Environmental Studies Program: Ongoing Study

Field	Study Information
Title	Traditional Knowledge Implementation: Accessing Arctic Community Panels of Subject Matter Experts (AK-15-05)
Administered by	Alaska Regional Office
BOEM Contact(s)	Dr. Jeffrey Brooks (jeffrey.brooks@boem.gov)
Procurement Type(s)	Cooperative Agreement
Conducting Organization(s)	North Slope Borough, Department of Wildlife Management
Total BOEM Cost	$359,470
Performance Period	FY 2016–2024
Final Report Due	January 31, 2024
Date Revised	February 16, 2023
Problem	BOEM applies traditional knowledge (TK) to help it responsibly develop the nation's offshore resources. BOEM needs to proactively apply TK in research to enhance shared knowledge of environmental conditions.
Intervention	Organize TK Panels in North Slope communities to closely work with scientists to improve the research process and application of results.
Comparison	Researchers are better informed when guided by TK Panels, and TK holders meaningfully contribute to research and management.
Outcome	The outcomes are an enhanced understanding of the environment, responsible management of energy resources, meaningful engagement of TK holders, and proactive application of TK.
Context	Scientific research in the North Slope to support BOEM's mission

BOEM Information Need(s): This project identifies and organizes Traditional Knowledge (TK) subject matter experts from Arctic communities into recognized panels of experts. The panels allow TK holders to become more widely accessible to research scientists and to function with authority on TK domains. This project actively advances prospects for TK application to scientific research sponsored by BOEM and other funding organizations. Any BOEM-funded study on the North Slope could be a candidate for TK Panel consultation and collaboration.

Background: Discussions about TK are often preoccupied with integration of TK data rather than with integration of TK experts into a collaborative research process. In the North Slope, research needs to be meaningful for both indigenous communities and scientists. This study identifies key individuals in North Slope communities who are locally recognized for their expertise on specific resources and available to serve on one or more TK Panels. External scientists funded by BOEM, or other organizations consult TK Panels. Communities and the DWM pre-authorize TK Panels to speak with authority on specific topics, including ocean currents, ice movements, changing environmental conditions, and nearshore or offshore subsistence activities and harvest patterns. Except for some active co-management commissions in place, formalized local panels of TK holders do not yet exist to serve this capacity.

Objectives: The successful integration of TK into research processes requires intensive collaboration between scientists and local communities. The objectives include:

- Define a process with consistent methods for selecting and vetting TK panelists and linking them with relevant research projects; demonstrate a good match between knowledge and the focus of a study.
- Enhance TK authority and application in scientific research by promoting co-production of knowledge and dissemination of TK to external scientists through direct involvement of TK holders with conventional scientists.
- Develop and provide rosters of TK experts and guidance for external scientists to effectively access those experts and apply TK on a systematic basis for North Slope projects.
- Enhance dialogue about science through exchange of information between external scientists and the communities.
- Enhance the understanding of environmental change in the Arctic through proactive application of TK and better-informed scientific research.
- Achieve more efficient research timelines; currently, some researchers have to substantially delay studies while they seek local counsel and garner community support.

Methods: The DWM is developing panels of experts with intimate knowledge of research topics. Working closely with BOEM, the DWM will select specific studies for the TK Panels to review and discuss. The DWM will choose the panelists after discussions with and guidance from City and Tribal Councils and elders. TK Panels will not exceed nine persons. The DWM will work with the relevant researchers to draft specific questions for the TK panelists to address while allowing them flexibility to identify and discuss their understandings of the topic. The TK Panels will host and hold discussions with scientists and managers associated with the specific study. Panelists will receive honoraria in recognition of their service.

Specific Research Question(s): How can decision-makers most effectively incorporate TK into scientific research in the North Slope of Alaska?

Current Status: Ongoing, fieldwork underway.

Publications Completed:

Citta, J.J., and K. Scheimreif. 2023. Annual Progress Report: Traditional Knowledge Implementation Accessing Arctic Community Panels of Subject Matter Experts. North Slope Borough, Department of Wildlife Management, Barrow, AK. 26 pp.

Harcharek, Q., R. Suydam and C. Campbell. 2017. Traditional Knowledge Implementation: Accessing Community Panels of Subject Matter Experts. Oral presentation at U.S. Canada Northern Oil and Gas Forum, Anchorage, Alaska.

North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management. 2019. The Towline, 11(2). http://www.north-slope.org/assets/images/uploads/2019_DWM_Fall_newsletter_FINAL.pdf

Affiliated WWW Sites: http://www.boem.gov/akstudies/