



Advice to Council No: 16-02

Re: Outputs from the JPAC Workshop in Mérida (September 2016) on “Biodiversity and Climate Change”

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 Merida, Mexico, on 8-9 September 2016, entitled “Biodiversity and Climate Change;”

RECALLING the Council's focus on climate change and biodiversity as strategic priorities for 2015-2020; and

SEEKING to provide constructive input regarding the pursuit of these strategic priorities through the CEC work for 2017-18 and beyond;

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

1. Biodiversity and climate change are intricately connected. This relationship is recognized in international initiatives, including the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Nagoya Protocol and the agenda for this year’s Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP13).
2. The CEC has actively supported research into biodiversity and climate issues over a span of more than 20 years, and this work has been understood as vital to the national interests of the Parties through successive administrations.
3. These efforts to research and understand biodiversity and climate change have led to three inescapable and inter-related conclusions:
 - a) Healthy ecological systems contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation in many and varied ways: functioning as natural carbon sinks, providing human health benefits, assuring the protection of coastal populations, and contributing to disaster risk reduction.
 - b) Climate change adversely affects biodiversity in many ways: degrading ecosystems; shifting migratory patterns and ranges of plants and animals; disrupting ecosystem

services such as pollination, coastal protection and others; altering the synchronicity of key ecological processes; and increasing exposure to pathogens and diseases.

- c) The impact of climate change on biodiversity—and the consequent harm that this will cause to the mitigating effect of biodiversity on climate change—will have severe, and potentially catastrophic and irreversible, negative effects on human health and wellbeing as well as on the North American economy.
4. Pollination of both wild species and commercial crops are among the ecosystem services most strongly affected by climate change, thus affecting agricultural production.
5. Climate change on coastal biodiversity already has and will continue to have a particular impact on communities and infrastructure, with the associated economic and social costs. JPAC reiterates its previous recommendation to the Council to share this vital information on the relevance of healthy ecosystems with other decision makers. This includes sharing and leveraging this information to enhance state and city climate action plans, as well as working to connect people across North America with nature and their ecosystems.
6. The rate of change associated with adaptation and migration of species is increasing, and being impacted by human settlements and infrastructure. We should create, expand and better regulate ecological corridors and protected areas to ensure they survive and adapt to climate change. In addition, not every species responds equally to climate change; some species, communities or ecosystems are more vulnerable to climate change impacts, so adaptive management strategies are essential.
7. Climate change and biodiversity loss will have a particular impact on indigenous communities, and the Parties should recognize and work to address the impact that climate change has on these peoples, in light of their unique cultural, historical, and spiritual relationship to the land, to the environment in which they live and interact, and to the natural systems upon which they have traditionally relied.
8. JPAC believes that the Parties should strengthen their mutual efforts to research and understand the reciprocal relationship of climate and biodiversity, and to communicate these inter-related risks and concerns, with an emphasis on the human health and economic benefits from addressing climate change and biodiversity loss.
9. JPAC urges the Council to assure the continued vitality of CEC programs by directing the Secretariat to continue and expand its work on biodiversity and climate change, to extend its Blue Carbon project upland into freshwater ecosystems, to continue engaging persons with Traditional Ecological Knowledge in helping to shape and inform programming and strategic direction, and to make a priority of engaging youth in the work of the Secretariat wherever possible.
10. The CEC is uniquely positioned to use its work plan to contribute to additional research, understanding, and communication through its expertise in mapping, which can help to better understand the retreat of species from their endemic habitats; through a better appreciation of climate impacts on local economies and indigenous communities; and through programs such as its Blue Carbon project, which has demonstrated that preserving wetlands is

important not only to protect the quality of water, but also to protect the carbon sequestration and climate mitigation functions of the wetlands themselves.

11. JPAC recognizes that collaborative governance takes time, trust, and interdependence. The biggest challenge is often the capacity to have everyone in the same room for a dialogue, and the willingness to share and exchange ideas even where there are important policy differences. However, JPAC reminds Council that the work of addressing trade and environmental issues in the North American context has never been undertaken because it is easy, but rather because it is vital to the health and wellbeing of our peoples and the security of our North American economy.

**Approved by the JPAC members
13 December 2016**