



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

DEC 22 2015

OFFICE OF
INTERNATIONAL AND TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Brian Houseal, Chair
U.S. National Advisory Committee
Adirondack Council
103 Hand Avenue, Suite 3
Elizabethtown, NY 12932

Dear Mr. Houseal,

On behalf of Administrator Gina McCarthy, I would like to thank you for the National Advisory Committee's (NAC) letter of advice dated November 25, 2015, reporting out on your forty-fifth meeting held by videoconference on October 23, 2015. We value the time you dedicate to the NAC and appreciate the comments made by the members as we strive to keep the momentum going following a very busy and successful year as the Chair for the CEC.

On behalf of the EPA administrator and the US government, I am pleased to offer the following response to the NAC's advice:

Recommendations on Charge Question: How can the CEC maintain positive momentum during this time of political transition, particularly as it relates to the projects in the 2015-2016 Operational Plan: Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation, Green Growth, & Sustainable Communities & Ecosystems?

(1) Initiate a dialogue with U.S. counterparts in Canada and Mexico to explore new possibilities for a North American 'clean energy and environment agreement' to provide continental coordination of climate mitigation and resilience policies, establishment of consistent emissions reductions standards, and scientific monitoring protocols.

We agree that this moment in time provides a unique opportunity to broaden our individual reach through trilateral action on environmental issues of common concern. Canada and Mexico have both expressed an interest in working together on clean energy, helping us to align our regional goals with international commitments already accepted. Thus, earlier this year, Presidents Obama and Peña Nieto created a U.S.-Mexico Clean Energy and Climate Policy Task Force led by the U.S. Department of Energy and Mexico's Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources, and thereafter, the three energy ministers in North America established a Trilateral

Working Group on Climate Change and Energy. We will continue to work alongside our sister agencies in the federal government to encourage our neighbors to follow through on addressing climate change while accelerating our transition to a clean energy economy, with the expectation that such shift will make North America more attractive to private industry as well as help strengthen our ability to act as a global leaders in the energy and climate change realms.

(2) Restore the CEC's budget to \$9.0 million per year: \$3.0 million from each member country.

Your recommendation to restore the CEC's budget to \$9.0 million per year has been seriously considered. As you know, the decision to reduce the budget was not an easy one, but it was one required by the reality of budget limitations in all three countries in North America; we had to adapt to the overall constraints affecting the global economies that had been many years in the making. For now we will continue to focus on our core mission while looking for opportunities to increase efficiencies and to maximize the environmental benefit of all our activities.

(3) During the transitional period, the CEC Secretariat, Council members and JPAC should brief all government agencies and other key parties involved in the NAAEC about the mission and work of the CEC.

As always, we appreciate your thoughts on possible outreach and marketing mechanisms to enhance the profile of the CEC and strengthen our relevance and resonance. We believe that we have made some important gains in our quest to raise public awareness of work accomplished through the CEC, particularly as regards to our annual work plans. For example, much of the Executive Director's time these past three years has been spent making presentations at colleges and universities across North America that include key messages regarding the CEC's accomplishments. Senior management at EPA has also done much to engage our counterparts at both bilateral meetings and multilateral meetings across the globe. Again, we urge our advisory committees to join in this important work in your communities and within your areas of influence.

(4) Engage in press and media briefings, re: the executive director transition, highlighting Dr. Coronado's accomplishments, and what to look forward to in terms of the CEC's Strategic Priorities and Cross-cutting Themes 2015-2020.

We agree that continuous engagement in press and media briefings would help highlight our accomplishments through the CEC. We have actively supported expanding the CEC's communications efforts, increasing that budget line item by 6% in the current Operational Plan. Additional resources are being spent to broaden communications via social media channels, attracting over 2000 new Facebook followers, an 87% increase from the previous year. We have also made improvements to the CEC website resulting in an increased number of subscribers to our listserv. Once again it is important that all of our supporters and our advisory committees in particular, become our megaphones for our work and identify strategies that they can implement as our independent representatives.

- (5) Ensure adequate resources for the new Traditional Ecological Knowledge Roster of Experts to support its operations, and provide an opportunity to review the CEC 2015-2016 Operational Plan's 16 projects and provide their recommendations on how TEK could be incorporated into the implementation phases, if appropriate and applicable.*

We agree that participation of our TEK Roster of experts in key trilateral activities throughout the year is important and some resources have already been identified for this purpose. The Council's Alternate Representatives along with some members of our Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) have discussed the resource needs for this purpose. And will continue to do so on an on-going basis to ensure that the Ministers' commitment to work effectively with local and indigenous communities across the North American continent is achieved. The Alt-Reps will continue to analyze how to best engage our local and indigenous communities throughout the CEC's ongoing activities this year and plan specific engagements with our TEK Roster experts throughout the coming years.

- (6) Reconsider water as an important component of all aspects of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan Priorities: Climate Change, Green Growth, and Sustainable Communities and Ecosystems.*

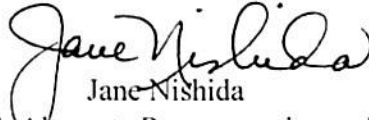
We agree with you that water is a key aspect in the work that we do, domestically and internationally, in our quest to protect human health and the environment in North America, which is why it is already incorporated into important components of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan Priorities. For example, we identified and are now implementing projects such as the North American Blue Carbon Project, the Local Environmental Observer Network Project and the Building Climate Change Resilience through TEK, all of which focus on water issues under all three strategic priorities.

- (7) Support, and restore budgetary resources for the Secretariat's proposed Article 13 report on the effects and concerns surrounding hydraulic fracturing within North America.*

Although the US has been supportive of most of the Article 13 reports proposed by a variety of Executive Directors in the past, the specific report you refer to was proposed at a time when the various government agencies, NGO's and many academicians were already engaged in data collection, baseline studies, monitoring etc, that would eventually produce the concrete, reliable data needed to enable decisions makers to make the hard decisions through increased analysis and better science, and to provide the best information to communities so they can make decisions that work best for them. Moreover, at the time of the request the Parties were already facing budget constraints and it did not seem effective or efficient to use resources to produce a report in which many scientists and institutions were already engaged.

As always, we appreciate and value the guidance you provide to this important program and look forward to continuing to work together to strengthen the CEC as a catalyst for cooperative action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Nishida". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Jane Nishida
U.S. Alternate Representative and
Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator