



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200
Long Beach, California 90802-4213

October 12, 2018

Dear Reviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to be a peer reviewer of the Draft Revised Recovery Plan for the Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*), prepared pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Your comments will assist us in ensuring that the plan is based upon the best information available

The enclosed draft plan is a revision to the 1998 Recovery Plan for the Blue Whale. The draft plan discusses the natural history, status, and potential threats to blue whales. Actions needed to promote the recovery of the species are discussed and recovery criteria are identified.

In addition to seeking independent scientific review, we are also making this draft plan available for public comment. Before the plan is finalized, we will consider all substantive comments received during the peer review and public comment period and address them as appropriate. Once finalized, the plan will be used to direct conservation and recovery actions for the species in the U.S. and to encourage international cooperation to promote the recovery of the species outside of U.S. jurisdiction.

Questions to Consider during the Peer Review

We welcome comments on any aspect of the draft plan, but request that you focus your review on the following questions:

- Is the information presented in the background sections accurate and current? If you are aware of additional or more current relevant information, please provide the suggested reference(s) and, if possible, a copy of the paper(s).
- Does the discussion of potential threats and other stressors accurately consider and reflect the risk to this species?
- Are the management units identified appropriately?
- Do you have any comments or concerns regarding the proposed recovery criteria?
- Do recovery action priorities presented in the plan's Implementation Schedule reflect a biologically sound conservation approach for blue whale recovery?
- Are the proposed research, monitoring, and management recovery actions appropriate and sufficient?
- Are there other recovery actions that should be considered for inclusion in the plan?

Requirements of the Peer Review

In accordance with the White House Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review (OMB Bulletin), we must post online the name and affiliation of each peer reviewer, along with reviewer comments, as part of the agency's public record. Your comments will be posted without attribution. Previously submitted peer reviews for other



documents are available at:

http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/prplans/PRsummaries.html

The OMB Bulletin further requires that non-Federal peer reviewers complete a “Confidential Conflict of Interest Disclosure” form.

Finally, the OMB Bulletin requires that peer reviewers be informed of applicable access, objectivity, reproducibility, and other quality standards under federal laws governing access and quality. NOAA’s Information Quality Guidelines are available at:

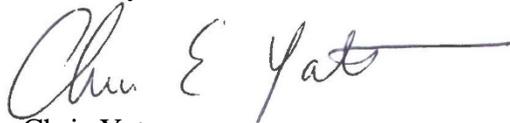
http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/IQ_Guidelines_103014.html

Logistics

Enclosed please find the draft plan and the conflict of interest disclosure form. Ms. Nancy Young of my staff will also transmit these documents to you by email. By December 11, 2018, please return your comments and the signed disclosure form (with your CV attached) to Ms. Young electronically at nancy.young@noaa.gov or by mail to the Protected Resources Division, West Coast Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Building 1, Seattle, WA 98115.

Thank you very much for your assistance with this important effort. If you have any questions regarding this review, please do not hesitate to call Ms. Young at (206) 526-6550.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris E. Yates" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Yates
Assistant Regional Administrator
Protected Resources Division
NOAA Fisheries, West Coast Region

Enclosures

cc: Administrative File: 151409WCR2018PR00061