

Tribal Ecological Knowledge

Key Points

- Don't want to be vague about TEK – make sure it is plugged into Federal, State and local efforts. TEK and interconnectedness (not TEK and planning).
- This should be about acknowledgement of Tribal ecological knowledge and practices. Show agencies where Tribes are doing and where they are headed. Want Tribal ecological practices acknowledged in the Water Plan. Agencies can show how they incorporated Tribal knowledge.
- This is about how to acknowledge and incorporate TEK.
- When submitting proposals, avoid the word “cultural” with knowledge. Cultural interests (such as maintaining and preserving land and waters for the Tribe) are described in terms of ecological knowledge.
- Tribal references and knowledge are often discounted, with preference for academic credentials.
- This is about communicating and collaborating with Tribes, validating their knowledge and emphasizing the inter-connectedness of resources as well as community (whole systems approach).
- Society is becoming increasingly disconnected from the natural world.

Case Studies

Identify and showcase examples:

- Include poster sessions – showing projects, models, studies and data collection. Inventorying areas for groundwater recharge. Show other agencies what Tribes do with what they have. Highlight partnerships and creative approaches. Example: Hitch project. Map everything that is going on. [Poster Session – Day 1]
- In Lake County, Tribes are growing native plants for restoration. Native plants are a big focus. It will help to provide examples of where this would be done.
- We need examples of collaborative efforts – like the Natomas drain. Being involved throughout the whole process.
- The Miwok restructured GAP program to address Tribal EK and offered stipends to Tribal members (through NRCS funding). In-the field experience on properties is invaluable. EPA accepted the information from the study. Showing that connection, with the EPA approval of data, with NRCS grant, with building Tribal capacity – this was invaluable.
- Discuss who has native gardens: who are their partners and stakeholders. How is youth involved?
- The EPA has already acknowledged the role of TEK in environmental science, policy and decision-making.

Challenges, best practices, lessons learned

DESIGN TEAM QUESTIONS:

- What type of format? (panel, presentations, white papers, etc.)
- Who should serve on panel, present?
- Develop main objectives for this theme.
- Who else should be on Design Team given the above?

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Other Considerations:

- DWR activities impact land and counties. There needs to be policy for incorporating TEK into land use decisions. The Water Plan does not include TEK or counties. That's where impacts occur. Land uses, even 20 miles from water bodies, have impacts. Agencies need to work with directly with Tribes rather than through high-end contractors. Tribal members developed a plan to protect burials on the river, which was presented to the City of Sacramento. The plan included native plants and habitat, to prevent erosion and help buildup sediment. SAFCA and the Corp are now using this. There is a lot of good work, which needs to be heard. DWR needs some awareness as well.
- There are a lot of bad past experiences with agencies who do not respect TEK. Examples can be provided. Governor Brown has made good appointments – there are still challenges with middle management.

Climate Change

- On climate change issues, indigenous knowledge is often ahead of the scientific community. Native Tribes in Alaska were aware of changes early on. There was a climate change conference in Redding, in 2009, and Tribal reports of changes that were confirmed.
- In Alaska, Irving Kava is working with Siberia and creating an international network.
- Climate change subject matter experts talk about uncertainty and adaptation. It involves local conditions. This is a good place to bring in DWR and California examples.
- There are efforts with the governor regarding ocean wellness. They talk about scientific knowledge of sea-level rise. Tribes have never been incorporated, nor our awareness of destruction of habitat over the last 50 years. Climate change could involve a white paper: Look at 3-4 communities at present from own perspective what we see as climate change issues. Describe what Tribes have had to adapt to. Tribal partnerships are needed. What could Tribes do if we had the resources? One you walk away from your land, you're lost. We have to speak for climate change.