

# A Matter of Respect: TEK

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## A Bit about NPS-IMR:

NPS works with tribes a bit differently than other federal agencies. We work with tribes, no matter the tribe's location, if it has an interest in a national park unit in Montana Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas or Oklahoma. There are about 90 parks, monuments, historic sites, recreational areas, preserves and seashores in the region.

## NPS TEK Policy Actions:

Management Policies 2006 uses the term "traditional knowledge" throughout the document and allows for the consideration of traditional knowledge in resource management. Director's Order 100 (2016) uses the term "traditional ecological knowledge" and calls for better integration of cultural and natural resources with a consideration of TEK.

Motivating concerns are to prepare staff to fulfill these directives by providing them with the tools they need to be successful. This work sounds fun, yet there are political and scientific rigors for it. These rigors include and are not limited to respecting the government-to-government relationship through consultation, Free Prior and Informed Consent from the tribe(s) and tribal member participants, just compensation for the tribe and/or tribal participants, research processes of both the agency/institution and the tribe(s), mutually agreed upon strong research methods, co-production of knowledge, confidentiality, mutually agreed upon products and use of data, etc.

## Tribal Concerns with Current TEK Research:

- Misuse of TEK leading to resource exploitation on public and tribal lands.
- Subsume TEK to Western Science when TEK is used to "check the box," to support Western Science, and ultimately ignored if it does not fit/agree with Western Science.
- Lack of FPIC for TEK at Tribal Government level—they are not notified of projects while still in the planning stages, and it is not necessarily the research the tribe wants to see done.
- Relegated to a "participant role" instead of "collaborator role" in TEK projects, e.g., authorship, compensation (individual), and royalties/profits (tribe).

## NPS TEK Efforts Include:

Prior to the release of DO 100, NPS started developing some building blocks for the information foundation. Some of the needs are basic to answer such questions as: What is TEK?, Who knows it?, who performs the research?, Can I do it?, How do I do it? Therefore, we began developing some products to fulfill these needs, which include:

- Two fact sheets (national)
- Website: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/tek/index.htm> (national)
- Introduction to Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Wildlife Conservation by Seafha Ramos (national)

- Informative presentations at Lunch 'n Learn series and Ranger Rendezvous (regional)
- Tribal Policies, Processes and Protocols Project (regional)

More work needs to be accomplished to have a robust and rigorous TEK program.

### Tribal PPP Project Goal:

This project does not ask for TEK; it asks for tribal research policies, processes and protocols, so researchers can comply with tribal processes for TEK research. The Goal is:

*Ultimately, the results of this project will facilitate the respectful inclusion of TEK for on-the-ground management of ecosystems (climate change impacts and health of wetlands, riparian areas, life cycle areas for animals, etc.) on NPS-IMR park lands in a way that is mutually beneficial to tribes and NPS.*

### TEK PPP Project Objectives:

- Our intent is that the information gleaned through this project will increase researchers' awareness (and hopefully compliance) of tribal policies, processes, and protocols.
- Tribes may find this database of tribal research policies, processes and protocols helpful if they do not already have them in place or if they would like to revise their existing ones.

### Tribal PPP Project Work Product:

Internal and external (w/FPIC) databases of tribes interested in sharing TEK; tribal research policies, processes, and protocols; tribal concerns regarding TEK; and for those tribes who would like to provide them, synopses of existing TEK projects, including successes, failures, best practices and lessons learned.

### Statistics to-date:

- 165 Tribes who have interest in the parks in the Intermountain Region
  - All but 15 tribes have been contacted since the initial letter and email
  - 99% of Tribes contacted to-date see the TEK PPP Project as valuable
- 50 Respondents have completed the Interview
  - Nearly 74% do not have protocols or have only informal protocols and are interested in developing their own
  - 6% do not have protocols and do not want to develop them
  - 20% have protocols and are willing to share them
- Results suggest a need; therefore, we are reaching out to a number of tribal organizations to determine if one of them have an interest in collaborating on a workshop for tribes to develop research protocols.