

**Peer Review for 2018  
Fiscal Year 2018 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 recovery. The members of the Panel have participated in meetings and reviewed draft and final scopes of work (SOW), work plans, draft reports, integration analyses, 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 SOW aims to improve the Program's peer review process by clearly outlining the responsibilities of the Peer Review Panel to maximize the benefits to the Program while decreasing the ambiguity in expectations of Panel members.

**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 evaluating management decisions made by the Program.

This Peer Review SOW requires independent reviews for annual SOWs and reports, but allows for consolidated reviews on the Annual Program Review (see below) or other documents as directed by the Program Office (PO). A diversity of opinions and even disagreement among peer reviewers is anticipated, and individual review efforts will increase the transparency of contributions of peer reviewers to the PO. Conversely, consolidated reviews on particular documents will have the potential to be enhanced from brainstorming among Panel members. The type of review solicited (individual or consolidated) for each document will be explicitly stated when the PO requests reviews. However, all Panel members will always have the option to provide their reviews independently if desired. All correspondence between the PO and Panel members, but not correspondence among Panel members, will occur through one point of contact within and designated by the PO.

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

**1) Review annual SOWs and reports**

Both annual SOWs and draft annual reports will be independently reviewed by the Peer Review Panel members. Annual SOWs and draft annual reports by Program PIs are due to the PO by 1 March and 31 March, respectively, of each year. After the PO receives these documents, a portion of the documents will be assigned to each peer reviewer by the PO such that the assigned topic aligns with each reviewer's expertise (as much as possible), and all reviewed documents will receive at least two reviews by peer reviewers. For the SOWs, the peer reviewers will assess if there are clearly identified hypotheses to be tested and if there is sufficient information regarding methods of data analysis. Reviews of draft annual reports will focus on experimental design, data analysis, interpretation of results, and relevance of the project in achieving or assessing progress toward recovery. However, an ongoing problem in evaluating

the science of some of the draft reports has been the lack of clarity in the writing and the need for major editing. Therefore, all reports should receive at least one review within the agency or organization of the primary PI prior to being submitted to the PO. Completed reviews of SOWs and draft annual reports will then be returned to the point of contact within the PO via email by 30 April of each year. Reviewer comments will then be compiled by the PO and disseminated to the BC, PIs, and peer reviewers verbatim. In the compilation, reviewers will be identified by name. The PIs will be required to respond to all comments on their SOW and draft report. Responses, including rebuttals, to comments on SOWs will be appended to revised SOWs prior to the SOW being considered in the annual work plan. Responses, including rebuttals, to comments on draft reports will be appended to final reports prior to being accepted by the Program. All reviews and responses to reviewers' comments will be distributed to the entire Program.

Biology Committee members should review all draft SOWs and draft annual reports as part of their commitment to the Program. Issues with editorial comments and interpretation of data can be provided during this 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.

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

Each peer reviewer will attend the February BC meeting and have the opportunity to make oral comments and suggestions during the meeting. The February BC meeting consists largely of presentations of the previous year's activities conducted by the PIs. This is an opportunity for the whole group to catch up on the progress on individual projects in a relatively short period. Moreover, these presentations should reflect comments supplied by peer reviewers on the original SOWs. Peer reviewer comments should focus on hypotheses tested, data analysis, clarity of presentation, and interpretation, but other general comments will be welcomed. The comments could also provide constructive suggestions that should be considered for incorporation into the draft annual reports. For the Peer Review Panel to provide in-depth comments on the ongoing research and monitoring efforts both listening to the presentations and seeing the draft annual reports are required, with the latter having sufficient detail to allow a clear understanding of the analyses and interpretations of the data.

## **3) Meeting with BOR, PO, and Annual Program Review**

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 will be open for discussion. After this meeting, the Panel members will draft an Annual Program Review of their consolidated assessment of the Program's progress towards recovery, suggestions for improvement, and other critiques of the Program and send them to the PO by 31 March. This Annual Program Review by Panel members will then be distributed to the entire Program (i.e., PO, BC, and CC).

## **4) Attend workshops and review special documents (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 or all peer reviewers may be invited to attend workshops to provide professional and technical guidance. If a peer reviewer is invited, the reviewer will be required to provide a review of the workshop and a general opinion on discussions within one month after the workshop completion. Because of the challenge of assessing information "on the fly" during an oral presentation and the complexity of analyses in some reports, a consolidated response from peer reviewers will be accepted. Additional guidance and details regarding reporting will be provided by the PO for any workshops or special documents the PO asks to be reviewed depending on the nature of the workshop or document.

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**Budget FY-18:**

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 2018 (includes travel, meetings, and document review).

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

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