



Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, and Subsistence Taskforce REPORT

January 20 and 21, 2022: 9am-3pm AKDT

Zoom Teleconference

Taskforce members in attendance:

Kate Haapala (Co-chair, NPFMC)	Robert Murphy (APU)	Richard Slats (Chevak)
Sarah Wise (Co-chair, AFSC)	Julie Raymond-Yakoubian (Kawerak, Inc.)	Simeon Swetzof (St. Paul)
Darcy Peter (Beaver)	Bridget Mansfield (NMFS)	
Rachel Donkersloot (Coastal Cultures Research)	Toby Anungazuk Jr. (Golovin)	

Members absent: Alida Trainor (ADFG)

Others in attendance:

Raychelle Daniel (DOI), Lauren Divine (St. Paul), Barbara Johnson (Georgetown Tribal Council), Stephanie Madsen (ASPA), Heather Mann (MTC), Mateo Paz-Soldan (St. Paul), Chris Tran (ACSPI), Jaylene Wheeler (Kawerak, Inc.), Megan Williams (Ocean Conservancy)

Introductions

The co-chairs of the Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, and Subsistence (LKTKS) Taskforce opened the meeting with introductions and gave an overview of the agenda. The co-chairs explained the purpose of the meeting, namely that the Taskforce would discuss the search engine and further develop the protocol. This meeting was the Taskforce's first opportunity to visualize and discuss a draft of the protocol.

During introductions and updates, Taskforce members had an opportunity to discuss current events and concerns facing their communities. At this meeting, the Taskforce heard from some members about the effects of climate change that people in the northern Bering Sea region are facing including changes in the location and abundance of key subsistence species, having to travel farther distances to hunt and fish, and concerns over food security, particularly through the winter. The Taskforce revisited some of these concerns and others in its discussion on how to illustrate the protocol's guidelines.

LKTKS Search Engine

The Council's [February 2020 motion](#) directs the Taskforce to develop processes and protocols to identify and define sources of LK, TK, the social science of LK and TK, and subsistence information, which would support the use of best scientific information available in the Council's decision-making process. The Taskforce received an update from Dr. Kate Haapala on recent work to finalize a search engine, a tool developed by this Taskforce to help achieve the Council's stated goal.

Over the last two years, the Taskforce has leveraged its diverse expertise to identify and collate hundreds of sources – scientific articles in peer reviewed journals, white papers, archives, metadata, and other media – of LK, TK, the social science of LK and TK, and subsistence information relevant to Federal fisheries management in the North Pacific into a search engine. ¹A demo of the search engine can be found on the Council’s website: <https://lktks.npfmc.org/>. This is a publicly available tool that is designed to be refined and evolve over time. After the Taskforce’s work is completed, the search engine will be maintained by a designated Council staff member with related expertise.

In general Taskforce members supported the search engine and discussed ways to advertise and popularize this valuable tool (e.g., sharing with Alaska Fisheries Science Center, North Pacific Research Board, Arctic Research Consortium of the U.S., Arctic Council, Interagency Arctic Policy Research Committee, and more). The consensus was the search engine is a great resource for anyone interested in or working with LK, TK, the social science, of LK and TK, and subsistence information linked to the Bering Sea region.

Some Taskforce members discussed the scope of work currently included in the search engine. Various points were discussed including whether it would be beneficial to add foundational methodological references that have moved the field of LK and TK scholarship forward, particularly foundational work on methods for ethically working with Indigenous communities and knowledge systems. Other Taskforce members expressed reluctance to expand the scope of included works beyond those that are geographically or substantively linked to the North Pacific and/or fisheries management. In general, the effort to collect LK, TK, the social science of LK and TK, and subsistence information has focused on pieces that specifically link to the Council’s decision-making process. There also continues to be some concern that the Taskforce is meant to provide practical guidance but is not to teach non-social scientists how to conduct social science: including broader methodologies may fall into the latter. Ultimately, Taskforce members saw value to including scholarship because the works are foundational, in many cases authored by Indigenous scholars, and do provide valuable perspectives on ethically working with Indigenous communities and maintaining the integrity of these knowledge systems.

Overall, the Taskforce supports the finalization of this work product and expressed interest in increasing its visibility and ensuring that it is widely known this tool is available.

Protocol Development

The LKTKS protocol provides guidance for analytical staff, researchers, and the Council for identifying, analyzing, and incorporating LK, TK, and subsistence information into the Council’s decision-making process. At the January 2022 meeting, the Taskforce reviewed the first draft of the protocol, which builds on the Taskforce’s prior work from the November 2020 and March 2021 meetings.² The protocol’s development has been, and will continue to be, an iterative process to provide multiple opportunities for the viewpoints, expertise, and experiences of every Taskforce member to be shared and included in the final product. The purpose of this meeting was to review the initial draft, identify gaps, and further develop themes and content for each guideline. Below are the key points from Taskforce member’s discussion at the January 2022 meeting in no particular order of importance.

¹ The Taskforce thanks the graduate and undergraduate students at Alaska Pacific University that supported the Taskforce’s search engine work by identifying some [initial sources](#) under the direction of Dr. Brad Harris and Dr. Bobby Murphy.

² The reports from each meeting can be found on the [Taskforce’s webpage](#) on the Council’s website. These reports contain important background information and rationale for the protocol’s guidelines.

The Taskforce discussed the scope of the protocol. The protocol reflects the Council's February 2020 motion which directs the Taskforce to provide guidance for identifying, analyzing, and incorporating, LK, TK, the social science of LK and TK, and subsistence for its decision-making *process*. The Council's decision-making process is multi-faceted, dynamic, and involves close partnerships with stakeholders, Federal agencies, Tribes, scientists, and more. By taking a broad approach, the protocol is intended to be useful for all the key entities in the Council's process (i.e., staff, Council members, Alaska Fisheries Science Center staff, Regional Office staff, and more).

Taskforce members revisited a core part of its work which is considering how to best, and most appropriately, integrate LK, TK, and subsistence information into the Council's decision-making process that heretofore, has relied on western scientific information. This conversation provided an opportunity for all meeting participants to reflect on the Taskforce's work thus far, and it opened the door for a broader conversation on the type of guidance the Taskforce is providing via the protocol. Specifically, there is strong agreement among Taskforce members, and resource management scholarship more broadly, regarding the value of including LK and TK in the suite of information used in Council decision-making processes (for more information, see Section 2 of the protocol). There is also recognition that the task of integrating multiple knowledge systems is complex and time consuming. For example, there are numerous challenges including 1) adequately funding related research, 2) allocating the necessary time to build relationships and adequately identify LKTKS information, and 3) having the requisite social science expertise at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center and Council staff, ensuring the willingness and trust among all parties, etc. However, Taskforce members agreed that to do this work well, and to ensure the Council's decision-making processes are informed by the best available science, the integrity of the knowledge system must be maintained. The protocol's guidelines provide a blueprint for how to do this.

Confidentiality emerged during discussion as a theme to be more clearly addressed upfront and throughout the protocol. The Council works in an open, public decision-making process, which does not afford the same protections on information shared, or the identities of those who share information, as other contexts (e.g., university researchers operating under an Institutional Review Board process). People may be hesitant to engage and share information if doing so means they will lose control over how or where that knowledge is used, translated, or interpreted. The Taskforce's discussion highlighted the protocol should more clearly provide guidance on the importance of setting expectations among all participants (e.g., Council staff, researchers, LK and TK holders, etc.), explicitly conveying how shared information will or could be used in the future, being clear about accreditation for information that is shared, and being mindful of Intellectual Property Rights.³

Capacity for ethically working with LK and TK holders and subsistence harvesters has been a consistent theme throughout the Taskforce's work. At this meeting, the Taskforce identified different opportunities for capacity building that should be more clearly communicated in the protocol. Throughout this conversation, it became clear there are near-term steps to address capacity issues and long-term steps that will take additional, future planning.

- **Near-term** opportunities include continuing to improve two-way communication between Tribes, communities, and the Council; support for continued participation in trainings (e.g., cultural awareness, Traditional Knowledge, subsistence ways of life, cross-cultural communications, etc.); community visits; knowledge exchanges (e.g., Straight Science talks).

³ For more information see the World Intellectual Property Organization:
https://www.wipo.int/pressroom/en/briefs/tk_ip.html

- **Long-term** opportunities include expressed support for research focusing on LK, TK, and subsistence; hiring additional, and specifically non-economic social science capacity at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center and on Council staff; opportunities for Tribal engagement directly with the Council.

The Taskforce considered different ways, such as short vignettes, to illustrate and operationalize the guidelines. There was agreement that vignettes provide an opportunity to highlight successful approaches to working with LK, TK, and subsistence information. Taskforce members from rural communities emphasized the importance of drawing on *current* issues that reflect real-time concerns of communities. Examples discussed in the meeting included the poor salmon runs across Western Alaska, changes in sea ice formation and related weather patterns, and migration shifts for key subsistence species like caribou. Vignettes based on current observations concerns also provide a means to better understand the differences between LK and TK (see Table 1, pg. 21, protocol).

Throughout Taskforce’s discussion on Day 2 there was interest in how public comment informs the Council’s decision-making. Some questions included: What happens to LK or TK shared via public comment? How is public comment tracked? Are there ways to evaluate or measure whether public comment was considered in decision-making? How do Council members weigh that information alongside reports or analytical documents? What is the role of public comment verses other forms of narrative information? Ultimately, this discussion focused on the importance of transparency in how the Council draws from and uses different types of information to inform its decision-making and Taskforce member’s previously identified onramp to expand Alaska Natives’ representation across the Council’s advisory bodies.

Next Steps

At this meeting, the Taskforce discussed the timeline and vision for remaining work.

- ✓ The LKTKS Taskforce will have its next meeting in Fall 2022 where the body will review a second draft protocol and further its discussion on potential onramps.
- ✓ The Taskforce intends to review a final protocol in January 2023 for Council review in early 2023, at which point the Council could consider adopting the protocol to inform its decision-making process.

Public Testimony

The Taskforce received no written or oral public comment at this meeting.