

Water and Culture Related Reference Documents:

- I. What is Culture? Approaching Cultural Diversity in California and Varying Definitions of Culture.
- II. Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Water Management (to be developed by Tribal AC)
- III. Cultural Burning and Water Management
- IV. Culture as a Beneficial Use of Water

Need: Reference pieces primers and TOC

- I. What is Culture.

What is culture? Culture is sometimes referred to as a concept derived from “to cultivate”. The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines culture as:

The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations; the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; *also*: the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time; the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.

Culture represents the larger collective lifeways, mindsets, livelihoods, and practices that represent the diversity of California’s social fabric. Shared passions, beliefs, histories, and experiences bring people together to create group and community identities. Many California tribes have their own creation story that may include water — tides, water spirit, ocean, rivers, springs, lakes, rain, creatures of the water, mud duck, convergence of water ways — forks, and the head waters. (Donna Miranda-Begay). Fishing towns and villages share social and cultural identities that derive from livelihoods that define ways of life. Ranching and agricultural communities were settled near water sources. These working landscapes provided habitat and vistas that characterized the West. The surfing and beach culture of California is directly associated with coastal and ocean resources, projecting and iconic image and serving as a key economic driver for the state. The environmental movement has advocated for coastal and river protections throughout the state.

For example, Box 30-2 indicates a range of diversity in how anthropologists and others may describe and define culture.

PLACEHOLDER Box 30-2 Diverse Definitions of Culture

[Any draft tables, figures, and boxes that accompany this text for the public review draft are included at the end of the chapter.]

National Park Service's Definition of Culture

The *National Register Bulletin 38* refers to its internal cultural resources management guidelines for its definition and view of culture:

Culture [is] a system of behaviors, values, ideologies, and social arrangements. These features, in addition to tools and expressive elements such as graphic arts, help humans interpret their universe as well as deal with features of their environments, natural and social. Culture is learned, transmitted in a social context, and modifiable. Synonyms for culture include lifeways, customs, traditions, social practices, and folkways. The terms folk culture and folk life might be used to describe aspects of the system that are unwritten, learned without formal instruction, and deal with expressive elements such as dance, song, music and graphic arts as well as storytelling.

National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties, Appendix I

The opposite of maintaining an open and respectful view about different cultures is called ethnocentrism, described as “evaluating other cultures from the perspective of one’s own presumably superior culture” (Bodley 1997) and being unable to “sympathize with the feelings, attitudes, and beliefs of someone who is a member of a different culture” (Parker and King 1998).

Native American Perspective of Definition of Culture.

The Political aspect of Water and Culture

BOX recommendation:

Native Perspectives of Cultural Resources and Cultural Resources Management

A cultural resource is the terminology and concepts applied to resources that are utilized by native tribal people for utilitarian and subsistence purposes in their traditional way of life (Goode 2011).

In Lakota culture, the saying is “We are all related.” Unlike Western views of management where humans manage their resources, tribes see humans as a part of the land, water, and air. On the first day of the 2013 Tribal Water Summit, some of the highlighted themes were

- The need for collaborative resource management.
- The value of oral, historical, and qualitative data applied to good resource management.
- Cultural identity is tied to the land and natural resources.
- Sharing tribal ecological knowledge requires trust and relationship building (Paula Britton).

Cultural prosperity for tribes is dependent on caring for the natural world. Re-creating past conditions requires an understanding of how people lived in their environments. For example, selective harvesting or culling was informed by traditional knowledge. Similarly, cultural burns involved fire mosaics that were timed and managed to generate specific types and qualities of resources. Other practices, such as rock

drop structures, enhanced groundwater recharge, stabilized stream flows, and created riparian habitat. The managed environment provided food, medicine, and building materials for the tribe. Removing people from the landscape is neither healthy nor sustainable. For centuries, tribes have experience in observing, evaluating, and manipulating ecosystems to continue their way of life and preserve their traditions. Tribes want to manage their lands and watersheds, and at the very least to co-manage them. Tribes are willing to work with local, State, and federal agencies to achieve this (Nathan Voegeli).

A further example of this is the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) process. The MLPA Initiative was presented as a case study at the 2013 Tribal Water Summit. When it was first developed, the MLPA addressed only commercial and recreational uses of marine resources. Tribal involvement was very limited. As the process evolved, there were geographically sequenced meetings along the California coast, moving from Southern California to Northern California. Tribes were disenfranchised in the earlier sessions and shared information with North Coast Tribes. When the process reached the North Coast area, it was apparent that tribes expected to be involved and that they had support from local government, fishing, and environmental interests.

There were challenges and frustration regarding MLPA and how it was developed. With time, the initial confrontations turned into a commitment to change the outcome. The process was not perfect and some tribal desires did not move forward. However, the process did change the paradigm of how tribes and State agencies work together and how policies can be influenced to support tribal sovereignty and improve the management of natural resources.

The MLPA process was one example of the valuable information tribes possessed, also known as Tribal Ecological Knowledge (TEK), that can inform agency practices in a number of ways. Formally, government-to-government consultation can guide policies and practices. Tribal practitioners can provide input on specific plans or proposals informally. Western science and TEK are both science-driven. Both are essential to better managing fishery, forest, and watershed resources. Agencies and tribes have a shared interest in working together on resource management and restoration activities.

For example, North Coast tribes worked with the Regional Water Quality Control Board to develop a new beneficial use category to protect cultural practices. Tribes throughout the state are working with the State Water Resources Control Board to have all regional basin plans have a cultural use category. The State Water Resources Control Board is also considering adding a beneficial use for subsistence fishing (Felicia Marcus).

California Native American Tribes' Relationships with Water

All plant and animal resources are water dependent. Resources have a variety of water dependent levels. Village sites and areas for cultural practices are found within a quarter mile of water whether it is a spring, creek, river, etc. which may still exist or once existed. It is no surprise that any excavation near a water body uncovers artifacts, such as bedrock mortars, petroglyphs, and tools, prove that Native American life was dependent on water. Therefore, their traditional practice of taking care of the land was highly relevant to keeping the water restored so that their resources had a continuum of regeneration (Goode 2011).

Below are excerpts from the 2013 Tribal Water Summit speakers sharing their tribe's relationship to water and the importance of managing the watershed for improved water quality and quantity:

- TEK has been passed down over thousands of years through oral traditions. Historic and ethnographic efforts continue to document this knowledge. It is time to incorporate tribal knowledge into restoration efforts led by local, State, and federal agencies.
- Tribes are a product of their homelands and ceremonies are tied to the land. The practices and conditions associated with caring for the land are transmitted orally down through the generations as TEK (Ron Goode).
- Materials used to weave a basket come from clean water and proper management of that resource (Don Hankins).
- When I hand someone a piece of willow, sedge, or bear grass I ask, "How clean was the water that this grew in?" Because they are now affected by it (Ruthie Maloney).
- Basket weavers split materials with their teeth. Important to avoid sprayed vegetation. Older weavers gather by road due to mobility constraints. Road vegetation gets sprayed (Sage LaPena).
- Not all tribes able to practice because of land constraints, lack of access, lack of protection, and preservation issues, but they continue their cultural knowledge to teach and practice (Lois Bohna).

Below are examples of how lack of access to water or unmanaged water diversions has affected Native American life.

- With no flows in the Trinity River, the Hoopa Valley Tribe cannot practice their river dances e.g., Flower Dance, Boat Dance, Deerskin Dance, and Jump Dance.
- Because a spring ran dry due to drought and groundwater pumping in Nevada, the Susanville Indian Rancheria could not perform their purification sweats to reconnect with Mother Earth. The Bureau of Land Management trucks in water so that ceremonies can continue (Aaron Dixon).
- LADPW diversions have dried Owens Lake and reduced Mono Lake water levels (Donna Vasquez and Alan Bacock).
- Water from the San Jacinto Mountains is diverted for residential areas causing low flows and preventing the hot springs to recharge. Hot springs are used for cultural practices. Low flows also inhibit subsistence activities or recreational contact. Without water, plants used for baskets, medicine, and events cannot grow. The culture dies (Erica Helms-Schenk).
- If Native Americans are not allowed to access their native sources, ancestral, or sacred sites, how can the culture continue and thrive? How will the traditional knowledge of the elders be passed down to the youth? The 2013 Tribal Water Summit echoed repeatedly how Native Americans hope to manage their lands and are open to co-managing with partner agencies and organizations. Many examples of successful co-management have been shared as well as examples of tribes acquiring land to manage for their own.

Everything in the natural world comes from the same place. Human beings are not separate from the other forms of spirit people (Leaf Hillman).

Photo Examples

Ceremonies - Mati

Traditional resource management practices: burning, stewardship activities, - Ron

Subsistence activities: root/reed collection, - Lois