

## Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) Activity Report to the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) since June 2023

This document is intended to provide Council with an overview of JPAC activities following the 29 June 2023 Regular Session of Council, to assist discussions during the 2024 annual joint Council/JPAC sessions.

Note that JPAC activities have been undertaken in accordance with Article 6(4) of the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (ECA), which states that JPAC “*may provide advice to the Council on matters within the scope of this agreement and may perform such other functions as the Council may direct.*”

### **JPAC Activities**

Since June 2023, JPAC accomplished the following activities.

#### **JPAC held four closed working sessions:**

1. JPAC Videoconference 23-06 on Thursday, 7 September 2023: Secretariat staff provided updates on the Loggerhead Turtle Factual Record and other SEM submissions; as well as an outline of JPAC's advice on the Public Forum in Victoria and a presentation of a draft concept note for the next Public Forum in Oaxaca, along with a brief TEKEG Trilateral Forum update. The JPAC Chair provided an overview of the US Forest Service's feedback on the JPAC-led project “Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products,” which included next steps. JPAC attendees included: Octaviana Trujillo (JPAC Chair), Elizabeth Whitsitt, Esteban Escamilla, Alfonso Argüelles, Robert Varney, and Felicia Marcus.
2. JPAC Videoconference 24-01 on Friday, 23 February 2024: Secretariat staff provided updates on various items, including the Virtual Alt Rep Meeting, Horizon 2030 Initiative, CEC Environmental Defenders Protocol, EJ4 Climate Grant Selection Committee Meeting, NAPECA Grant Program, Generation of Environmental Leaders Program (GELP), and the launch of a Public Consultation on the CEC's Community-led Environmental Education Initiative for Biocultural Heritage Protection. JPAC members reviewed and approved the proposed priorities and activities in the draft JPAC 2024 Annual Plan of Activities. Additionally, a drafting committee was appointed to develop the next JPAC Public Forum Agenda, and a subcommittee was established to oversee the selection of consultants and review materials for the JPAC-led project on Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products. JPAC attendees included: Esteban Escamilla (JPAC Chair), Luis Alfonso Argüelles Suárez, Cessia Esther Chuc Uc, Felicia Marcus, Octaviana Trujillo, and Robert Varney.
3. JPAC Subcommittee Videoconference 24-02 on Monday, 8 April 2024: The subcommittee convened to review and refine the draft Wilmington JPAC Public Forum Agenda, which was developed by the Secretariat, in close collaboration with the JPAC Chair, and provide recommendations on potential panelists. JPAC attendees included: Esteban Escamilla (JPAC Chair), Luis Alfonso Argüelles Suárez, Louie Porta, Octaviana Trujillo, and Robert Varney.
4. JPAC Videoconference 24-04 on 6 June 2024: JPAC members met to discuss the JPAC in-camera topics for the upcoming Council meeting on 26 June 2024 in Wilmington, North Carolina. The Secretariat provided a detailed overview of the three-day event, as well as an update on the logistics. JPAC attendees included: Esteban Escamilla (JPAC Chair), Luis Alfonso Argüelles Suárez, Octaviana Trujillo, Cessia Esther Chuc Uc and Robert Varney.

**JPAC actively engaged in the following CEC meetings:**

1. Alt Rep Meeting on 5 October 2023: The JPAC Chair, Octaviana Trujillo, provided an update on JPAC activities, including the planning efforts for the JPAC Public Forum in Oaxaca, Mexico, and the JPAC-led initiative on Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products.
2. Alt Rep Meeting on 31 October 2023: The JPAC Chair, Octaviana Trujillo, provided an overview of the agenda for the JPAC Public forum that took place in Oaxaca, Mexico, on 29 November 2023. She also provided a status update on the development of the JPAC-led initiative Advancing Responsible Consumption of Forest Products, and acknowledged receipt of the feedback that was received from the US Forest Service and Profepa. She also noted that the JPAC Advice to Council No: 23-03 on the JPAC Public Forum on Indigenous Approaches to Climate Adaptation, would be forthcoming.
3. NAC and GAC Meeting on 7 December 2023: The JPAC Chair, Octaviana Trujillo, presented an overview of the JPAC Advice to Council No: 23-03 on the JPAC Public Forum on Indigenous Approaches to Climate Adaptation, and provided updates on the JPAC-led initiative on Advancing the Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products, on her participation in recent meetings of the Alternate Representatives, the TEKEG and JPAC Forums in Oaxaca, Mexico, and on the status of the election of the JPAC Chair for 2024.
4. TEKEG and JPAC members participation in the CEC's Youth Engagement Week Meeting on Thursday, 18 January 2024: During this session, Youth Engagement Week (YEW) participants provided an overview of the recommendations they shared with the CEC Secretariat and had an open dialogue with JPAC and TEKEG members, which included an exchange on priorities and approaches for increased youth engagement in CEC activities.
5. EJ for Climate Selection Committee Meeting on 31 January 2024: The JPAC Chair, Esteban Escamilla, participated in the Selection Committee meeting, along with the CEC Executive Director, Secretariat staff and GSC representatives. During the meeting, the JPAC Chair provided his top five, out of ten proposals, which he considered were more closely aligned with the theme: Community empowerment strategies to improve resilience to extreme weather events in urban settings.
6. Virtual Alt Rep Meeting on 9 February 2024: The JPAC Chair, Esteban Escamilla, provided an update on the development of the JPAC 2024 Annual Plan of Activities, noting that a strong emphasis was going to be made on increasing collaboration with the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG), as well as with key actors in the region, particularly underserved communities that are grappling with environmental justice issues.
7. TEKEG Working Meeting and Roundtable on North American Traditional Ecological Knowledge Principles on 21-22 March 2024: The JPAC Chair, Esteban Escamilla, along with Octaviana Trujillo, participated in the roundtable organized by the TEKEG. They exchanged their thoughts on the significance of developing North American TEK Principles and discussed ways that JPAC can support this endeavor.
8. NAPECA Selection Committee Meeting 18 April 2024: The JPAC Chair, Esteban Escamilla, participated in the Selection Committee meeting, along with the CEC Executive Director, Secretariat staff and GSC representatives. During the meeting, the JPAC Chair provided his top five, out of ten, proposals, which he considered were more closely aligned with the theme: Empowering Indigenous Peoples and Enhancing Climate Adaptation by Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge.
9. Alt Rep Meeting on 30 May 2024: The JPAC Chair, Esteban Escamilla, provided an overview of JPAC's participation in the TEKEG Working Meeting and Roundtable on TEK Principles in North

America that took place in March, as well as the NAPECA Selection Committee meeting that was held in April. He also provided an overview of the two recent JPAC Advices, No: 24-01 JPAC Public Forum on Community-based Conservation of Freshwater Resources: Forging Alliances for Water Stewardship and 24-02 Public Consultation on new CEC Project: Community-led Environmental Education Initiative for Biocultural Heritage Protection, including key highlights. He concluded with a presentation of the agenda for JPAC Public Forum that will take place in Wilmington, on 24 June 2024.

**JPAC submitted three Letters of Advice to Council:**

1. *Advice to Council No: 23-03 JPAC Public Forum on Indigenous Approaches to Climate Adaptation*  
Following the 2023 JPAC Public Forum that took place in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, on 28 June 2023, JPAC submitted an Advice to Council that included the following recommendations:
  - Recommendation #1: Continue to advance the respectful support of “weaving” TEK and Indigenous perspectives into the work of the CEC.
  - Recommendation #2: Support Indigenous-led conservation projects as well as knowledge sharing between the three countries.
  - Recommendation #3: Support Indigenous economies and alliances across the three countries.
  - Recommendation #4: Support relationship building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and organizations.
  - Recommendation #5: Review financing processes to ensure that they provide for sufficient funding to address planning and implementation phases of climate and environmental initiatives, when applicable, and to ensure that funding processes do not impede the participation of communities with limited capacity.
2. *Advice to Council No: 24-01 JPAC Public Forum on Community-based Conservation of Freshwater Resources: Forging Alliances for Water Stewardship*  
Following the 2023 JPAC Public Forum held in Oaxaca, Mexico, on 29 November 2023, JPAC submitted an Advice to Council that included the following recommendations:
  - Recommendation #1: Continue to support relationship building among Indigenous Peoples, community-led and not-for-profit organizations, and other public and private key actors, as a key component for developing successful partnerships among them, and for advancing the weaving of TEK and Indigenous perspectives into the work of the CEC.
  - Recommendation #2: Support Indigenous and community-led conservation efforts through a knowledge, practices, and experience-sharing process.
  - Recommendation #3: Explore additional ways to include participants from diverse populations, in particular, from youth and Indigenous Peoples, into the activities of the CEC.
3. *Advice to Council No: 24-02 Public Consultation on new CEC Project: Community-led Environmental Education Initiative for Biocultural Heritage Protection*  
Having conducted an online public consultation on the draft project description that took place from 4 to 25 March 2024, and after carefully reviewing the comments received from 69 participants, representing a diversity of stakeholders throughout North America, JPAC submitted an Advice for Council’s consideration concerning the following:
  - Objectives and activities of the project, along with concrete recommendations for strengthening them.
  - Potential participation and contributions in project activities by communities, organizations, and institutions.
  - Existing environmental education efforts in communities to address the environmental challenges they face, to be considered in the development and testing of an Environmental Education Framework, addressing ecosystem conservation and climate action challenges.

- Any other aspect of the project.

**JPAC organized the following public forums and consultations:**

1. *JPAC Public Forum on Indigenous Approaches to Climate Adaptation* held in the margins of the 2023 Regular Session of the Council in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
  - The forum served as a platform to showcase climate adaptation stories from Indigenous communities in the three countries and discuss the critical role of Indigenous Knowledge and perspectives in shaping effective climate adaptation policies and planning efforts.
  - Approximately 414 participants attended the public forum in-person (30%) or virtually (70%).
2. *JPAC Public Forum on Community-based Conservation of Freshwater Resources: Forging Alliances for Water Stewardship*, held in Oaxaca, Mexico, on 29 November 2023
  - The forum brought together community leaders, nongovernmental organizations, and other key actors to discuss water management strategies and highlight community-led efforts to address the multifaceted aspects of freshwater conservation and its sustainable use, with a strong focus on partnerships and alliances.
  - Approximately 309 participants attended the public forum in-person (26%) or virtually (74%).
3. *JPAC Public Consultation on new CEC Project: Community-led Environmental Education Initiative for Biocultural Heritage Protection*
  - JPAC conducted an online public consultation on the project description (from 4 to 25 March 2024).
  - 69 participants sent comments through the public consultation: 42 from Mexico, 11 from Canada, 13 from the United States of America and 3 from other countries.

**JPAC initiated the implementation phase of the JPAC-led project *Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products* after obtaining approval from the Parties:**

- Upon the review of the final project description by the Parties, the Alt Reps approved the JPAC-led initiative during their meeting on 9 February.
- JPAC members established a subcommittee, which includes Luis Alfonso Argüelles, Robert Varney, and Elizabeth Whitsitt. Their mandate includes providing feedback throughout the implementation of the initiative, review of corresponding materials, as well as any other relevant tasks included in the project description.
- Next steps: Begin implementation of Activity 1.