

Annual Report
2023



COMMISSION FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
COOPERATION





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A Word from the CEC Executive Director

Entering into its fourth decade since its founding in 1994, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) works to promote North American collaboration to protect and conserve our natural environment. As the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss deepens and challenges us to take urgent environmental action, the work of the CEC can help us find viable and sustainable pathways that are equitable and that effectively address the unprecedented environmental challenges that humanity has ever faced.

Whether it is advancing the protection of shared ecosystems across North America, or mapping natural resources to better understand our ecosystems, or harmonizing pollution data across countries in order to find opportunities for better managing toxic pollutants; whether it is exploring ways to use cutting-edge satellite technologies to improve air quality or to advance environmental justice; whether it is fostering greater, more inclusive public participation and engagement on key environmental issues important to disadvantaged and often marginalized groups, or exploring ways to learn from and elevate the benefits of traditional ecological knowledge; whether it is more meaningfully engaging with and respecting the rights of Indigenous

Peoples, or working to promote actions that ensure and improve environmental equity; the CEC is working collaboratively across Canada, Mexico and the United States to advance trilateral efforts to conserve, protect and restore the North American environment.

This 2023 Annual Report is a summary of the CEC's programs and initiatives over the past year. All of our work takes place through direct engagement with local communities, it happens collaboratively with our partners and with the assistance and guidance provided by officials and experts in our three countries and beyond. We partner with and receive continuing invaluable support from local actors to protect our ecosystems and improve the lives of communities across the region.

This Annual Report informs the CEC Council, composed of the environment ministers of our three countries, as well as the public and our partners, on how we are doing, and how we are using collective resources to promote environmental protection across North America. It also highlights progress on our mandate, on our Strategic and Operational Plans, while providing summary information on the numerous projects and initiatives that the CEC implements.

Key projects and initiatives undertaken by the CEC are described herein, as well as those of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) and the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Experts Group (TEKEG), which together provide input from civil society, communities, the private sector and Indigenous leaders across North America. It also covers CEC engagement with key actors such as youth, 2SLGBTQIA+ persons, academics, and many others.

The CEC is constantly expanding partnerships, embracing diversity, and leading regional efforts to protect and conserve our environment. We are placing all of our material, financial, technological and human resources to their fullest use and potential, to effectively and efficiently strive to achieve a more sustainable, inclusive and socially just environment for North America.

This report provides a lens into the unique collaborative space forged by the CEC and our three countries to help guide ourselves and our communities in the stewardship of our region's natural resources and biodiversity.

Jorge Daniel Taillant

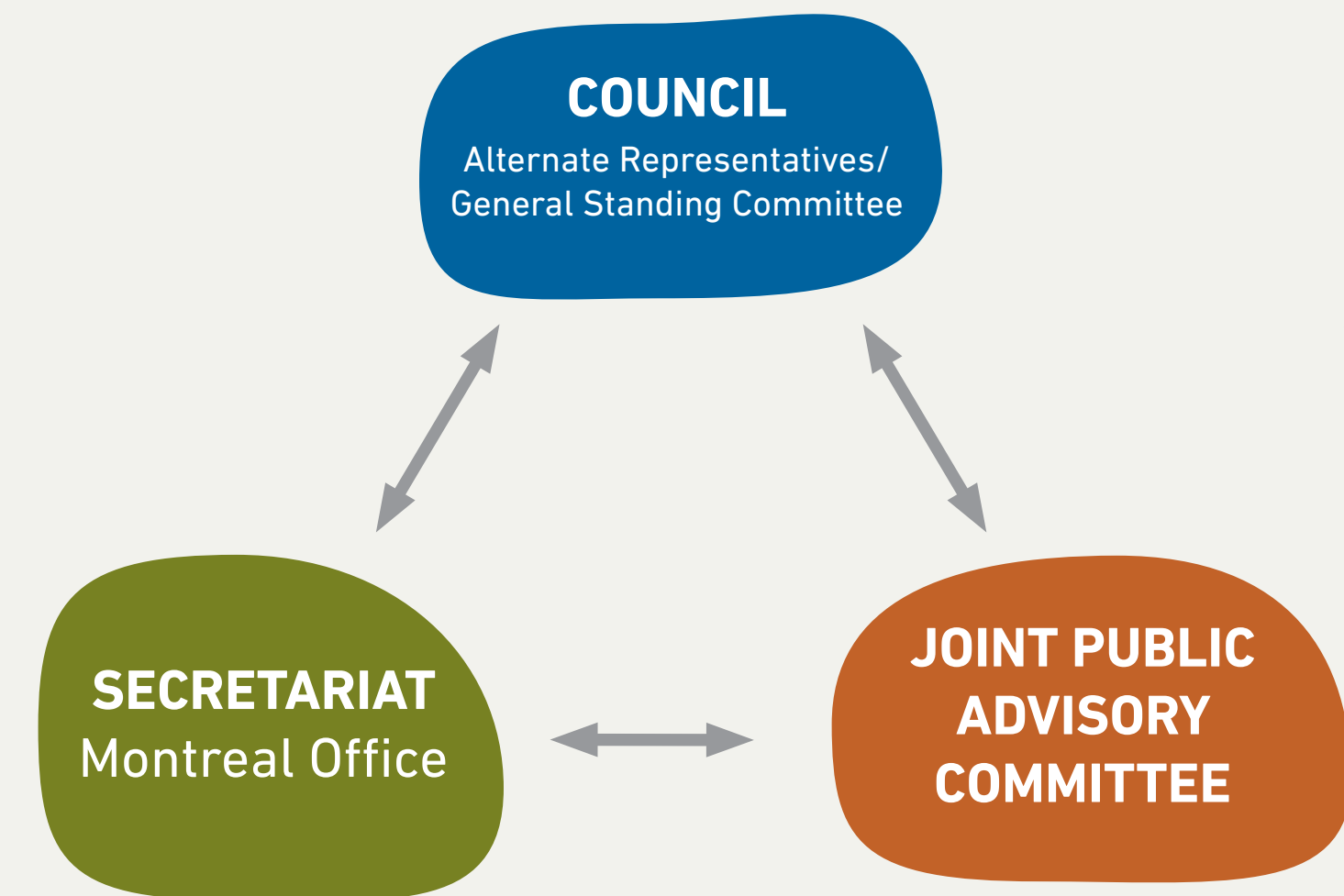
Executive Director

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

CEC Mission Statement

In the context of environmental, economic and social linkages among Canada, Mexico and the United States, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) facilitates effective cooperation and public participation to conserve, protect and enhance the North American environment in support of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Three Constituent Bodies of the CEC



- **The Council:** The CEC's governing body comprises cabinet-level representatives from Canada, Mexico and the United States.
- **JPAC:** The Joint Public Advisory Committee provides advice to the Council and comprises nine volunteer citizens, three per country, from Canada, Mexico and the United States.
- **The Secretariat:** The Secretariat provides technical, administrative and operational support to the Council.

Annual CEC Council Session and JPAC Forum

28–29 June 2023

Each year, the CEC brings together the top environmental officials from Canada, Mexico and the United States to engage with the public in a dialogue on pressing environmental issues facing the North American region. In 2023, the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, hosted his Council counterparts at #CEC30.

In accordance with the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (ECA) Article 3(4), the CEC Council shall hold public meetings in the course of all Regular Sessions. These public meetings have been held since 1995 and represent a unique opportunity for North American individuals to engage with senior environmental officials and learn about North American environmental collaboration in the context of free trade as well as share their views with the Council. The 2023 Council public meeting focused on “Indigenous and Urban Approaches to Climate Adaptation.”



- 106 in-person participants from the three countries gathered during the Council Session, including Indigenous representatives, subnational government officials, NGO representatives (including environmental justice activists), and youth.
- 235 participants also joined remotely.
- The most represented country was Mexico (with 43% of all attendees) followed by Canada (41%), and the United States (15%). As for the most represented sectors, the highest percentage was from government agencies (38%), followed by NGOs (21%), and the academic sector (13%). Among attendees, nearly 32% self-identified either as youth (16%), Indigenous Peoples, (15%) and Indigenous youth (1%).
- During the Council public session, 43 participants participated actively in polls using the Slido platform.
- In line with the Council theme, 20 public participants and speakers received financial assistance to attend the 2023 Council Session

As part of the 30th Council Session, the CEC announced the following¹:

- C\$500,000 to launch a new Council-led initiative, “Reaching Horizon 2030: An Environmental Outlook for North American Cooperation,” that will detail how to prepare for the emerging environmental and climate challenges North America is expected to face from the present until 2030 and beyond.
- C\$500,000 to launch a cities initiative focused on sharing approaches and best practices to adaptation planning and implementation, as well as visiting concrete, on-the-ground projects that respond to the needs of urban residents, including considerations for advancing more effective and equitable climate governance, environmental justice, nature-based solutions and Indigenous engagement.
- US\$2 million for the third cycle of the EJ4Climate grant program that will focus on projects to build resilience to climate change. The EJ4Climate grant program assists underserved and vulnerable communities and Indigenous communities in Canada, Mexico and the United States in preparing for climate-related impacts.
- C\$1,750,000 to fund a new cycle of the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) grant program to engage and empower Indigenous communities in climate adaptation. Since 2011, NAPECA has been supporting the delivery of projects led by nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations that build partnerships and drive action at the local level.
- Two new projects focusing on shared environmental priority areas, with Fast Mitigation Strategies for reducing Short-Lived Climate Pollutants, including addressing methane emissions reductions in the waste sector by harnessing emerging remote sensing technology to identify key emissions sources, and another extending the CEC’s work on promoting reductions of Food Loss and Waste.



1. For more information, visit: <http://www.cec.org/media/media-releases/2023-council-statement/>.



Octaviana V. Trujillo, JPAC Chair at the JPAC Public Forum 2023.

The CEC's Joint Public Advisory Committee also hosted a Public Forum on 28 June,² which showcased climate adaptation stories from Indigenous communities in the three countries and exchanged views on the critical role of Indigenous Knowledge and perspectives in shaping effective climate adaptation policies and planning efforts.

Throughout #CEC30, participants learned from and engaged with Indigenous and community leaders, subject matter experts, business leaders, youth and other key actors focused on enhancing trilateral cooperation to conserve, protect and enhance North America's unique biodiversity and natural resources.

The 2023 CEC Council Session and JPAC Public Forum were open to the public and both were live-streamed in English, French and Spanish.

2. The agenda for the JPAC forum is available at: <http://www.cec.org/events/cec30/>.



A Common Vision to Protect the Environment and Health of Communities in North America

The 2023 CEC Council Session built on the January 2023 North American Leaders' Summit, in which Prime Minister Trudeau, President López Obrador and President Biden recognized the critical nature of taking rapid and coordinated measures to tackle the triple planetary crisis and respond to its consequences. This includes collaborating through organizations like the CEC to achieve the Parties' respective 2030 nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement and coming together to align approaches on estimating the social cost of greenhouse gas emissions. The CEC Council members stated that they collectively understand the important role of the CEC for enhancing trilateral cooperation amongst the three countries to drive collaborative efforts on environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and climate action that contribute to the health of our shared environment and our people.

2023 Council Statement available [here](#).

“It has been an honor to host the 30th annual CEC Council meeting in Victoria, BC. A beautiful urban center and home to diverse Indigenous Peoples, it has been a perfect location to explore how Canada, the United States of America and Mexico can work with Indigenous and urban partners to adapt to climate change. I continue to be encouraged by the cooperation and progress our three countries make together, trilaterally through the CEC. Our shared commitment to North American environmental cooperation and climate action has never been stronger or more important, as we respond and adapt to the serious impacts of climate change.”

— The Honourable **Steven Guilbeault**,
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada

“The United States is proud of the work we are doing with the CEC to confront the climate crisis while also advancing environmental justice. We will continue building partnerships with our neighbors in Mexico and Canada, and with Indigenous communities and state and local governments to efficiently, effectively and equally implement climate change adaptation strategies for a resilient North America.”

— United States Environmental Protection Agency
Deputy Administrator **Janet McCabe**

“The 30th session of the CEC Council has allowed us to hear the voices of different communities in North America and the efforts they are making to address the negative effects of climate change. The Government of Mexico values and listens attentively to these voices, as well as the learning and knowledge that indigenous communities share with us to find common paths to advance in the environmental challenges of the region.”

— **Iván Rico López**,
Undersecretary of Environmental Policy and Natural Resources, Semarnat.

Turning the Vision into Action

The **Strategic Plan 2021–2025** has defined a path forward for our three countries to work together on pressing regional and global environmental issues. It outlines six priority areas for cooperation and two cross-cutting approaches to support more effective implementation of the CEC’s work.

Strategic Pillars



The CEC’s cooperative work program includes both core projects and Council initiatives. Core projects are multi-year cooperative projects funded from the annual contributions of the three Parties and focused on addressing key areas for cooperation under the six strategic pillars for 2021–2025 (presented above): 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.



Council initiatives are generally funded through accumulated surplus funds and announced annually by the Council at the annual Council Session. These new Council initiatives are often designed to address the theme of the Council Session or other emerging regional priorities.

This dynamic process of introducing new projects and initiatives to reflect emerging priorities, while sustaining core projects creates a resilient and vibrant landscape of environmental cooperation on the region's most important and pressing environmental issues.

Throughout 2023, efforts were focused on the development of the following projects and initiatives that advanced the ambitious agenda of the five-year 2021–2025 Strategic Plan. The next section provides the status of cooperative projects and notable results achieved during the year.



Cooperative Projects

Progress and Results



Reducing Marine Litter



Budget and duration: C\$497,000, 30 months (November 2021 – April 2024)

Marine litter is a growing problem that negatively affects economies, threatens ecosystems and marine species and poses risks to human health. It is estimated that 80% of marine litter originates from land-based sources, often due to the improper disposal of items or uncollected waste that becomes litter and travels through watersheds to the oceans. Previous CEC work on marine litter includes the development of guidance and engagement tools to reduce marine litter in inland communities. Building on this past work, the CEC's current project aims to build public awareness about marine litter, deploy litter capture devices, and collect comparable data across the three countries. This project will reduce land-based marine litter, including single-use plastic products and packaging in communities located inland along waterways and river systems in North America.

In 2023, the CEC installed trash capture devices in small to mid-size streams or urban waterways in Canada and Mexico, following the 2022 activities in the United States (one inland pilot city per country), and implemented community science activities in each pilot city. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC raised awareness about land-based marine litter by installing trash capture devices and holding related community science activities in Toronto, Canada and Chiapa de Corzo, Mexico, and preparing for local action in those two communities and in the Quad Cities region, United States.

Advancing Pollinator Conservation Throughout North America

Budget and duration: C\$497,000,

24 months (February 2022 – January 2024)

Pollinators support the reproduction of 80% of wild vascular plants and 75% of crop species, and as such are crucial to food security, human well-being and natural ecosystems. The number of pollinators has declined dangerously worldwide. This decline requires urgent conservation actions and the engagement of stakeholders in different sectors to help bring back pollinators and increase their resilience. Building on past work by the CEC as well as ongoing national efforts on pollinator conservation, the project is laying the foundations for more robust and standardized data repositories to inform pollinator conservation actions across the continent and develop tools and communication materials to raise awareness about pollinators and their importance to our North American ecosystems.

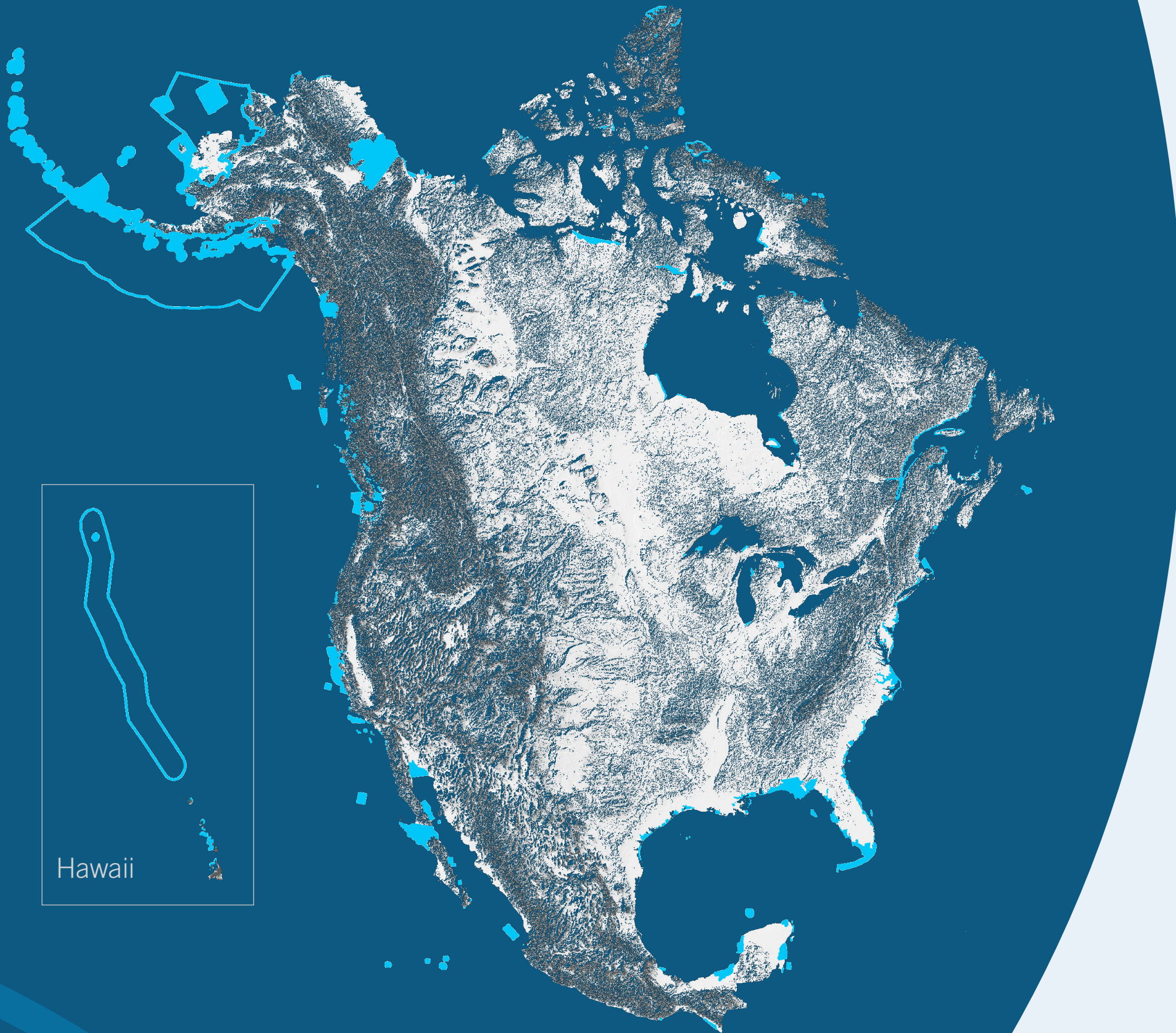
In 2023, the CEC strengthened existing tools and shared best practices for native bee inventories and monitoring through an emerging North American community of practice. The CEC also communicated the environmental, social and economic benefits of native bees for communities, food production and natural ecosystem functioning. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC produced a compilation of native bee monitoring and inventory programs and expanded a geospatial tool to support evidence-based pollinator conservation.
- The CEC launched the People for Pollinators social media campaign, to encourage everyone in North America to take action for pollinator conservation. Click [here](#) for info on the campaign.



Enhancing Co-benefits of Marine Protected Areas



Budget and duration: C\$590,000,
36 months (January 2022 – December 2024)

This project is focused on strengthening adaptation capacity in marine protected areas (MPAs) and supporting an ecologically sustainable and socially inclusive North American network of MPAs. Recognizing the leadership role Indigenous and local communities can play in managing and conserving coastal and marine areas, the CEC is supporting events to promote knowledge sharing and capacity building among these communities.

In 2023, the CEC built on existing approaches and opportunities for Indigenous and community leadership and engagement in coastal conservation and adaptation, developed knowledge on socio-ecological connectivity and conservation to strengthen seascape-level conservation, and identified and shared best practices for coastal/marine climate change adaptation, conservation and restoration of blue carbon and other critical habitats. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC recognized and highlighted Indigenous leadership in marine conservation by supporting an Indigenous-led session and participation at the 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5).
- The CEC brought practitioners together to share experience and practices on coastal climate change adaptation in marine protected areas.
- The CEC engaged North American MPA practitioners through “deep-dive” workshops, participation in local and global events on whale conservation and continued information through a regular discussion list by supporting the North American Marine Protected Areas Network (NAMPAN).

Grasslands Conservation and Migratory Birds



Budget and duration: C\$450,000,

36 months (November 2021 – October 2024)

This project is supporting central grasslands conservation by facilitating opportunities for inclusive and diverse collaboration, providing information on the human dimensions of grasslands conservation and developing a collaborative framework for monitoring grasslands change.

In 2023, the CEC produced a social science analysis of challenges, constraints, and drivers for the conservation of grasslands, analyzing socio-economic factors and human dimensions (motivations, values, economics, needs of communities and barriers) to inform grasslands' conservation strategies. The CEC also laid the groundwork to identify a common trinational framework and updated annually for monitoring native grasslands loss/gain and supported equitable engagement of those less represented in or absent from the Central Grasslands Roadmap and JV8 conservation strategy (such as private and communal landowners (ejidos) in Mexico, Central Grasslands Indigenous communities and other potential partners). Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC gathered insight from ranchers, landowners and other grasslands conservation partners to develop conservation strategies informed by social science.
- The CEC brought together experts in monitoring grasslands change to develop a common understanding of the state of the science and its application across North America.
- The CEC introduced underrepresented Indigenous communities in Chihuahua to the Indigenous Kinship Circle group of the Central Grasslands Roadmap, to make sure that they are part of the effort and that their priorities are included and supported.

Nature-based Solutions to Address Flooding in Coastal Cities

Budget and duration: C\$560,000, 36 months (November 2021 – December 2024)

Natural areas adjacent to cities provide ecosystem benefits and services that support climate change adaptation for communities. Inspired by these systems, nature-based solutions (NBS) reduce flood and erosion risk through the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of natural coastal environments, and the construction of new features that mimic or work with ecological processes. As countries look to finance infrastructure work in the context of a COVID-19 economic recovery, NBS represent one promising way to combine development, climate, disaster risk reduction and conservation objectives. Building on past collaborative experiences advancing knowledge on blue carbon, coastal adaptation and extreme events, we are uniquely placed to build capacity for coastal communities to manage flood risk in a changing climate through NBS.

In 2023, the CEC developed trilateral, intersectoral collaboration to support the use of NBS to address coastal flooding in cities, as well as knowledge and tools for coastal communities to support NBS implementation, including foundational guidance on the co-benefits of NBS, retrofitting existing infrastructure and monitoring the efficacy of NBS. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC brought together experts in monitoring the performance of nature-based solutions to develop guidance for decision-makers.
- The CEC is introducing guidance documents to the global climate adaptation community of practitioners through presentations at the 7th edition of Adaptation Futures, highlighting North American expertise in coastal adaptation.



Trilateral Data Exchange System on the Import and Export of Hazardous Waste

Maintenance, Implementation, Testing, and Launch of US-Mexico Application Programming Interface (API) Exchange in Production

Budget and duration: C\$249,000,

18 months (December 2021 – May 2023)

Pursuant to relevant regulations, Canada, Mexico and the United States control the import and export of hazardous waste by exchanging notice and consent prior to shipping this waste across their borders. In the context of CEC's 2019–2020 Operational Plan, the CEC undertook an initial project to support the countries to update their Notice and Consent Electronic Data Exchange (NCEDE) system to facilitate the seamless exchange of notifications relative to cross-border movements of hazardous waste and have the flexibility to respond to updates in regulations, with the goal of protecting the North American environment. This follow-up project ensured the successful culmination of the system's modernization and update and provided technical support for the first year of operation.

The system has been operational since August 2022, and the United States and Mexico have continued to monitor the electronic exchange to duly resolve any disruptions to the exchange as needed. Regular, periodic trilateral calls to ensure a sound maintenance of the system have been held on relevant issues deriving from specific problems and needs, and tools have been made available for the countries to successfully follow-up their joint work: the "Maintenance and Change Management" and the "Lessons Learned" guiding documents. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The system remained fully operational by the end of the project (May 2023) and remains operational as of 31 December 2023. The new functionalities are a sound improvement of the original system.

Strengthening the Implementation and Effective Enforcement of CITES for Timber in North America

Budget and duration: C\$535,000, 24 months (November 2021 – November 2023)

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) provides crucial mechanisms to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants is carried out in a controlled manner, that does not threaten a species' survival. CITES Appendix II covers species that are not necessarily threatened with extinction, but whose trade must be controlled to avoid the possibility that they become endangered.

In 2023 the CEC shared information and assessed similarities and differences between national legislation, regulations and processes for implementation of CITES by enforcement officers, and provided them training, including information on novel tools and risk assessment, to improve their ability to determine if a timber import is at high risk of being illegal. The CEC also formed an alliance of the laboratories providing forensic and research capacity for wood products identification, in order to harmonize databases, share reference samples and facilitate accurate, rapid and expedient species identification of timber evidence. Additionally, the CEC shared potential methods and processes and exchanged best practices on North American capacity to track the origin of timber in trade. The CEC also coordinated exchanges, and produced information to increase guidance to CITES Parties on CITES source code Y implementation in North America. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC organized a four-day in-person training in Ottawa, where 29 government officials, including border inspectors, wildlife lab researchers and prosecutors, gained knowledge and tools, under a “train the trainer” model, to identify and intercept shipments of suspicious wood products.
- An alliance was formed between nine forensic laboratories and academic institutions of the three countries to facilitate collaboration for wood products identification and to harmonize databases, share reference samples, and facilitate accurate, rapid, and expedient species identification of timber evidence.
- The CEC developed a thorough report with information to identify CITES timber-producing tree species that may be grown under the assisted reproduction scheme referenced as source code “Y” and provides a compendium of information about those species to be used in developing guidance for completing non-detriment findings (NDFS) for tree species grown via assisted reproduction.
- With the inputs provided by the experts, the CEC produced a guideline document for the implementation of source code Y. The document gained international attention during the last Source Codes meeting of the CITES, celebrated in December 2023 in Nairobi.

Ecolnnovation Network – Transition

Budget and duration:

Year 1: C\$150,000;

Year 2: C\$75,000;

24 months (December 2021 – November 2023)

In 2019, the CEC launched the Ecolnnovation Network (EIN) to promote the creation and interconnection of innovation centers at academic institutions across North America, and to provide tools for youth and communities to further green growth through entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainable design. In December 2021 a follow-up project was launched to support and ensure the proper transition of the EIN’s financial, operational and governance responsibilities from the CEC to the EIN members, partners and the initial managing institution, the University of Waterloo, and to build the necessary operational and financial capacity for the EIN to continue its efforts in the future.



EcoInnovation Network – Transition

In 2023, the CEC continued to support the operations of the EcoInnovation Network to further promote the creation and interconnection of innovation centers at academic institutions across North America and provide tools for youth and communities relative to entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainable design for green growth. The CEC also supported the dissemination of EIN activities to increase visibility of the network and promote activities. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- A series of activities were undertaken to review and adjust the charter, operation, governance, composition, and direction of the Network.
- The University of Waterloo moved forward to strengthen the EIN and expand its reach in the region by connecting with the Canadian, Mexican and United States chapters of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). These Chapters bring together universities and other stakeholders that already work with innovation and sustainable processes in their countries but have not yet worked together as a region.
- The EIN is striving to become a key actor that will link the in-country work of the Chapters and will bring them together to collaborate with eco-innovation projects.
- Through its operation, the EIN facilitated diverse resources for students and young entrepreneurs and knowledge exchanges between its members. A final report including highlights, lessons learned and overall intentions of activities of the EIN for the future was developed.

Transforming Recycling and Solid Waste Management in North America

Budget and duration: C\$1,530,000,

Phase I (Years 1 and 2 – Objective 1); C\$745,000,

Phase II (Years 3 and 4 – Objective 2); C\$785,000,

48 months (November 2021 – October 2025)

Reducing waste and closing material loops helps minimize environmental impacts throughout the value chain of resources and products, generating considerable economic opportunities. Circular economy strategies, including a multitude of recovery options, are estimated to unlock US\$4.5 trillion in economic growth around the globe. The transition to a circular economy and increased material recovery also offers the potential for climate change mitigation. Shifting toward sustainable production and consumption patterns is about improving the management and efficient use of materials and resources. This shift opens the door to new economic and environmental opportunities, as well as securing a more sustainable and resilient economic future.

In 2023, the CEC continued to work on the development of milestone studies to evaluate the current state of recycling, opportunities and barriers, emerging technologies, best practices, etc., with a focus on the paper, plastics and bioplastics waste streams. The CEC also developed a work program to identify relevant stakeholders and interested partners and promote their engagement and collaboration on the topics related to the studies. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC concluded the final technical draft of the three milestone studies and submitted them to the Parties' appointed experts for final review and validation before publication. The studies containing information for Canada and the US will be published in 2024, with a complementary publication with data for Mexico planned for release in 2025.
- The opportunities and technologies identified in the milestone studies will be considered for pilot testing in Phase II of the project to increase understanding of both the current state of the recycling sector in North America and opportunities for the future. This will further support collaboration with stakeholders via networking activities and events.



Preventing and Reducing Food Loss and Waste



Continued outreach, enhancement and promotion of CEC-related products and stakeholder engagement

Budget and duration: C\$160,000, 18 months (December 2021 – May 2023)

Building on the previous food loss and waste-related CEC projects and the materials developed within them (ranging from a toolkit for educators and a practical guide for businesses and organizations, to educational videos and topic-focused microsites), the Secretariat has continued efforts to raise awareness on food loss and waste and foster the use of CEC resources and stakeholder involvement and public participation to reduce food loss and waste in North America.

In 2023, the CEC engaged in an ongoing promotion, awareness raising and CEC content dissemination of the “Food Matters Action Kit.” As well as an ongoing promotion, awareness raising and CEC content dissemination of the “Practical Guide 2.0: Why and How to Measure Food Loss and Waste.” Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC developed new material (videos for social media), and existing partnerships have been reinforced along with new stakeholder engagement, e.g., the participation of the CEC in Food Waste Prevention Week (April 2023) extended the event to Mexico and Canada.
- The CEC launched a successful social media and digital campaign on various platforms, including a piece that ran with key influencers, that has significantly expanded the CEC’s reach to new audiences.

Advancing Supply Chain Transparency for Chemicals in Products

Budget and duration: C\$270,000,

24 months (July 2022 – June 2024)

The goal of this project is to foster collaboration among North American countries to improve supply chain transparency (SCT) and enhance governments' ability to identify and prevent products containing chemicals of concern, or chemical substitutes of concern (e.g., regrettable substitution), from entering or re-entering the economy. The information derived from this project will also help industry build resilient supply chains that respond to consumer demand for safer products and information on their chemical composition.

In 2023, the CEC conducted a review, consultation and assessment of existing chemical supply chain transparency (SCT) current practices, tools, challenges and regulations, and initiated case studies of three industry sectors currently using best practices for supply chain transparency and knowledge of product composition. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC presented an update on project activities during the OECD's 7th Meeting of the Working Party on Exposure Assessment.
- The CEC selected case studies to highlight SCT best practices on cosmetics and personal care products, electronics and building materials.



Communities for Environmental Justice Network (CEJN)



Budget and duration: C\$190,000,

18 months (April 2023 – September 2024)

The CEJN project, which was developed during 2022, aims to create a network of Indigenous, local, vulnerable, disadvantaged, and/or underserved communities that have environmental justice concerns, in order to increase local capacity to collect, deepen and disseminate community-based expertise, lessons learned and guidance related to climate change. Through the network, participating members will contribute to the facilitation of learning and knowledge exchange processes, in particular traditional ecological knowledge and practices, and develop a virtual resource library, with the goal of strengthening climate adaptation and mitigation, as well as building capacity of Indigenous, local and vulnerable communities in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

In 2023, communities and organizations were selected for inclusion in the CEJN and to take part in the project activities. They participated in a trilateral workshop hosted by the CEC to identify and disseminate stories, strategies and lessons learned, as well as inform the development of knowledge-sharing tools from culturally and contextually diverse North American communities. Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

Notable results:

- The CEC hosted a trilateral workshop from 16 to 18 November 2023 in Ejutla de Crespo, Oaxaca, where 13 communities and organizations (5 from Canada, 2 from the United States and 6 from Mexico) shared their perspectives about their needs and what they could bring to support others through a North American Communities for Environmental Justice Network. They identified ways to continue engaging together and sharing their knowledge and experience to address environmental justice issues and climate resilience across the three countries. The workshop report will be made public.



Council-supported Initiatives



Indigenous Approaches to Freshwater Management in North America

Budget and duration: C\$500,000, 16 months (October 2021 – March 2024)

Water is central to the spiritual, cultural and personal aspects of Indigenous life, and these holistic relationships and the transfer of intergenerational knowledge inform traditional approaches to the sustainable management of freshwater resources. This project will reflect upon these unique perspectives and engage Indigenous communities across North America.

In 2023, the CEC continued documenting Indigenous Peoples' approaches to freshwater management in North America, through three successful case studies, as well as an exchange of experiences through a knowledge dialogue to complement the successful case studies. The CEC also organized a trinational Indigenous Forum in Oaxaca, Mexico, to assess potential opportunities to integrate Indigenous Knowledge (including Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)), as well as Indigenous Peoples' perspectives and stewardship practices in freshwater management, into CEC operations and across North America. The CEC created an online portal on the CEC's website, showcasing Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on freshwater management and sustainable use and project deliverables. Click [here](#) for more information about the initiative.

Notable results:

- The CEC successfully documented two of the three case studies (in Mexico and the United States) and the initiative will finalize a collaboration with an Indigenous community in Canada in 2024.
- The Trinational Forum on Indigenous Approaches to Freshwater Management offered an opportunity to discuss how Traditional Ecological Knowledge plays a key role in ensuring the sustainable and responsible use of our planet's most vital resource – fresh water. The forum also explored the vital role of Indigenous stewardship practices and the intersection with Indigenous rights in freshwater management across North America.



Air Quality Improvements for Environmental Justice

Budget and duration: C\$1,000,000

36 months (October 2022 – September 2025)

As part of its expanding work on environmental justice, the CEC launched this initiative to build collaborative partnerships with communities that will respond to community-identified poor air quality conditions from exposures to high levels of black carbon and particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) emissions, as well as communities that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harm or risk, and/or have environmental justice concerns. This initiative will work with communities to deploy low and mid-cost air quality sensors to increase public awareness of and access to air pollution information, identify emission sources and formulate potential emission mitigation strategies.

In 2023, the CEC worked toward formalizing collaborative partnerships with three community-based organizations. This process involved identifying synergies, priorities and capacities to align current local work with the goals of the project. Click [here](#) for more information about the initiative.

Notable results:

- Three community-based organizations have agreed to be part of this initiative. In Canada, the Aamjiwnaang First Nation will work to deploy and manage their own community monitoring network in their traditional territory, located near the city of Sarnia in Ontario, which is surrounded by Canada's biggest petrochemical conglomerate. In Mexico, the initiative will be led by the Indigenous cooperative, Fundación Tosepan A.C., based in Cuetzalan, Puebla, with a focus on the relationship between indoor and ambient black carbon exposure levels due to traditional household woodburning emissions. Finally, in the United States, Comité Cívico del Valle (CCV), an environmental justice NGO, and pioneers in the implementation and recognition of air quality community monitoring in Imperial County, California, will partner with the CEC to include black carbon in their monitoring efforts, and will collaborate and share experiences with the communities in Canada and Mexico, as they embark in the implementation of their own air quality networks.
- Completed scoping and selection of appropriate technologies for monitoring PM_{2.5} and black carbon. Monitoring activities are scheduled to start in June 2024.

Addressing Ghost Gear in North America

Budget and duration: C\$1,000,000,

38 months (December 2022 – February 2026)

Ghost gear (abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear – ALDFG) is a particularly harmful form of marine debris, putting marine ecosystems at great risk. The Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) is the largest cross-sectoral alliance dedicated to tackling ghost gear, and includes Canada, Mexico and the United States as governmental members. This project will work with the GGGI in engaging local communities to prevent, reduce and retrieve ghost gear, and in building knowledge that will advance responsible management of active and end-of-life fishing gear.

In 2023, the CEC conducted training workshops for the fishing industry on responsible fishing, developed support material to implement ADLFG best practices, and supported coordination of ghost gear advocacy initiatives. Click [here](#) for more information about the initiative.

Notable results:

- The CEC built relationships with partners in Mexico to engage new groups and communities in ghost gear reduction efforts, including through upcoming workshops.
- The CEC provided support materials in Spanish for a training with fishers, divers and park rangers in preparation for gear survey and retrieval activities.



Transitioning Remote Communities to Renewable Energy



Budget and duration: C\$500,000, 24 months (April 2023 – March 2025)

This initiative aims to develop case studies of best practices from across North America on transitioning communities to cleaner, more affordable, and reliable sources of clean energy that will improve environmental conditions, enhance energy security, and promote self-sufficiency and community-ownership of energy generation projects. These case studies will be integrated into a “Multi-stakeholder Platform for Transitioning Remote Communities to Renewable Energy,” developed by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), which will serve as a global communications platform on the topic of energy transition for remote communities.

In 2023, the CEC identified case studies in North America as models of community-driven ownership and maintenance of renewable energy projects and engaged case study communities in sharing renewable energy transition experiences and lessons learned. Click [here](#) for more information about the initiative.

Notable results:

- The initiative defined metrics to showcase the case studies of energy projects in North America.
- The initiative defined criteria for the selection of community energy projects. Energy projects under consideration for the development of case studies include:
 - Canada: Haeckel Hill Wind Project (Yukon), Wataynikaneyap project (Ontario), Gull Bay First Nation Solar Microgrid (Ontario)
 - United States: Help My House (South Carolina), Toro Negro Community Solar Microgrid Project (Puerto Rico), and Energy Transition in the Transitioning North (Alaska)
 - Mexico: Solar Energy Projects in Zongolica (Veracruz), Sahuaripa (Sonora), and Llera (Tamaulipas)
- The CEC has held meetings with IRENA partners to discuss the initiative’s progress.
- The CEC held meetings with JPAC members to evaluate case study selection.
- The CEC began engaging with communities for this initiative and presented a project workplan at IRENA’s sponsored panel during COP28.

Resilience of Indigenous Peoples Traditional Food Systems

Budget and duration: C\$300,000, 24 months (February 2024 – February 2026)

Food security is one of the major global challenges facing humanity today. The climate crisis and the depletion of natural resources have put an increased strain on food production. Promoting and ensuring diverse and sustainable food systems that contribute to human well-being and avoid the deterioration of nature are top priorities now more than ever. The food systems of Indigenous Peoples have existed since time immemorial and are recognized for being sustainable and respectful of nature. While Indigenous Peoples have demonstrated resilience and leadership in maintaining their traditional food systems, most North American Indigenous communities face traditional food system shortages and crises. The CEC will support the greater inclusion of Indigenous leadership and Indigenous Knowledge, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge, in activities and decisions affecting Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems.

The main objectives of this initiative are to:

1. Better understand the current state of traditional food systems of Indigenous Peoples in North America;
2. Support the revitalization of networks and relationships among Indigenous Peoples across North America to foster knowledge exchange and partnerships; and
3. Raise awareness and promote the respect of Indigenous resiliency and leadership in policies, activities, and decisions affecting Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems.

Notable results:

- The project was approved in October 2023 and will begin implementation in March 2024.



Upcoming Cooperative Work (currently under design)

Council-supported Initiatives

- Community-led Environmental Education Initiative for Biocultural Heritage Protection
- Opportunities for Circularity in the North American Electronics Sector: Phase 1
- Climate Adaptation Initiative
- Advancing Responsible Consumption of Forest Products
- Indigenous and Urban Approaches to Climate Change Adaptation “Champion Cities”
- Reaching Horizon 2030: an Environmental Outlook for North American Cooperation

Projects

- Fast Mitigation Strategies to reduce short-lived climate pollutants, including methane in the waste sector
- Food Loss and Waste (FLW) – follow-up project: Supporting stakeholders to stimulate behavior changes and expanding uptake of CEC FLW resources
- North American Center for Informed Substitution scoping work



Providing Tools for Decision-Makers



Tracking pollutant releases and transfers in North America

Supporting the 2021–2025 Strategic Pillar, *Clean air, water and land*, the North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (NAPRTR) Initiative compiles, harmonizes and presents data on the sources, amounts and management of pollutants reported by approximately 40,000 industrial facilities to the Canadian, Mexican and United States' pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs). These data are made accessible via the *Taking Stock Online* website and searchable database, as well as through analyses in the *Taking Stock* report series. They are used by governments, industry, academia, communities, NGOs and the general public to explore and better understand pollutant releases and transfers reported by North American facilities, their risks and related pollution prevention measures.

In 2023, the CEC published the *Taking Stock* report and launched the enhanced Taking Stock Online website, which now includes additional contextual information and interactive data graphics on the home page, along with a simplified database user interface. Two additional years of trilateral data (for the 2021 and 2022 reporting years) were being integrated into Taking Stock for early 2024. In addition, a subset of facility-level greenhouse gas data is being tested for inclusion in the database.



Representatives from the Aamjiwnaang First Nation presented their Pollution Reporter mobile application at the public meeting.

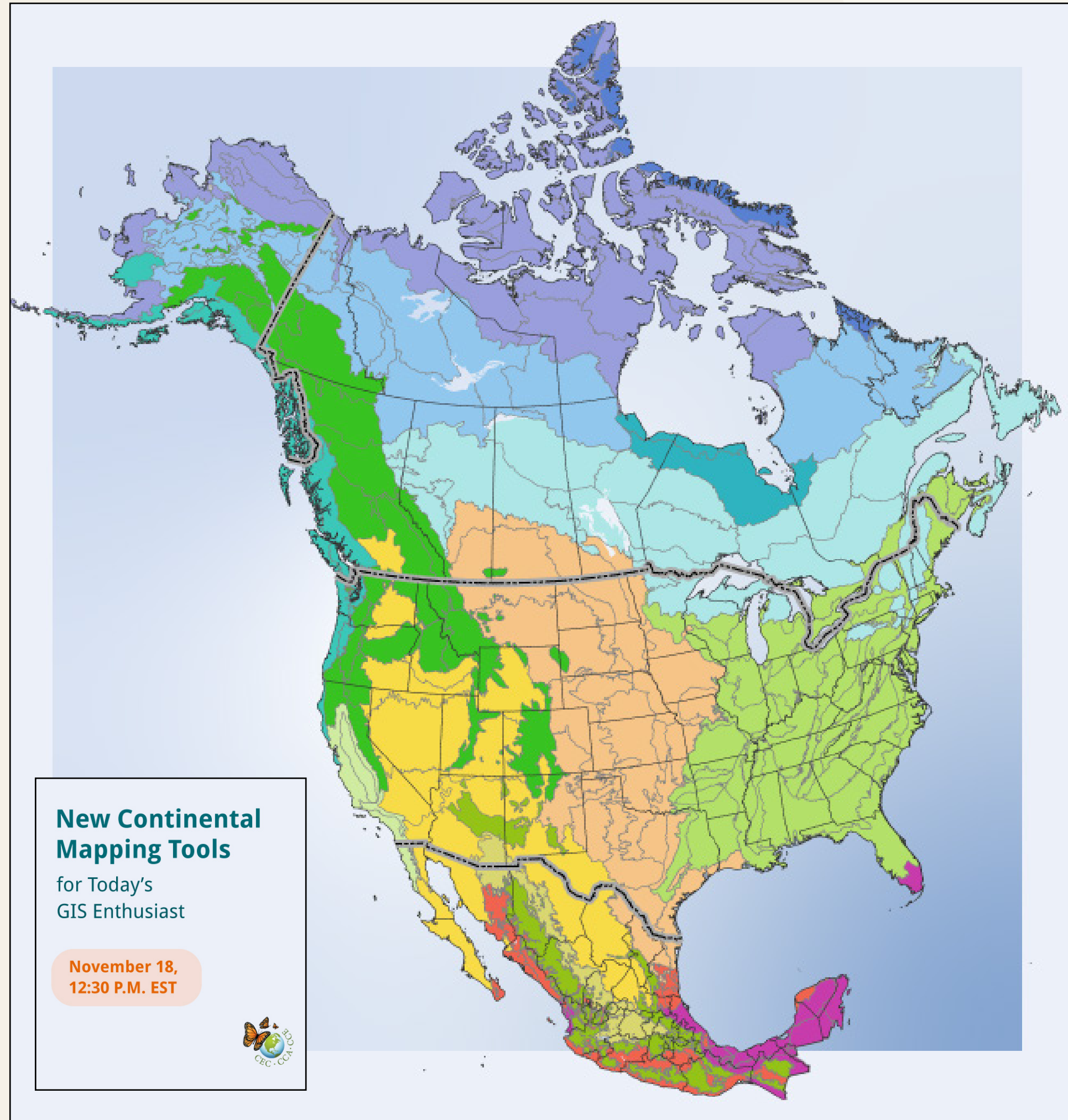
Tracking pollutant releases and transfers in North America

The CEC held a very successful online public engagement event in August 2023 to share updates with interested groups and individuals, get their feedback regarding the *Taking Stock* report and Taking Stock Online enhancements, and hear about their concerns relating to industrial pollution and sustainability in North America. A second public engagement event (either virtual or in person) will be held in 2024.

To address a key recommendation of the *Action Plan to Enhance the Comparability of PRTRs in North America*, the CEC, in collaboration with the national PRTR programs and representatives of the automotive manufacturing sector and supply chain, launched the Pollution Prevention (P2) Challenge. The first phase of this initiative, involving an assessment of the quality and coverage of pollution prevention reporting for the industry, has been completed; a second phase, focused on engaging facilities and sector representatives in the sharing of information and best practices, is anticipated to begin in 2024 (pending review of the Phase 1 report).

Notable results:

- The CEC published Volume 16 of the Taking Stock report in March 2023, with more than 400 resulting online articles and an estimated reach of over 6.5 million people.
- As of October 2023, the online report had been consulted or fully downloaded 1,021 times. The number of visits on the Taking Stock website between 1 January and 31 October 2023 totaled 6,662.
- The report's special feature analysis on off-site transfers to disposal complements national PRTR efforts to identify and prioritize areas for action.
- Under the auspices of the OECD's Working Party on PRTR, the CEC is leading a collaborative project involving the assessment of cross-border transfers data quality and comparability. A preliminary data assessment started in October.
- The CEC, in collaboration with the three PRTR programs and representatives of the automotive manufacturing sector and its supply chain, launched the Pollution Prevention (P2) Challenge, aimed at assessing the quality and coverage of pollution prevention reporting for the industry and opportunities for sharing information and best practices across the region.
- A preliminary subset of facility-level data for four greenhouse gases (methane, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and sulfur hexafluoride) is being evaluated for inclusion in Taking Stock Online in 2024.



North American Environmental Atlas

The CEC's North American Environmental Atlas is a collection of map layers that allow for a continental and regional perspective of various environmental aspects, such as terrestrial and marine ecological regions, climate zones, as well as land cover across the three countries. The Atlas compiles and harmonizes accurate geospatial data for North America, which are used by decision-makers, land managers, conservation organizations, NGOs, communities, scientific researchers and international organizations to research, analyze and manage environmental issues. The Atlas is available [here](#).

North American Land Change Monitoring System

The North American Land Change Monitoring System (NALCMS) is an ongoing collaborative initiative between the CEC and the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States and their respective mapping agencies to monitor land cover and its changes over time. Land cover refers to the classification of surface cover on the ground, whether forest, urban infrastructure, bodies of water or agricultural land, etc., helping to distinguish between natural and anthropogenic features. The land cover products are part of the North American Environmental Atlas. Specific information about NALCMS is also available [here](#).

Notable results:

- In 2023, the North American Environmental Atlas website has been visited more than 85,000 times.
- The CEC published the North American Land Cover 2020 in March 2023, the most accurate map available at this scale. In 2023, the webpage of that specific map product was visited more than 13,000 times, and its different data files have been downloaded more than 2,000 times.
- The North American Land Cover 2020 product was also published on the Google Earth Engine cloud computing platform, widening the data's accessibility especially for those with limited IT resources.
- The CEC created and updated map layers in the North American Land Cover Change 2015–2020 and the North American Elevation.
- The CEC published an interactive Atlas StoryMap on the external ArcGIS Online platform in May 2023, increasing accessibility of the different CEC mapping products and datasets of the Atlas to the wider public. In 2023, the StoryMap has been viewed more than 2,000 times.
- The CEC registered the Atlas as a resource with the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) in July 2023, increasing its visibility and reach to environmental education professionals and students in North America.
- In September 2023, the CEC published a database of more than 1,100 external publications (scientific articles, books, reports, theses, etc.) from researchers, practitioners and decision-makers who have used data of the Atlas.
- In December 2023, the CEC presented the Atlas at the AGU Annual Meeting 2023 (San Francisco, USA), the largest earth observation conference in the world, which welcomed more than 25,000 earth observation enthusiasts from more than 100 countries.
- The CEC created the North American Lakes and Rivers 2023 map and dataset in October 2023 (published on 6 November 2023), a unique product showcasing the freshwater systems of North America.



Outcome of Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) Activities

In 2023, JPAC focused its efforts on increasing collaboration with the other CEC constituent bodies and the CEC's TEK Expert Group (TEKEG), and on the development of the JPAC-led initiative: Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products. Please find more information about JPAC [here](#).

JPAC's areas of focus included:

- The Climate Crisis – Continue to build upon efforts to increase knowledge sharing, public dialogue, and public engagement in North America on climate change mitigation and adaptation throughout JPAC events; by addressing topics such as TEK and Indigenous perspectives, environmental justice, greenhouse gas emissions reduction pathways of trilateral interest and impact.
- Water – Build upon the success of the 2021 JPAC transboundary water webinar to increase knowledge-sharing and public dialogue through JPAC events by addressing water-related topics, such as transboundary water management, sustainable water practices in key economic sectors, best practices and standards for water efficiency in the public and private sectors, and ecosystem resilience.

To achieve this, the following activities took place:

- Meetings with the other CEC constituent bodies and the TEKEG.
- JPAC Public Forum (23-01) on Indigenous Approaches to Climate Adaptation on 28 June in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.
- JPAC Regular Session 23-02 in Oaxaca, Mexico on 27–29 November.
- Development of the JPAC-led initiative on Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products.

Notable results:

- A joint meeting between JPAC and TEKEG took place from 6 to 8 March 2023 to begin a conversation on the development of a CEC Indigenous Strategy and discuss potential joint activities during the 2023 Council Session and the TEKEG-led trilateral Indigenous Forum.
- The CEC hosted a joint meeting between JPAC and TEKEG in Victoria on 26 June to continue strengthening future collaborations.
- The CEC hosted the JPAC Public Forum on Indigenous Approaches to Climate Adaptation in the margins of Council Session in Victoria.
- The CEC organized the JPAC Public Forum in Oaxaca on Community-based Conservation of Freshwater Resources: Forging Alliances for Water Stewardship, in the margins of the TEKEG-led Trilateral Indigenous Forum.
- All of the areas of focus identified by the JPAC members have been incorporated throughout their activities.



Engagement and Community Action



Inclusive and Diverse Engagement



In 2023, the CEC managed activities aimed at simultaneously ensuring sustained engagement and strengthened relationships with key actors and collaborators, while developing and maintaining partnerships as well as expanding the CEC's engagement with underrepresented, disadvantaged and marginalized groups and communities.

The CEC also aimed to increase visibility, raising awareness of key environmental issues, and enhancing the CEC's unique role in facilitating collaboration; and continued to seek and implement innovative and inclusive approaches for the creation of synergies and fostered the identification and undertaking of collaborative opportunities. The CEC

developed and implemented more awareness and behavior-change campaigns, co-hosted events and explored new and innovative approaches for diverse and inclusive engagement, with a particular focus on environmental justice actors, Indigenous leaders, the youth sector, members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and key actors in the private sector. Partnership opportunities and engagement activities included roundtable discussions on key issues, collaborative events, videos, joint activities and statements with key partners and partnership agreements to promote regional and global discussions. These efforts aimed to recognize the value of collaboration and partnerships and strengthen knowledge sharing and the commitment to leverage efforts to support key environmental topics. The CEC identified opportunities for partnerships to support the implementation of regional and international frameworks and position the North American region as a leader on environmental topics.

Inclusive and Diverse Engagement

Notable results:

- The CEC partnered with key actors (including the National Zero Waste Council) on an awareness campaign for the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) North America regional office, and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on an activation campaign for the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies and supported the expansion of the Food Waste Prevention Week initiative to Mexico and Canada.
- The CEC became a partner as an Intergovernmental Organization (IGO) of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC).
- The CEC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNEP North America regional office to strengthen their collaboration.
- The CEC hosted a session at the GEO BON Global Conference: Monitoring Biodiversity for Action showcasing the North American Environmental Atlas to promote CEC's work in the creation of networks.
- The CEC launched and coordinated the seventh edition of the International Monarch Monitoring Blitz with 8 partner organizations including the incorporation of Correo Real as a new partner. This partnership initiative continues to highlight CEC's key role in promoting community science in North America.
- The CEC co-hosted the 2023 Water Innovation Lab North America in collaboration with the Canadian Embassy in Mexico and Waterlution to promote regional discussions with youth and Indigenous peoples.
- The CEC facilitated the participation of the Youth Innovation Challenge winners in the Regional Conference of Youth.
- The CEC hosted an inaugural North American Youth Engagement Week at CEC headquarters.
- The CEC had an active participation at the International Youth Conference.
- The CEC built relationships with collaborators and partners to promote CEC work and create synergies (FAO North America, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UNEP North America, Montreal International, Space for Life, among others).
- The CEC expanded its audience through targeted research on key sectors and actors and maintained stakeholder management system (Borealis) which includes more than 8,000 individuals.
- The CEC convened a landmark consultation with 2SLGBTQAI+ communities by hosting an expert roundtable with participants from Canada, Mexico and the United States. Discussion was centered on priority actions to promote meaningful collaborative engagement of 2SLGBTQAI+ communities and identify opportunities for strengthening environmental conservation, the advancement of environmental justice, and the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge, through 2SLGBTQIA+ perspectives at the North American level.
- The CEC launched a deep-dive and outreach to an extensive list of environmental justice advocates across Canada, Mexico and the United States, to better understand, engage and define future action on environmental justice at a North American scale.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge



The Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG) provides advice to the CEC on integrating traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous perspectives into the CEC's work and policy recommendations. Please find more information about the TEKEG [here](#).

In 2023, the CEC Secretariat continued working with the TEKEG to inform, support and enhance CEC engagement activities and identify and incorporate Indigenous Knowledge (IK), including Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as well as Indigenous perspectives and stewardship practices into its activities and policy recommendations. The CEC also worked on the implementation of Activity 3 of the TEKEG-led project on Indigenous Approaches to Freshwater Management in North America, the development of a new TEKEG-led project on the Resilience of Indigenous People's Traditional Food Systems, and the development of a CEC Indigenous Strategy and Protocol for engaging with Indigenous communities. The CEC is also exploring ways to foster closer collaboration between the TEKEG and the JPAC, for example, through joint meetings and collaborative events.

Notable results:

- A joint meeting between JPAC and TEKEG took place from the 6–8 March 2023 to discuss a potential CEC Indigenous Engagement Strategy, which included a discussion on a Protocol for Engaging Indigenous Communities. This session also served to plan joint activities during the 2023 Council Session and the TEKEG-led trilateral Indigenous Forum (27–28 November 2023).
- Joint meeting between JPAC and TEKEG in Victoria on 26 June to continue strengthening future collaborations.
- The TEKEG-led Trilateral Forum on Indigenous Approaches to Freshwater Management in North America, which took place on 27–28 November 2023, explored the vital role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Indigenous stewardship practices and the intersection with Indigenous rights in freshwater management across North America. It showcased Indigenous-led water restoration and conservation projects in the region, and how to bridge knowledge systems while applying and co-applying Indigenous-Science to freshwater management. A final report with concrete recommendations for the CEC will be made available in the portal.
- The TEK Expert Group has also participated in the design of the Community-led Environmental Education Initiative for Biocultural Heritage Protection (currently under design) and has also continued to provide support to other projects and initiatives.

Supporting Youth Engagement



Youth Engagement Week

The CEC is seeking to amplify the voices of youth who are at the forefront of addressing environmental challenges in North America. In November 2023, the CEC organized its first Youth Engagement Week. This in-person event was held at the CEC Secretariat in Montreal, Canada, with the aim of gathering insights from youth and integrating them into the CEC's upcoming Youth Engagement Strategy. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to enhance the CEC's current activities and include youth perspectives in all of its projects and initiatives.

Participants had the opportunity to learn from the CEC and provide recommendations to strengthen youth engagement across the organization. Participating youth met with CEC Secretariat staff members to share ideas on promoting greater youth engagement. Other youth-focused social and educational activities involving collaborative environmental learning and action also occurred during the week with some of the CEC's collaborators.

Notable results:

- Youth Engagement Week received 138 submissions of interest to participate.
- The CEC selected and supported the participation of nine young individuals aged 18–35 from Canada, Mexico and the United States (three from each country).
- Participants traveled to Montreal for a week-long visit. During their stay, they did a deep-dive on CEC projects and initiatives, actively participated in regular CEC projects and operations, met amongst themselves to discuss their weeklong experience and CEC engagement and offered the CEC valuable recommendations on ways to promote further meaningful youth engagement.
- Participants subsequently had the opportunity at the trilateral level and with other Party youth advisory groups and government officials, to share their expertise on CEC engagement and youth-led initiatives to inspire change.
- Nine youth have been actively engaged in CEC activities and have joined in-person and online events.
- The recommendations from the youth leaders will guide the drafting of the 2024–2025 CEC Youth Engagement Strategy.

Supporting Youth Engagement

Youth Innovation Challenge

Beginning in 2017, the CEC hosted the annual Youth Innovation Challenge (YIC), a contest that invited youth from Canada, Mexico and the United States to submit their innovative ideas and solutions for improving both the environment and the economy in North America.

In 2023, the CEC launched the seventh and final edition of the Youth Innovation Challenge, under the theme “Water Solutions for Sustainable Development,” which encouraged dynamic and creative young leaders to participate in the contest with actions, innovations and transformative solutions on issues relating to water. Please find more information about the 2023 YIC winners [here](#).

Notable results:

- 2023 Youth Innovation Challenge received 57 submissions.
- Four winners were selected for their impactful and innovative solutions for water-related challenges by demonstrating potential benefits for the environment and direct impacts that support communities, with a focus on social, environmental and economic equity.
- Seven representatives from the winning teams travelled to the CEC Council Session at Victoria, British Columbia to present their innovative solutions to the CEC Council and the public during the Council public session.



North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action



The North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) is a CEC biannual grant program that engages and supports local and Indigenous communities. More information is available [here](#).

In 2023, the CEC monitored progress and results for grant projects announced in Spring 2022. The CEC visited three projects supported by NAPECA grants in Canada and Mexico, engaged with the beneficiary communities, and documented the work through photos and videos. In November 2023, the CEC launched the call for proposals for the 2024–2026 cycle of NAPECA. This new cycle will support environmental initiatives that involve and empower Indigenous Peoples and communities and enhance climate adaptation by respectfully applying Indigenous Knowledge and helping to protect Indigenous Knowledge systems.

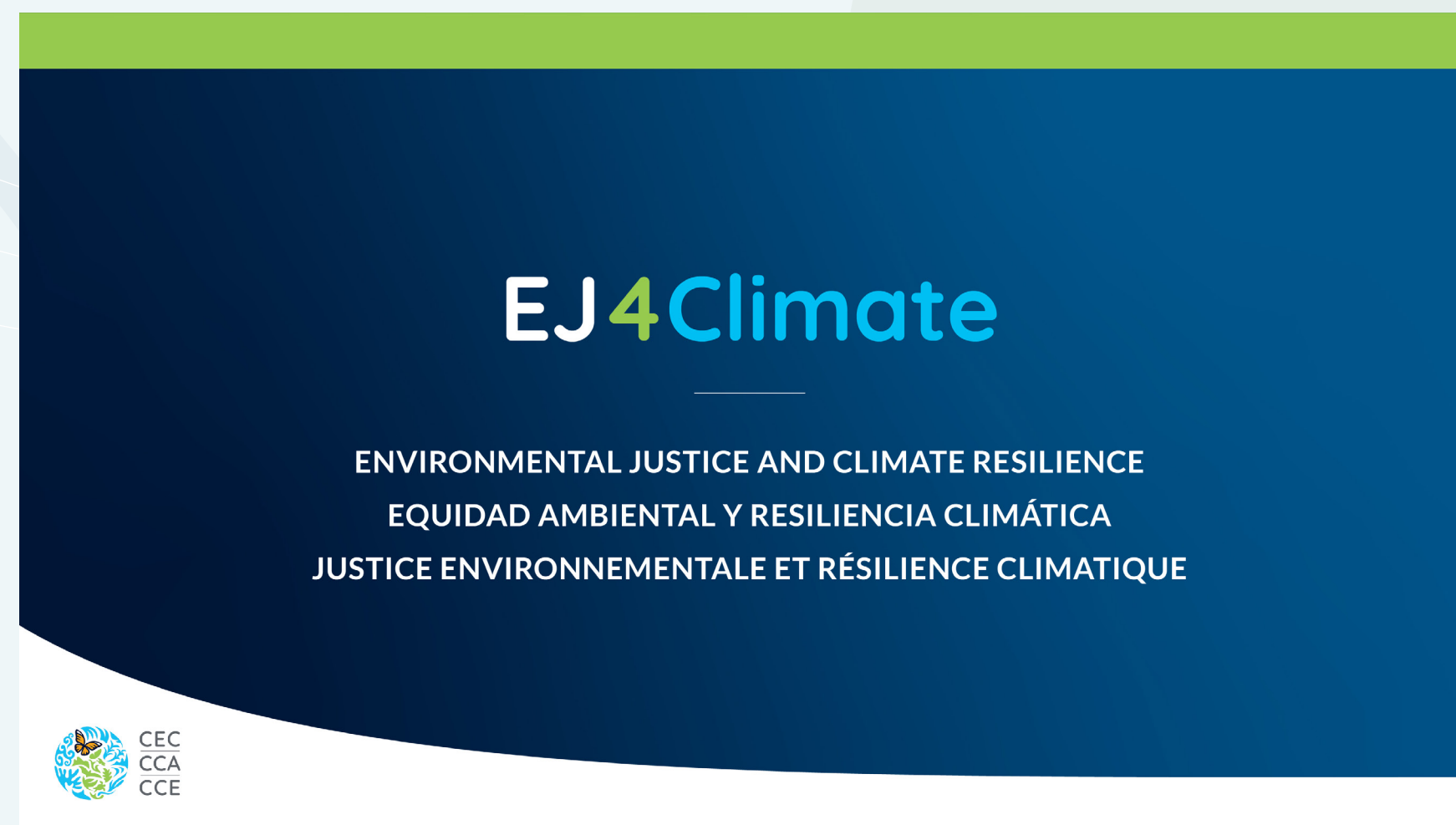
This theme is in line with the importance the CEC places in working with Indigenous Peoples and communities—the original guardians and caretakers of territories in Canada, Mexico and the United States and whose environmental knowledge and practices, and unique perspectives, are increasingly recognized, at local and international levels, as critical to promoting environmental protection, equity, resilience and sustainability in combating climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

Considering the intended objective of NAPECA to improve environmental conditions, in 2022 the CEC commissioned a long-term impact assessment (LTIA) to provide insights into the process, results and long-term impacts of the grants in order to inform decisions regarding future implementation of the program. The report showed that some of the important outcomes of NAPECA have to do with building long-term partnerships to improve environmental conditions at the community level and strengthening communities' capacities in different areas. Please find more information about the findings and recommendations of the LTIA [here](#).

Notable results:

- On 27 November 2023, the CEC launched a new cycle of NAPECA focused on “Enhancing climate adaptation by incorporating Indigenous Knowledge (IK)”.
- 49 respondents, including past grantees, completed a survey and 13 interviews were conducted during the preparation of the NAPECA long-term impact assessment, providing useful recommendations for future cycles.

EJ4Climate Grant Program: Environmental Justice and Climate Resilience



In September 2021, the CEC launched EJ4Climate, an annual grant program to support underserved, vulnerable, as well as Indigenous communities across North America, to increase preparedness and resilience for climate-related impacts. The EJ4Climate Grant Program provides funding directly to community-based organizations and seeks to support environmental justice by facilitating the involvement and empowerment of communities searching for solutions and the development of partnerships to address their environmental and human health vulnerabilities, including those due to climate impacts. More information is available [here](#).

In 2023, the third grant cycle of EJ4Climate was launched and the CEC called for project proposals that will advance community empowerment strategies in support of environmental justice and community resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events in urban areas. The CEC also monitored ongoing grants, selected grantees for the second cycle of EJ4Climate and launched the call for proposals for the third cycle of EJ4Climate. The CEC visited three projects (in Canada and Mexico) supported by EJ4Climate grants, engaging with communities and documenting their work (through photos and videos).

EJ4Climate Grant Program: Environmental Justice and Climate Resilience

Notable results:

- Second and third cycles of EJ4Climate: 705 proposals (29 projects selected).
- Number of submissions received for the EJ4Climate cycle III: 244 (Canada – 48 proposals (20%); Mexico – 76 proposals (31%); United States 120 proposals (49%).
- 14 EJ4Climate (second cycle) grantees selected in 2023.
- More than 500 people registered for the 19 October 2023 information session, entitled “How to submit a strong proposal.”
- Four EJ4Climate grantees participated in person and presented at the 2023 Council Session.
- The project Seeding Resilience in Princeville II: Community-driven Adaptation to Climate (first cycle grantee) was showcased at the Cities Summit of the Americas in Denver, Colorado.
- Projects completed in 2023 have achieved the following:

Seeding Resilience in Princeville II: Community-driven Adaptation to Climate (United States)

- Building of a half-mile network of walking trails along the Tar River at key access points throughout Princeville and Edgecombe County.
- Conversion of three acres (1.21 hectares) of vacant land to restored wetland areas, stormwater management areas, or community garden spaces to grow locally-sourced food to benefit residents.
- Planting 50 native trees throughout a two-square mile area of the town’s corridor that has experienced historic and repeated flooding.
- Engagement of nearly 300 youth aged 5–18 and more than 50 women through different activities.

Rural Women Leaders in the Adaptation to Climate Change (Mexico)

- Improvement of the agricultural practices of 162 families on 198.6 hectares, with the leadership of a group of 14 rural women to reduce soil erosion, eliminate the use of pesticides, increase biodiversity and increase the resilience of agri-food systems to extreme weather events.
- Increase in the strengthening of capacities in terms of access to justice and environmental equity due to the participation of women in community decision-making spaces.
- Consolidation of productive initiatives led by women for the sustainable use of the natural resources with the intention of reducing vulnerability to the effects of climate change and structural inequalities that women face.
- Training of 848 women and 333 young people in different subjects.

Sustainable Ecosystems and Resilient Economies through Mariculture (United States)

- Plantation of three times more sugar kelp than originally planned (15,000 linear feet instead of 5,000 feet), which will triple the amount of harvestable kelp.
- Incorporation of 20% reclaimed fishing equipment and marine debris into the kelp array, mostly supplied by tribal elders, local fishermen and the United States Coast Guard.
- Creation of key partnerships with research scientists and academic institutions, the Alaska Mariculture Alliance, Ocean Rainforest and other local and international kelp farms.
- Establishment of the basis for a future workforce development program, in the form of formal education credits, that will train students in all the necessary skills to join the mariculture industry.

The Submissions on Enforcement Matters Process (SEM)

Submissions on Enforcement Matters

The CEC Submissions on Enforcement Matters process supports public participation transparency in the effective enforcement of environmental law in North America.

If you have reason to believe that an environmental law is not being effectively enforced by Canada, Mexico or the United States, the SEM process may address your concerns.



To learn more about the SEM process, scan here.

cec.org



The Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) process is governed by Articles 24.27 and 24.28 of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA/ CUSMA) (originally created under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation). The SEM process allows a North American permanent resident, citizen or entity to file a submission asserting that Canada, Mexico and/or the US is failing to effectively enforce its environmental law(s). From 1994 to the end of 2023, the Secretariat has received 112 submissions: 34 concerning Canada, 62 concerning Mexico, 14 concerning the US, and two concerning both Canada and the US. The Secretariat has published 26 factual records to date.

The Submissions on Enforcement Matters Process (SEM)

In 2023, the CEC received seven new submissions and continued to process six others, making it the most active year for submission processing in the last 15 years. In five instances, the Secretariat determined that the submission met the criteria in USMCA/CUSMA Article 24.27(2) and requested a response from the respective Party in accordance with Article 24.27(3). The Secretariat concluded action on three submissions: *Madín Dam Basin* (after finding the revised submission did not meet the eligibility requirements), *Residential Development San Cristóbal de las Casas* (after not receiving a revised submission), and *La Primavera Forest II* (after reviewing Mexico's response). The Secretariat informed the Council that five submissions warrant developing factual records: *Tren Maya*, *Avocado Production in Michoacán*, *Agave Production in Jalisco*, *Valle de Bravo-Amanalco Sub-Basin*, and *Illegal Logging in Jalisco*.

The Secretariat published factual records for the *Metrobús Reforma* and *City Park* submissions. The Secretariat received Council instructions and started to prepare factual records for the *Hydraulic Fracturing in Nuevo Leon* and *Loggerhead turtle* submissions, the latter being the first factual record governed under the USMCA/CUSMA.

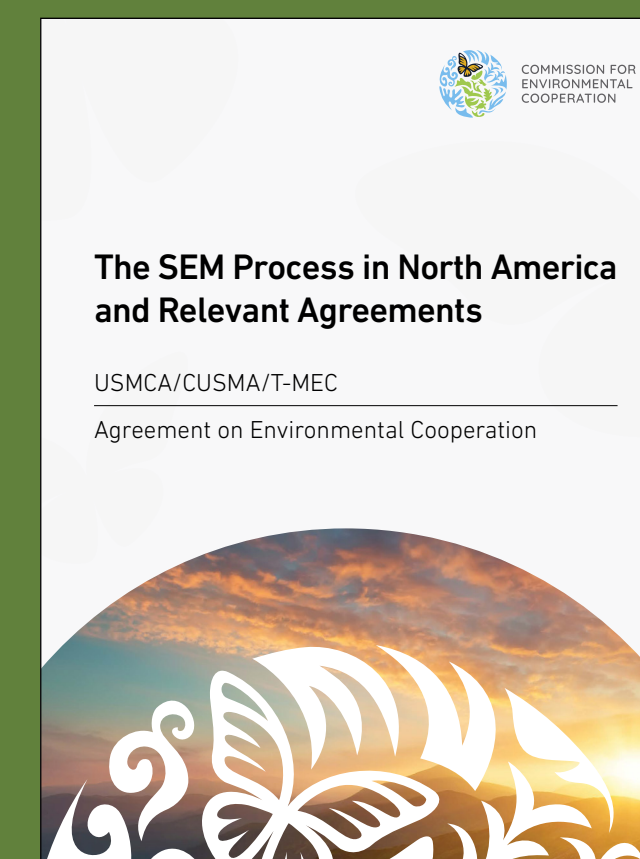
Six of the submissions filed in 2023 relate to Mexico's alleged failure to enforce its environmental laws to:

- (i) protect forests and birds from the impacts of housing developments near San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas;
- (ii) protect forest ecosystems and water resources from the adverse impacts of avocado production in Michoacán;
- (iii) adequately manage and treat wastewater from the tequila manufacturing process in Jalisco;
- (iv) appropriately evaluate the environmental impacts of a residential development near La Primavera Forest Protected Area in Jalisco;
- (v) protect forests, biodiversity, and water resources from degradation and contamination in the Valle de Bravo-Amanalco watershed in the State of Mexico, and
- (vi) prevent illegal logging and unauthorized forest land use change in Cuautla, Jalisco.

The last submission of 2023 alleges that Canada is failing to enforce its environmental laws to control pollution from vessels off the coast of Pacific Canada. More information is available [here](#).

Notable results:

- 7 Submissions filed at the CEC (record annual number, since 2004).
- 17 Determinations issued.
- 2 Final Factual Records submitted to Council and released to the public.
- 2 Factual Records in preparation.
- 93% of target deadlines met by the Secretariat.
- 32 events where SEM was presented (including CEC and non-CEC events).



CEC Communications

In 2023, the CEC communicated with an increasingly diverse array of target audiences about our trilateral activities and priorities, as well as on issues of common concern and interest for North Americans in Canada, Mexico and the United States. The CEC also enhanced visibility, public awareness and understanding of the organization's work and role in environmental cooperation and public participation, continued to modernize access to information for decision-makers and key actors, strengthened modes of communication to facilitate public participation and promote diverse and inclusive stakeholder engagement and also promoted attendance and participation in national and international fora and facilitated joint events.

Notable results:

- Media hits: 2,419
- Media reach: 2.63 billion total potential views (via industry-leading Meltwater media monitoring)
- Media reach 65 million likely traditional media views (using standard 2.5% of total potential reach)
- Meltwater estimated ad value equivalent: US\$24,337,040
- CEC website visits: 631,786 unique page views; 33,309 returning users
- Social media followers: 58,141
- Social media impressions: 6.24 million
- Unique social media engagements: 315,650
- Average newsletter open rate: 27%
- Video views: 171,879 (YouTube only)

Administration and Management

The CEC promoted sound financial management, recruitment and training to foster a diverse workplace and build skills, updated corporate policies, improved information technology (IT) systems and resilience, streamlined Meeting Services support and developed an Office Sustainability Plan.

Notable results:

Financial Management

- The CEC updated the (2014) *Procurement Manual* to streamline processes and expedite our contracting in collaboration with the SEM unit and Cooperative Heads.
- Despite inflationary pressures and exchange rate instability, external audit concluded that the CEC's financial management was sound, limiting the use of the contingency fund.
- The CEC provided quarterly financial reports to the Council and worked to limit variances.
- It also improved efficiency of its payroll system and maintained internal operating costs stability.

Human Resource Management

- The CEC achieved high level **recruitment** and supported **employee development**:
 - Recruited new high-caliber and seasoned professionals: Director of Administration, Meeting Services Assistant, IT Technician, TEK Officer and three new Leads for Communications, Advisory Groups and Private Sector Engagement, and Partnerships and Outreach.
 - Administered an Employee Pulse Survey to better assess employees' development needs. Based on the survey results, targeted managerial training was offered to enhance coaching skills and an Employee Working Group was created to address employee development.
 - Supported work on the Gender and Diversity Survey and a forthcoming GEDI Strategy.

- Offered new language training to improve communications with stakeholders and better integrate our CEC team into local life.
- Updated its Performance and Development tool to target employee development.
- Provided Staff Rules training to improve understanding of employee-employer relations and accountability.
- The CEC also continued to update existing **corporate policies** and developed new ones to improve the functioning of the workplace:
 - Implemented new Cellphone and Teleworking Policies for hybrid workers; and a new internship framework to better attract young talent.
 - Enhanced the onboarding plan to ensure managers and employees have a better understanding of their accountabilities and CEC's operations.

Administration and Management

Information System Infrastructure

- The CEC upgraded server operating systems, application software, the computer security, and increased the resiliency of IT systems (by moving to a cloud delivered solution for email and collaboration) to prevent vulnerabilities.
- The CEC improved business continuity and security by hiring an IT technician to support the IT manager.
- Supported an Artificial Intelligence (AI) pilot project to potentially alleviate Legal/SEM translation services and contract preparation. It also supported the development of internal guidance on the use of AI tools in the workplace.

Meeting Services

- In light of the growing number and costs of hybrid and onsite Meeting Services, the CEC provided training to all staff on meeting planning to increase the capacity of staff and contain costs.

Office Sustainability

- The CEC hired an intern to support the development of the Office Sustainability Strategy and Policy to improve CEC's environmental footprint. The intern worked with the CEC's internal Evergreen Committee to develop a detailed assessment of key sectors and areas of improvement, including metrics for measuring success and offset options for our CO₂ emissions.

Planning, Measuring Performance and Reporting on Progress

As stated in the Strategic Plan 2021–2025, the implementation of a performance measurement framework is a means by which the CEC can demonstrate progress in meeting the organization's environmental goals and objectives. The framework promotes CEC's commitment to transparency, excellence, collaboration, inclusiveness and integrity through enhancing the CEC's performance, accountability and reporting ability. It also represents a monitoring mechanism by which it becomes possible to integrate responsive feedback to re-direct and sharpen actions as needed.

The planning and performance framework activities at the CEC are powerful mechanisms to strengthen environmental governance. Evaluation of the CEC's work must also account for the various tangible and intangible benefits generated from its focus on public participation and engagement with key actors. Throughout 2023, the CEC worked on the implementation of operational and strategic key performance indicators (KPIs), the development of two long-term impact assessments (LTIAAs), the publication of the 2022 Annual Report, biweekly status reports for the Parties on the planning of the cooperative projects and initiatives and the executive summaries for two other LTIAAs conducted in 2022 and 2023. The CEC also worked on the development of a process manual for the Performance Measurement Framework and the publication of the 2023 Operational Plan. Please find more information about the CEC's planning and performance framework [here](#).

Notable results:

- The CEC designed the initiative *Reaching Horizon 2030: An Environmental Outlook for North American Cooperation (H-2030)* which will assess significant environmental challenges to 2030 that can be addressed through the CEC, providing critical information and input for the development of the CEC Strategic Plan 2026–2030. Implementation will begin in 2024.
- The CEC strengthened both its definition and implementation of key performance indicators (KPIs) for projects and initiatives to measure their impact on the environment and in communities.
- The CEC provided training to all units of the Secretariat on both operational and strategic KPIs.
- The CEC conducted two long-term impact assessments (i.e., Youth Innovation Challenge and NAPECA); two other LTIAAs are scheduled for completion in early 2024 (i.e., Extreme Heat Events and ISO 50001).
- The CEC published the executive summaries for the LTIAAs of the Youth Innovation Challenge and NAPECA.
- The CEC developed and published the 2022 Annual Report.
- The CEC published its 2023 Operational Plan.
- The CEC analyzed gaps in the development process of projects and initiatives and developed a proposal for activities and timelines for the process of the design of projects and initiatives.
- The CEC provided quarterly financial reports to the Council and worked to limit variances.
- It also improved efficiency of its payroll system and maintained internal operating costs stability.

2023 Expenses

DELIVERABLES

Cooperative Projects	3,060,031
North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) and EJ4Climate	2,533,620
Submissions on Enforcement Matters	344,707
Tracking Pollutant Releases and Transfers in North America (PRTR)	111,648
CEC Interactive Platforms	185,865

TOTAL DELIVERABLES 6,235,871

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE

Council Support	354,688
JPAC Support	300,511
TEK Expert Group Support	111,419
Communications	316,291
Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Development	256,828
Information System Infrastructure Maintenance	134,393
Strategic and Operational Planning	78,585

TOTAL INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE 1,552,714

ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT

Salaries, Benefits and Professional Development	4,021,267
Operating Expenses	767,619
External Administrative Support	396,090
Relocation/Orientation, Recruitment	128,161
Executive Director's Office and Mandate	177,667

TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT 5,490,804

TOTAL EXPENSES 13,279,389

Less loss on exchange 464,582

Expenses 13,743,971

(All figures in Canadian dollars)



COMMISSION FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
COOPERATION