



North American Regional Action Plan on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Certain persistent, toxic, and bio-accumulative substances released to the environment as a result of human activity are transported long distances through air and water and pose unacceptably high risks to the environment, to ecosystems, to human health and to sustainable development.

The Sound Management of Chemicals (SMOC) initiative, developed by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), targets specific substances for phase-out, stringent control or virtual elimination through North American Regional Action Plans (NARAPs).

The NARAP on environmental monitoring and assessment is a unique regional undertaking stemming from agreement between the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States of America. It provides a framework, a forum and specific actions to facilitate cooperation in monitoring the status and trends of persistent and toxic substances in North America. Particular emphasis will be on improving our capacity to assess the effects of these substances on ecosystems and on human health.

The history of the NARAP

In October 1998, the Working Group of the Sound Management of Chemicals directed that a concept paper on environmental monitoring and assessment be written. Following development of this paper and subsequent meetings of experts and the Working Group, the Council of the CEC approved Council Resolution 99-02, which directed that a North American Regional Action Plan on environmental monitoring and assessment be developed. Subsequently, in Resolution 00-10, the CEC Council directed that the Sound Management of Chemicals ensure a strong children's health focus in the development of this NARAP. The Working Group established a North American task force, comprising experts and managers in-

The focus of the NARAP

The primary focus of this NARAP is on the monitoring and assessment activities, but it is recognized that our capacity to fully address these activities is directly limited by our overall understanding of the many factors affecting the behavior of persistent toxic substances in the environment and the risks they pose to ecosystems and human health. This NARAP does provide a framework, a forum and mechanisms to promote collaborative action on monitoring and assessment of persistent toxic substances. It also provides a means of focusing attention on important, related surveys, and on research and modeling activities that are available or needed to improve our capacity to monitor and assess persistent toxic substances in North America.

At a more general level, the NARAP on environmental monitoring and assessment is intended to provide Canada, Mexico and the United States with an agreed-upon course of action to increase the comparability, reliability, relevance and availability of data and information on persistent toxic substances in the North American environment. This NARAP provides an overall strategic framework to assist in achieving this goal while the North American Standing Committee on Monitoring and Assessment, established under this action plan, will, in addition to its role as an expert advisory body, also serve as a primary forum for advancing the implementation of this plan. It will also foster and encourage cooperation and collective action in planning, conducting and reporting of baseline surveys and monitoring, modeling and research programs on the status, trends and effects of persistent and toxic substances. A major priority is capacity building and international cooperation, with a particular emphasis placed on increasing the capacity of Mexican scientists to measure, monitor and assess persistent and toxic substances in Mexico.

involved in research, monitoring and modeling of persistent toxic substances, to take the lead in developing this NARAP.

Several substance-specific NARAPs have been developed, or are being developed, under the Sound Management of Chemicals initiative. All have monitoring implications related to the monitoring, research, modeling and assessment of these substances and their implica-

tions for human health and the environment. The NARAP on environmental monitoring and assessment provides an important means of helping to address these obligations. The implementation of this NARAP will involve extensive consultation and collaboration with the Implementation Task Forces overseeing the substance-specific NARAPs.

Projects under the NARAP on environmental monitoring and assessment

1. A synoptic, baseline survey is to be developed that will include the levels of selected persistent and toxic substances in selected environmental media at selected locations in Mexico. This survey is to provide data on the status of selected persistent toxic substances in Mexico with particular reference to those substances being addressed under existing and anticipated North American Regional Action Plans.
2. An assessment of the levels of persistent toxic substances in environmental media in Mexico is to be prepared, together with an initial assessment of the exposure to, and risks of, persistent organic pollutants and certain heavy metals to humans and the environment in Mexico.
3. A baseline survey of the North American region is to be developed, investigating the exposure of newborn children and infants to persistent toxic substances.
4. A baseline survey for the North American region is to be developed, including information about exposure of reference communities or occupations which are believed to have a higher than average exposure to persistent toxic substances.
5. A North American Reference Network is to be established of designated Integrated Index Sites for the systematic collection of data and information on the concentrations, fluxes and effects of persistent and toxic substances in the North American environment, with particular reference to North American ecosystems and human health.
6. Satellite sites will be recommended and directly associated with the North American Reference Network to address one or more key considerations in monitoring or understanding concentrations, fluxes and effects of persistent toxic substances.
7. Other existing or planned Reference Data Sets, directly associated with the North American Reference Network, will be identified and recommended. These will comprise baseline environmental surveys, epidemiological surveys and studies, and important research findings related to monitoring and understanding concentrations, fluxes and effects of persistent toxic substances.



More information can be found at:

http://www.cec.org/programs_projects/pollutants_health/smoc/



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