

**Peer Review for 2017  
Fiscal Year 2017 Project Proposal**

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**Background:**

A Peer Review Panel was established in 1997 to assist the SJRIP with planning studies, analytical designs, data interpretation, and aiding the Program's use of science towards the process of recovery. The members of the Panel participated in meetings and reviewed pre-draft, draft, and final scopes of work, work plans, reports, integration analyses and reports, and other Program documents. However, the responsibilities of individual peer reviewers were generally unclear, leading to some unsatisfied individuals in the Program as well as peer reviewers themselves. This Scope of Work (SOW) aims to improve the Program's peer review process by refining and guiding the responsibilities of the Panel members to maximize the benefits to the Program while decreasing the ambiguity of peer reviewer expectations.

**Goals:**

The main goal of peer review in the SJRIP is to use the professional expertise of panel members to improve the Program's scientific operations, particularly on technical and biological issues. Indeed, peer reviewers are invited to join the Program based on their reputations in their respective fields of study. Therefore, this SOW was developed to capitalize on the use of peer review to aid in guiding and defending management decisions made by the Program. Furthermore, the new SOW has incorporated a blind, anonymous peer review process aimed at encouraging candid reviews without the fear of personal/social reprisals. Blind reviews will be handled by the Program Office's (PO) Program Assistant to ensure reviews remain anonymous to PO staff involved in synthesizing reviews, developing the annual peer review SOW, and coordinating the Program.

The new SOW also requires (mostly) independent review from its peer review panel. A diversity of opinions and even disagreement among peer reviewers is acceptable and individual efforts will increase the transparency of contributions of peer reviewers to the PO. Consensus reviews have the potential to diminish the diversity of opinions and independence of peer reviewer input. Although the sum of effort for independent peer review may exceed that of group-reviewed work, the PO finds that cost acceptable in the spirit of increasing the diversity of viewpoints. While group reviews may have provided some synergistic benefits, these benefits cannot be quantified and the PO is willing to sacrifice synergy for independence in reviews.

The peer reviewers will contribute to three major components of the Program detailed below and we have noted expectations and responsibilities for each:

**1) Review annual SOWs**

Annual SOWs by Program PIs are due to the PO by 31 March of each year. After the PO receives SOWs, each peer reviewer will review a list of SOWs assigned by the PO (n=5-15). SOWs will be assigned such that each scope's topic aligns with each reviewer's expertise (as much as possible) and each SOW will receive at least two independent reviews (as well as comments from the PO). Reviews should focus on

the science, experimental design, data analysis, and relevance of the SOW in achieving recovery or assessing progress toward recovery. We recognize that some SOWs may need more detail compared to their current form to allow peer reviewers to conduct a rigorous assessment. Reviews will then be due back to the PO by 30 April.

The PO would like to see succinct reviews and do not necessarily want to read through track changes on word documents (although blind track changes that include editorial suggestions can be delivered to the PIs through the PO but will not be required for the review). Blind reviewer comments will then be compiled and synthesized by the PO and disseminated to the BC, PIs, and peer reviewers. The PIs will then be required to respond to peer reviewer and PO comments and append those responses to their respective SOW before they will be considered in the annual work plan. The PIs response to comments will be distributed to the all BC members and peer reviewers.

## **2) Attend and review presentations during the February meeting**

The February BC meeting consists largely of presentations of the previous year's activities conducted by the PIs. This is a great opportunity for the group as a whole to catch up on progress on individual projects in a relatively short period of time. Moreover, these presentations should reflect comments supplied by peer reviewers in original SOWs and they outline how data will be analyzed and interpreted in the final reports.

Each peer reviewer will make blind comments on individual presentations (a list of presentations will be provided by the PO) and send them to the PO by 31 March. These comments should focus on data analysis, clarity of presentation, and interpretation but other general comments will be welcomed. The PO will then compile the reviewer comments and distribute them to the BC and individual PIs. These written comments to the PO will not preclude any questions or comments the peer reviewers want to make orally during the meeting.

An additional meeting (half day) will occur at the end of the February BC meeting among the PO, BOR staff, and peer reviewers to discuss 'big picture' issues in the Program, especially progress toward recovery, but other concerns with individual projects or the peer review process would be open for discussion as well. The peer reviewers will then draft a group summary of their assessment of the Program's progress towards recovery as well as general suggestions for improvement and send them to the PO by 31 March.

## **3) Attend workshops/review special documents, annual reports (upon invitation)**

Workshops are occasionally held to address specific issues that arise during Program operations. These meetings usually occur over 2-3 day periods in Albuquerque, Farmington, or Durango. Some/all peer reviewers may be invited to attend workshops to provide professional and technical guidance. If a peer reviewer is invited, they will be required to provide a review of the workshop and their general opinion on discussions. The same review requirements as 1) and 2) above will apply to any special documents the PO asks to be reviewed. Additional guidance and details will be provided for any workshops or special documents the PO asks to be reviewed depending on the nature of the workshop or document.

Peer reviewers will no longer be required to review the Program's annual reports (unless upon the request of the PO). However, the peer reviewers are certainly free to utilize these reports as they may provide background useful in completing the tasks outlined above. The BC should provide review of annual reports as part of their commitment to the Program. Issues with editorial comments and interpretation of data can be provided during this "professional courtesy" review. In the past it

appeared that some in the BC relied on the peer reviewers' review of annual reports rather than conducting their own assessment of annual reports.

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**Budget FY-17:**

Payment for serving on the Peer Review Panel includes expenses for travel to and from the meeting, and an hourly rate for services. It is anticipated that Panel Members will spend approximately 15-20 days each in 2017 (includes travel, meetings, and document review).

The total budget is distributed among the four peer reviewers through individual Services Contracts with Reclamation.

Salaries:	\$50,000
Travel:	\$10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>