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My comments on the Draft CEC Strategic Plan, with particular focus on the need for environmental reporting which integrates the three priority themes. The CEC's North American Atlas has the potential to do this.

I see many strengths in the draft Strategic Plan. The three priority themes are clearly defined and suggested activities are included -- making the plan more tangible. Evaluating outcomes as well as outputs will ensure projects remain oriented to the CEC's mandate.

My concern relates to the importance of being able to report on the 'integrated' North American environment - finding a way to visualize the relationships between information gathered and reported individually for the three priority themes. For example, both communities and ecosystems will be influenced by a greener economy and by lower carbon emissions. When information from these three themes is displayed on a common collection of base maps, geographical patterns will emerge which will encourage the public and policy-makers to consider these interrelationships. Only by understanding these linkages can we collectively achieve development which is truly sustainable.

The North American Atlas project, launched on-line by the CEC in 2010 (www.cec.org/naatlas) has provided the initial framework for this visualization. The data behind each map is carefully quality-controlled and documented with metadata. All of the maps and data are available free-of-charge on-line. As more map content is added, the value of the Atlas will only increase.

My recommendation would be that the CEC's 2010 Strategic Plan explicitly include the North American Environmental Atlas as an integrated reporting tool for information gathered from the three priority themes.

At this point, including a NA Atlas 'place-holder' keeps the door open for whatever map content is required as the operational plan is implemented.