



2023

Operational Plan



COMMISSION FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
COOPERATION

A faint, light gray map of North America, including Canada, the United States, and Mexico, is visible in the background of the left page.

CEC Mission Statement

In the context of environmental, economic and social linkages between Canada, Mexico and the United States, the CEC facilitates effective cooperation and public participation to conserve, protect and enhance the North American environment in support of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.

Table of Contents

About the CEC	3
Institutional Priorities	6
2023 Budget	8
2023 Work Program	9
Cooperative Projects and Initiatives	9
Council-supported Initiatives	23
Supporting Communities	29
Improving Access to Information for Decision-Making	32
Stakeholder Participation and Engagement Mechanisms	36
30 th Annual Council Session	39
Joint Public Advisory Committee Activities	40
Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group Activities	43
Outreach and Partnerships Activities	44
Enhancing Visibility and Public Awareness of CEC’s Work	47
Measuring Performance and Reporting on Progress	48

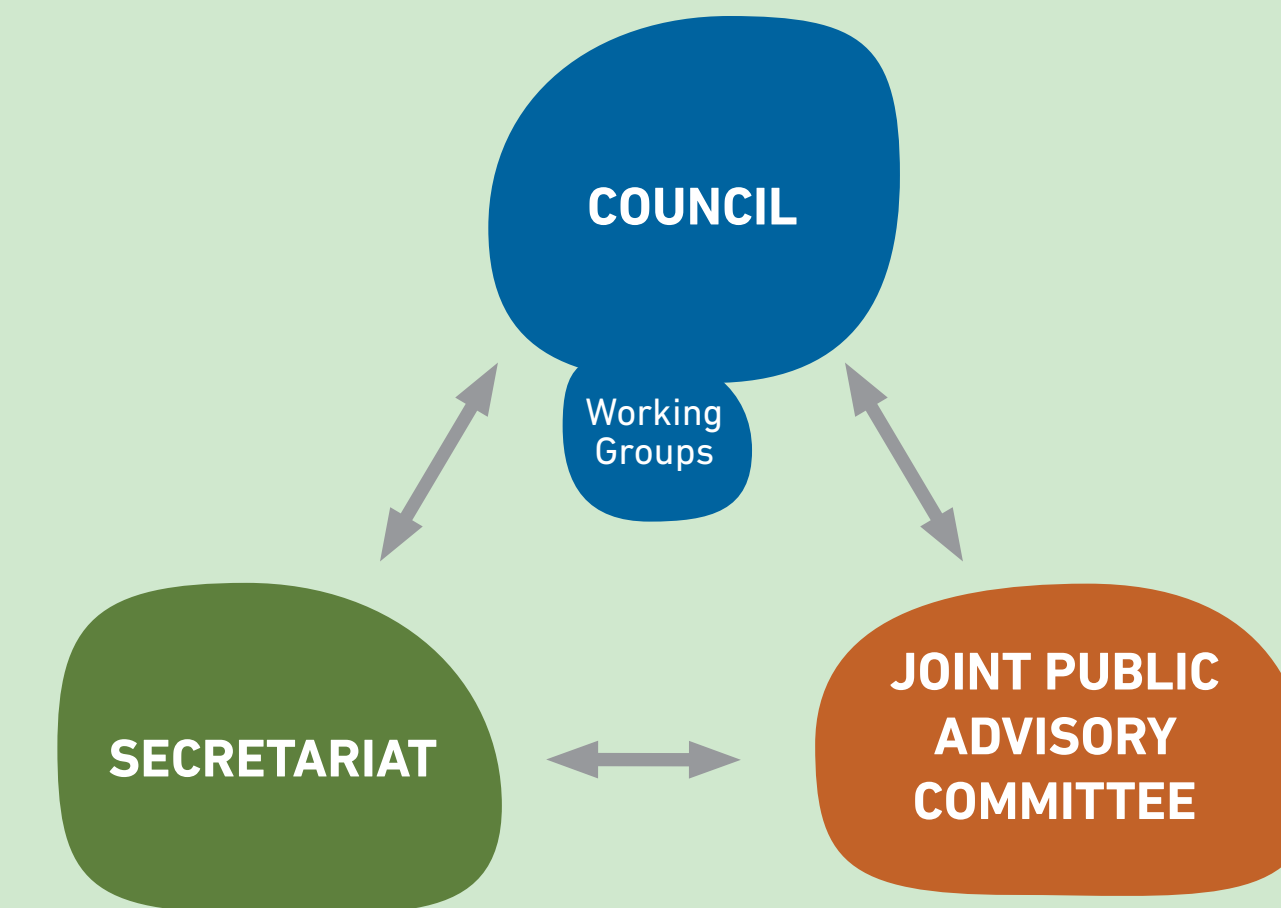


About the CEC

Since 1994, the CEC has been an effective instrument to facilitate sustained environmental cooperation between the Governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States for the conservation, protection and enhancement of our shared environment.

The cooperative work program of the CEC has helped strengthen environmental governance across the North American region in such ways as: building relations among people; supporting communities and governments; promoting effective environmental enforcement; promoting inclusive participation (with an emphasis on vulnerable communities); fostering best practices for conservation and nature-based solutions; building capacity in communities and among practitioners; and implementing restoration, remediation and conservation activities focusing on improving human well-being and promoting environmental justice. The CEC's mission is fulfilled through its three constituent bodies:¹

1. For more information, please refer to Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation available at: www.cec.org/about/agreement-on-environmental-cooperation/.



- **The Council**, which is the governing body of the Commission, comprises cabinet-level or equivalent representatives of each Party responsible for environmental affairs.
- **The Secretariat**, which provides technical, administrative and operational support to the Council (and to committees and groups established by the Council).
- **The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC)**, which comprises nine citizens, three from each country (Canada, Mexico and the United States), that advise the Council on a wide array of environmental issues within the scope of the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA). The alignment with the ECA is described in the following section. JPAC engages the public in open forums and public consultations, bringing together experts and interested individuals to identify options to address North America's most pressing environmental challenges.



The CEC's cooperative work program is implemented by a Secretariat staff of 44 employees (supplemented by external resources and interns). Additionally, the work program is supported by trilateral working groups of government experts, as well as through the engagement and involvement of interested groups and individuals representing the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, academia, the public at large, as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

In accordance with Article 10 of the ECA, this 2023 Operational Plan (OP) ensures that the areas of cooperation are aligned with the CEC's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan (SP). For each area, the OP identifies specific objectives and, wherever possible, short-, medium- and long-term activities that will be undertaken to achieve results. It provides rationale for action, while describing efforts in 2023 to address issues of common interest and concern through its cooperative work program, as well as by means of direct support for community projects and initiatives. Each year, new projects and initiatives announced by the Council at its annual session are added to the OP.

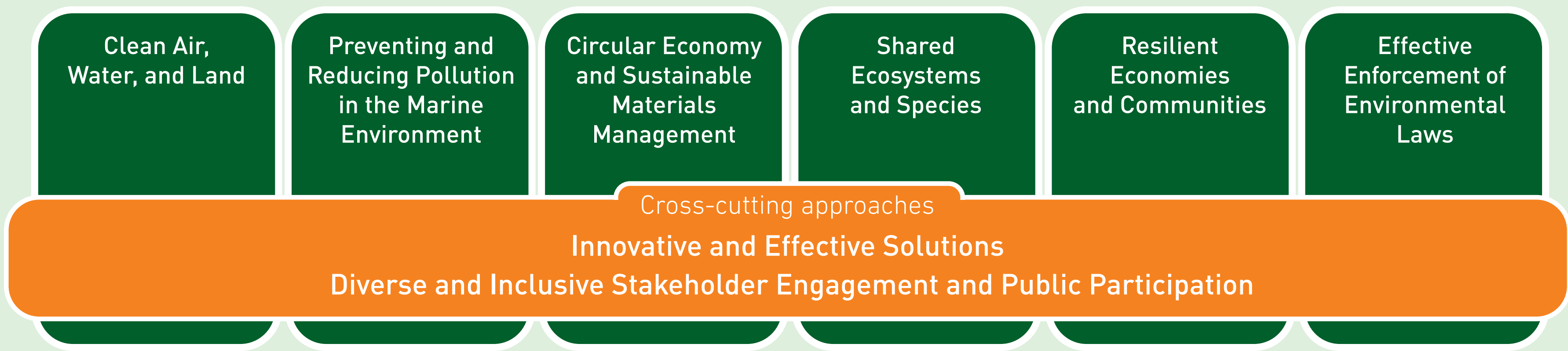


Moreover, this OP outlines activities of JPAC and the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG), as well as other cross-cutting CEC endeavors aimed at ensuring transparency and public participation in support of environmental law enforcement, providing relevant and reliable environmental data and information for decision-making, encouraging diverse and inclusive stakeholder engagement, raising awareness, promoting sustainable behaviors, facilitating outreach efforts, and fostering partnerships. The final section of this Operational Plan presents the CEC's framework to measure and report on our performance, which is anticipated to demonstrate our progress in meeting the CEC's goals and objectives and show how these achievements help the three Parties reach national priorities. The framework serves to enhance the CEC's performance and accountability, and to strengthen future planning processes.

Institutional Priorities

In addition to considering the commitments under Chapter 24 of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement² (“Trade Agreement”) and under the accompanying ECA, the three Parties affirmed their commitment to cooperate on activities in areas such as the reduction of pollution, environmental governance, the conservation and protection of biodiversity and habitat, the sustainable management and use of natural resources and supporting green growth and sustainable development. The ECA, as its first objective states, “seek[s] ways to modernize and enhance the effectiveness of environmental cooperation between the Parties, building upon their long history of environmental cooperation.”³ The strategic focus provided under the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan is a major step in this direction as it encompasses the following six thematic pillars and two cross-cutting approaches:

Figure 1. CEC’s 2021–2025 Strategic Pillars and Cross-cutting Approaches



The SP 2021–2025 reflects Council guidance and direction for CEC efforts over a five-year period and supports the development of specific activities, projects and initiatives to be included in the CEC Work Program.

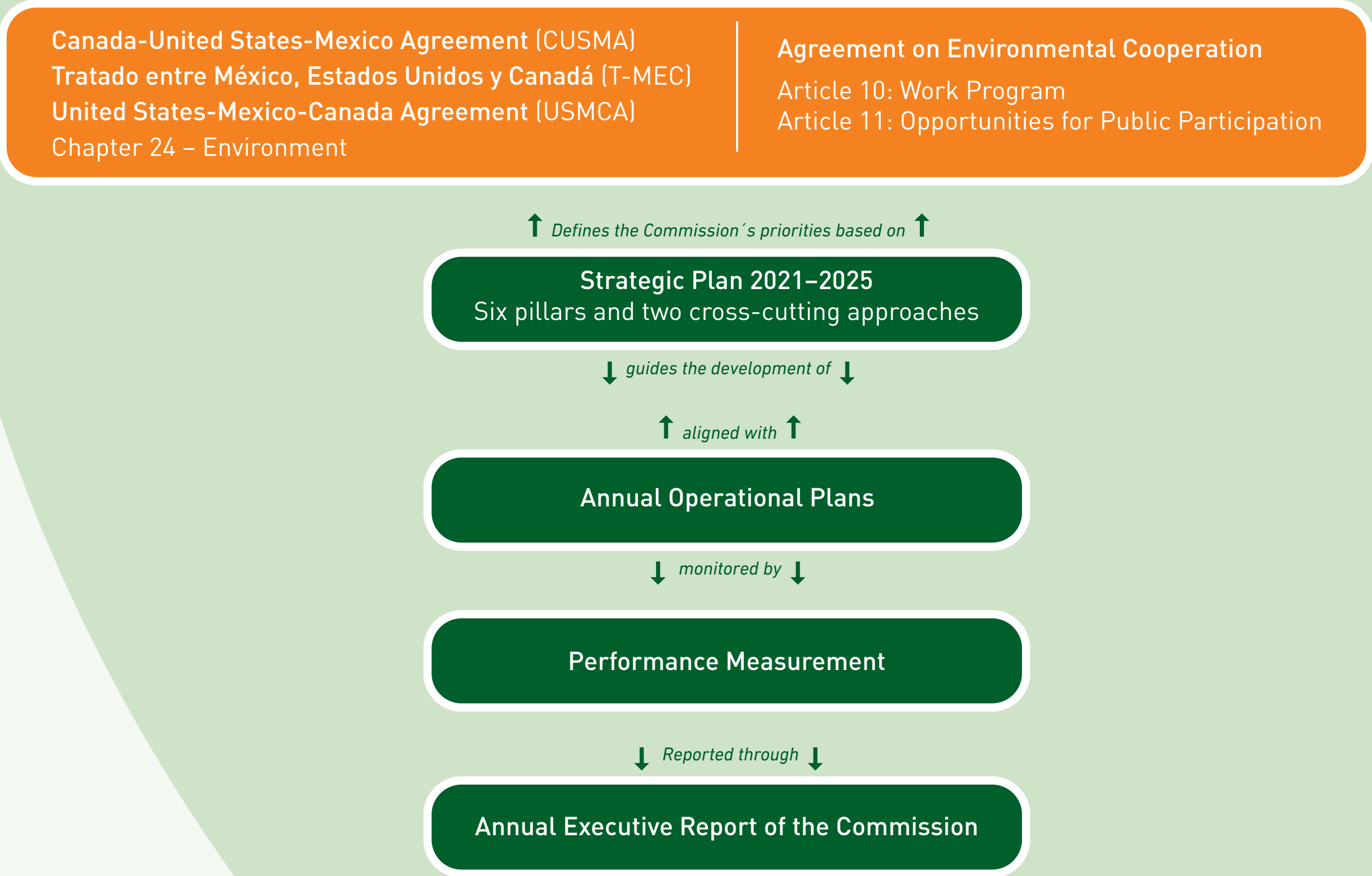
2. Chapter 24 of CUSMA / USMCA / T-MEC, available at: <<http://www.cec.org/files/documents/sem/chapter24-environment.pdf>>.
3. Agreement on Environmental Cooperation among the Governments of the United States of America, the United Mexican States, and Canada, available at: <<http://www.cec.org/about/agreement-on-environmental-cooperation/>> .

In line with Articles 10 and 11 of the ECA, the SP 2021–2025 promotes the CEC’s efforts to plan and evaluate its work effectively and in a meaningful manner and emphasizes the importance of strategies to increase outreach and support public participation in the development, implementation and monitoring of activities and projects. The planning process will ensure that consideration be given to Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in various facets of project design and management. It will also make certain that youth engagement, gender, diversity, equity and environmental justice are integrated in CEC’s work, where applicable.

Given that many of the projects and initiatives are based on multi-year commitments, emphasis is put on describing which activities will take place in 2023 and how these will be implemented to help achieve their stated objectives.

All projects and initiatives include workplans as well as performance measures and indicators to assist in monitoring and evaluating progress in achieving results (including through participatory evaluation). The latter requirement supports ECA Article 8, which refers to making public an annual executive report of the Commission. This exercise is critical to strengthening environmental governance in the North American region and to fostering transparency, public participation and accountability (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Governance Instruments to Promote Impact and Transparency



2023 Budget

(All figures are in Canadian dollars)

REVENUES	2023 budget
Parties' Contributions (Contributions US\$7,650,000, (US\$1.35/C\$ in 2023, US\$1.25/C\$ in 2022)	10,327,500
Apportioned Amount from Surplus to Supplement Parties' Contributions	n/a
Special Contributions from US Government (US\$1,000,000) (US\$1.35/C\$ in 2023, US\$1.25/C\$ in 2022)	1,350,000
Apportioned amount from Surplus Funds	3,600,000
Other	n/a
TOTAL REVENUES	15,277,500

EXPENSES

2023 budget

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	
Multi-Year	
Cooperative Projects	936,500
Large-Scale Initiatives	n/a
Council Initiatives	1,000,000
JPAC Initiatives	n/a
TEK Initiatives	n/a
EJ4Climate	2,700,000
North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA)	1,750,000
Annual	
Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM)	360,000
Tracking Pollutant Releases and Transfers in North America (PRTR)	195,000
CEC Interactive Platforms (Atlas)	162,000
Mandate Priorities and Emerging Issues	150,000
TOTAL PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	7,253,500
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE	
Council Support	308,000
JPAC Support	400,000
TEK Expert Group Support	150,000
Work Program Support	30,000
Communications	392,000
Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Development	325,000
Information System Infrastructure Maintenance	146,000
Performance Measurement and Reporting	85,000
Strategic and Operational Planning	60,000
TOTAL INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE	1,896,000
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT	
Salaries, Benefits and Professional Development	3,920,000
Operating Expenses	725,000
External Administrative Support	327,000
Recruitment and Relocation	86,000
Executive Director's Office	70,000
TOTAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT	5,128,000
Contingency Fund (includes FX impact of rate on Parties' contributions - 800K)	1,000,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	15,277,500



2023 Work Program

Addressing Issues of Common Interest and Concern

Cooperative Projects and Initiatives

CEC projects and initiatives encourage teamwork, promote outreach, support learning opportunities, and foster the exchange of knowledge, reflecting a vast array of modalities and forms of cooperation. All cooperative projects and initiatives support at least one of the SP 2021–2025 strategic pillars (see Table 1).

The following section presents the activities planned in 2023 for current cooperative projects and initiatives, some of which were initiated in 2021. More detailed information on project activities and budgets can be found in Appendix I.



Table 1. Projects Supporting Each Strategic Pillar

	Clean Air, Land and Water	Circular Economy and Sustainable Materials Management	Shared Ecosystems and Species	Resilient Economies and Communities	Effective Enforcement of Environmental Laws	Preventing and Reducing Pollution in the Marine Environment
Strengthening Implementation and Effective Enforcement of CITES for Timber in North America			•		•	
Grasslands Conservation and Migratory Birds			•	•		
Reduction of Marine Litter	•		•			•
Transforming Recycling and Solid Waste Management in North America		•		•		•
Nature-based Solutions to Address Flooding in Coastal Cities			•	•		
Trilateral Data Exchange System on the Import and Export of Hazardous Waste–Maintenance, Implementation, Testing, and Launch of US-Mexico API Exchange in Production	•	•			•	
Enhancing Co-Benefits of Marine Protected Areas			•	•		
EcolInnovation Network–Transition	•	•		•		•
Preventing and Reducing Food Loss and Waste: Continued Outreach, Enhancement, and Promotion of CEC-related Products and Stakeholder Engagement	•	•		•		
Advancing Pollinator Conservation throughout North America			•	•		
Advancing Supply Chain Transparency for Chemicals in Products		•				
Communities for Environmental Justice Network (CEJN)				•		
Indigenous Approaches to Freshwater Management in North America	•	•	•	•		
Supporting Circular Economy in North America		•				
Transitioning Remote Communities to Renewable Energy				•		
Addressing Ghost Gear in North America		•	•	•		•
Environmental Education for Community-led Ecosystem Conservation			•	•		
Air Quality Improvements for Environmental Justice	•					
Climate Adaptation Initiative				•		
Resilience of Indigenous People’s Food Systems	•	•	•	•		
Advancing Sustainable Forestry and Responsible Consumption of Wood Products			•		•	

Strengthening Implementation and Effective Enforcement of CITES for Timber in North America



Project duration: 24 months (Initiated in November 2021)

Context: CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) provides mechanisms to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants is carried out in a controlled manner that does not threaten the survival of species. This CEC project helps reduce illegal trade in CITES Appendix II timber species in North America by bringing together and leveraging the knowledge and roles of management and scientific authorities, enforcement officers, wood identification experts and forensic scientists, and other relevant experts to address specific needs within CITES regulations and enforcement activities.

Objective: This project will develop information on CITES enforcement relevant to the trilateral North American context, enhance the capacity of enforcement officials to identify CITES timber species reaching our borders, explore methods and systems for tracking timber species in trade, and support scientific assessment of a new CITES source code related to timber species.

2023 Activities:

- Share information and assess similarities and differences between national legislation, regulations, and processes for implementation of CITES by enforcement officers.
- Provide training, including information on novel tools and risk assessment, to enforcement officers to improve their ability to determine if a timber import is at high risk of being illegal.
- Form an alliance of the laboratories providing forensic and research capacity for wood products identification, in order to harmonize databases, share reference samples, and facilitate accurate, rapid and expedient species identification of timber evidence.
- Share potential methods and processes and exchange best practices on North American capacity to track the origin of timber in trade.
- Coordinate exchanges and produce information to increase guidance to CITES Parties on CITES source code Y implementation in North America.

Grasslands Conservation and Migratory Birds

Project duration: 36 months (Initiated in November 2021)

Context: The central grasslands of the Great Plains are a shared ecosystem stretching from southern Canada, through the United States, into northern Mexico. These grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America, home to many endemic grassland-dependent species that are at-risk, threatened, or endangered. The central grasslands also provide other valuable environmental services (e.g., carbon sequestration, water supply and flow regulation, and erosion control), and play a crucial role in agricultural sustainability for rural communities and economies. Building on past work by the CEC on grasslands conservation and ongoing efforts, such as the [Central Grasslands Roadmap](#) and the [JV8 Central Grasslands Initiative](#), the current project will fill recognized gaps in central grasslands conservation.

Objective: The three countries have made commitments to conserve at least 30 percent of their respective land and waters by 2030. To help fulfill these commitments, the CEC will support central grasslands' cross-sectoral mainstreamed management, restoration, and conservation in Canada, Mexico and the United States, by raising awareness of the grasslands' importance, providing new knowledge for decision-making, and strengthening collaboration, through inclusive network-building and strategic planning.

2023 Activities:

- Produce a social science analysis of challenges, constraints, and drivers for the conservation of grasslands, analyzing socio-economic factors and human dimensions (motivations, values, economics, needs of communities and barriers) to inform grasslands' conservation strategies.
- Lay the groundwork to identify a common trilateral framework and updated annually for monitoring native grasslands loss/gain.
- Support equitable engagement of those less represented in or absent from the Central Grasslands Roadmap and JV8 conservation strategy [such as private and communal landowners (ejidos) in Mexico, Central Grasslands Indigenous communities, and other potential partners].



Reduction of Marine Litter

Project duration: 30 months (Initiated in November 2021)

Context: As a growing problem that negatively affects economies and threatens ecosystems and potentially human health, marine litter is a high-priority global issue being addressed from several different angles. It is estimated that 80 percent of marine litter originates from land-based sources, often due to the improper disposal of items or uncollected waste that becomes litter and then travels through watersheds to the oceans. To prevent and reduce marine litter, actions are needed across the lifecycle of products.

Objective: Building on previous CEC efforts, the project will build public awareness about marine litter, deploy litter capture devices, collect comparable data across the three countries, and reduce land-based marine litter, including single-use plastic products and packaging, in communities located inland along waterways and river systems in North America. By demonstrating, educating, and communicating about the flow of commonly littered items downstream to the ocean, using low-cost technology and a variety of communication tools, the project will help prevent and reduce marine litter originating from inland cities.

2023 Activities:

- Install trash capture devices in small to mid-size streams or urban waterways (one inland pilot city per country).
- Implement community science activities in each pilot city.





Transforming Recycling and Solid Waste Management in North America

Project duration: 48 months (Initiated in November 2021)

Context: The World Bank estimates that around 2 billion tons of municipal solid waste were generated in 2016, with Canada, Mexico and the United States generating 0.4-1.5 kg more waste per capita per day than the global average.⁴ North America has the highest per capita plastic and paper consumption in the world. The region represents 21% of total plastics consumption⁵ and four times the global average in per capita paper consumption.⁶ Reducing waste and closing material loops will help minimize the environmental impacts along the value chain of resources and products, as well as presenting considerable economic opportunities and solutions to mitigate climate change.

Objective: This project aims to accelerate the uptake of circular economy and sustainable materials management practices that are needed to transform North American recycling and solid waste management and realize the economic and environmental benefits for the region. The project will address information gaps, inform policymaking across Canada, Mexico and the United States, identify potential areas for policy coherence, and advance circularity and sustainable material management practices.

2023 Activities:

- Generate milestone studies to evaluate the current state of recycling, opportunities and barriers, emerging technologies, best practices, etc., with a focus on the paper, plastics, and bioplastics waste streams.
- Stakeholder engagement: Develop a work program to identify relevant stakeholders and interested partners and promote their engagement into collaborative work on the topics related to the studies.

4. Kaza, Silpa; Yao, Lisa C.; Bhada-Tata, Perinaz; Van Woerden, Frank. 2018. What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050. Urban Development. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

5. Heller, M., Mazor, M., & Keoleian, G. (2020). Plastics in the US: toward a material flow characterization of production, markets and end of life. Environmental Research Letters, 15(9), 94034–.

6. Mandy Haggith, Susan Kinsella, Sergio Ba foni, Patrick Anderson, Jim Ford, Rune Leithe, Emmanuelle Neyroumande, Neva Murtha and Bas Tinhout. 2018. The State of the Global Paper Industry. Shifting Seas: New Challenges and Opportunities for Forests, People and the Climate. Environmental Paper Network.

Nature-based Solutions to Address Flooding in Coastal Cities

Project duration: 30 months (Initiated in November 2021)

Context: Many North Americans live in coastal cities that produce a high value of goods and services but are vulnerable to flooding. The risks associated with coastal flood hazards are escalating due to land-use changes, ecosystem loss or transformation, population growth in coastal zones, sea-level rise, changes in the frequency and severity of storms, and ageing flood protection infrastructure. Nature-based solutions (NBS) reduce flood and erosion risk through the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of natural coastal environments, and the construction of new features that mimic or work with ecological processes.

Building on past collaborative experiences advancing knowledge on blue carbon, coastal adaptation, and extreme events, the CEC is uniquely placed to build capacity for coastal communities to manage flood risk in a changing climate through NBS that maximize co-benefits to human and natural communities.

Objective: This project provides a first opportunity for NBS practitioners, working across North America in a broad range of disciplines, to lay the foundation for a North American community of practice that can offer an interdisciplinary approach to implementing NBS. It also addresses barriers to using NBS by filling knowledge gaps on co-benefits, retrofitting and monitoring, and by training practitioners and educating community members on the use of NBS.

2023 Activities:

- Develop trilateral, intersectoral collaboration to support the use of NBS to address coastal flooding in cities.
- Develop knowledge and tools for coastal communities to support NBS implementation, including foundational guidance on the co-benefits of NBS, retrofitting existing infrastructure, and monitoring the efficacy of NBS.



Trilateral Data Exchange System on the Import and Export of Hazardous Waste–Maintenance, Implementation, Testing, and Launch of US-Mexico API Exchange in Production

Project duration: 18 months (Initiated in December 2021)

Context: Pursuant to the legal frameworks controlling imports and exports of hazardous wastes across North America, Canada, Mexico and the United States exchange notice and consent notifications prior to shipping hazardous wastes. The “Notice and Consent Electronic Data Exchange” (NCEDE) is a system developed through the CEC in 2012 to enable the three countries to process these notifications efficiently and effectively and thus protect the North American environment through appropriate control of transboundary hazardous waste movements. This is a follow-up project to the CEC’s OP 2019–2020 project, “Modernizing the data exchange system for hazardous waste transfers,” and is needed to consolidate the modernization of the system given unexpected delays caused by contract lapses related to the security certification for the US IT system.

Objective: This project continues the joint work carried out by the trilateral working group/Steering Committee, representing areas of authorization management for transboundary movements of waste and information technology. The aims of the project are to: 1) test implementation of the maintenance approach created in 2021 for the node-based and API-based exchanges, including, at the trilateral level, an optimization and update of the data catalogs (operational codes) developed, and the incorporation of the regulatory changes on cross-border movements between the three countries; 2) complete testing of the US-Mexico API exchange in production; and 3) ensure IT support for a full period after the US-Mexico API exchange is successfully launched.



2023 Activities:

- Conduct regular, periodic trilateral calls to ensure a sound maintenance of the system.
- Ensure via virtual meetings that the US-Mexico API exchange is fully operational.
- Provide Operations and Maintenance (O&M) and development support for the IT system used by the Mexican Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Semarnat).

Enhancing Co-benefits of Marine Protected Areas

Project duration: 36 months (Initiated in January 2022)

Context: Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are key to conserving and restoring coastal and marine ecosystems, delivering many natural and socio-economic co-benefits. Over several projects, the CEC has provided a unique forum for North American MPA practitioners, bringing them together to identify and describe the marine ecoregions of North America and priority conservation areas; communicate the vital roles MPAs play for communities, the economy, scientific knowledge, and conservation; gather scientific information on the impact of climate change on MPAs; and develop tools to assess conditions and identify vulnerabilities in coastal and marine ecosystems and respond to these vulnerabilities.



Objective: This project aims to enhance co-benefits by increasing Indigenous and local leadership in MPA networks; facilitating seascape-level conservation through collaboration; and identifying and sharing best practices for climate change adaptation and mitigation, habitat restoration, and blue carbon and other critical habitat work. By providing a platform to learn from Indigenous and community-led conservation and for practitioners to identify opportunities for adaptation, mitigation, conservation and restoration in their MPAs, within shared seascapes, and across the marine ecoregions of North America, the project will support the development of an ecologically and socially inclusive MPA network across North America, for the benefit of coastal and marine ecosystems, coastal communities, and a more resilient North America.

2023 Activities:

- Build on existing approaches and opportunities for Indigenous and community leadership and engagement in coastal conservation and adaptation.
- Develop knowledge on socio-ecological connectivity and conservation to strengthen seascape-level conservation.
- Identify and share best practices for coastal/marine climate change adaptation, and conservation and restoration of blue carbon and other critical habitats.

EcolInnovation Network – Transition

Project duration: 24 months (Initiated in December 2021)

Context: The CEC launched the EcolInnovation Network (EIN) at its annual Council Session in 2019. The Network's mission is to encourage the creation of innovation centers at academic institutions across North America and connect them in order to enhance education and provide tools for students and communities related to entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable design for green growth. As a last activity of the 2019–2020 project, a transition plan was developed to create a path for moving the Network to a new host institution. The University of Waterloo (Ontario, Canada) has agreed to host the EcolInnovation Network starting in 2022 and committed to additional financial and in-kind contributions in support of this endeavor.

Objective: This follow-up project aims to create a financially independent and sustainable EIN by 30 June 2023, transferring the financial, operational and governance responsibilities of the Network from the CEC to the EIN members, partners and the managing institution, and by building the necessary operation and financial capacity to continue its efforts in the future. CEC funds will be combined with financial contributions from other sources, including membership fees, project funding from other organizations, and corporate contributions from private sector sponsors and partners.

2023 Activities:

- Support and ensure the proper transition of the Network's financial, operational and governance responsibilities from the Commission to the University of Waterloo.
- Under the leadership of the University of Waterloo, continue to support the operations of the EcolInnovation Network during 2023 to further promote the creation and interconnection of innovation centers at academic institutions across North America and provide tools for youth and communities relative to entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainable design for green growth.
- Support dissemination of EIN activities to increase visibility of the network and promote activities.



Preventing and Reducing Food Loss and Waste: Continued Outreach, Enhancement and Promotion of CEC-related Products and Stakeholder Engagement



Project duration: 18 months (Initiated in December 2021)

Context: Food loss and waste (FLW) is an increasingly important issue in Canada, Mexico and the United States, where close to 170 million tonnes of food produced for human consumption are lost and wasted each year—across the food supply chain, including in pre-harvest and consumer sectors.⁷ Disposal of food waste in landfills produces methane, a powerful greenhouse gas many times more potent than carbon dioxide. FLW also has environmental and socio-economic impacts, including the inefficient use of natural resources, economic loss, biodiversity loss and public health issues. Therefore, preventing food from becoming waste in the first place is one of the most impactful approaches Canada, Mexico and the United States can take to reducing the environmental harm associated with FLW.

Objective: The main goal of this follow-up project is to build upon the success and momentum achieved through the previous CEC projects on FLW prevention and reduction. The CEC will actively work to elevate the visibility of preventing, recovering, recycling, and reducing food loss and waste through continued outreach, awareness-raising, enhancement, and promotion of CEC-related products and stakeholder engagement.

2023 Activities:

- Conduct ongoing promotion, awareness raising and CEC content dissemination of both the “Food Matters Action Kit” and the “Practical Guide 2.0: Why and How to Measure Food Loss and Waste.”

7. Source: CEC Foundational Report. [Characterization and Management of Food Loss and Waste in North America](#), 2017.

Advancing Pollinator Conservation throughout North America

Project duration: 24 months (Initiated in July 2022)

Context: Pollinators support the reproduction of about 80% of wild vascular plants and 75% of crop species, and as such are crucial to food security, human well-being and ecosystems. The population sizes of pollinators have declined worldwide. This decline requires urgent conservation actions and the engagement of stakeholders in different sectors. Canada, Mexico and the United States established foundations for regional collaboration on pollinator conservation through an initial project. Over two years, the project held targeted workshops and supported a literature review to inform the drafting of a first North American Pollinator Framework. The framework highlights the need for long-term, harmonized monitoring data to design and implement effective pollinator conservation strategies.

Objective: By sharing best practices and strategies to organize and mobilize native bee inventory and monitoring, this project will lay the foundations for more robust and standardized data repositories to inform conservation actions across the continent. In addition, the project will develop tools and communication materials to raise awareness about native bees and their importance, and to drive action through citizen science and community involvement.

2023 Activities:

- Strengthen existing tools and share best practices for native bee inventories and monitoring through an emerging North American community of practice.
- Communicate the environmental, social, and economic benefits of native bees for communities, food production, and natural ecosystem functioning.



Advancing Supply Chain Transparency for Chemicals in Products



Project duration: 24 months (Initiated in February 2022)

Context: A fundamental assumption in a circular economy is that materials re-introduced within value chains are safe for human health and the environment. However, a lack of composition data for chemicals in products, and industry awareness of them, poses challenges to identifying risks. Increased chemical supply chain transparency (SCT) will help governments and industry to: 1) identify problematic chemicals or classes of chemicals, and suitable alternatives for them; 2) inform trade and procurement decisions for raw materials, product components, and final goods at various points within value chains; 3) inform recycling and waste management systems; 4) improve the ability of industry to comply with chemical reporting and other regulations; and 5) meet growing consumer demand for product ingredient information.

Objective: The goal of this project is to foster collaboration among North American countries to improve SCT and enhance governments' ability to identify and prevent products containing chemicals of concern, or chemical substitutes of concern (e.g., regrettable substitution), from entering or re-entering the economy. The information derived from this project will also help industry build resilient supply chains that respond to consumer demand for safer products and information on their chemical composition.

2023 Activities:

- Conduct a review and assessment of existing chemical supply chain transparency (SCT) current practices, tools, challenges, and regulations.
- Undertake a case study of one or more industry sector currently using best practices for supply chain transparency and knowledge of product composition.
- Plan and conduct workshop(s) with decision makers, industry stakeholders and other experts to share the findings and gather additional recommendations to enhance SCT in North America.

Communities for Environmental Justice Network

Project duration: 18 months (initiated in April 2023)

Context: Environmental Justice (EJ) is a broad term used to describe a range of social movements and policy frameworks that address the heightened risk of environmental harm on marginalized communities. Seeking justice in this context implies an effort to increase and enable the fair and equitable treatment among the population, leading to the elimination of inequities. For the purposes of this project, the terms “environmental equity” and “environmental justice” refer indistinctly both to fair and equitable treatment among the population, leading to the elimination of inequities, subordination, discrimination and exclusion, recognizing and protecting cultural and gender differences, from a human rights perspective in actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.⁸

Objective: The project “Communities for Environmental Justice Network” (CEJN), is intended to create a network of Indigenous, local vulnerable, disadvantaged, and/or underserved communities that have environmental justice concerns, in order to increase local capacity through the amplification and dissemination of community-based expertise, lessons learned, and guidance in the context of climate change. Through the Network, participating members will contribute to the facilitation of learning and knowledge exchange processes, in particular traditional knowledge and practices, and develop a virtual resource library, with the goal of strengthening the climate adaptation, mitigation and other capacity building of Indigenous, local, and vulnerable communities in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

8. Source: US EPA. *Environmental Protection Agency*, <<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>>. This is one government-centric definition, note that others exist from the NGO perspective. A historic, yet still highly recognized list of 17 Environmental Justice principles from NGOs may be found here: <<https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>>.



2023 Activities:

- Select communities for inclusion in the CEJN and engage them as founding members of the Network.
- Host a trilateral workshop to identify and disseminate stories, strategies, and lessons learned, as well as inform the development of knowledge-sharing tools from culturally and contextually diverse North American communities (founding members).
- Develop and disseminate CEJN toolkit and knowledge exchange tools and culturally relevant information.

Council-supported Initiatives



Indigenous Approaches to Freshwater Management in North America

Initiative duration: 16 months⁹ (initiated in October 2021)

Context: Water is at the core of the six pillars under the CEC's Strategic Plan 2021–2025: water management, water cleanliness, ecosystem health, marine pollution, and supporting economic sectors heavily reliant on the sustainable management of water. Indigenous Peoples' traditional cultures and knowledge systems are globally recognized as holding critical information related to achieving sustainable practices in environmental management. As such, a fuller appreciation of Indigenous Peoples' perspectives is essential to advancing inclusive and diverse sustainable environmental management approaches in meeting the goals and priorities of the CEC, and to institutionalizing the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge (IK), including traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in the activities of the organization.

Objective: This initiative will document Indigenous approaches to freshwater management in North America and make lessons learned available to the public through an online portal on the CEC's website. This initiative will include a series of case studies identified by the TEKEG, a knowledge dialogue to complement the case studies and a workshop with water experts on potential opportunities to apply IK, including TEK, to the CEC's operations and policy recommendations.

2023 Activities:

- Continue documenting Indigenous Peoples' approaches to freshwater management in North America through three successful case studies, including site visits to each community.
- Organize a trilateral workshop in Mexico, to assess potential opportunities to integrate IK (including TEK), as well as Indigenous Peoples' perspectives and stewardship practices in freshwater management in CEC operations and across North America.
- Create an online portal on CEC's website showcasing Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on freshwater management and sustainable use.

9. The Council approved extension of the initiative's implementation until December 2023.



A close-up photograph of a vehicle's exhaust pipe and tire tread, showing signs of wear and rust. The image is dark and moody, with the exhaust pipe being the central focus.

Air Quality Improvements for Environmental Justice

Initiative duration: 45 months (Initiated in October 2022)

Context: Black carbon (BC), or “soot” (a component of fine particulate matter, PM), is a significant air contaminant that affects not only public health but also our climate. Sources of these emissions include agricultural burning, domestic wood combustion, and fossil fuel combustion from transportation and industrial activities. Our countries’ systems for monitoring air pollution have limited coverage, with millions of people across North America living in communities that have no means of measuring local air quality conditions.

Objective: This initiative aims to build partnerships that will respond to community-identified poor air quality conditions from exposures to high levels of BC and particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) emissions, as well as communities that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harm or risk, and/or have environmental justice concerns. The initiative will select and deploy low-cost air pollution sensors (in at least one community per country) to better document, understand, and mitigate PM_{2.5} /BC exposures in these communities, while increasing transparency and access to air quality information for local populations and decision makers.

2023 Activities:

- Formalize collaborative partnerships with communities (at least one per country).
- Identify and procure appropriate PM_{2.5}/BC sensor technologies for each community.
- Work with the community and technical advisors to identify PM_{2.5}/BC sources and define mitigation priorities.
- Develop a monitoring and capacity-building activities.

Transitioning Remote Communities to Renewable Energy

Initiative duration: 18–24 months (initiated in April 2023)

Context: In North America, many rural, isolated, and remote communities lack proper access to traditional electrical grid infrastructure and often rely on small, mainly diesel-based, mini-grids for their electricity supply. These mini-grids are inefficient, expensive, and contribute to local pollution. Further, ageing, inefficient generators leave communities vulnerable to power outages, including damage from extreme weather events, while capacity limitations and unreliability hinder many communities from expansion and economic growth. In many cases, Indigenous communities are disproportionately impacted by these issues. Transitioning these communities to clean and decentralized energy solutions has the potential to bring socio-economic and environmental benefits.

Objective: The CEC will develop case studies of best practices from across North America on transitioning communities to cleaner, more affordable, and reliable sources of clean energy that will improve environmental conditions, enhance energy security, and promote self-sufficiency and community-ownership of energy generation projects. These case studies will be integrated in a “Multi-stakeholder Platform for Transitioning Remote Communities to Renewable Energy,” developed by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), which will serve as a global communication platform on the topic of energy transitions for remote communities. It would be the first regional case study completed on this topic and would provide models and strategies for countries around the world facing similar challenges. This project builds on previous CEC expertise on the topic, namely, the “Guide to Developing a Community Renewable Energy Project in North America.”

2023 Activities:

- Identify case studies in North America as models of community driven ownership and maintenance of renewable energy projects.
- Engage case study communities (at least one per country) in sharing renewable energy transition experiences and lessons learned.



Addressing Ghost Gear in North America



Initiative duration: 36 months (initiated in December 2022)

Context: Tonnes of ghost gear (abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear—ALDFG) enter the ocean every year, harming marine life, reducing fish stocks and impacting the livelihoods of coastal communities. Our three countries are signatories to the Global Ghost Gear Initiative, an alliance of fishing industry, private sector, academia and governments focused on solving the problem of ghost gear through collaborative work. .

Objective: This initiative aims to prevent and reduce ghost gear in Canada, Mexico and the United States by developing tools to address ALDFG best practices in fisheries, building fishing industry understanding and collaboration, identifying knowledge and data gaps, and supporting responsible management of end-of-life fishing gear in coastal fishing communities.

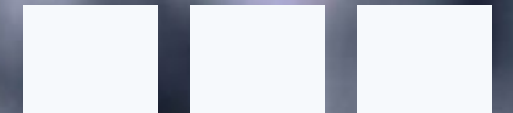
2023 Activities:

- Conduct training workshops for the fishing industry on responsible fishing.
- Develop support material to implement ADLFG best practices.
- Support coordination of ghost gear advocacy initiatives.

Other Initiatives under Development

Other initiatives currently under development include:

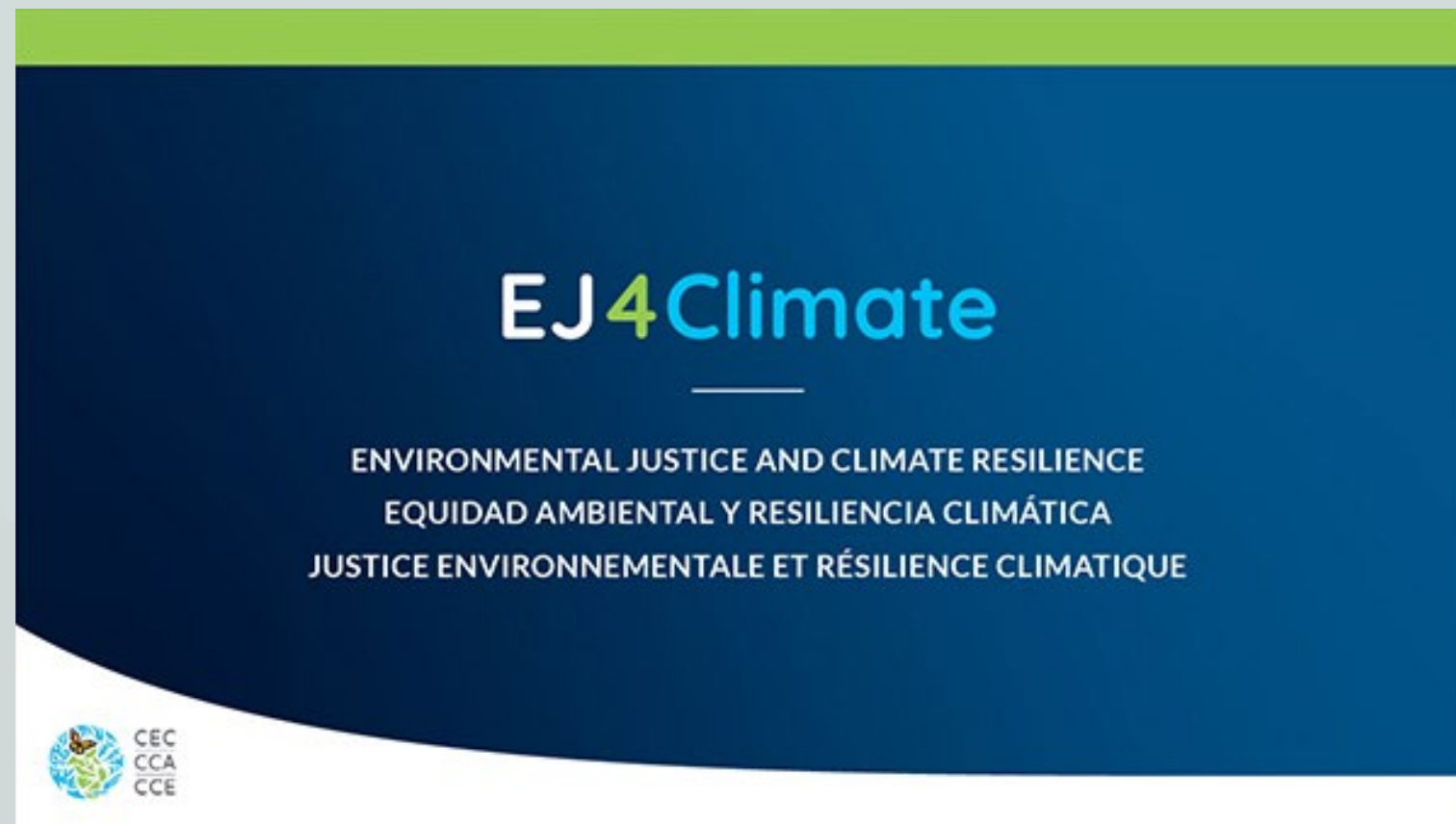
- Environmental Education for Community-led Ecosystem Conservation
- Supporting Circular Economy in North America
- Climate Adaptation Initiative
- Resilience of Indigenous People's Food Systems
- Advancing Sustainable Forestry and Responsible Consumption of Wood Products



Grant Programs

The background is a stylized illustration. The top half is a deep blue sky with two white birds in flight. The bottom half features rolling hills in shades of green and light blue, with a darker blue area at the very bottom, suggesting water or a path.

Environmental Justice and Climate Resilience (EJ4Climate) Grant Program



This grant program, initiated by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by providing an additional US\$1 million contribution to the CEC, was launched by the Council in 2021. It provides funding directly to local and Indigenous communities and community-based organizations in Canada, Mexico and the United States, supporting underserved and vulnerable communities as they prepare for climate-related impacts. Recognizing

that building resilience to the climate crisis is urgent for those North American communities, EJ4Climate supports environmental justice by facilitating grassroots involvement in the pursuit of innovative and effective local solutions and the development of partnerships that address the unequal distribution of environmental vulnerabilities to climate change. The second cycle of this US\$2 million grant program was launched in September 2022, calling for proposals that integrate formal or informal community-led environmental education approaches. The implementation of selected projects will begin in March 2023 and organizations that receive grants are to deliver their community-based initiatives over a 24-month time span.¹⁰

Also in 2023, a third cycle of the EJ4Climate program will be launched, giving priority to projects that put forward community empowerment strategies to improve resilience to extreme weather events in urban settings. The climate crisis underscores the need for self-determination in climate action and the importance of engaging residents in urban areas in defining priority actions and implementing them to improve local conditions.

10. See <<http://www.cec.org/grant-programs/ej4climate/ej4climate-grants/>> for more information on the projects.

North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA)

With C\$7,488,903 disbursed since its launch in 2010, the CEC's North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) grant program has supported the delivery of projects led by nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations that build partnerships and drive action to improve environmental conditions at the community, Indigenous, local and regional levels. This program promotes a sense of shared purpose and responsibility for the environment and has served as an important mechanism for bringing direct benefits to local communities in the region and for engaging the public in addressing the CEC's priorities. Indeed, all supported projects have complemented the work of the CEC by addressing one or many of its strategic pillars and carrying out innovative and effective solutions.

The 2021–2023 NAPECA grant program has provided a total of C\$1,500,000 to 10 organizations to support projects that help communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and increase their resilience.¹¹



11. See <<http://www.cec.org/grant-programs/north-american-partnership-for-environmental-community-action/napeca-grants/>> for more information on the projects.

Improving Access to Information for Decision-Making

The CEC's online publications library¹² and tools and resources¹³ provide the public with access to high-quality environmental information and materials. These include scientific reports, databases and geospatial data related to environmental research and management, all intended to support the efforts of government officials, the private sector, academic and research institutions, nongovernmental organizations and communities.

The CEC's webpage hosts hundreds of publications available in English, French and Spanish.

A list of CEC's most popular publications can be found [here](#).¹⁴

The following initiatives further the Council's commitment to facilitate cooperation and knowledge sharing in North America towards decision-making that supports environmental protection and sustainable development.

12. Available at: <www.cec.org/publications/>

13. Available at: <www.cec.org/tools/>

14. Available at: <<http://www.cec.org/top-50-publications/>>

North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register Initiative (NAPRTR)



Supporting the 2021–2025 Strategic Pillar, *Clean air, water, and land*, the North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (NAPRTR) Initiative compiles, integrates and presents data on the sources, amounts and management of industrial pollutants reported by approximately 40,000 industrial facilities to the Canadian, Mexican and United States pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs). These data, accessible via the Taking Stock report series and *Taking Stock Online* website¹⁵ and searchable database, are used by governments, industry, researchers, NGOs and the public to explore and better understand the pollutant releases and transfers reported by North American facilities, their risks, and the effectiveness of pollution prevention measures.

The sixteenth edition of the *Taking Stock* report will be published and features a special analysis of off-site transfers to disposal during the 2014–2018 period. At the same time, the CEC will launch the enhanced *Taking Stock Online* website, that includes additional contextual information on the home page to help guide data users, along with a simplified database user interface and two additional years (2019–2020) of trilateral PRTR data. Feedback from interested groups and individuals on the *Taking Stock* report and website enhancements will be sought during an online workshop.

15. Available at: <www.cec.org/takingstock>

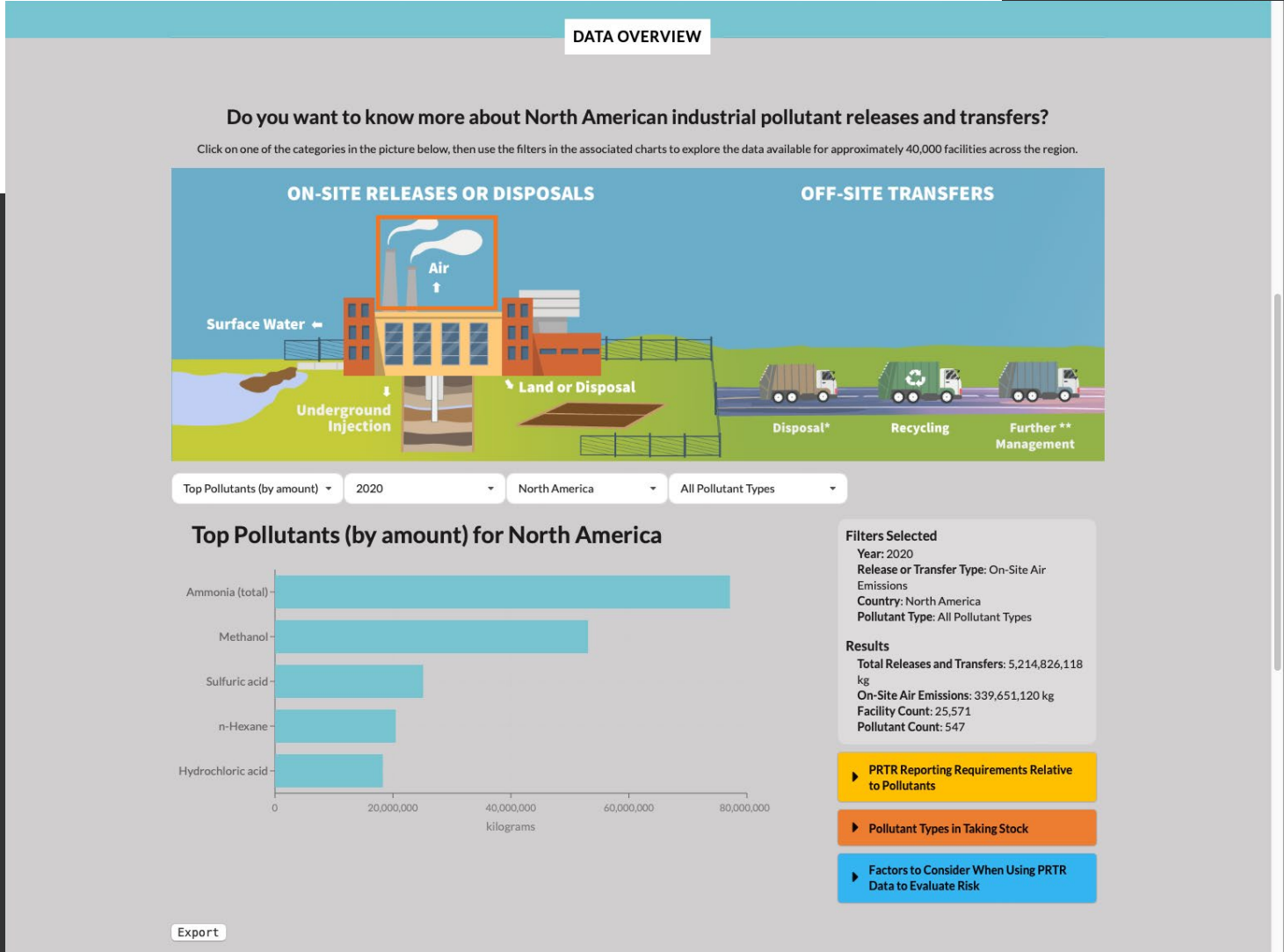
Taking Stock: North American Pollutant Releases and Transfers

Volume 16



With a feature analysis of off-site transfers to disposal

March 2023



Coordination with the national PRTR programs will proceed in 2023 to continue enhancing the quality, comparability and accessibility of PRTR data across the region. In collaboration with the national programs and representatives of the transportation equipment manufacturing sector and supply chain, the CEC will continue work on the recently launched Pollution Prevention Challenge, the first phase of which involves assessing the level of pollution prevention reporting by facilities in the sector.

Other activities involve exploring options for providing access to reported facility-level greenhouse gas data into the *Taking Stock* Online database and collaborating with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Working Party on PRTR on issues related to improving cross-border transfers.

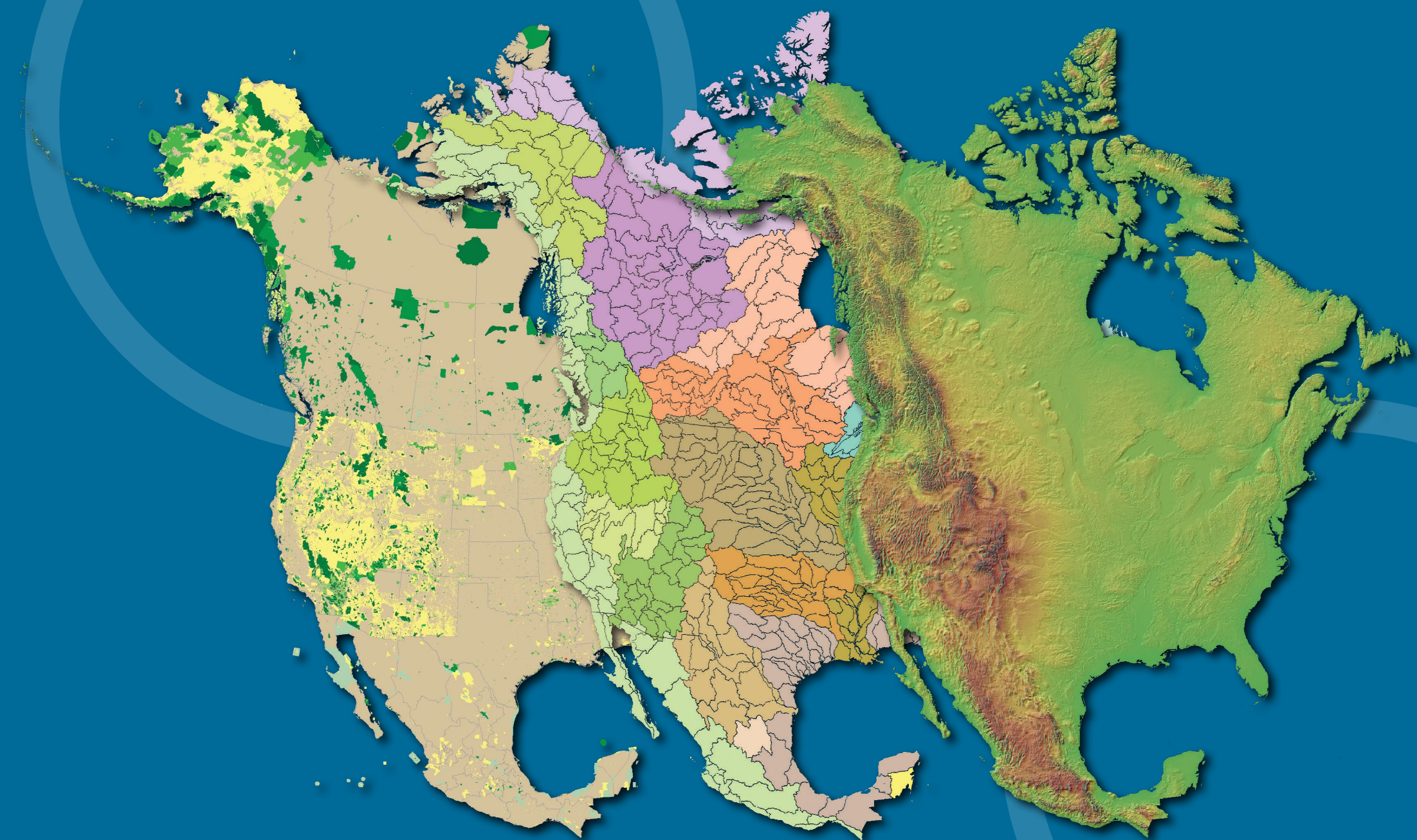
The North American Environmental Atlas

The North American Environmental Atlas is an online mapping resource providing combined and harmonized geospatial environmental data from Canada, Mexico and the United States, allowing for a continental and regional perspective on transboundary environmental issues. Downloadable North American map layers can also be examined through an online map viewer, allowing the visualization of various environmental aspects, such as terrestrial and marine ecological regions, climate zones, as well as protected areas across the three countries.

The Atlas supports a wide range of research and analysis of environmental challenges in North America as attested by citations in over a hundred published scientific articles.

Activities in 2023 will focus on updating individual map layers, including, but not limited to, the North American Land Cover, North American Major Roads, and North American Lakes and Rivers map layers. Additional activities and resources will also be dedicated to improving the accessibility, visibility and reach of this online mapping resource to a wider public.

The Atlas supports the SP 2021–2025 by providing geospatial information that can be associated to all strategic pillars. New and updated thematic map layers are often based on data generated by CEC initiatives/projects.



North American Land Change Monitoring System (NALCMS)



North American Environmental Atlas – Land Cover 2020, 30m

The North American Land Change Monitoring System (NALCMS) is an ongoing collaborative initiative between the CEC and the Governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States and their respective mapping agencies to monitor land cover and its change over time at the North American perspective. Land cover refers to the classification of surface cover on the ground, whether forest, urban infrastructure, bodies of water or agricultural land, etc., which helps to distinguish natural and anthropogenic features. The NALCMS product depicts information about land cover and land cover change in a seamless and consistent way across North America by assembling and harmonizing national datasets.

NALCMS provides valuable indicators to help the three countries better understand the dynamics of land cover and its changes over time and can be used in analyses for decision-making for various applications, such as carbon sequestration analysis, wildlife habitat mapping, ecosystem monitoring, environmental planning, water quality assessments, and evaluation of biofuels production potential.

Activities will be undertaken in 2023 to finalize the North American 2020 land cover dataset and publish it as part of the North American Environmental Atlas, and to initiate the North American 2015–2020 land cover change product. These activities will also include the development of promotional and outreach material to connect with existing and new geospatial practitioners and engage them in the use of the NALCMS set of products.



Stakeholder Participation and Engagement Mechanisms

Public participation and stakeholder engagement are at the core of the CEC mission. For more than 29 years, the CEC has developed a strong network of stakeholders who have been engaged through different mechanisms including the implementation of projects, initiatives, grant programs and participation in the annual Council session, JPAC public forums and consultations, youth programs, outreach and partnership activities and through the Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) process. Furthermore, the importance of achieving *Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation* was identified as a cross-cutting theme in the CEC Strategic Plan 2021–2025, especially regarding private sector engagement, the inclusion of traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous perspectives, youth, vulnerable populations and environmental justice, gender and diversity considerations.

In 2023, the CEC will continue strengthening its collaborative efforts and finding innovative approaches and tools to promote diverse and inclusive engagement. These efforts will continue to increase the visibility of the CEC's work and raise awareness of North American environmental priorities, while enhancing the relevance of the CEC as a unique organization and highlighting its mandate to convene and facilitate cooperation. In addition, stakeholder engagement activities will focus on finding opportunities for collaboration to leverage efforts, share knowledge and tools and position the CEC and the North American region at the forefront of regional and global discussions of environmental priorities. To achieve this, the CEC's efforts will be driven by the overarching 2021–2025 Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Strategy, a 2023–2024 Youth Engagement Plan and a Private Sector Strategy. In addition, the Partnerships Action Plan and Reference Guide will inform our partnerships efforts to support the implementation of CEC's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan.

Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) Activities

The Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) process is a mechanism originally established under the 1994 North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation that allows any person or entity of a Party to raise concerns about an alleged failure of any of the three Parties to effectively enforce its environmental laws. The process has continued and is now governed by Articles 24.27 and 24.28 in the environment chapter of the trade agreement. The SEM process promotes transparency and public participation by providing information to enhance understanding of the enforcement of environmental law in North America. The CEC Secretariat is responsible for implementing key stages of this process as per the Environmental Cooperation Agreement and the trade agreement. As part of the Council's efforts to promote transparency and the information-sharing focus of the SEM process, in 2023 the Parties agreed to meet regularly to monitor constantly the progress of the submissions received and analyze how to expedite the SEM process.



In 2023, the Legal Affairs and SEM Unit will publish the *Metrobus Reforma* and the *City Park Project* factual records and will undertake the development of any new factual records as instructed by the Council.¹⁶ The Secretariat is awaiting Council's instructions on developing factual records, potentially with respect to four submissions. The Secretariat will continue processing other active submissions.

The CEC also plans to publish the independent, long-term impact assessment of the SEM process developed by the Environmental Law Institute. Other activities will include a joint event with other Secretariats in the Americas charged with the implementation of similar submissions processes under trade agreements with the United States and the increasing awareness about SEM in the three countries.

16. See Registry of Submissions, available at: <www.cec.org/submissions-on-enforcement/>



30th Annual Council Session

Every year the CEC Council holds a public meeting during its annual Regular Session. Council public sessions offer a unique opportunity for citizens to engage in-person or remotely in a dialogue with Council members and share their views on relevant topics and issues.

On 28-29 June 2023, the Council will convene for its thirtieth regular session in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The theme of the session will be *Indigenous and Urban Approaches to Climate Adaptation*.

Joint Public Advisory Committee Activities

JPAC is committed to supporting the CEC's mission of facilitating effective cooperation and public participation to conserve, protect and enhance the North American environment. As such, it will continue to support efforts to have diverse public participation in the various CEC activities and its cooperative work program, especially through the organization of events and public consultations, among others. The CEC's Strategic Plan 2021–2025, the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA), and Chapter 24 of the United States, Mexico, Canada Agreement all establish broad areas of cooperation in the North American region. Based on these, and with Indigenous Knowledge (IK), including Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous perspectives as cross-cutting themes, JPAC will focus its efforts in 2023 on the following:

- Increased collaboration with the other CEC constituent bodies and the TEK Expert Group (TEKEG)
- Implementation of the JPAC-led initiative: Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products
- Climate Crisis
- Water
- Trade and Environment



To achieve this, JPAC members proposed the following activities:

- Meetings with the other CEC constituent bodies and the TEK Expert Group (TEKEG) that:
 - Build on recent efforts to increase dialogue with the Council and Alternate Representatives from Canada, Mexico and the United States, through informal meetings and communications.
 - Seek opportunities for increasing collaboration with the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG) through joint virtual and in-person meetings and events.
 - Support the TEKEG and CEC efforts to increase the integration of TEK and Indigenous perspectives in CEC programs and activities.
 - Support the CEC and build upon recent successes to increase public participation and the dissemination of the work of the JPAC and the CEC, including enhanced collaboration with relevant stakeholders, such as academia, research centers, nongovernmental organizations, etc.
 - Support the Parties' efforts in ensuring that CEC officials, JPAC members and other experts are granted comparable privileges and immunities across the three countries.
 - Support the CEC's efforts to increase the engagement and involvement of youth and environmental justice communities in CEC programs and activities.

- JPAC Public Forum (hybrid) on Indigenous Approaches to Climate Adaptation on 28 June in Victoria, Canada.
- JPAC Regular Session 23-02 in Mexico.
- Virtual round table on trade and environment.
- JPAC-led initiative on Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products.

By considering Indigenous knowledge (IK), including TEK, and Indigenous perspectives as part of all its activities and by increasing collaboration with the TEK Expert Group, JPAC's work will contribute to the Resilient Economies and Communities strategic pillar and will employ: *Innovative and Effective Solutions* and *Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation* cross-cutting approaches. The JPAC public forum on climate adaptation will also support the *Resilient Economies and Communities* strategic pillar. JPAC will also continue its efforts to reach new and diverse stakeholders as part of all its public engagement activities in collaboration with the CEC secretariat in support to the crosscutting approach *Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation*.



By considering TEK and Indigenous perspectives as part of all its activities and by increasing collaboration with the TEKEG, JPAC's work will contribute to the *Resilient Economies and Communities* strategic pillar and will employ the: *Innovative and Effective Solutions and Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation* cross-cutting approaches.

The JPAC Public Forum on environmental education will also showcase initiatives led by local communities and offer a platform for communities to learn from each other and increase their resilience which supports the *Resilient Economies and Communities* strategic pillar. JPAC will continue its efforts to reach new and diverse stakeholders as part of all its public engagement activities in collaboration with the CEC secretariat in support to the cross-cutting approach *Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation*. Finally, JPAC will also develop and lead a new initiative starting in 2022. The initiative is in development.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group Activities



Working with experts in traditional environmental practices from across North America has had an invaluable impact on the CEC's work by contributing to an improved understanding of ecological processes and ultimately to enhanced positive results for the environment.

The Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG),¹⁷ created in 2015, is the first traditional ecological knowledge panel to provide advice to an intergovernmental organization such as the CEC. This recognizes the importance of preserving the

traditional knowledge and practices of local and Indigenous communities to help address the effects of climate change and contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and to the protection of biodiversity.

The CEC will continue working with the TEKEG to inform, support and enhance CEC engagement activities and identify and incorporate Indigenous Knowledge (IK), including Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as well as Indigenous perspectives and stewardship practices into its activities and policy

recommendations, as appropriate. In 2023, this will be done through the continued implementation of the TEKEG-led initiative on Indigenous approaches to freshwater management in North America, which will help inform how better to integrate Indigenous approaches to freshwater management into CEC activities and support the following strategic pillars: Clean Air, Land and Water; Circular Economy and Sustainable Materials Management, Shared Ecosystems and Species; Resilient Economies and Communities. The TEKEG is also developing a new initiative on the Resilience of Indigenous People's Food Systems, and implementation is expected to begin during the second semester of 2023. In addition to these efforts, the TEKEG will also work with the CEC Secretariat on developing a CEC Indigenous Strategy and a protocol for engaging with Indigenous Communities.

17. For more information about the TEKEG, please visit: www.cec.org/about/traditional-ecological-knowledge-expert-group/

Outreach and Partnerships Activities

The CEC recognizes the importance of increasing both its regional and international presence and highlighting its unique role in promoting trilateral cooperation in North America. Activities aimed at ensuring sustained engagement and strengthened relationships with stakeholders and collaborators, and to develop and maintain partnerships, will be managed to optimize resources and impact.

Outreach and partnership efforts will continue to focus on increasing the CEC's visibility, raising awareness of key environmental issues, and enhancing the CEC's unique role in facilitating collaboration. Guided by the 2021–2025 Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Strategy and the Partnerships Action Plan and Reference Guide, the CEC will continue to seek innovative and inclusive perspectives for the creation of synergies and foster the identification and undertaking of collaborative opportunities.





Outreach efforts will include the development and implementation of more awareness and behavior-change campaigns, co-hosted events, and new and innovative approaches for diverse and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Targets will include youth (see below) and Indigenous communities and expanding and reinvigorating the CEC's engagement efforts that align with the Private Sector Engagement Strategy.

Partnership opportunities will include more joint statements, events, videos and partnership agreements to promote regional and global discussions, recognize the value of collaboration and partnerships and strengthen the commitment to leverage efforts to support key environmental topics. A special focus will be given to identify opportunities for partnerships to support the implementation of regional and international frameworks and position the North American region as a leader on environmental topics.

Youth Engagement

Youth Innovation Challenge

Since 2017, the CEC has hosted the annual Youth Innovation Challenge (YIC), a contest that invites youth, aged 18 to 30, from Canada, Mexico and the United States, to propose innovative solutions for improving both the environment and the economy in North America. The submissions are evaluated by a panel of North American experts and government representatives and the winners selected receive up to fifteen thousand (C\$15,000) Canadian dollars per country in seed funding. The winners also have the unique opportunity to present their solution at the annual CEC Council Session, benefit from a year-long mentorship opportunity (which includes developing skills in presentation, funding, marketing and networking), and are given visibility and communication opportunities that will be developed and disseminated across CEC digital channels and potentially across CEC partners' channels.



In 2023, the CEC will launch YIC's seventh edition under the theme "Water Solutions for Sustainable Development" and encourage dynamic and creative young leaders to participate in the contest with actions, innovation, and transformation on issues relating to water. The 2023 winners will be selected for their impactful and innovative solutions to water-related challenges by demonstrating potential benefits for the environment and direct impacts that support communities, with a focus on social, environmental and economic equity.¹⁸

18. See <<http://www.cec.org/youth-initiatives/water-solutions-for-sustainable-development/>> to learn more about the winning solutions.>

Enhancing Visibility and Public Awareness of CEC's Work

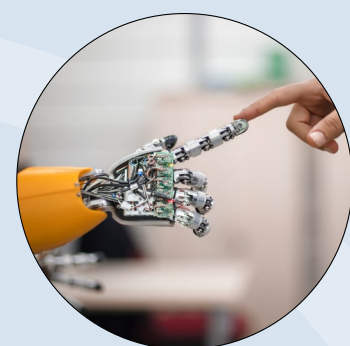


To increase public participation in the implementation of this OP and to harness the momentum building across North America for action on environment and sustainable development, the CEC will communicate with an array of target audiences on its trilateral activities and priorities as well as on issues of common concern and interest for Canada, Mexico and the United States. These objectives will be achieved through CEC publications, media releases, more frequent newsletters, new audiovisual products, participation in events, more robust social media, a modern web presence and by utilizing emerging regional and international opportunities.



The overarching goal of the CEC's communications efforts will be a growing and widespread recognition, both regionally and globally, of the CEC's values, relevance, leadership, and distinct role in catalyzing sustainable development. The three guiding objectives of the 2022–2023 Strategic Communications Action Plan will be to enhance visibility, public awareness, and understanding of the CEC's work and role in environmental cooperation and public participation; modernize access to information for decision-makers and interested individuals and groups that can make a difference with their actions; and improve modes of communication to facilitate public participation and promote diverse and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

Efforts to increase CEC visibility will include promoting attendance and participation in national and international fora and facilitating joint events.





Measuring Performance and Reporting on Progress

Planning, monitoring and reporting are crucial activities that will be put into practice through the CEC's core values of transparency, excellence, collaboration, inclusiveness and integrity.

To foster transparency, in addition to publishing this Operational Plan, the CEC will publish its Annual Report for 2022. The Secretariat will also prepare biweekly status reports for Council on the planning of the cooperative projects and initiatives, and quarterly reports to Council on project/initiative development.



The implementation of operational and strategic key performance indicators (KPI) will improve the ease of identification of internal management and evaluation of project impact. In addition to this monitoring of project performance, in 2023 the CEC will conduct two long-term impact assessments (LTIA) of cooperative projects, which should generate valuable lessons to improve future work: a LTIA of CEC's work on addressing the impact of extreme heat events (during 2015–2018), and another about CEC projects to stimulate uptake of the ISO 50001 energy efficiency standard (during the same period). Finally, the CEC will publish an executive summary concerning at least two other LTIA conducted in 2022 and 2023.

During 2023, the CEC will continue using its strategic KPI, strengthened by user-based evaluation methods. This will allow stakeholders and collaborators to contribute to the assessment of our efforts, as it will encourage the participative audience to be involved in the activities. This approach calls for evolving, innovative thinking about the way we incorporate a wide diversity of voices, and will bring about improvements and positive changes in existing practices. These strategic KPI will provide the CEC with more information about the impact of our cooperative work and in creating collaboration and fostering inclusiveness.



An Effective Model of Collaboration to Address the Planetary Crises

There has never been a more urgent time to advance trilateral North American cooperation to conserve, protect and restore our shared environment. As North America's foremost environmental organization, the work and mission of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) are of paramount importance to this challenge and to tackling the three planetary crises (climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution).

Through its work over the last 30 years, the CEC has been recognized as a model of successful collaboration. It provides a neutral forum for examining emerging and complex issues, and possible strategies to address them. Much of the CEC's success can be attributed to its ability to act as a convener to facilitate consensus among experts and policy makers in the three countries.

In 2023, the CEC will continue building on this collaboration to deliver an expanded, bold agenda for action that will yield durable results across North America. The CEC will also seek new partnerships and the engagement of a broader range of local and sectoral actors to further its reach and ensure tangible successes, both locally and regionally.





COMMISSION FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
COOPERATION