



**Advice to Council No: 15-04**

**Re: Outputs from JPAC Workshops in Boston (July 2015), “Water and Climate Change: Adaptation through Green Infrastructure”**

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 Boston, Massachusetts, on 14–15 July 2015, entitled “Water and Climate Change: Adaptation through Green Infrastructure;”

**TAKING NOTE OF** the presentations and recommendations of expert panelists, as well as comments and recommendations of participating members of the public, which are provided in Appendix A, and the comments and recommendations provided to the Council during our in-camera session, which are provided in Appendix B, to this Advice;

**RECALLING** the Council’s priority focus on climate change and water as strategic priorities for 2015–2020; and

**SEEKING** to provide constructive input regarding the pursuit of these strategic priorities through the CEC priorities for 2016–2017 and beyond;

**SUBMITS** the following observations and recommendations for Council’s consideration:

1. The presentations in Boston highlighted an impressive array of local initiatives addressing critical infrastructure challenges necessary to provide safe drinking water, manage stormwater and wastewater, and protect ecosystems in a complex coastal environment while simultaneously making strides to mitigate the impact of global climate change in a vibrant coastal community. JPAC members were impressed by the dedication of public officials, businesses, and citizen groups working at local, state, and national levels to address these water issues through technological innovation and cooperative governance.
2. We also noted the importance of political will to make positive change even where substantial capital investments must be funded by the public through increased utility rates. This willingness to “pay now” in order to be served and protected later is an important example to communities everywhere. We believe that the results achieved in and by the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, working with

partners at the local and national levels, speak volumes about the many advantages (including substantial economic advantages) of pursuing environmental conservation priorities by developing and implementing green infrastructure.

3. Examples of key strategies that appear to have been particularly successful include:
  - looking at stormwater, rainwater, and wastewater as a single resource, through approaches such as low-impact development (all water retained onsite to be infiltrated and reused), green streets (increased infiltration), and regional management plans (improve existing parks, increase recreational access);
  - facilitating community engagement and outreach as essential elements of shaping successful strategies and assuring implementation and compliance; and
  - recognizing that the return on investment for green infrastructure projects is of longer term than many traditional infrastructure options, and offering government support in the form of financing, grants, or other incentives to encourage commitment to green projects.
4. Reflecting on the success stories and challenges relating to green infrastructure that were the focus of much of the Boston public meeting, JPAC believes that the Council can and should:
  - a) Identify, through the North American Environmental Atlas, vulnerable areas that could benefit from the use of green infrastructure.
  - b) Help to identify the types of green infrastructure that can contribute to resilient communities, based on specific local needs and capacities.
  - c) Support mechanisms to identify and disseminate experiences and success stories such as those that we learned about in Boston within their governments and among their constituents at a regional, national, and local level.
5. As JPAC noted in its Advice to Council No: 14-01 following JPAC workshops in Oaxaca (May 2014) on Building Healthy and Sustainable Homes in Remote Communities: “Climate changes have brought about, and will increasingly call for, the need for adaptation efforts.” JPAC noted at the time, and believes it is important to reiterate, that these changes will have a particular impact on tribal and indigenous communities and that appropriate governmental responses must take into account the historical and cultural characteristics of affected groups. It is evident from the discussions in Boston that climate change is likely to have disproportionate impact on many marginalized and economically disadvantaged communities within our societies, and JPAC believes that governmental responses to climate change must respond to the needs of these communities. JPAC recommends that Council similarly assure that cooperative efforts in North America make these needs a priority.
6. Climate change will magnify problems relating to water—both problems of flooding as well as those of drought. This reinforces the need for approaches to adaptation that are both transversal and integral. Because integrated and coordinated administration at

multiple levels of government presents legal and governance challenges, it is important that the duties and responsibilities of governmental authorities at every level be clearly delimited, and this requires increasing efforts of communication and harmonization.

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  
23 November 2015**