Indigenous Experiences in the U.S. and Maine with Climate Change and Environmental Stewardship

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IUCN World Parks Congress – Sydney, Australia
November 17, 2014
Overview of presentation

- Climate change and indigenous experiences in the US and Maine – focus on social and cultural impacts as a result of changes in natural resource conditions

- Identify aspects that make indigenous peoples especially vulnerable to climate change yet also cultural heritage traits that are unique for adaptation to climate change

- Express the desire tribes have to be involved and to collaborate with a broad set of stakeholders
Tribal Populations Extend Beyond Reservation Lands
Cultural connections to the land

Indigenous peoples of the U.S. are spiritually and culturally invested in specific areas and many of the values, meanings, and identities are closely interlinked with features of the natural landscapes and physical interactions with that landscape.
Cultural connections to the land

Glooskap came first of all into this country, into the land of the Wabanaki, next to sunrise. There were no Indians here then. And in this way he made man: He took his bow and arrows and shot at trees, the basket trees, the ash. Then Indians came out of the bark of the ash tree. – Wabanaki Creation Story
Cultural connections to the land

- According to Houser et al., (2001) approximately 1.2 million (60%) of the U.S. tribal members live on or near reservations, and pursue lifestyles with a mix of traditional subsistence activities and wage labor.
Cultural connections to the land

- There are wild foods such as fiddleheads, deer, moose, birds, fish, berries, and seafood that provide not only sustenance but cultural connections through story telling, harvesting, processing, and sharing food.
Specific impacts threatening indigenous peoples in the U.S.

- Some of the specific impacts threatening indigenous peoples in the U.S. inherent in climate change scenarios involve the potential loss of traditional resources and geographical range changes of plant and animal species.
Brown Ash
Black Ash 2100 (Habitat suitability)
Integrate Spatial &
Expert/Indigenous Knowledge
Emerald Ash Borer-Brown Ash: SES Research

- 10 Townships Sampled So Far (24 Goal)
- Approx 850 cores collected from 400 trees
- Findings positive: More black ash and wider increment growth than expected
- Tribal harvesters for ground-truthing of data—growth rate, site conditions, health of tree
- Study protects harvest sites, provides more for harvests, and will include videos of harvesting stories and techniques.
Unique Adaptive Capacities

- Ethical perspectives
- Systems of Ecological Knowledge
- Some of the contemporary solutions of indigenous peoples may help society at large to frame and guide successful adaptation
Need and desire for tribal entities to “sit at the table”

- The livelihoods and cultures of the indigenous peoples in the U.S. may vary well depend on their abilities to participate and provide input in the shaping of the new forms of economies and sustainable development, including decisions on management of natural resources.
Volume 120, Issue 3, October 2013
Special Issue: Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples in the United States: Impacts, Experiences and Actions