



U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee
Independent Federal Advisors on the USMCA
Environmental Cooperation Agreement

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Committee Members

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Texas

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Montana

James Payne
Acting Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Acting Administrator Payne:

The U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) to the U.S. Representative to the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation held its 61st meeting on December 5, 2024, in Tucson, Arizona at the Tohono O'odham Nation. This letter represents our advice resulting from that meeting. The main objective of our meeting was to provide advice to the EPA Administrator on the upcoming CEC's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.

Our meeting included presentations on: 1) *U.S. Priorities and Guidance* from Mark Kasman, Director of International Affairs, at EPA's Office for International and Tribal Affairs (OITA), 2) *CEC Update: Strategic Plan Overview*, from Jorge Daniel Taillant, Executive Director of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation in Montreal, Canada, 3) *JPAC Report-out* from Esteban Escamilla, Chair of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), and 4) *Update on Arizona Project (CEC EJ4Climate Grant)*, from Jordan Sene, Education Program Manager at the Borderlands Restoration Network.

The meeting was opened with opening remarks from Federal Advisory Committee Management and Oversight Division (FACMOD) Director Robbie Young-Mackall, who provided an overview of FACMOD activities and responsibilities. The NAC appreciates the dedicated support provided by the FACMOD and thanks Director Young-Mackall, Oscar Carrillo our Designated Federal Officer, and all the FACMOD staff for their support in ensuring our meeting was a success. We welcome you to your new position at EPA and hope our advice is useful to you, in your work with the CEC, and wish you success.

Sincerely,

Austin Nunez, Chair
Governmental Advisory Committee

cc:

Rafael DeLeon, Acting Assistant Administrator, Office of International & Tribal Affairs OITA, EPA
Victoria Tran, Deputy Assistant Administrator, (OITA), EPA
Robbie Young-Mackall, Director, Federal Advisory Committee Management & Oversight Division, EPA
Lisa Berrios, Acting Director, American Indian Environmental Office, EPA
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Veronica Apontes-Morales, General Standing Committee (OITA), EPA
Oscar Carrillo, NAC Designated Federal Officer, FACMOD, EPA
Esteban Escamilla, Chair, Joint Public Advisory Committee
Jorge Daniel Taillant, Executive Director, CEC
Members of the U.S. National and Governmental Advisory Committees

*Administrative support for the GAC is provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
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Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)
to the U.S. Representative to the
Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)

Advice 2025-1 (January 23, 2025)

There were two charge questions to the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) on December 5, 2024.

Question #1 –Should any pillars be updated or expanded to address evolving/emerging environmental issues in North America? Do you see a need for new/additional strategic pillars to address gaps in the current approach? Are there any emerging technologies or partnerships that should be integrated into the cross-cutting approaches?

The CEC's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan is currently structured around six key pillars: clean air, land, and water; preventing and reducing pollution in the marine environment; circular economy and sustainable materials management; shared ecosystems and species; resilient economies and communities; and effective enforcement of environmental laws. The success of the pillars depends on innovative and effective solutions, the positive impact on sustainable economic growth, and engaging stakeholders (named cross-cutting approaches).

As CEC looks to strengthen its impact and adapt to emerging environmental challenges, we are seeking your advice on the following:

- a) Should any pillars be updated or expanded to address evolving/emerging environmental issues in North America?***
- b) Do you see a need for new/additional strategic pillars to address gaps in the current approach?***

The GAC did not see a need for any of the pillars to be updated or changed, nor any need to add new strategic pillars. The existing pillars are flexible and comprehensive to address emerging environmental challenges. The GAC does suggest that the examples in the "related issues" section of the strategic plan be updated to help frame the new issues that the plan will help address.

- c) Are there any emerging technologies or partnerships that should be integrated into the cross-cutting approaches?***

A new cross cutting approach that the GAC would like to see articulated is *Transparency and Reporting on Outcomes*. The work of the CEC and the efficacy of the efforts is not available in any central or easily identified locations. The strategic plan should specify the importance of sharing results in an accessible manner. As an example, the TEK group is explicitly mentioned in the existing strategic plan, and it would be helpful if the plan also set an expectation for how the group would disseminate its findings and activities.

Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)
to the U.S. Representative to the
Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)

Advice 2025-2 (January 23, 2025)

Question #2 As the CEC develops its new Strategic Plan, we are prioritizing the triple planetary crisis (climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss) as the central focus of our efforts. However, we recognize the importance of staying responsive to other emerging environmental issues and innovative solutions.

a) Beyond this focus, what other emerging environmental challenges should the CEC address? (e.g., the increase in vector-borne diseases linked to climate change)

The GAC discussed several emerging environmental challenges that the CEC may consider addressing in its new strategic plan. These included:

- Abandoned and closed uranium mine sites
- New technologies for waste management
- Responsible mining
- Water supply/adequacy of water supply
- Technologies for water quality/treatment and reuse
- Wildfire and wildfire smoke
- Odors from wastewater

b) What opportunities exist to enhance collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities, particularly in leveraging Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to address the triple planetary crisis and emerging environmental threats?

The GAC affirms that inclusion of TEK in the CEC Strategic Plan will benefit all levels of government. The following considerations may enhance collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities and facilitate incorporating TEK into data interpretation and presentation.

The GAC recommends:

1. In developing the new strategic plan, solicit input on the experiences of indigenous people in providing TEK input to projects/decisions, and use this to inform the strategies and approaches to meet the objectives.
2. Identify protocols and standard practice for government-to-government communication, consultation and collaboration and utilize these to engage with State and Federally Recognized Tribal Governments.
3. The use of specific examples that can be well-informed by TEK, such as food sovereignty, the effects of invasive species exacerbated by climate change, and the utilization of traditional crops and native seed fields to address problems of

c) Are there specific emerging technologies, tools, or approaches (such as artificial intelligence or earth observation technologies) that the CEC should consider integrating into its efforts?

The GAC suggests that the CEC consider integrating satellite data and research techniques into its efforts. The GAC also discussed the use of alternative methods of education and information dissemination such as art and storytelling. Storytelling is an educational tool for promoting sustainability, combining traditional knowledge, transformative learning, systems thinking, and narrative. This may also be a useful and innovative way to incorporate TEK into the plan.