



Advice to Council No: 19-02

Council Request for Input to the Joint Public Advisory Committee: 2021–2025 CEC Strategic 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 other functions as the Council may direct”;

RECALLING the current strategic plan, adopted by the Council in 2015, will conclude on 31 December 2020, JPAC welcomes the invitation from Council to provide input on this process and recognizes the important work that the Commission has accomplished to date;

HAVING received three questions from the Council in order to inform the discussions on the development of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan this fall;

SUBMITS the following recommendations for Council’s consideration:

At the outset, JPAC would like to make one foundational recommendation to Council that underpins the ability for the CEC to deliver on the areas presented below. *In the strongest possible terms, JPAC recommends that Council reestablish funding for the CEC at a minimum of US\$3 million per country, as agreed to in Council Resolution 95-11.*

I. **Question from Council: *What are the environmental issues and challenges facing North America in the next five years?***

- 1. Climate Change:** The single greatest issue facing the future of our continent and planet are the impacts of a changing climate on all aspects of our environment and society. We must take urgent action that reconciles what we know scientifically with what we do politically and as citizens.
- 2. Water Security:** Without fresh water, life is not possible. Human and wildlife populations all depend on fresh water access, security and supply. Guaranteeing water security is fundamental to the long-term wellbeing of people, communities, economies, food production and affordability, wildlife, natural habitat, and vital ecological systems and processes.
- 3. Biodiversity and Marine and Terrestrial Habitat:** There is scientific consensus that the Earth is presently experiencing a 6th *Mass Extinction*. Wildlife migrations are the best

metaphor for the environmental interconnectedness between Mexico, the United States and Canada. From caribou to snow geese, from the monarch butterfly to bison, from humpback whales to blue fin tuna—animals do not understand or recognize national jurisdiction. Serious effort and attention is required to conserve land, water, and wildlife for future generations.

- 4. Waste and the Circular Economy:** The world has a waste problem. Our rivers, lakes and ocean have never contained more garbage than they do now. Without action, it is possible that by 2030, there could be more plastic than fish in the ocean. At the same time, there is an incredible economic opportunity. What we throw away annually in North America is worth billions of dollars.

II. Question from Council: *What are the opportunities for the CEC, considering the strengths, mission, and mandate of the organization, to address these issues/challenges in the next five years?*

1. Take Clear Action and Achieve Meaningful Cooperation on Climate Change:

JPAC recommends the new strategic plan directly outline a clear climate vision and an action framework that considers the following elements: (1) A way forward to accomplish the decarbonization of North America by 2050. (2) Propose a plan to meet power and electrification needs in a carbon-free context. (3) Expand and harmonize carbon pricing and markets between Canada, the United States and Mexico. (4) Commit to increasing financial support for natural solutions to help affected regions adapt and mitigate the impacts of a changing climate and associated extreme weather events.

2. Foster Water Security in an Insecure World:

JPAC recommends the new strategic plan directly outline a vision and an action framework to secure North American water resources for generations to come. The following elements should be considered for inclusion: (1) Develop clear strategies to manage interjurisdictional water bodies and watersheds. (2) Promote literacy of fresh water management and supply issues within all aspects of society. (3) Facilitate increased cooperation on trilateral fresh water monitoring and management. (4) Investigate options for a continental water pricing market.

3. Protect Biodiversity and Important Marine and Terrestrial Habitat:

JPAC recommends the new strategic plan directly outline a vision and an action framework to create a new, ambitious continental conservation target. The following elements should be considered for inclusion: (1) Propose recovery plans for highly migratory marine and terrestrial species at risk. (2) Map critical habitats and supply recommendations for their protection. (3) Promote collaboration on bilateral or trilateral conservation projects and programs. (4) Address the depletion of ecosystem services due to fragmentation, increased urban growth and agricultural practices. (5) Facilitate ecosystem-based approaches (e.g., circular economy, agroecology, agrosilvopastoral systems, basin-based resources management). (6) Commit to working with Indigenous peoples to build a continental Guardian Program that would manage and steward our biological and ecological heritage.

4. Reduce Waste and Build a Circular Economy:

JPAC recommends the new strategic plan directly outline a vision and an action framework to set a continental waste reduction target and define opportunities to foster a circular

economy. The following elements should be considered for inclusion: (1) Build and harmonize an extended producer responsibility framework for the continent. (2) Set clear goals for reducing single use plastics. (3) Incentivize business opportunities that turn waste into products and jobs. (4) Deliver public advocacy campaigns that describe how citizens can take action in their day-to-day lives.

5. Enhance Enforcement of Environmental Laws:

JPAC recommends that the CEC enhance promote co-responsibility for environmental issues in the region, among all stakeholders: civil society, local and indigenous communities, subnational and national governments, academia, and the private sector. Enhancing the understanding of environmental laws is one of the core objectives of NAAEC and will continue to be instrumental in guiding the work of the Commission under the USMCA.

6. Increase the CEC's Visibility and Accessibility:

In order to grow its audience and engage more members of the public, the CEC could strengthen and broaden its communications strategy by: (1) using new media and story mapping to enhance outreach and education, (2) producing podcasts and webinars that feature environmental conversations of public interest, (3) creating culturally specific communication products, and (4) developing a public portal to maintain a constant link to timely environmental issues and priorities.

III. Question from Council: *Where do you see opportunities for an enhanced role for JPAC under the next strategic plan?*

- 1. Building Bridges – From West to East and North to South:** JPAC is the *only trilateral public-representative body* with the mandate to promote cooperation on continental environmental issues. Our public engagement brings people together from all corners and cultures of North America. The results provide compelling testimony, information, and solutions that is invaluable to governments, decision makers, and citizens in pursuit of a healthy and enduring North American environment.

We recommend Council consider resourcing JPAC to take an enhanced role in featuring public sentiment and response to urgent environmental matters. Specific actions could include: (1) Convene additional official trilateral dialogues aimed at elucidating advice on environmental cooperation and problem solving. (2) Enhance public literacy of, and local participation in environmental issues by targeting public schools with information and options for engagement. (3) Prepare and respond to implications of the ratification of the new USMCA.

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

**Approved by the JPAC members
4 November 2019**