



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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Gustavo Alanis
Chair, Joint Public Advisory Committee
Commission for Environmental Cooperation
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Office of
International and
Tribal Affairs

Dear Mr. Alanis:

On behalf of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), I would like to thank the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) for your advice to Council No: 17-05 highlighting outputs from the JPAC Public Forum on the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC): Assessing the Past, Looking Towards the Future, held in Chicago in November 2017. We value the relevance of the forum and JPAC's timely advice to the Council.

The NAAEC created the CEC as a trilateral forum for environmental cooperation among Canada, Mexico and the United States to preserve and protect the environment and promote sustainable development in the region in the context of increasing levels of commerce and economic activity. As JPAC notes, over the last 23 years, the CEC has served a valuable role in convening the Parties and stakeholders, facilitating and supporting collaboration, developing and sharing information and capacities; facilitating public participation, transparency and enforcement; and leveraging resources.

Modernizing and Improving

Trilateral cooperation through the CEC has produced tangible results, including improved capacities and best practices on environmental information, policies, regulations, compliance and enforcement, as well as public engagement and transparency. Current efforts by the Parties to modernize and renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and our accumulated experience with the NAAEC and CEC present an opportunity to evaluate successes and challenges and to explore modernizing trilateral environmental cooperation among Canada, Mexico, and the United States to continue preserving and protecting the shared North American environment and supporting sustainable development.

Successful Convening Role

The CEC's convening role is fundamental to timely and effective North American cooperation on present and emerging environmental and ecosystems issues of common concern. This function can be improved to better engage key agencies, regulators, researchers, the private sector and other experts and interested stakeholders and to continue developing, sharing, and

harmonizing capacity where possible. Past and current projects in the CEC Operational Plans offer key examples of this work and can provide lessons on how to improve. Current projects, for instance, include collaboration to establish a Mexican Emissions Control Area to harmonize with the United States-Canada North American Emissions Control Area; implementation of trilateral action plans on trade of CITES species; and collaboration on strategies and practices to reduce land-based sources of marine litter on the US-Mexico and US-Canada borders.

While each Party has different governance and regulatory development frameworks, the CEC can serve as a convening forum for cooperation to inform regulatory approaches for emerging environmental issues and opportunities.

Stakeholder Engagement, Transparency, Enforcement

We are pleased that public participation in CEC activities has grown significantly with very successful use of social media and other platforms. Online participation growth is impressive and improves our reach, engagement and information sharing on trilateral priorities, cooperative projects, initiatives, deliverables, submissions on enforcement matters and results. Engaging through social media also helps reduce our environmental footprint. We are grateful and welcome JPAC's and the Secretariat's support and skill in outreach, access and engagement by underrepresented stakeholders, such as indigenous representatives and the private sector. We also believe that collaboration with the private sector on relevant environmental projects is important and provides potential partnerships to leverage resources. The current ISO 50001 project work is co-funded by private sector partners participating in the project and we hope future projects can leverage resources as well.

We appreciate the effective support from JPAC and the Secretariat as the Council engages indigenous peoples and communities in the work of the CEC through indigenous representation and participation in CEC projects and initiatives. We are pleased that several 2017-2018 projects, such as the project on prevention and mitigation of food waste, include engagement with indigenous communities. Furthermore, of the nine NAPECA grants approved by Council for 2018, seven are led by, or involve and serve, indigenous organizations and communities in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. These grants focus on topics highlighted by JPAC, including traditional ecological knowledge, first foods, ecosystems, lakes/waters and land use.

Knowledge Base and Information Sharing

We also value the CEC trilateral knowledge-gathering and information-sharing capabilities, including tracking transboundary emissions/pollution through the trilateral Pollutant Release and Transfer Registry (PRTR) and providing tools to understand how to mitigate the negative environmental impacts of cross-border trade. Our agencies use CEC tools such as the North American Land Change Monitoring System (NALCMS), which graphically depicts information about land cover and land cover change in North America. A North American team consisting of the U.S. Geological Survey, Natural Resources Canada, and Mexico's CONABIO, CONAFOR, and INEGI works closely through the CEC to develop, maintain, use and promote this resource. Capitalizing on this resource, EPA's Office of Research and Development is exploring how to integrate land use change to improve EPA's models and build a terminology library based on the

land cover definitions used by NALCMS. Currently, there is no known publicly-recognized library of this kind.

Value of a CEC Secretariat

The Council recognizes the strategic importance of the CEC and its three institutional bodies. The Secretariat provides valuable technical assistance, independent reports, and administrative and operational support to the CEC’s work. We diligently communicate to our governments and the North American public the value added by the CEC organization through activities and projects. Recently, we partnered with the Secretariat to evaluate our shared experience implementing the NAAEC and identify successes and areas for improvement. Furthermore, we are currently working together to improve communications and marketing to convey value and results to key audiences and stakeholders and to address remaining and emerging institutional challenges. We appreciate JPAC’s efforts to consult regional experts and the public on the value and products of the CEC and are pleased that the feedback aligns with our belief that the CEC is an important and unique institution for Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Canada, the United States, and Mexico value the opportunity to modernize trilateral environmental cooperation to achieve value-added results for the Parties and stakeholders in protecting and preserving the environment and promoting sustainable development. Thank you and the JPAC members for your hard work, insights, and advice to the CEC Council.

Sincerely,



Jane Nishida
Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator
Office of International and Tribal Affairs
Alternate Representative for the United States

cc:
Isabelle Bérard, Alternate Representative for Canada
Enrique Lendo, Alternate Representative for Mexico
César Chavez, CEC Executive Director
Marcela Orozco, JPAC Liaison Officer