



Advice to Council No: 15-05

Re: Outputs from JPAC Planning Meeting in Montreal (November 2015)

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 met to coordinate and plan for the coming year in Montreal, Canada, on 5-6 November 2015; and

SEEKING to provide constructive input regarding the CEC’s pursuit of strategic priorities for 2016–2017 and beyond;

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

1. JPAC heard reports from program staff regarding efforts to advance the CEC Work Plan through specific and targeted programs. We were impressed by the substance of the Secretariat’s programs. The scope and quality of the Secretariat’s programmatic work is a positive reflection on all three governments and is a testament to the dedication of Secretariat staff under the leadership of outgoing Executive Director, Dr. Irasema Coronado. JPAC noted its strong support for the Secretariat staff, and presented Dr. Coronado with a letter thanking her for her work over the past three years.
2. JPAC believes that results must be measured and reported to assure that CEC programs meet strategic priorities. We wish to reinforce the Secretariat’s efforts to assess the impact of the CEC’s work, including the work of JPAC. We recommend that the Secretariat continue to refine its assessment efforts by including realistic indicators of impact (including, where possible, impact on governance institutions and on environmental quality) and by assessing, where possible, the qualitative aspects of the CEC’s work.
3. JPAC reviewed its budget performance from 2015 and its proposed budget for 2016, which has been reduced from historical levels since 2013. JPAC has managed to operate within this reduced budget during the past year despite the challenges of increased travel and venue costs in part by postponing an important meeting in Canada, which will take place in 2016. We have also realized savings by combining our public meetings with program meetings where possible to increase the reach of our work and engage experts

whose work (in part) and travel is funded by CEC programs. JPAC recognizes that the reduction in its budget is related to an overall reduction in the CEC budget. JPAC continues to believe, as it has advised Council on prior occasions, that the CEC should be returned to full funding as soon as possible. The many issues addressed by the CEC at a regional level, including climate change, water, biological diversity, transportation, and infrastructure, coincide with the Parties' national priorities and fully funding the CEC is a way to leverage regional work on these national priorities.

4. JPAC believes that the CEC can and should raise its public profile through engaging relevant institutions and processes that coincide with CEC priorities and programs and through expanded use of social media. An increased profile will expand the CEC's ability to leverage limited resources through collaborations on (and possibly co-funding) projects that are relevant for constituencies within and beyond North America. It will also acknowledge the progress made by the Parties to foster conservation and protection of the North American environment to a wider audience and serve as a reminder to our own constituencies, as well as a model for other regions. In order to realize these benefits, JPAC recommends that Council:
 - a) Direct the Secretariat to identify and pursue opportunities to engage relevant regional and international agencies and organizations whose work coincides with the CEC work plan and programs. These opportunities may include participating in meetings and workshops to present information about the CEC and its programs, and collaborating on or co-funding joint projects. This advice is not meant to suggest that the Secretariat has a role in acting for or on behalf of any of the Parties in international forums, but rather recognizes that the Secretariat can advance the common interests of the Parties by telling the story of the CEC as a model of regional cooperation on the environment, and by leveraging the investment that the Parties are making in the program work of the CEC.
 - b) Direct their respective agencies, ministries, and secretariats, to acknowledge CEC programs that coincide with or advance their own institutional initiatives and programs, and to expand social media connections by creating "hyperlinks" to the CEC and its programs at relevant pages within their web sites;
5. JPAC conducted a conference call with members of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Roster of Experts to continue the process of getting to know one another (a process we began following the Council Session in Boston in July 2015) and to solicit insights from those experts on how we might best develop a constructive and collaborative working relationship. For more than a decade, JPAC has stressed the importance of increasing the participation of indigenous communities in the work of the CEC, and we believe that the creation of the TEK Roster of Experts is a vital step toward addressing that concern. JPAC wishes to commend Council for the insight that it demonstrated in creating the TEK Roster, for the discernment exercised in identifying experts with such a depth of knowledge and connection to their communities, and for the foresight to allocate modest additional funding to support the work of the TEK Roster.

JPAC looks forward to learning from and working with the TEK Roster of Experts in the coming months and will report to Council on the progress of our mutual efforts..

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
8 December 2015**