



Meeting Summary

Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (S-TEK)

Working Group: Webinar #4

September 19, 2014

Participants

Working Group Members:

- Stan Johnson, National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy
- Heather Ray, Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation
- Kyle McFee, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, Shivwits Band of Paiutes
- Jim Hurja, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
- Jeanne Chambers, USDA-Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station

GB LCC Staff:

- Todd Hopkins, USFWS, Great Basin LCC Science Coordinator
- Matt Germino, USGS, Great Basin LCC
- Ryan Orth, EnviroIssues, facilitator
- Bridger Wineman, EnviroIssues, facilitation support

Key Discussion Points

Welcome and agenda overview

Ryan Orth, EnviroIssues, welcomed attendees and noted that a meeting agenda and results of the impact matrix exercise were distributed to Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (S-TEK) working group participants before the webinar.

Todd Hopkins, Great Basin LCC, thanked attendees for joining the webinar and reviewed the agenda topics which included: reviewing the S-TEK work schedule, reviewing and discussing the impact matrix exercise and discussing categorization of priority topics and next steps.

S-TEK Group Schedule

Todd said the Great Basin LCC holds an annual open forum where staff presents current work and gains input from stakeholders beyond the LCC Steering Committee. Todd proposed gathering additional input on a draft of the S-TEK strategy at the forum. The forum, to be held in December, will engage participants virtually using online tools. A portion of the forum will be open for a week during which people can provide input.

The next webinar will be moved from November 2014 to January or February 2015 to accommodate the December forum. This schedule shift will allow time to gather and organize comments received through the forum and determine how to address those in the S-TEK strategy. Todd showed an updated schedule graphic which depicted the proposed change in the S-TEK work schedule.

Ryan said an email will be sent to participants cancelling the November webinar. There will be another notice sent out scheduling a replacement webinar in early 2015. Participants will also be advised of the dates of the GBLCC forum when it is scheduled, anticipated for early December.

Impact matrix review

Todd said the group is nearing the end of the second phase of the S-TEK work plan process. Current work focuses on narrowing the long list of science and management needs into a shorter list of priority topics. The final phase will include asking questions about management and implementation to identify a final set of balanced priorities across the Great Basin.

Ryan displayed the impact matrix exercise results on screen, summarizing scoring by working group members. The results were depicted in a heat map showing the highest and lowest summed scores for resource-driver pairs in a matrix. Resource-driver pairs represent possible priority topics. Todd said 77 percent of the pairs in the matrix received at least one point.

The 24 pairs with 14 or more points were used as a starting point for group discussion of a potential “short list”. Todd explained that staff determined 14 points as the threshold for priority topics as an arbitrary starting point, in part based on the total number of pairings. Setting the threshold for priority topics will determine which topics go to the next stage of the prioritization process. Including more topics will increase the complexity of the next steps in the prioritization process.

The matrix results show all but four of the valued resources (on the matrix y-axis) have at least one pair with a score at or above the initial threshold of 14 points. The four ecosystem resources which do not have a score above the threshold are playas, alpine, coniferous forest and aspen. Playas represent an outlier in this group as it received far fewer points than any of the other ecosystems. Todd said the group may move ahead leaving these ecosystems as secondary elements or determine to bring them forward with the other priority topics.

- Jeanne Chambers, USDA-Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, suggested some of the ecosystems which were not scored above the threshold should still be considered for the short list. Aspen, for example, is a critical habitat for some species and a system that is in decline. She suggested using a tiered hierarchy to recognize the priority status of important systems which did not make the initial cut.
- Todd said one option is to bring forward the highest ranked topics for the ecosystems which were short of the threshold but which still scored well to the list of primary topics.

These included aspen, coniferous forest, and possibly alpine ecosystems. Playas would still fall out under this scenario because it received very low scores. Jeanne said such an approach makes sense.

- Matt Germino, USGS, said the scoring exercise using the impact matrix does not reflect the conditional importance of some resources. Playas, for example are important when considering air quality and off-road vehicles. Alpine and coniferous forest ecosystems are also of importance. Matt suggested the matrix could accommodate the conditional importance of some resources. Jim Hurja, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, agreed alpine and coniferous forest ecosystems should be included in the shorter list.
- Jeanne said another approach to help include additional important ecosystems in the short list is to reduce the total number of categories by collapsing some of the drivers and resources in the matrix. The matrix includes many specific drivers which are related to climate, for example. Aggregating some columns would allow the group to accommodate additional systems in the set of priority topics. The group agreed to consolidate scoring in the three precipitation-related driver categories. Stan Johnson, National Center for food and Agricultural Policy, agreed some aggregation drivers will allow a more encompassing perspective for the S-TEK strategy. Jim said springs and persistent springs could be aggregated as well.

Todd said another consideration for using the impact matrix exercise scoring results is where to set the threshold for priority topics. If some of the resources categories are consolidated there is a question of if the next highest ranked resource/driver pairs would be brought in, or if additional ecosystems that did not make the initial cut will be brought in.

- Jeanne said she agrees with bringing in aspen, coniferous forest and alpine ecosystems after consolidating some categories.
- Todd asked the group if springs and persistent springs should be combined and if lakes and playas can be grouped. Matt said perennial lakes and reservoirs is a good category, but playas are distinct.

Kyle McFee, Shivwits Band of Paiutes, said it was not clear what the cultural resources line in the matrix encompasses. In scoring, he assumed it included all effected resources; plants, animals, archeological sites, and so forth. Kyle said he is not sure what the Great Basin tribes would like to focus on.

- Todd said the LCC is still trying to determine the resources tribes in the Great Basin would like the LCC to focus on. There are TEK studies which will be funded by the LCC for FY 2014-15 which may help develop this understanding. Cultural resources scored well across the matrix and warrant further discussion about how they will be included in the next steps of the process.

- Kyle said the Southern Rockies LCC S-TEK process had a group working specifically on cultural resources.
- Stan suggested using a cultural overlay for everything the LCC does. Heather agreed and said addressing cultural resources separately may not be the best approach.
- Todd agreed with using a cross-cutting cultural overlay approach to all the priorities.

Ryan noted cultural resources scored well for many of the drivers and was the third highest scoring category overall. However, only two topics made the sort list using the 14 point cut off. Ryan asked if the group would like to include all of the resource/driver pairs for cultural resources, or just a few of them.

- Jeanne said to include cultural resources in an overarching way, reflected in the definitions of each of the resources. Stan and Todd said they agreed with this approach.
- Heather said the information gathered through the exercise is important, but the group should not drop any of the topics related to cultural resources from consideration as priority topics.
- Jim said he felt perhaps cultural resources should have been on the x-axis of the matrix rather than the y-axis.

Todd said there are two additional tribal climate adaptation trainings which will be an opportunity for more conversation about which cultural resources areas deserve specific focus from the LCC and to add some depth and breadth to the S-TEK strategy. The S-TEK strategy can be updated with additional information after it is adopted, if needed.

Ryan noted agreement among the group to incorporate TEK in the next round as an integrated factor and use the impact matrix scores as a reference.

Priority topic categorization and detailed evaluation approach

Todd said the next step for prioritizing science and management needs is to group the priority topics on the short list into categories which will be further evaluated by subject matter experts. Categorizing will reduce inherent bias and individual workload for the evaluators. Scores would be normalized for comparison among categories. One possible organization would use the following categories:

- Rivers and streams
- Sagebrush
- Riparian
- Salt desert
- Forests
- Mountain brush

The group discussed reorganizing the initially proposed categories and determined the following categories should be used:

- Rivers/streams, riparian
- Shrublands (Sagebrush, Salt desert, Mountain brush)
- Wetlands, groundwater, springs, playas
- Alpine
- Lakes/reservoirs
- Forest and woodlands (aspen, coniferous forest, pinyon/juniper)

Jeanne suggested another category could be included for novel ecosystems or invasive annuals. The group determined to consider cheat grass ecosystems under the shrublands category.

Ryan said the North Pacific LCC S-TEK strategy used four primary evaluation criteria. One approach the Great Basin LCC might take is to use cultural resources as a balancing factor and include some description of the resource-driver pairings for reference during scoring. The group will further discuss the advantages and drawbacks of various approaches to the next round of scoring at the Oct. 15 meeting, including consideration for the conditional importance of some resources.

The group approved moving forward with the revised categories for the next scoring exercise. Todd said each category will include a description or definition.

Review next steps and action items

Immediate next steps include

- Scoring will be adjusted in the impact matrix to reduce the number of categories. The group will be updated with the results of those changes.
- Information will be sent to those who will use invitational travel to the October meeting.
- Work will also be done to develop draft short list category definitions to support the final prioritization exercise. A cancellation of the November webinar will be sent out and it will be rescheduled for early 2015.

Todd thanked participants for engaging in the conversation.

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