

TEK statement by the PBSG

Agreed upon in Fort Collins, USA, on June 12, 2014

The Polar Bear Specialist Group (PBSG) is part of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's science-based network of experts that work in support of the IUCN's mission of biodiversity conservation. The PBSG provides the IUCN Species Survival Commission with scientific advice on the research and management of polar bears, which it develops through discussions and meetings using the scientific expertise of the Group's members. In addition, the PBSG has agreed to act in the role of scientific advisor to the Range States. The PBSG also provides scientific information and advice to governments, NGOs, stakeholders and the public.

The PBSG recognizes that diverse sources of information may contribute to knowledge about polar bears and their habitat including Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)/Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) and anecdotal reports or observations. The PBSG recognizes the value of observations from local people who live near polar bears and their habitat and have assimilated observations across long time periods. For example, TEK/LEK can be used for generating questions and hypotheses, understanding how people live in the Arctic with polar bears, informing on-the-ground management approaches, and setting up studies for polar bear subpopulations.

While recognizing that TEK/LEK and anecdotal observations can be valuable sources of information, it is not the role of the PBSG to integrate information that is not based on scientific design into its advice for decision makers. The PBSG considers information from TEK/LEK to be different than that from scientific studies and is of the opinion that TEK/LEK should be considered a parallel line of information that could be used by decision makers.