

# Peer Review Plan for the Eastern Hellbender Species Status Assessment Report

## About the Document

**Title:** Eastern Hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*) Species Status Assessment Draft Report

**Purpose:** The Species Status Assessment (SSA) report will inform the determination by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) whether the species warrants listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

**Estimated Dissemination Date of SSA Report:** December 2024

## About the Peer Review Process

**Estimated Timing of Peer Review:** April - May 2024

**Type of Peer Review:** The Service will solicit comments from independent scientific reviewers who will submit individual comments in written form.

**Anticipated Number of Reviewers:** The Service will request review by at least three but not more than ten independent subject matter experts.

**Reviewer Selection Method:** The peer reviewers will be selected by the Service. In selecting peer reviewers, we will consider four key factors: expertise, balance, independence, and avoidance of conflict of interest. In accordance with the Service's 2016 Director's memorandum on the peer review process, a Service office not associated with development of the SSA report will select peer reviewers and coordinate the process. We will not seek nominations for peer reviewers from the public.

**Necessary Expertise:** Peer reviewers should have knowledge of eastern hellbender biology and distribution, aquatic ecology, or conservation biology. Peer reviewers will be advised that they are not to provide advice on policy.

## About Public Participation

Peer review comments will be publicly available. If we determine that the species warrants listing, we will publish a proposed rule to list the species, with appropriate opportunities for public review and comment. The public is invited to submit comments on this peer review plan by contacting the agency person listed below.

## Contact

Barbara Hosler at (517) 580-0254 or [barbara\\_hosler@fws.gov](mailto:barbara_hosler@fws.gov)