

Document 5

For the 23 February 2024 IRST Meeting

Peer Review Process (DRAFT)

What Will Be Reviewed

The AMP rules require “A peer review process that is transparent and addresses both study designs and study reports. Based on discussion in the IRST 9 Jan 2024 meeting, this peer review clause was intended to apply to the research products commissioned by the IRST.

IRST Preliminary Review

The IRST will provide a preliminary review of each research report as it is received and decide whether further information is needed from the authors to facilitate the peer review process. The Housing Agency will pass on any requests to the authors and distribute responses back to the IRST.

Selection of Reviewers

The IRST will arrange peer reviews of research products from individuals with the appropriate topic expertise, which in some cases may be IRST members themselves and in other cases will be outside experts. When a research project is nearing completion, the IRST will discuss and provide the names of any recommended reviewers to the Housing Agency. The Housing Agency will research and provide additional reviewer names if requested. Given a goal of two independent reviews, a list of four or more potential reviewers is recommended. Reviewers may be offered financial compensation at the discretion of the IRST.

Peer Review

Once the IRST decides that a research report is ready for peer review, they will discuss and provide any specific questions that they wish to pass on to reviewers and a target timeline for the review. The Housing Agency will contact reviewers in the list until two have accepted and will manage the collection of reviews. Per the AMP rules, “the IRST shall not grant anonymity to authors, handling editors, or peer-reviewers before January 1, 2028. After January 1, 2028, the IRST may modify the anonymity requirements to peer reviewers by a substantial decision of the IRST” [629-603-0400(4)(d)].

Post-review

IRST will assess the reviews and decide whether any responses are needed from the report authors, which may include revisions to the report or less formal comments/clarifications. The Housing Agency will request any responses from authors and forward these back to the IRST for further assessment. Once the IRST is satisfied with the reviews and any author responses, the report will be considered final for the 30-day report delivery timeline specified in the rules [629-603-0200(7)]. The IRST may formulate a memo to accompany the report and reviews when they are submitted to the AMPC and Board of Forestry.

Example Peer Review Process - CMER

Example of a scientific peer-review process used by CMER in Washington's Adaptive Management Program (Pages 14-17 in Section 22 of the Washington Forest Practices Board Manual) is shown below:

PART 4. SCIENTIFIC PEER REVIEW PROCESS

4.1 Purpose

WAC 222-12-045(2)(c) "establishes an independent scientific peer review process to determine if the scientific studies that address program issues are scientifically sound and technically reliable; and provide advice on the scientific basis or reliability of CMER's reports."

The purpose is to:

1. Clarify which adaptive management products and recommendations require independent scientific peer review;
2. Identify products or situations where peer review or other technical consulting services are suggested;
3. Outline the basic review procedures for each type of product; and
4. Help define responsibilities for CMER and other adaptive management participants throughout this process.

The scientific review process should not be used as a substitute for dispute resolution.

4.2 Administrative Structure

Scientific review is conducted in a manner similar to the peer review process used by many scientific journals. Peer review is conducted in an independent scientific peer review process established by the Board. This manual uses the functional names and nomenclature common to the peer reviewed journal process.

The Administrator coordinates the peer review process between the report authors, CMER, and an appointed Managing Editor. The Managing Editor initially reviews CMER reports and assigns them to an Associate Editor having expertise in the appropriate scientific field. The Associate Editor then selects 2-3 individual reviewers to perform the actual review of the document.

The Managing Editor is also responsible for maintaining a database of reviewers by area of expertise, and evaluating the Associate Editors and reviewers' performance. CMER, the Policy Committee, and the Board may determine other duties of the Managing Editor.

4.3 What Will Be Reviewed

Final reports of CMER funded studies, certain CMER recommendations, and pertinent studies not published in a CMER-approved, peer-reviewed journal are reviewed in the scientific peer review process. Other products that may require review include, but are not limited to, external information, work plans, requests for proposal, subsequent study proposals, a final study plan, and progress reports as described in WAC 222-12-045(2)(c). Table 1 provides a summary of what will be reviewed as part of the scientific peer review process.

Table 1: Overview of the requirements for the scientific peer review process

Review Process (will include expert panels or as otherwise approved by the Administrator)	Must be Reviewed	May be Reviewed
Double-blind Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CMER final reports ▪ Pertinent studies in non-approved journals ▪ Certain CMER recommendations ▪ Unpublished reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External information ▪ Work plans ▪ RFPs ▪ Progress reports ▪ Literature reviews
<i>Interactive Review</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Study plans ▪ Literature reviews

4.4 Procedure for Peer Review

Approach

Products requiring formal peer review should undergo the double-blind approach where both the authors and the reviewers remain anonymous. This approach is a generally accepted method used by most scientific journals.

Background Information and Review Questions

After CMER approves a final project report, CMER may prepare additional background information and a list of specific questions for the peer reviewers to address. These questions may outline known problems or areas of uncertainty that reviewers should pay particular attention to. Questions submitted for peer review must be approved by CMER and should only address technical issues. Questions related to policy issues should be referred to the Policy Committee. If CMER cannot gain consensus on these additional materials, the issue is forwarded to the Policy Committee for dispute resolution.

Administrator Initiates the Peer Review

CMER sends the final CMER project report and any review questions to the Administrator. The Administrator reviews all materials to ensure that the submittal is consistent with CMER protocol. The Administrator prepares a transmittal letter that may incorporate additional background information or review questions, and forwards all materials to the Managing Editor of the scientific peer review process.

Scientific Peer Review

The Managing Editor receives materials from the Administrator, evaluates their readiness for review, and then transfers them to the appropriate Associate Editor. The Associate Editor selects a panel of two or three reviewers from a list developed by the Managing Editors, with nominations from Associate Editors and CMER.

A final CMER project report undergoes double-blind peer review in which both the authors and the reviewers remain anonymous. Each reviewer independently reviews the material, responds to any specific review questions, and provides comments and recommendations to the Associate Editor. The Associate Editor then summarizes all reviewer comments into a separate synthesis report that identifies the key observations, provides general suggestions, outlines any contradictions in comments, and includes a recommendation for addressing contradictions. If the individual reviews are inconsistent, the Managing Editor, the appropriate Associate Editor and an outside Associate Editor(s) address and resolve the inconsistencies. It should be noted that while synthesis reports are disclosable under public disclosure law, confidentiality of the reviewers and their individual comments is maintained.

The Associate Editor forwards the synthesis report, together with the individual reviewer comments, to the Managing Editor. The Managing Editor then returns the document to the Administrator who forwards it to the authors and CMER.

Review Response Action Plan

CMER prepares a “Review Response Action Plan” in response to the peer review comments by working with the report authors to evaluate all peer review comments and defining the appropriate actions (if any). CMER is not obligated to incorporate all the changes suggested by the peer review, for its response. CMER identifies any suggested document revisions and/or actions that stem from the peer review by a consensus process. If CMER cannot reach consensus, it will forward the Action Plan to the Policy Committee for review and resolution.

Special Considerations for Literature Reviews

Literature reviews should be peer reviewed since they can strongly influence the direction of subsequent research and monitoring programs. Peer review of a literature review will follow a similar process as final reports. However, these peer reviews will typically focus on whether the literature review overlooked relevant literature, and whether conclusions or synthesis recommendations are supported by the literature reviewed.

Special Considerations for Certain CMER Recommendations

CMER may respond to policy issues in various ways that may include workshops, literature reviews, white papers, recommendations for additional research, etc. The products of these efforts are subject to peer review. When sufficient and credible data are available for any given issue or question, CMER prepares a recommendation package that is based on the best available science (e.g., this may include the results of CMER research as well as other research). After the Policy Committee reviews the CMER recommendations, it has the option of requesting peer review to evaluate the scientific content of the report. The review of CMER recommendations to the Policy Committee is similar to other peer review except the review is initiated by the Policy Committee.

4.5 Other Products that May be Reviewed

- Reports and articles from journals not approved by CMER and unpublished reports must be peer reviewed prior to their use in adaptive management decisions.

- Reports and CMER products that have a science question within them may be reviewed. The decision to peer review these products is based on whether additional scientific expertise is needed.
- Review of study plans/designs is recommended to help identify potential problems prior to releasing funds or collecting any actual data. This early project phase can benefit from open and iterative interaction between the authors, reviewers, and others. Unlike the double-blind peer review process, this approach provides more of a consulting service where all parties agree to face-to-face meetings or other interactions where the identity of the authors and reviewers may be revealed.

The Administrator and the Associate Editor coordinate the open review process. They identify specific questions or issues to be addressed during interactive sessions and communicate them to study plan authors and CMER-appointed reviewers. CMER-appointed reviewers may interact directly with the study plan authors and other CMER-appointed reviewers. Interactive sessions will generally be conducted by phone conference or, in special cases, in face-to-face meetings.

In some cases, the reviewers may be asked to participate in development or refinement of the study plan by addressing unresolved questions in the study plan development process, or by bringing their expertise to bear on specific technical questions. In other cases, the authors may only want the opportunity to discuss specific comments with reviewers for clarification. The products of an open review may be similar to those of a blind review, i.e., reviewers comment and an Associate Editor synthesizes, or the products may be specifically tailored to the particular project.

Reference

Washington Department of Natural Resources. 2013. Section 22: Guidelines for the Adaptive Management Program. *Forest Practices Board Manual*.

https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/bc_fpboard_bmsection22.pdf