Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)
Session 25-02 of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC)
2 December 2025

Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth
900 René-Lévesque Blvd W
Montreal, Quebec
H3B 4A5
(Hybrid Event)

Program of Public Events

JPAC Public Forum: Regenerating North America's Future

North America is increasingly affected by persistent environmental pollutants—including pesticides, forever chemicals (PFAS), and microplastics—that accumulate in soils, water, air, and ecosystems. These pollutants not only impact the environment and biodiversity but also pose significant risks to human health, via direct exposure, food consumption, water contamination, or inhalation. The 2025 JPAC Public Forum, *Regenerating North America's Future*, provides a space to exchange ideas and explore pathways toward systems that restore ecological integrity while safeguarding community well-being.

By focusing on these interconnected challenges, the Forum will examine how scientific innovation, traditional knowledge, emerging regulatory and policy measures, corporate accountability, and multi-actor engagement can deliver practical and lasting solutions. Designed as a participatory platform, the discussions will bring together diverse voices from governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, Indigenous peoples, women, and youth, to inspire collaborative action and support the CEC long-term environmental and sustainability objectives. Participants will explore concrete strategies to reduce environmental contamination, restore ecosystems, and enhance human health across North America.

Tuesday, 2 December 2025

Time Zone: Eastern Standard Time

Location: Room Viger

8:00–9:00 **Registration of Public Participants**

9:00–9:20 **Traditional Welcoming Ceremony**

9:20–9:25 **Opening Remarks by Anne-Raphaëlle Audouin, JPAC Chair**

9:25–9:40 **Welcoming Remarks by the CEC Executive Director**

9:40–9:45 **Procedural Setup by Julian Portilla, Forum Facilitator**

9:45–11:00 **Session 1. Regenerating Soils and Protecting Health: Breaking Free from Pesticides**

While pesticides, chemical compounds that are used in agriculture to kill pests, including insects, rodents, fungi and unwanted plants (weeds),[1] have played a role in increasing food

[1] World Health Organization (2020, 26 October). *Chemical safety: Pesticides*. https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/chemical-safety-pesticides

production and minimizing short-term losses, their excessive use has resulted in soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, water pollution, pest resistance, and considerable risks to both human and animal health. These negative impacts have fueled a growing movement toward regenerative and agroecological methods that reduce or eliminate reliance on pesticides while sustaining productivity. This session will highlight innovative and effective regenerative practices that minimize or avoid synthetic inputs, demonstrating that it is possible to nourish a growing population while restoring ecosystem health. By regenerating soils, promoting biodiversity, and supporting rural livelihoods, these methods present a pathway to an agricultural system that is both productive and sustainable. The goal is to deliver practical guidance for scaling up food production systems that safeguard human health and the environment throughout North America.

- Ignite Presentation by **Sophie McCafferty**, Farm Manager, Hudson Heartbeet Community Farm
- Speaker from Canada: **Antonious Petro**, Executive Director, Regeneration Canada
- Speaker from Mexico: **Laura Gómez Tovar**, Researcher, Center for Interdisciplinary Research for Integral Rural Development (CIIDRI) – Department of Agroecology, Autonomous University of Chapingo
- Speaker from the US: **Brian Leahy**, Owner of Brian R. Leahy Consulting, LLC and Former Director of the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR)

11:00–11:15 **Break**

11:15–12:30 **Session 2. Forever Chemicals in Our Food and Water: Understanding the Risks and Acting Now**

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), often referred to as "forever chemicals," are a group of thousands of human-made compounds used as surfactants, lubricants, and as repellents for dirt, water, and grease in a wide variety of products.[2] Highly resistant to natural degradation, PFAS persist in the environment for extended periods, accumulating in water, air, soil, wildlife and humans. Found in everyday products, such as non-stick cookware, food products and packaging, cosmetics, and even toilet paper, they have been linked to harmful effects on both human health and the environment.[3] This session will present the latest research on PFAS and other persistent chemicals, examining their health impacts, exposure pathways, and contamination in soils, crops, livestock, and drinking water. It will also explore emerging regulatory measures, corporate responsibility, safer product innovation, and community-led monitoring. The discussion will center into actionable strategies and coordinated efforts to protect public health and reduce chemical exposure across North America.

- Ignite Presentation: **Diego Arreola Fernández**, Co-founder and President, Green Speaking
- Speaker from Canada: **Benoit Barbeau**, Professor and Co-chair, Industrial Chair in Drinking Water, Polytechnique Montréal
- Speaker from Mexico: **Sergio Gasca Álvarez**, Senior Consultant, GreenSync
- Speaker from the US: **Meredith Williams**, Principal at Advancing Impact, and former Director of California's Department of Toxic Substances Control

12:30–13:30 **Lunch [provided]**

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[2] Government of Canada (2025, 28 February). *Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and your health.* *https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/chemicals-product-safety/per-polyfluoroalkyl-substances.html*

[3] United States Environmental Protection Agency (2025, 30 September). *PFAS Explained*. https://www.epa.gov/pfas/pfas-explained

13:30–14:45 **Session 3. From Oceans to Our Bodies: Tackling the Microplastics Crisis**

Microplastics, fragments of plastic between 1 nanometer and 5 millimeters wide,[4] are pervasive across air, water, soil, and food systems.[5] They pose potential risks to both ecosystems and human health, including ingestion by marine life, contamination of drinking water, bioaccumulation and biomagnification in the food chain. This session will explore the urgent need to address microplastic pollution and highlight transformative solutions across textiles, packaging, industry, and wastewater management. Discussions will focus on the sources and impacts of microplastics, innovations in filtration and circular materials, and manufacturing design improvements. The session will also explore how aligning local solutions—from coastal and watershed restoration to community leadership by fishers, Indigenous Peoples, and youth—with regional policy strategies and producer responsibility can foster a coordinated North American response to plastic pollution.

- Ignite Presentation: **Samantha Athey**, Marine Plastics Program Manager, EarthEcho International
- Speaker from Canada: **Tony Walker**, Professor, School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University
- Speaker from Mexico: **Nancy Ramírez Álvarez**, Senior Researcher in Environmental and Water Sciences, Oceanographic Research Institute, Autonomous University of Baja California

14:45–15:00 **Break**

15:00–16:30 **Session 4. Voices from North America: Multi-Actor Storytelling Circles and Dialogue**

A dynamic space for participants to share experiences, perspectives, or initiatives related to the forum's topic, engage with JPAC members, and collectively explore the diversity of stories and viewpoints.

16:30-16:45 **Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG) Intervention**

16:45–16:50 **Remarks** by **Anne-Raphaëlle Audouin**, JPAC Chair

16:50–17:00 **Closing Traditional Ceremony**

17:00–19:00 **CEC Networking Event [in-person only]**

[4] United Nations Environment Programme (2025, 02 June). *Everything you should know about microplastics.* https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/everything-you-should-know-about-microplastics

[5] Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (2018, 13 October). *Microplásticos, otra forma de contaminación en los mares. [Microplastics, Another Form of Pollution in the Seas].* https://www.gob.mx/semarnat/articulos/microplasticos-en-el-menu