



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JAN 22 2015

Jeffrey Wennberg, Chair  
U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee  
VT Department of Environment Conservation  
103 South Main St, Building 1 South  
Waterbury, VT 05641-0401

Office of  
International and  
Tribal Affairs

Dear Mr. Wennberg:

On behalf of Administrator Gina McCarthy, I would like to thank you for the Government Advisory Committee (GAC) letter of advice of November 24, 2014 reporting on the forty-third meeting held by teleconference in Washington, D.C. on October 23, 2014. We appreciate the recommendations provided by you on integrating Council priorities and cross-cutting themes into the CEC Operational Plan, integrating traditional ecological knowledge into CEC activities, and the CEC Performance Framework.

It was a pleasure for JoAnn and me to meet with those who attended the meeting in person and those who participated via teleconference. We value our relationship with the GAC committee members and we appreciate the commitment the GAC members make to support our Administrator, particularly through the U.S. Chairmanship of the CEC Council.

We thank you for your thoughtful advice and note the influence the GAC has had on the development of our current strategic and operational plans at the CEC and the importance of integrating traditional ecological knowledge into our cooperative trilateral engagements. We note the thorough reflection required to deliver this advice to us and we intend to incorporate your recommendations as we develop both the CEC 2015-2020 Strategic Plan and the CEC 2015-16 Operational Plan.

***Recommendations for 1<sup>st</sup> Charge Question:***

*1. The GAC recommends that the U.S. government supports Council and Secretariat use the 2014 Council priorities and cross-cutting themes as the basis for prioritizing project and other budget priorities under the 2015-2016 Operational Plan. Special emphasis should be given to those activities that serve multiple priorities and themes. By undertaking these activities the Council will effectively integrate priorities and themes and accomplish the combination of subject matter and organizational goals established in Yellowknife.*

*2. The GAC recommends that the U.S. Alternative Representative seek support for the following U.S. project priorities for inclusion in the 2015-2016 Operational Plan:*

*a. North America's Blue Carbon: Assessing the Role of Coastal Habitats in the Continent's Carbon Budget*

*b. Interoperability and Maintenance of Information Systems*

*c. Air Quality Monitoring and Public Information*

- d. Opportunities for North American Greenhouse Gas Trading*
- e. Promoting North American Markets, Innovation, and Policy Alignment for Greener Products and Supply Chains*
- f. Reducing Emissions from shipping in North America*
- g. Technical guidelines on environmentally sound management of spent lead acid batteries*
- h. Improve North American Trade Statistics on Elemental Mercury and Mercury-added Products*
- i. North American Wildfire Smoke Exposure Risk and Human Health Impacts Tool*
- j. Improving Indoor Air Quality to Improve Children's Health in North*
- k. Enhancing Environmental Law Enforcement in North America*

We appreciate your reflection on the charge question itself and agree that the Council should select projects that best further the organizational goals and priorities expressed through the themes. It is true that the Council priorities are not separate from one another and the work conducted through the 2015-16 Operational Plan will bring benefits to multiple priorities. Several of the projects build upon work that is ongoing under previous Operational Plans and will benefit from the experience and familiarity established through years of cooperation. Some other projects are approaching new work streams and we are excited about the possibilities these projects bring to the CEC portfolio.

Of the 54 total projects proposed by the United States, Canada, and Mexico, the Alt Reps have determined to pursue 16 projects under the 2015-16 Operational Plan. These projects spread evenly across the strategic priorities and cross-cutting themes identified by the parties and several of the U.S. projects recommended by the GAC have been selected for development. Specifically, the projects *North American Blue Carbon: Assessing the Role of Coastal Habitats in the Continent's Carbon Budget* and *Reducing Emissions from shipping in North America* have been selected by the Alt Reps and elements of other recommended projects will be incorporated into similar projects submitted by our Mexican and Canadian counterparts.

***Recommendations for 2<sup>nd</sup> Charge Question:***

- 1. The GAC recommends that the U.S. government support CEC engagement with groups like the Institute for Environmental Professionals (ITEP) at Northern Arizona University and tribal working groups that have been working on this issue.*
- 2. The GAC recommends that the U.S. government recommend formation of a trilateral working group whose functions would be*
  - a. The establishment of an institutional interface between indigenous peoples, traditional knowledge holders, and governments;*
  - b. To recommend changes to CEC policies and structures to facilitate the incorporation of TEK consistent with the Council priority;*
  - c. To review and comment on potential CEC projects and grants as they relate to TEK.*

On the question of integrating traditional ecological knowledge into all CEC projects, we again appreciate the focus of the GAC on getting the process right before pre-determining programs or results. We agree that an outreach effort to engage these communities will bring the Parties to these groups and ultimately diversify the cooperative activities the Parties seek to enrich. We hope to work with the GAC, the NAC, and our own tribal office to maintain and expand these outreach efforts to tribal nations.

We also agree with the recommendation to form a trilateral committee dedicated to establishing an international interface between indigenous peoples, traditional knowledge holders, and governments. The Parties have agreed to establish a TEK group of experts composed of five TEK experts from each CEC country to advise and consult on the cooperative work of the CEC. We will continue to work with our GAC advisors to develop this list and finalize the expert group soon.

***Recommendations for 3<sup>rd</sup> Charge Question:***

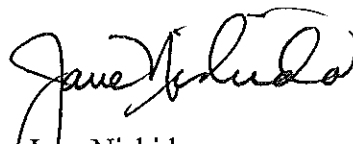
*The GAC recommends that the Performance Framework:*

- 1. Track the number of government organizations in lieu of government officials at the local, state, and federal level that have increased their capacity to enhance, conserve or protect the North American environment through the CEC collaborative work projects.*
- 2. Condition the number of citations of CEC work with citations of "relevant knowledge to conserve, protect, and enhance the North American environment."*
- 3. Make specific mention of the JPAC's public engagement efforts, perhaps including a separate class of metrics so that the progress of the JPAC and the CEC can be reported independently.*

We are grateful for the thorough recommendations on the performance measures framework being pursued at the CEC. It is imperative that the Parties and the CEC focus on the output and the outcome of our collective efforts in a meaningful way. We agree with many of your suggestions to refine the measures and to track organizational performance. While it may be difficult to assess the capacity developed at government organizations, we will look to pursue measures that reflect the individual as well as organizational improvements. We will also encourage the CEC to track JPAC public engagement separately so the two bodies can report their performance independently.

Again, we thank you for your advice and look forward to future engagements and advice from the GAC.

Sincerely,



Jane Nishida  
Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator