

## **Charge Statement for Peer Review of the Document:**

### *Draft Recovery Status Review for the Central America, Mexico, and Western North Pacific Distinct Population Segments of Humpback Whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)*

Thank you for agreeing to provide peer review of the Draft Recovery Status Review for the Central America, Mexico, and Western North Pacific Distinct Population Segments of Humpback Whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). We appreciate your willingness to help with this important effort to ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of the scientific information upon which the Recovery Status Review is based.

#### **Background**

The attached Draft Recovery Status Review for the Central America, Mexico, and Western North Pacific DPSs is part one of our recovery planning efforts for humpback whales. It represents a departure from past NOAA Fisheries recovery plans, in that it is a separate document from the Recovery Plan (currently being drafted) and is considered a “living document” that can be updated without having to update the entire recovery plan, which can be a lengthy process. The Recovery Status Review includes the executive summary, species information, threats assessment, conservation efforts, and biological constraints and needs. These efforts for a DPS-specific Recovery Plan under the three-part framework will replace the 1991 species-wide humpback whale recovery plan.

#### **Review Directives**

We welcome comments on any aspect of the Draft Recovery Status Review, but request that you focus your review on the following:

1. In general, does the Recovery Status Review include and cite the best scientific and commercial information available on the species and its biology, population demographics, habitat, and threats? 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).
2. Does the Threats Assessment accurately reflect the known and potential threats to each DPS? Are the results and discussion of the Threats Assessment supported by the information presented?
3. Are uncertainties addressed fairly and clearly, where appropriate? If not, please explain.

#### **Logistics:**

1. Comments should be submitted electronically to [meghan.gahm@noaa.gov](mailto:meghan.gahm@noaa.gov).
2. Please make suggested edits to the document in “track changes” using Microsoft Word.
3. Please provide your comments no later than 30 days after receipt of the draft Recovery Status Review. However, if you identify major concerns, please let NMFS know as soon as possible.
4. If you are not a Federal employee, please make sure that you return a signed conflict of interest form with your review and attach a short form CV.

After seeking independent peer review on this document, we will consider all substantive comments received and address them as appropriate. We will then finalize the Recovery Status Review and post it to our NOAA Fisheries humpback whale species profile page. We will also seek peer review and public comment on the Draft Recovery Plan (Part 2), and peer review (at a minimum) of the Recovery Implementation Strategy (Part 3) once those are ready for review.

**Peer Review Requirements:**

The President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a Peer Review Bulletin (December 2004) that requires online posting of this peer review as it has been determined to be "influential." To ensure that we have a transparent process for public disclosure, names, affiliations, and comments of each peer reviewer must be posted online. The comments, however, will not be attributed to individual peer reviewers. Comments will be compiled and made publicly available without attribution to individual reviewers. Previously submitted Peer Reviews are available at [http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services\\_programs/prplans/PRsummaries.html](http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/prplans/PRsummaries.html). However, if NMFS receives a FOIA request, anonymity of peer reviewers or comments cannot be guaranteed.

***The Draft Recovery Status Review is considered pre-decisional and should not be distributed. The report and all information associated with the report is to remain strictly confidential until the report is posted to the NMFS website and/or an associated proposed critical habitat rule is published in the Federal Register by NMFS.***

For any questions, please contact Meghan Gahm ([meghan.gahm@noaa.gov](mailto:meghan.gahm@noaa.gov)).