



Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, and Subsistence Taskforce FINAL REPORT

Taskforce Membership

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Overview

In December 2018, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) adopted the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP). The Bering Sea FEP is a living policy document that provides a collaborative and transparent framework to guide the Council’s actions to strengthen fisheries and management of the Bering Sea ecosystem. When the Council adopted the Bering Sea FEP in 2018, it also prioritized work on two Action Modules. Action Modules are specific analyses or research efforts initiated by the Council under the framework of the Bering Sea FEP. The Council formed the Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, and Subsistence (LKTKS) Taskforce in October 2019 to complete an Action Module under the Bering Sea FEP, “Develop Protocols for Using LK and TK in Management and Understanding Impacts of Council Decisions on Subsistence Use.”¹

The LKTKS Taskforce convened for its first meeting in Anchorage, Alaska in January 2020 to establish Taskforce objectives, prioritize next steps to meeting these objectives, and finalize the Taskforce’s workplan. At the February 2020 Council meeting, the Council adopted two primary goals for the LKTKS Taskforce to achieve:²

1. To create processes and protocols through which the Council can identify, analyze, and consistently incorporate TK and LK, and the social science of TK and LK into Council decision-making processes to support the use of best available scientific information in Ecosystem-based Fishery Management (EBFM).
2. To create a protocol and develop recommendations through which the Council can define and incorporate subsistence information into analyses and decision-making.

The Council also adopted five objectives directly related to the two primary goals for the Taskforce to achieve, and it outlined several work products for the Taskforce to deliver, one of which is a final report summarizing the Taskforce’s work. The Taskforce has completed the work tasked by the Council, and the purpose this final report is to summarize the work of the LKTKS Taskforce over the last three years (2020-2023).

¹ The Bering Sea FEP document can be found here:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=9fd5d027-86a8-4983-a7e7-f456acc478bf.pdf&fileName=C4%20BS%20FEP.pdf>

² The Council’s February 2020 motion can be found here:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=ce213a15-6672-4d0b-9fad-6b0719388804.pdf&fileName=D3%20MOTION%20.pdf>

Taskforce goals, objectives, and work products

Table 1 Summary of Taskforce goals, objectives, and work products tasked by the Council

Goals	Objectives	Work Products
<p>Goal 1: Create processes and protocols through which the Council can identify, analyze, and consistently incorporate TK and LK, and the social science of TK and LK into Council decision-making processes.</p> <p>Goal 2: Create a protocol and develop recommendations through which the Council can define and incorporate subsistence information into analyses and decision-making.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a glossary of terms to be included in the Taskforce’s workplan. 2. Identify potential “onramps” or points of entry within the Council’s process for the Taskforce’s work. 3. Develop a Protocol outlining best practices to identify, analyze, and incorporate LKTKS information into Council decision-making. 4. Develop guidelines or protocols for Council staff for soliciting/identifying, analyzing, and using subsistence data and information in analyses. 5. Prepare a final report for the Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ LKTKS Protocol ✓ LKTKS Onramp recommendations, including analytical template for LKTKS information ✓ LKTKS search engine ✓ Workplan ✓ Final report

Notes: The Taskforce decided early on to create one Protocol to meet goals 1 and 2 to streamline effort and because of the relationship between TK and subsistence.

Review of Taskforce progress

January 2020, Anchorage, Alaska.

The Taskforce convened for its inaugural meeting in January 2020. At this first meeting, the Taskforce received a presentation which provided an overview of the Council’s decision-making process as well as the general directives for the Taskforce based on the Bering Sea FEP Action Module. The LKTKS Taskforce discussed and cultivated a vision for the work it would complete, namely members identified a core set of collectively agreed upon objectives, determined the next steps required to meet these objectives, identified the ground rules for our work (i.e., a code of conduct all Taskforce members agreed to) including that the Taskforce would use consensus model for decision making. Figure 1 depicts a summary of the Taskforce’s ground rules.



Figure 1 Summary of LKTKS Taskforce ground rules

Taskforce members also provided updates that emphasized the importance of understanding the human dimensions of climate change in the Bering Sea region, discussed some best practices for ensuring ethical collaborations with Indigenous communities, and others shared some of the diverse values that encompass TK and subsistence. In light of these conversations, Taskforce members agreed that a better understanding of key terminology would be a crucial foundation for future work and set about reaching consensus on definitions for LK, TK, and subsistence. It is important to note the Taskforce did not define “subsistence” because members agreed that multiple definitions for “subsistence” exist in Alaska, including those definitions specified in Federal (e.g., Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act of 1980) and State policies. The Taskforce emphasized the important relationship between LK and TK and subsistence—the importance of subsistence extends beyond the commercial value of resources; subsistence practices are deeply rooted in place with social, cultural, and spiritual importance for those individuals and communities engaging these subsistence practices.

April 2020, Zoom Teleconference.

At its meeting in April 2020, the LKTKS Taskforce reviewed the feedback it received from the Council, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and the Advisory Panel (AP) at the Council’s February 2020 meeting in Seattle, Washington. At that meeting, the Council amended Goal 2 as originally written by the Taskforce and chose not to adopt Objective 6.³ The Taskforce’s original language for Goal 2 was based on the synopsis of the Action Module (see page 49 of the Bering Sea FEP). However, the Council clarified that it has primary authority for developing mitigation strategies.

³ Objective 6 was to “identify existing measures and potential opportunities to mitigate impacts to subsistence resources and subsistence resource users.”

	Original Taskforce goals	Goals authorized by the Council
Goal 1	To create processes and protocols through which the Council can identify, analyze, and consistently incorporate K and LK into Council decision-making processes to support the use of best available scientific information in Ecosystem-based fishery management .	Same as original Goal 1
Goal 2	To create clear direction(s) for the Council regarding how impacts to subsistence are defined and incorporated into analyses as well as mitigation strategies for potential impacts to subsistence resources or use of those resources	To create a protocol and develop recommendations through which the Council can define and incorporate subsistence information into analyses and decision-making

Figure 2 Summary of the Taskforce’s original proposed goals and the goals authorized by the Council

The Taskforce also identified four initial onramp recommendations at its April 2020 meeting: hiring a Tribal Liaison on Council staff, establishing a process for Tribes to engage directly with the Council, creating guidelines for including LKTKS information into analytical documents used to inform the Council’s decision-making, and expanding LKTKS expertise on existing Council advisory bodies.⁴

The Taskforce had significant discussion focused on different conceptual models for Council-Tribal engagement. It is important to note that, while the Taskforce was not explicitly directed to develop pathways for Council-Tribal engagement, it was directed to identify ways that LK and TK could be further incorporated into the Council’s decision-making process. LK and TK resides within people, and especially TK is usually shared orally. It is possible but not guaranteed that LK and/or TK could be shared directly with the Council during engagement sessions by Tribal members. Thus, Tribal-Council engagement is one way that LK and TK could be shared and potentially incorporated into the Council’s decision-making process.

The Taskforce understands the National Marine Fisheries Service is the Federal agency responsible for undertaking Tribal Consultations under Executive Order 13175 and did not suggest the Council lead formal Tribal Consultations as Tribal Consultations are government-to-government relations. However, the Council has experienced consistent and increased engagement from Alaska Native Tribes, Tribal members, and Tribal Consortia in its decision-making process.

⁴ While the Taskforce identified early on that hiring a Tribal Liaison on Council staff could be one opportunity to incorporate LKTKS into the Council’s decision-making process, the Council ultimately did add these responsibilities to those of an existing staff position in February 2021 in response to the Final Report and recommendations from the Community Engagement Committee. As such, the Taskforce did not continue to recommend this onramp but rather expressed its support for the Council’s February 2021 action.

Alaska Native Tribes are sovereign governments with constitutions, bylaws, and a right to self-determination. This legal status distinguishes Tribes from other fishery stakeholder groups that engage the Council's decision-making process. These early conversations on Council-Tribal engagement were the basis for the Taskforce's later onramp recommendation for the Council to initiate a process whereby Tribes could directly engage with the Council.

November 2020, Zoom Teleconference.

In November 2020, the Taskforce a) discussed ongoing work to identify sources of LKTKS information and best approaches to collating these sources including a search engine that could be accessed by analytical staff and the public, b) reached consensus on a description of "subsistence" that was included in the LKTKS Protocol, c) discussed the possibility of using the Norton Sound Red King Crab fishery as a case study to "test" the Protocol being developed by the Taskforce, and d) created an initial outline for the LKTKS Protocol including 14 initial guidelines or best practices for working with LKTKS information.⁵

March 2021, Zoom Teleconference.

The primary purpose of this Taskforce meeting was for Taskforce members to discuss and further develop the LKTKS Protocol and onramp recommendations. The Taskforce also discussed ongoing work to develop a list of Narrative Sources of data which includes legal and other guidance documents, metadata, archival materials, oral transcripts, or subsistence maps based on LK and TK expertise. One important outcome of this meeting was the Taskforce's decision to refine the LKTKS Protocol guidelines, combining, removing, and modifying the initial guidelines identified in November 2020. Following the March 2021 meeting, the co-Chairs began to develop an initial draft LKTKS Protocol based on the seven guidelines identified by the Taskforce as well as additional input.

January 2022, Zoom Teleconference.

At this meeting, the LKTKS Taskforce received an initial demonstration of the LKTKS search engine.⁶ The Taskforce 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. The LKTKS search engine was developed to be a publicly available tool that can be refined and evolve over time. The January 2022 meeting was also the Taskforce's first opportunity to visualize and discuss a draft of the LKTKS Protocol. Upon review, the Taskforce identified information or content gaps, developed the primary themes to be captured within the Protocol, and developed bullet points for guideline-specific content.

December 2022, Anchorage, Alaska (hybrid).

The purpose of this meeting was for the Taskforce was to a) review a revised draft LKTKS Protocol (based on the input received from the Taskforce in January 2022, the Council at its April 2022 meeting, and other advisory bodies that received presentations from the co-Chairs throughout Spring 2022), b) discuss the Protocol's guidelines and the associated content, c) and review each draft onramp recommendation. A primary point of consideration for the Taskforce at this meeting was to reach

⁵ At this meeting, when the Taskforce discussed the Norton Sound Red King Crab case study, it ultimately decided it did not have the bandwidth to take on a case study by which the LKTKS Protocol could be tested. Members also noted the Council did not direct the Taskforce to conduct a case study to "test" the Protocol, and many felt the collective expertise encompassed within the Taskforce was sufficient to develop materials that could achieve the Council's goals and objectives for this body.

⁶ The finalized LKTKS search engine can be found here: <https://lktks.npfmc.org/>

consensus on the primary audience for the LKTKS Protocol. All members agreed the Council is the target audience for the protocol, however, its usage could be much broader and include Council staff, agency staff, the public, among others. Recognizing the Taskforce was nearing the end of its work, the Taskforce had some discussion on how the Council's process could change should the Council adopt the LKTKS Protocol and/or initiate work on any one or multiple onramp recommendations. At this meeting, the Taskforce reviewed a draft "LKTKS Policy Statement" based on the Protocol's guidelines.

January 2023, Zoom Teleconference.

The purpose of this meeting was to provide the Taskforce, and members of the public, an additional opportunity to revisit the outcomes and major points of Taskforce dialogue from the December 2022 meeting. Some Taskforce members were absent from the December 2022 meeting and others faced challenges with maintaining virtual connectivity due to poor weather. As such, there were no new discussion items, but the co-Chairs felt an additional meeting would help to ensure equitable access to information and support consensus building. One agenda item discussed at this meeting was a timeline for future work, including that the Council could release finalized materials presented in April 2023 for an extended public comment period to solicit greater public input and engagement. The second was the idea of transforming the LKTKS Protocol guidelines into a short and accessible "LKTKS policy statement." The Taskforce envisioned that, if someone wanted to know the Council's approach to working with LK, TK, and subsistence information, they could reference the "LKTKS policy statement" on the Council's webpage and then turn to the full LKTKS Protocol to gain an understanding of the context that policy statement.

March 2023, Zoom teleconference.

At this meeting, the Taskforce finalized the materials presented to the Council in April 2023, namely the LKTKS Protocol and related "LKTKS Policy statement" as well as the onramp recommendations. As a result of this meeting, the Taskforce added an eighth guideline and the LKTKS Protocol and onramp recommendations were separated into two different documents (the onramp recommendations were in Section 5 of the Protocol in the December 2022 draft). The latter edit was done to be clear that, should the Council adopt the LKTKS Protocol, it would not also automatically be adopting and initiating work on the onramp recommendations. Rather, the Taskforce's intent was that the Council would consider each onramp recommendation individually to decide which onramps would be most relevant and timely to initiate work on them.

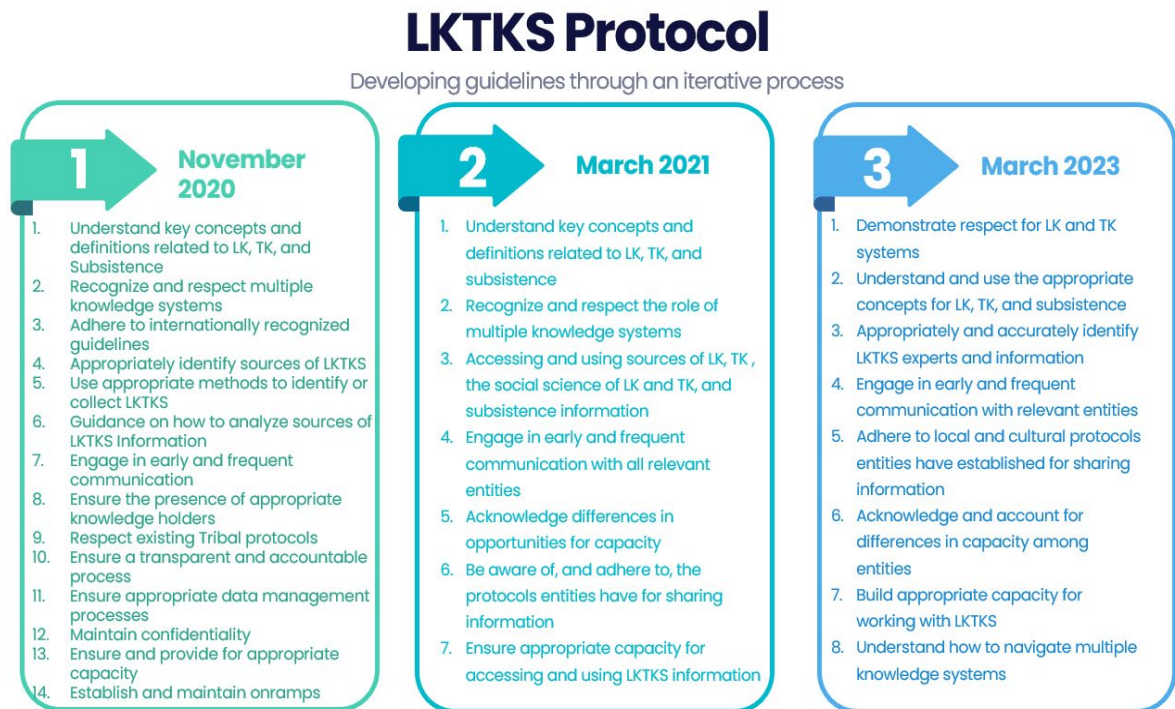


Figure 3 Summary of LKTKS Protocol guideline development as an iterative, multi-year process

June 2023, Zoom Teleconference.

In April 2023, the Council released the LKTKS Protocol and onramp recommendations developed by the Taskforce for an extended 50-day public comment period. The Council also authorized one additional meeting of the Taskforce to review all comments received during this period and reach consensus on whether any edits were required as a result. The Taskforce convened virtually in June 2023 for this purpose, and to a) review and discuss the input it received from the Council and the SSC in April 2023, b) review and discuss input from Council staff regarding the LKTKS Protocol and onramp recommendations, c) and discuss the resources and capacity needed for implementation. **All public comment letters supported the adoption of the Protocol and implementation of at least some of the onramp recommendations.**

Summary of meetings and links to written reports

- January 2020 meeting [report](#).
- April 2020 meeting [report](#).
- November 2020 meeting [report](#).
- March 2021 meeting [report](#).
- January 2022 meeting [report](#).
- December 2022 meeting [report](#).
- January 2023 meeting [report](#).
- March 2023 meeting [report](#).
- June 2023 meeting [report](#).