



**Advice to Council No: 13-03**

**Re: JPAC-led Public Consultation on the 2013–2014 Operational Plan**

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** reviewed the Executive Summaries for the CEC 2013–2014 Operational Plan sent on 6 March and provided initial commentary on 22 March;

**HAVING** reviewed the Draft Project descriptions and associated budget for the CEC 2013–2014 Operational Plan;

**HAVING** subsequently conducted a public consultation on the proposed Plan and reviewed the comments and recommendations from North American stakeholders, which are included in the Appendix to this Advice;

**RECALLING** the Council's designation of Climate Change—Low-carbon Economy and Greening the North American Economy as two of the three core strategic themes of the CEC's Strategic Plan for 2010–2015;

**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 comments for Council's consideration:

**General Comments**

We are very pleased to see that all but one of the projects we endorsed are being considered for the 2013–2014 Operational Plan. Notwithstanding, we hope Council will consider revisiting the project: Reducing North American Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Power Generation, and consider work in this important area for the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. We note that several projects under the Climate Change-Low Carbon Economy and Greening the Economy in North America priorities do not contain a green energy component, particularly project 12: Improving Conditions for Green Buildings Constructions in North America. JPAC feels that work on solar and wind power generation technologies could prove highly beneficial for the three countries,

especially for isolated communities. The use of these technologies would not only curb greenhouse gas emissions, but it could easily be implemented by collaborating with existing promoters in Canada, Mexico and the United States. We would also ask Council to turn its attention to our recent Advice that resulted from our Calgary meeting, which contains a set of specific recommendations that could be applied to the work being proposed and/or included in the next Strategic Plan.

We also note there seems to be less emphasis on ecosystem health themes, despite this area having been recognized by the three countries as essential for human health. A potential area of work could be the fragmentation of ecosystems, which is so closely linked to transportation—among other causes—and continues to be one of the main causes for biodiversity loss.

In terms of performance measurement, some of the descriptions are fairly clear in describing the main outcomes, others less so. JPAC feels there needs to be a more homogeneous approach in all projects for measuring success.

Looking ahead, we note the proposed budget does not clearly show what funds will be used in 2013–2014 to develop the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, although presumably that work will have to begin in that timeframe. We recommend that the full Operational Plan include an explanation for developing the next Strategic Plan and what budget line will fund those activities. The budget also does not indicate what will be done in connection with the 20-year anniversary of the CEC in 2014. We recommend that the Operational Plan provide a description of those activities and what budget line will fund them.

### **North American Collaboration for Conservation of Transboundary Protected Areas**

We strongly endorse this project and recommend its expansion to other transboundary protected areas.

### **Enhancing Environmental Law Enforcement in North America**

We note that the project description does not seem to respond as much to the JPAC comments made on our 22 March letter. We hope the Enforcement Working Group and others involved in the project will seek opportunities to address the matters we listed in our prior communication.

### **Improving Indoor Air Quality to Reduce Exposure to Airborne Contaminants in Alaska Native Population and Other Indigenous Communities in North America**

The detailed description of the Alaska Indoor Air Pollution project seems responsive to JPAC comments for the most part, with greater emphasis on learning from this project on how the approach can be extended to other indigenous communities in North America that face different indoor air quality issues. However, and in order to give this project broader regional character, we would suggest linking it from the onset to similar ones that already exist in Mexico and Canada. There are several initiatives, particularly in Mexico, aimed at diminishing the health and environmental impacts caused by the use of firewood and charcoal in homes, through the use of ecological stoves and solar pots.

### **North American AirNow-International Project**

JPAC feels that this project, in particular, has an excellent public engagement component. Citizens across Mexico will soon have access to reliable air quality data, which will assist them in making informed decisions to protect their health.

### **North America's Blue Carbon: Assessing the Role of Coastal Habitats in the Continent's Carbon Budget**

This is a very relevant project and it is important we underline explicitly: "Because blue carbon habitats also have a wide range of other ecosystem benefits, including fish and wildlife habitat, flood protection and water quality improvement, the project also contributes to and supports the goals of the Healthy Communities and Ecosystems priority and in particular the Increased Resilience of Shared Ecosystems at Risk strategic objective." This comprehensiveness should be applied in a clear and decided manner in other projects.

### **Integrated Modeling and Assessment of North American Forest Carbon Dynamics and Climate Change Mitigation Options**

This is an important project, since it understands the importance of ecosystems in the carbon cycle. We would, however, suggest emphasizing the integral view of ecosystem services, where carbon cycle is but one. In addition, JPAC believes that this project would strongly benefit from engaging with industry, specifically the forest sector.

### **Improving Conditions for Green Building Construction in North America**

JPAC strongly endorses the main objectives for this project, specifically the green workforce training, resource use efficiency and building capacity for benchmarking in Mexico. However, we feel that in order to have greater impact, it should also focus on financing solutions, which are at the crux of the issue, as well as stronger interaction with the construction and development industry, given they will ultimately be the ones driving the success of these initiatives.

### **North American Online, Interactive Informational Platform on Climate Change**

The work to be carried out in this project is impressive and has enormous potential. Looking ahead, JPAC feels that the CEC needs to address how to better market all of its products, to ensure broader public engagement.

### **Greening Transportation at North American Land Ports of Entry (POEs)**

JPAC feels this project is lacking stakeholder engagement, particularly from border communities and industry. The description, as it stands now, gives the impression of being government-driven and focused on security issues. We feel that in order for it to be successful, it needs a much broader consultation with stakeholders, including the trucking industry, corridor associations and border communities.

Lastly and as we move forward with the implementation, JPAC members would welcome the opportunity to engage closely with the working groups.

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

**Approved by the JPAC members  
27 June 2013**