



Advice to Council No: 13-01

Re: Outputs from JPAC Workshops in New Orleans (July 2012) and Mérida (December 2012) on Fostering Resilient Communities and Reducing Ecosystem Vulnerability in North America

The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) of North America:

IN ACCORDANCE with Article 16(4) of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), which states that JPAC “may provide advice to Council on any matter within the scope of this agreement (...) and on the implementation and further elaboration of this agreement, and may perform such functions as the Council may direct;”

HAVING conducted a public workshop in New Orleans, Louisiana, United States on 9–10 July 2012, entitled "Resilient Communities in North America," and another in Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico on 13–14 December 2012, entitled "Reducing Ecosystem Vulnerability, Responding to Community Needs: Tools and Information for North American Action";

HAVING reviewed the comments and recommendations of workshop participants, which are provided in Appendices A and B (*English and French versions to be distributed*) to this Advice;

RECALLING the Council's designation of Healthy Communities and Ecosystems as one of three core priorities of the CEC's Strategic Plan for 2010–2015, with strategic objectives aimed at improved environmental health of vulnerable communities in North America, increased resilience of shared ecosystems at risk, an enhanced regional approach to sound management of chemicals, North American pollutant release and transfer registers and strengthened regional environmental and wildlife law enforcement;

SEEKING to provide constructive input regarding the attainment of these strategic objectives through the CEC's cooperative work program for 2013–2014;

SUBMITS the following observations and recommendations for Council's consideration:

General comments:

1. The New Orleans and Mérida workshops represented a new format of engagement by JPAC with North Americans. The workshops were designed, first, to provide information to participants on factors affecting the resilience of communities and ecosystems and on potential local, state/provincial, national and regional (i.e., North American) responses for reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience. Next, workshop participants broke out into working groups in which they shared ideas and

experiences on how to enhance community and ecosystem resilience. The working groups then shared the results of their discussions, which allowed all participants to identify and strongly support themes, observations and suggestions.

2. JPAC is pleased to share the results of the two workshops, which are attached in Appendices A and B. JPAC recognizes that the participants in these two workshops represent only a small slice of North Americans with views and interests related to resilient communities and ecosystems. However, the participants came from throughout North America, literally from Yukon to Yucatán, and the depth and richness of their experience and knowledge on issues related to community and ecosystem resilience was impressive. While JPAC does not endorse every observation, comment and recommendation offered in the workshops, we do recommend that Council give serious consideration to the workshop outcomes in considering the role that the CEC can play in enhancing community and ecosystem resilience in North America, particularly with respect to vulnerable communities.

Specific comments and recommendations: JPAC wishes to highlight some outcomes and recommendations from the New Orleans and Mérida workshops that in our view merit particular attention:

1. Making use of the information in the North American Environmental Atlas, as well as other strengths, the CEC can play a key role in:
 - a. The identification and protection of areas that are key in providing the ecosystem service of disturbance control.
 - b. The identification of communities that have higher vulnerability to the impacts of global climate change, as well as the promotion of public policies for urban development that is based on ecological planning that recognizes and respects risk areas.
2. The CEC should favor opportunities to encourage place-specific efforts to reduce community and ecosystem vulnerability and increase resilience, for example, by highlighting case studies that demonstrate approaches of broad applicability, and by developing and disseminating generally applicable information and approaches relevant in North America.
3. The CEC should give emphasis to refining and clarifying the meaning of community and ecosystem vulnerability and resilience within North America's diverse context.
4. The Council should consider the document "Resilient Future," that was the product of JPAC's public meeting in New Orleans, as a valuable resource for identifying the drivers of and possible responses to threats to community and ecosystem health and resilience.

Recognizing that Council has given special emphasis to vulnerable communities and ecosystems in implementing the 2010–2015 strategic plan, JPAC recommends that Council continue a strong effort in this area. JPAC encourages the Council to give particular attention to these and other recommendations from the New Orleans and Mérida meetings in approving potential projects or

activities for the 2013–2014 Operational Plan, with a view to providing a platform for implementing those recommendations.

JPAC is confident that the recommendations contained herein are highly relevant to the CEC Council's strategic priorities, and is unanimous in supporting this Advice to Council.

**Approved by the JPAC members
21 March 2013**