

# Annual Report **2020**



COMMISSION FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
COOPERATION



## Word from CEC Executive Director Richard A. Morgan

I am pleased to present the Commission for Environmental Cooperation's (CEC) 2020 Annual Report, which summarizes the highlights of international collaboration among Canada, Mexico and the United States on environmental issues of mutual concern in the context of liberalized trade.

**The year 2020 marked the most significant milestone in CEC history since our founding in 1994.** A new Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA) came into force, replacing the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. The ECA represents a commitment toward achieving sustainable development, with a key objective of seeking ways to modernize and enhance the effectiveness of environmental cooperation between our three countries.

**Indeed, at no time in CEC history has international cooperation on environmental issues been more necessary,** given the heightened concern about the future and the increasing need for evidence-based decision-making. According to the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Risk Assessment, climate change and biodiversity loss currently represent two of the most impactful and likely risks to global stability. As an intergovernmental organization, the CEC provides a neutral forum within the North American region for examining complex environmental concerns and developing strategies and solutions to help address these issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a rapid shift in how international organizations like ours fulfil their mandates. Our collaborative efforts and events were carried out almost exclusively via digital

platforms in 2020, leading to new challenges but also **incredible opportunities to broaden the spectrum of partners and collaborators and to facilitate public participation.**

Looking ahead, the CEC will continue to emphasize collaboration, inclusiveness, diversity, excellence, integrity and innovation, while remaining committed to meaningful involvement of all sectors of society, including industry, nongovernmental organizations, academia, youth, and local and Indigenous communities. In the pages that follow, you will see why **the CEC remains uniquely positioned to capitalize on the promise of a new trilateral agreement** as well as build on the momentum to take on its ambitious agenda and secure a sustainable future.

**Richard A. Morgan**

Executive Director, Commission for Environmental Cooperation



## CEC Mission Statement

In the context of environmental, economic and social linkages between Canada, Mexico and the United States, the CEC facilitates effective cooperation and public participation to conserve, protect and enhance the North American environment in support of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.

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## In 2020, the CEC...

- **Launched** a new website.
- Had its work **recognized** in 427 news articles.
- **Connected** with 33,684 people through social media platforms, representing a 23% increase since 2019, and a 351% increase since 2015.
- **Organized** 52 workshops, meetings, and public forums, with close to 5,000 participants, including 616 and 112 identifying as youth and Indigenous, respectively.

Despite the pandemic forcing communities into isolation for most of 2020, people across North America stayed connected with the CEC on the environmental issues they care about. The year 2020 saw the greatest and most diverse participation ever recorded in CEC events and social media.



# Annual CEC Council Session and JPAC Forum



Canadian Environment and Climate Change Minister Jonathan Wilkinson hosts the 2020 CEC Council Session

Each year, the cabinet-level environment ministers from Canada, Mexico and the United States gather at the **CEC Council Session** to reaffirm their commitment to environmental cooperation in North America, reflect on progress made in the last year, discuss pressing topics of mutual interest, and establish areas of future work for the CEC.

In 2020, Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, hosted his counterparts, Andrew Wheeler, US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator, and Víctor Manuel Toledo, Mexican Environment Minister, at the 27<sup>th</sup> CEC Council Session, which was focused on the theme of Clean Technology for Resilient Communities. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's meeting was hosted virtually in order to protect the health and safety of participants.



Prior to the event, the CEC's **Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC)** held an open forum for the public to engage with experts on how the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement

(USMCA) will address environmental issues such as **marine litter, illegal trade in wild fauna and flora, air pollution** and more.

The accessibility of a virtual event attracted the **highest level of participation ever recorded** at a CEC Council Session and JPAC Forum, with 1,458 attendees. Participants asked nearly 100 questions of the presenters and out of 186 post-event survey respondents, over half indicated the event **exceeded expectations**.

The Ministers lauded the new free trade agreement among the three countries, underlining the fact that the agreement includes the strongest set of environmental provisions included in a free trade agreement to date.





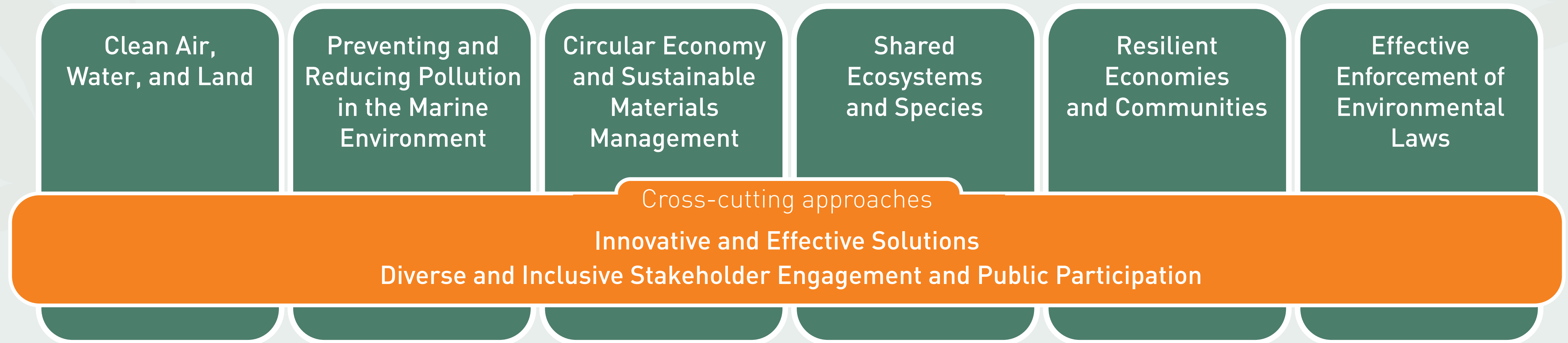
## 2020 CEC Ministers Statement

“We, the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), are proud to renew and expand our commitment to environmental cooperation as we implement the **new North American free trade agreement**. Our ongoing commitment to the CEC since 1994 is rooted in the understanding that addressing environmental issues requires solutions that transcend our national borders.”



# CEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025

## Strategic Pillars



In addition, at this year's Council Session, the Council announced a new five-year Strategic Plan for the CEC, outlining six priority areas for cooperation among the three countries in the coming years.

The Joint Public Advisory Committee led the public consultation effort for the draft CEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025 in spring 2020 and provided a series of recommendations in their Advice to the Council. Over 75 people took the opportunity to give their comments and feedback during the consultation, increasing the transparency of strategic decision-making at the CEC.



# Renewed Environmental Cooperation under the USMCA and ECA



Only a few days after the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Council Session, the new trilateral trade agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States entered into force on July 1, 2020.

## Chapter 24

Chapter 24 of the trade agreement contains provisions that require each country to maintain appropriate environmental impact assessment procedures and also includes obligations related to:

- protecting the ozone layer
- protecting the marine environment from ship pollution
- improving air quality
- preventing the loss of biodiversity
- preventing, detecting and controlling invasive alien species
- protecting and conserving marine species
- promoting sustainable forest management

Chapter 24 also provides for the continued operation of the Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) process, a transparency mechanism that allows any national or enterprise of the United States, Mexico, or Canada to file a submission with the CEC Secretariat asserting “that a Party is failing to effectively enforce its environmental laws.”



# Renewed Environmental Cooperation under the USMCA and ECA

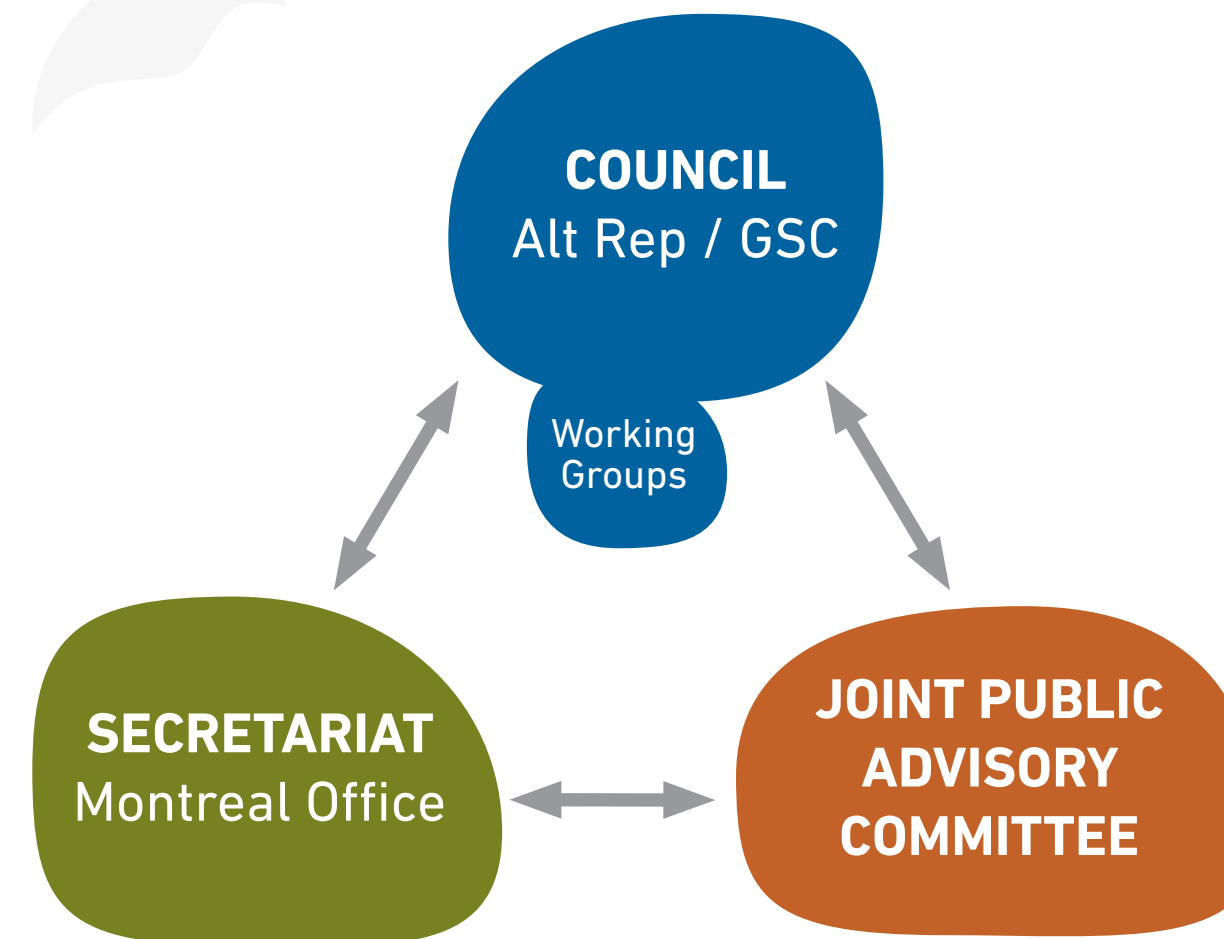


## Environmental Cooperation Agreement

The Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA), a companion agreement to the free trade agreement, has created new opportunities for strategic cooperation between the three countries.

Under the ECA, **the CEC and its three constituent bodies will remain the primary mechanism for facilitating trilateral environmental cooperation between Canada, Mexico, and the United States.**

## Three constituent parts of the CEC



- **Council:** The Council is the CEC's governing body and comprises cabinet-level representatives from Canada, Mexico and the United States.
- **JPAC:** The Joint Public Advisory Committee provides advice to the Council and is composed of 9 citizens, 3 per country, from Canada, Mexico and the United States.
- **Secretariat:** The Secretariat provides technical, administrative and operational support to the Council.

Via the JPAC as well as other partners like *Política y Legislación Ambiental (POLEA)*, the Embassy of Canada in Mexico and the Baker Institute, the CEC held several public engagement events and webinars in 2020 to showcase the CEC's role under the free trade agreement and the ECA amongst the general public and decision-makers.





# Trilateral Cooperation in Action

Notable outcomes in 2020 of international cooperation between Canada, Mexico and the United States on environmental issues of common interest



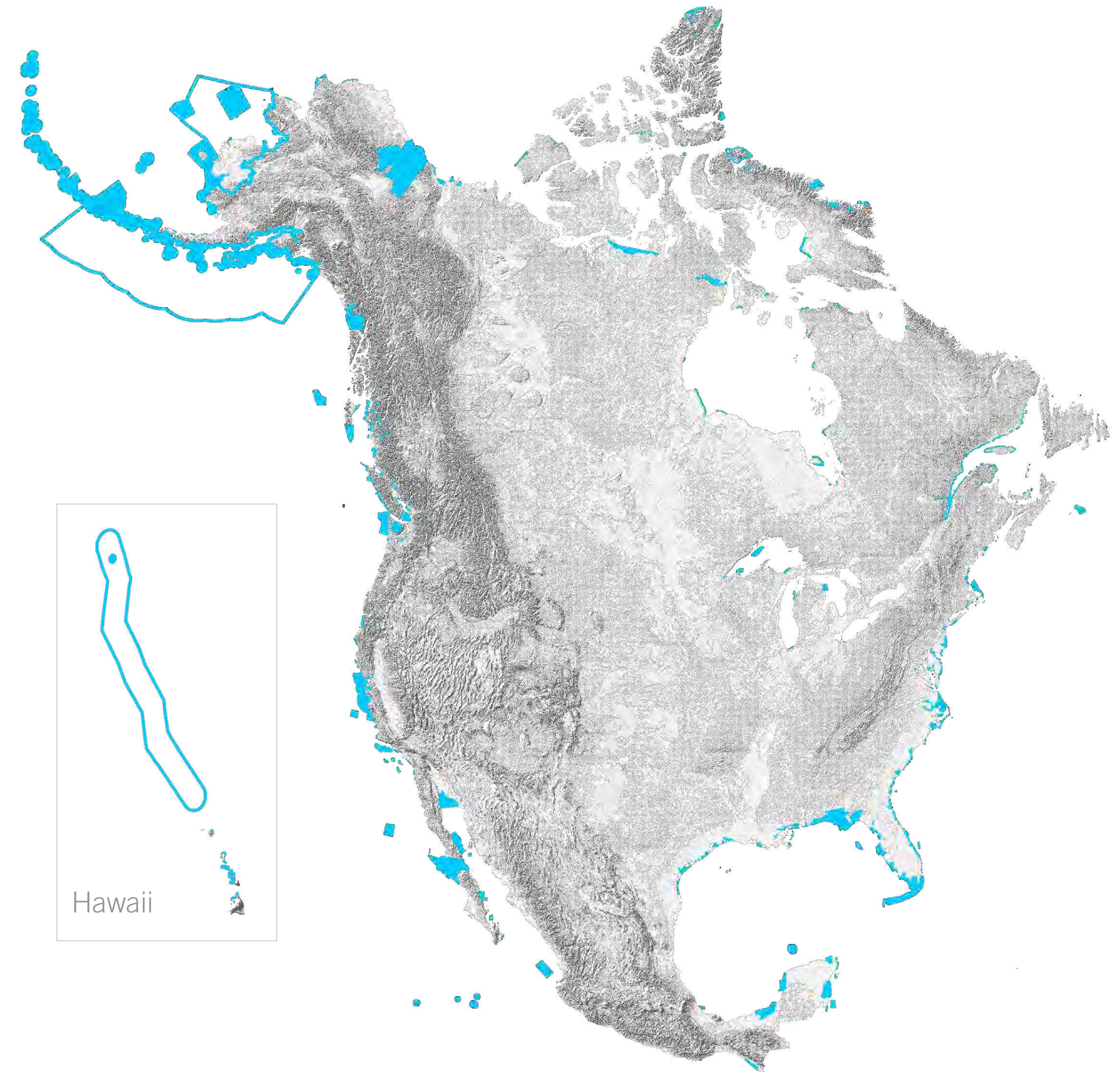


### The North American Marine Protected Areas Network

Launched as a CEC initiative in 2004, the **North American Marine Protected Areas Network (NAMPAN)** continued its development as an independent network. The United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for North America took a leading role in the network as a coordinator and consulted with marine protected area (MPA) practitioners in Canada, Mexico and the United States to develop the network's first work plan.



**NAMPAN** is a network of resource agencies, marine protected area (MPA) managers, and other coastal and marine practitioners from Canada, Mexico and the United States. NAMPAN aims to connect people and MPAs in North America, creating a community of practice focused on common issues and able to share information and best practices to face their common challenges.





### Learning and Knowledge-Sharing

The CEC hosted training and workshops to strengthen the capacity of MPA practitioners to apply climate adaptation planning in their MPAs.

- **Climate Adaptation Workshops:** MPA practitioners working in the northeastern United States, and on Canada's Atlantic coast and Mexico's Gulf Coast, were trained to identify coastal vulnerabilities and climate adaptation strategies.
- **Blue Carbon Workshops:** Blue carbon experts and MPA practitioners exchanged knowledge and opportunities to integrate blue carbon into marine protected area management and climate adaptation planning in North America. A newly updated map of blue carbon ecosystems in North America will be launched in 2021! This up-to-date information will help coastal practitioners plan and manage conservation, restoration and adaptation efforts.
- **Training on Nature-based Solutions for Coastal Hazards:** Held in collaboration with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), this was the first time the course was offered to a North American regional audience, fostering regional collaboration on nature-based solutions for disaster risk reduction.

### What is blue carbon?



The term “blue carbon” denotes the long-term storage of carbon within plant habitats growing in coastal lands and near-shore marine environments. North American blue carbon habitats include seagrass, salt marsh, and mangrove. They are considered to be among the world's most efficient carbon sinks; on many coasts their soils have accumulated carbon for millennia.



### The North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) Initiative

A longstanding program of the CEC, the **North American PRTR Initiative** seeks to improve public access to pollution information reported by industrial facilities across the region through collaboration with the three federal PRTRs and a wide range of stakeholders, including industry, NGOs, academia, the media, and civil society.

A **public meeting in February 2020** brought together individuals from industry, government, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and the public, to explore current and potential uses of North American PRTR data, with the aim of better understanding and addressing the needs of stakeholders across the region. This meeting was organized for the first time in collaboration with Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI) Program.

The enhanced **Taking Stock Online website** was launched in June 2020, making it easier than ever to navigate through pollutant release and transfer data reported by facilities across North America.



Representatives from the Aamjiwnaang First Nation presented their Pollution Reporter mobile application at the public meeting.





### Improving International Collaboration on Management of Hazardous Waste

Keeping track of the movement of hazardous waste is essential to prevent environmental and health risks, particularly for vulnerable populations that are exposed to these contaminants through their work or in their communities. In 2020, the CEC helped Canada, Mexico and the United States update and improve their **Notice and Consent Electronic Data Exchange** (NCEDE) system that exchanges information prior to exporting and importing hazardous waste. This work supports North American commitments under international agreements (such as, for Canada and Mexico, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal) and national programs.



Beginning in 2019, the CEC has developed regional networks to support information-sharing and coordinated response to increasing extreme events, including flooding, wildfires and drought.

### **Workshop on Remote Sensing Early Warning Systems for Floods**

Nearly 150 Canadian, Mexican and US emergency managers and experts gathered to discuss current satellite technologies leveraged during flood events, and possibilities for continued collaboration between agencies in the three countries. As a result of the workshop, discussions are ongoing between the United States and Mexico to deal with flooding linked to the increased frequency of hurricanes in these two countries and the use of the Canadian precipitation analysis tool in Mexico.







### North American Drought Summit

This three-day event brought together more than 80 drought practitioners across the three countries who are tasked with preparing for drought, and planning and managing the response to it. Participants developed recommendations to improve national and North American regional information-sharing of drought management tools and best practices.

### Workshop on Remote Sensing Early Warning Systems for Wildfires

Over 113 experts, local and regional first responders, emergency managers and decision-makers came together to exchange information on the use of satellite imagery in the preparation and response to wildfires, marking the first time such a coordinated regional effort has taken place. Experts from Central and South America participated in the workshop as observers. Steps are being taken by government partners to formalize information-sharing agreements and to ensure wildfire-related data needs of the three countries are met by satellite missions.



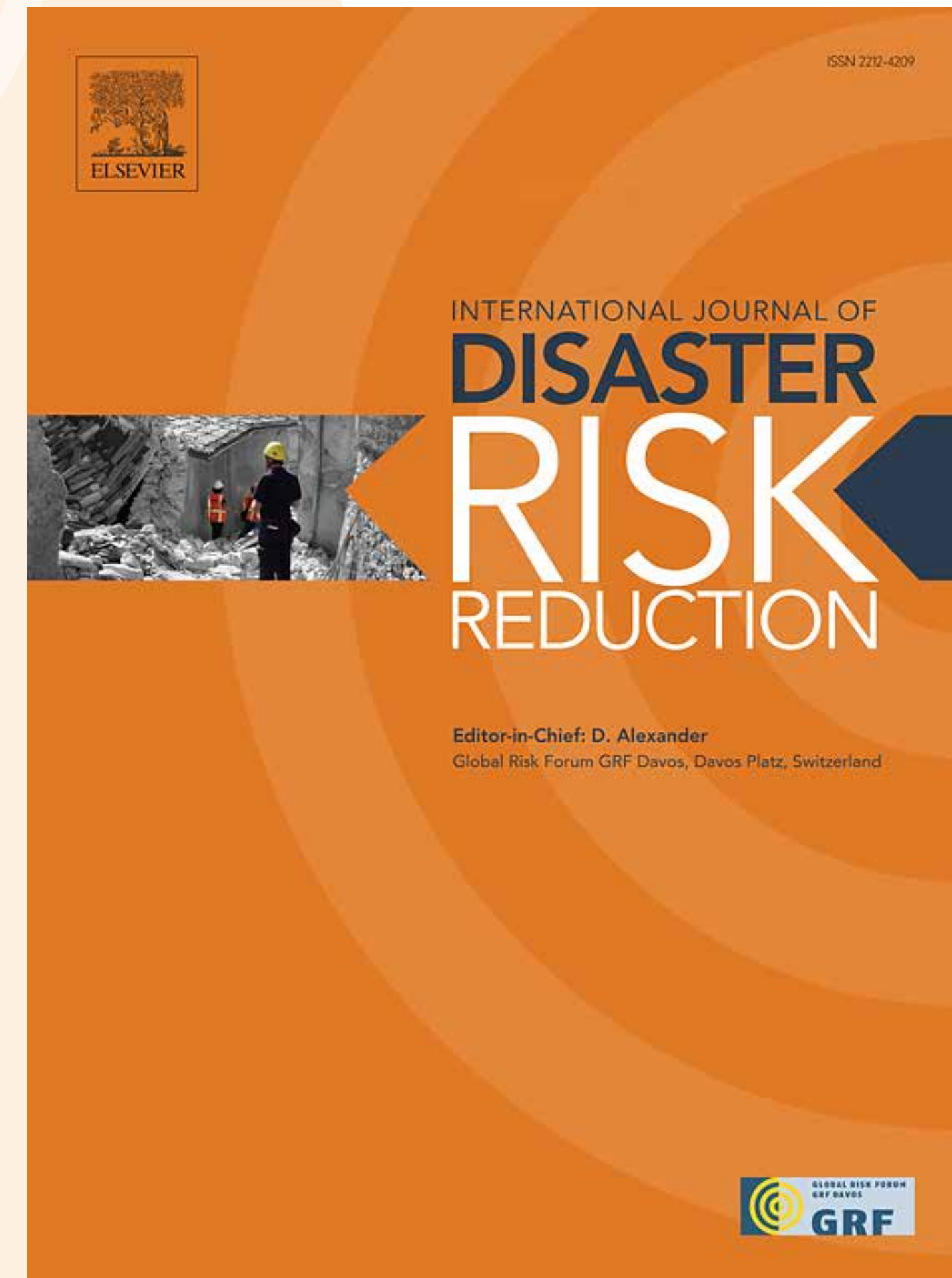


### Developing a Comprehensive Methodology for Evaluating Economic Impacts of Floods in Canada, Mexico and the United States

**Workshop on Methods to Assess the Costs of Floods:** This event brought together experts from the insurance, governmental and academic sectors to review the proposed standardized methodology for costing damages from floods in North America, developed under the CEC project. Three country-specific case studies were identified to evaluate the integration of cascading hazards into the flood-costing method.

In November 2020, **a research paper, presenting the proposed common methodology to estimate the costs of floods across North America,** developed under the CEC project, was published in the International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction.

“Flood events across the international borders between Canada, Mexico, and the United States have led to significant economic impacts and loss of human life in recent years... Overall, to improve disaster prevention, emergency responses, and recovery strategies, it is first necessary to better understand the consequences of floods on local and regional economies, and to develop methodologies to estimate the comprehensive cost of such disasters.”





### Preventing and Reducing Food Loss and Waste

About 168 million tonnes of food are lost or wasted every year in North America; enough to feed 260 million people, according to the CEC's 2018 foundational report.



### Engaging the Private Sector

The CEC supported an in-depth dialogue and pilot testing of its Practical Guide on Why and How to Measure Food Loss and Waste. By collaborating with organizations across the food supply chain—including processing, distribution, retail and consumption—the CEC has helped them to measure their food loss and waste and identify opportunities to reduce it, generating a positive environmental impact and an economic profit. The CEC has compiled case studies, documents and tools showcasing and supporting businesses that are measuring food loss and waste and generating tangible economic, social and environmental benefits in the process.



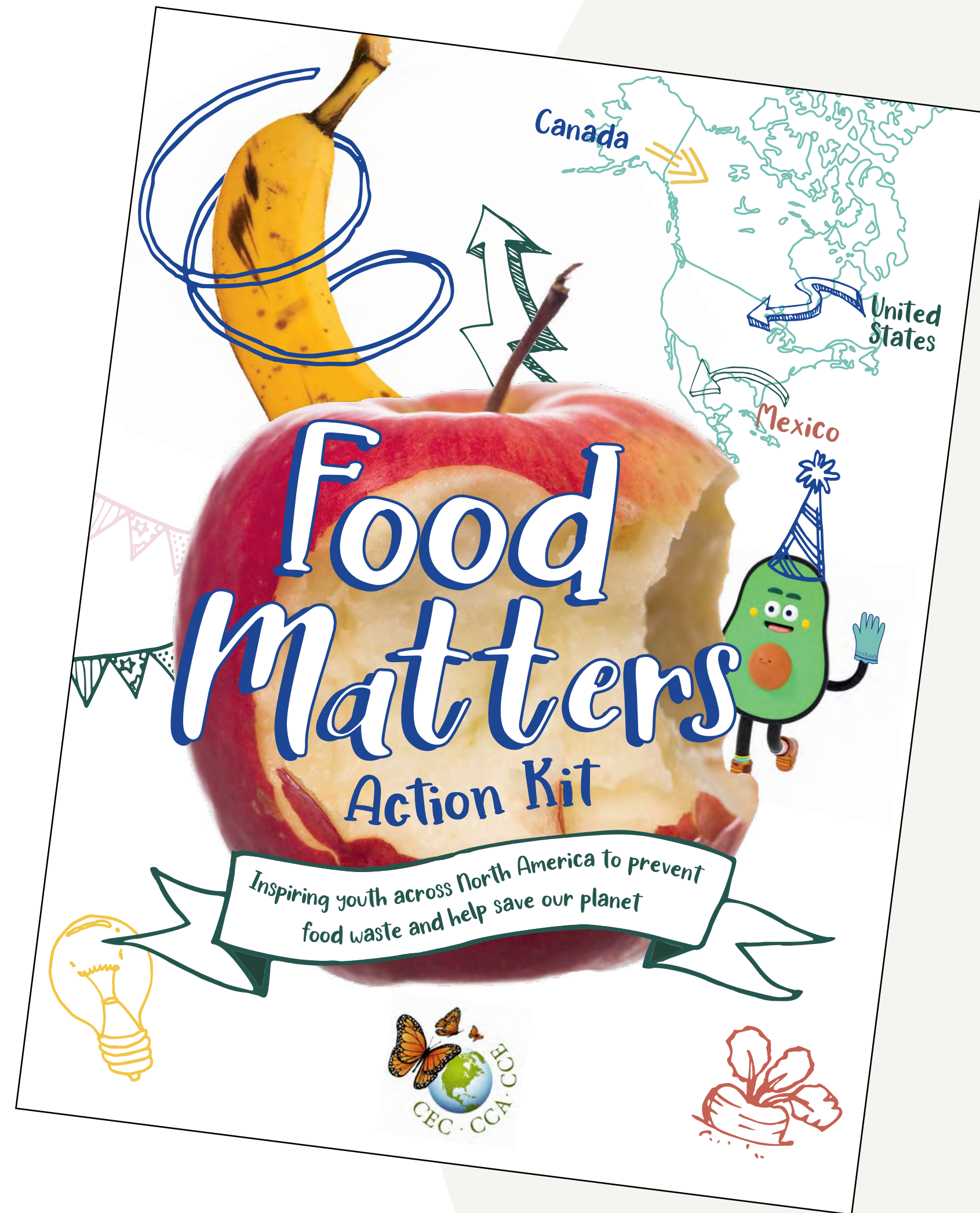
### Let's Shrink Food Waste Mountain Campaign

On September 3, 2020: the CEC launched a comprehensive public relations and communications campaign called **“Let's Shrink Food Waste Mountain”** to raise awareness in North America by educating youth on the impact of food loss and waste using educational videos, compelling graphic images and more. The launch period included a partnership event on September 29, 2020, with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's North America office for the first-ever **International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste**. The webinar drew 428 participants and subsequent Twitter Chat #FLWChat received 550 mentions and a reach of 5.2 million.



CEC's Food Matters Action Kit workshop at the 24<sup>th</sup> World Scout Jamboree in West Virginia, United States.





### #ShrinkFoodWaste #FoodMattersActionKit

The campaign was launched in three pilot cities: Mérida (Mexico), Montreal (Canada), and on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington (United States).

- **E-learning videos** received close to 500,000 views, digital ads received 69,000 clicks, and media coverage earned 10.9 million impressions.
- The CEC collaborated with influential social media personalities in all three countries, who created engaging and impactful content on Instagram and through personal blogs with a potential reach of 333,400 views.
- **The Food Matters Action Kit** website pageviews saw a dramatic increase in traffic and was viewed almost 40k times in only two months, and up to 2.8k page views a day.
- 10 local partners joined the campaign across all three pilot cities, sharing social media content, adding the campaign to their websites, and participating in media interviews.
- The CEC also developed and supported a trilateral network of stakeholders and partners to further the reach of the campaign through various collaborative activities such as webinars, workshops, training, etc.



The CEC is uniquely positioned to map North America's shared environment. Using geospatial data from government agencies and other institutions, the CEC continues to produce harmonized mapping products that provide a continental perspective on environmental issues and a look at changes in land cover over time. These products continue to be some of the most popular downloads from the CEC website.







- **North American Land Cover Map for 2015:** The CEC offers the highest-quality land cover product for North America to date, with improved accuracy in land cover classification over the previous 2010 product.
- **New North American Environmental Atlas map viewer:** Equipped with new customization and compatibility features, the viewer lets you explore two decades worth of environmental mapping data.
- **North American 2010-2015 Land Cover Change map at 30-meter resolution** and accompanying ArcGIS Online StoryMap that demonstrates key stories of Our Changing Continent between 2010-2015.
- **Webinar on International GIS Day (November 18):** Over 300 participants attended a CEC-hosted webinar to tour the North American Environmental Atlas, including the 2010-2015 land cover change layer.





Members of the CEC's Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (Michael Vegh, Amelia Reyna Monteros Guijón, Kathy Hodgson-Smith, María del Pilar García Hernández and Cessia Esther Chuc Uc)

### **Workshop on Indigenous Perspectives on Costing Floods:**

Experts from Indigenous organizations and research and academic institutions convened during a two-day workshop to discuss the incorporation of local and Indigenous perspectives in the methods for costing floods.

The CEC published **four reports related to the engagement of Indigenous communities and experts associated with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)** in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. These reports are available on the CEC website and include summaries of relevant frameworks and mechanisms related to the engagement of Indigenous and local communities in the three countries, examples of successful integration of TEK by various institutions, and a review of CEC engagement of Indigenous peoples and communities over the last 25 years.



### The 2020 Youth Innovation Challenge

On February 12, 2020, the CEC launched its 4<sup>th</sup> annual Youth Innovation Challenge, which focused on social entrepreneurship for environmental sustainability.

- The challenge received **193 submissions** and saw the highest quality and quantity of participation ever

### All 3 winners were women

- From Canada: **Bruized**, a food enterprise created to combat food waste through education and wholesome food
- From Mexico: **NoPlastic**, a 100% biodegradable compostable bioplastic based on Nopal cactus
- From United States: **Rebundle**, a plant-based synthetic hair brand that eliminates skin rashes and single-use waste





### The Ecolnnovation Network

The goal of the Ecolnnovation Network is to encourage youth-based innovation and entrepreneurship that is deeply rooted in sustainability.

The Ecolnnovation Network represents a new opportunity for defining and promoting innovation and sustainable design hubs and programs at North American academic institutions and facilitating collaboration among North American academic institutions.

Created by the CEC in 2019, support for the Ecolnnovation Network continued in 2020 with the goal of building a strong foundation to ensure its eventual self-sustainability.



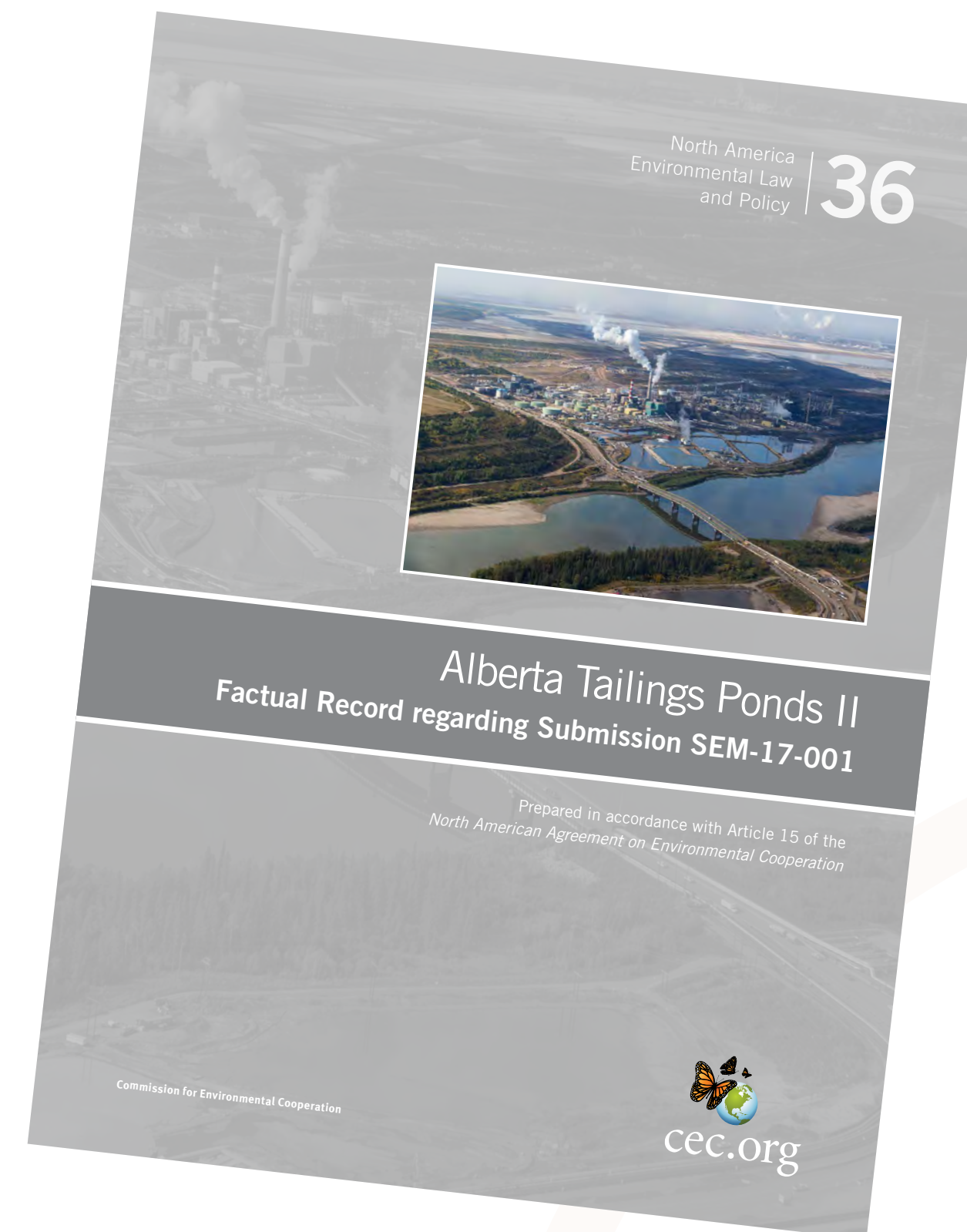


### What is the SEM Process?

Under the process established in Articles 24.27-28 of North America's trilateral trade agreement, a submission is a document written by the public and filed with the Secretariat, asserting that Canada, Mexico, or the United States is failing to effectively enforce its environmental law.

A national person or organization, or any nongovernmental organization or enterprise, established in Canada, Mexico, or the United States may file such a submission.

Filing a submission can lead to an independent gathering of information by the CEC Secretariat and the publication of a factual record examining the issues raised.



- The CEC presented the SEM Process at a record-breaking 18 events across the region in 2020. Over 1,500 members of the public learned about the SEM process, how to file a submission, and the environmental issues that have been the subject of submissions.
- On September 4, 2020, the **Alberta Tailings Ponds II Factual Record** was released to the public. The report addressed a submission filed in 2017 asserting the leakage of deleterious substances into water bodies from oil sands tailings ponds in northeastern Alberta, Canada. The factual record led to media coverage and commentary across Canada and increased awareness by Canadian organizations of the SEM process.



- Impact of the **Sumidero Canyon Factual Record**: In 2011, using the SEM process, a local community in Chiapas, Mexico, successfully drew attention to environmental and public health impacts caused by mining activities taking place within a national park. Ultimately, following conclusion of the SEM process, the mining operation was closed in 2020.
- The CEC produced a **short documentary** telling the story of this community, which received over 67,800 views in less than six months.
- On December 17, 2020, the CEC **received the first submission under the new trilateral trade agreement** regarding enforcement of protections for the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in Mexico. The submitters, two nongovernmental organizations, assert that the Mexican Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources and other environmental agencies are failing to effectively enforce measures aimed at the protection and conservation of the loggerhead turtle under domestic environmental laws.



### **The North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action Grant Program (NAPECA)**

NAPECA is a community grant program that engages with local and Indigenous communities. In 2020, 11 community-based environmental initiatives across North America implemented CEC-funded projects aimed at helping communities adapt to extreme events and climate change. While some projects faced delays in implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the grantees have been provided an extra six months to complete their projects.



Ocean Foundation

In Puerto Rico, **The Ocean Foundation** successfully developed a large-scale feasibility assessment and mangrove restoration plan for the eastern portion of Jobos Bay, a federally protected estuary that was heavily damaged during Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. This restoration plan will be used by the community to seek funding and obtain permits to begin the very first certified mangrove restoration project under REDD+ in Puerto Rico.





In the Oaxaca region of Mexico, **Género y flor de Maíz** engaged with 41 municipal representatives and leaders from two municipalities to develop risk management plans, worked with schools to develop and build capacity on risk management and early warning systems, and developed a suite of educational materials to be shared with other municipalities and the public to increase risk management capacity throughout the region.



In Alberta, Canada, through its Planning for Resilient Smart Energy Communities program, **QUEST Canada** engaged four communities and local utility companies to develop and complete climate risk assessments and adaptation reports that will help them adapt their energy infrastructure and build resilience to the impacts of climate change, such as increased occurrence of extreme weather events.



# 2020 Financial Report

<b>Commission for Environmental Cooperation 2020 Expenses (all figures in Canadian Dollars)</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
<b>DELIVERABLES</b>	
Cooperative Projects	623,180
Submissions on Enforcement Matters	133,004
Communications and Outreach	205,439
Tracking Pollutant Releases and Transfers in North America (PRTR)	10,201
Performance Measurement and Reporting	59,060
CEC Interactive Platforms	58,586
	<b>1,089,470</b>
<b>Institutional Support and Maintenance</b>	
Council Support	79,330
JPAC Support	40,598
TEK Expert Group Support	2,483
Stakeholder engagement and Partnership development	34,273
Information System Infrastructure Maintenance	84,867
Strategic and Operational Planning	65,886
Institutional Transition	85,511
	<b>392,948</b>
<b>Administrative and Management</b>	
Salaries, Benefits and Professional Development	2,698,469
Operating Expenses	521,495
External Administrative Support	281,637
Relocation/Orientation, Recruitment	54,952
Executive Director's Office	21,998
	<b>3,578,551</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>5,060,969</b>





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