

Commission for Environmental Cooperation Secretariat



Activity Report

June 2005

A message from the Executive Director

Dear friends and colleagues,

At our June 2005 Council session the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) adopted a new strategic plan to guide our work over the next five years. As we set out on this new path it is timely to look back at some of our accomplishments over the past twelve months. As always, it has been a very active time, with our research staff, the many officials of Canada, Mexico, and the United States, and other stakeholders working hard to continue CEC programs as we implement the new priorities as set out at our last Council session in Puebla, Mexico.



As always, promoting regional cooperation and facilitating public involvement have been major areas of activity for the CEC Secretariat. We have heard from hundreds of people who have attended meetings or given us their comments on dozens of working documents and reports. Interest in our activities continues to be high, with some 38,000 visitors to the CEC's web site every month. And our reports continue to be in demand: as an example, some 3,700 copies of the first complete report of air emissions from North American power plants (profiled below) have been downloaded since it was published in January 2005.


William V. Kennedy
Executive Director
CEC Secretariat

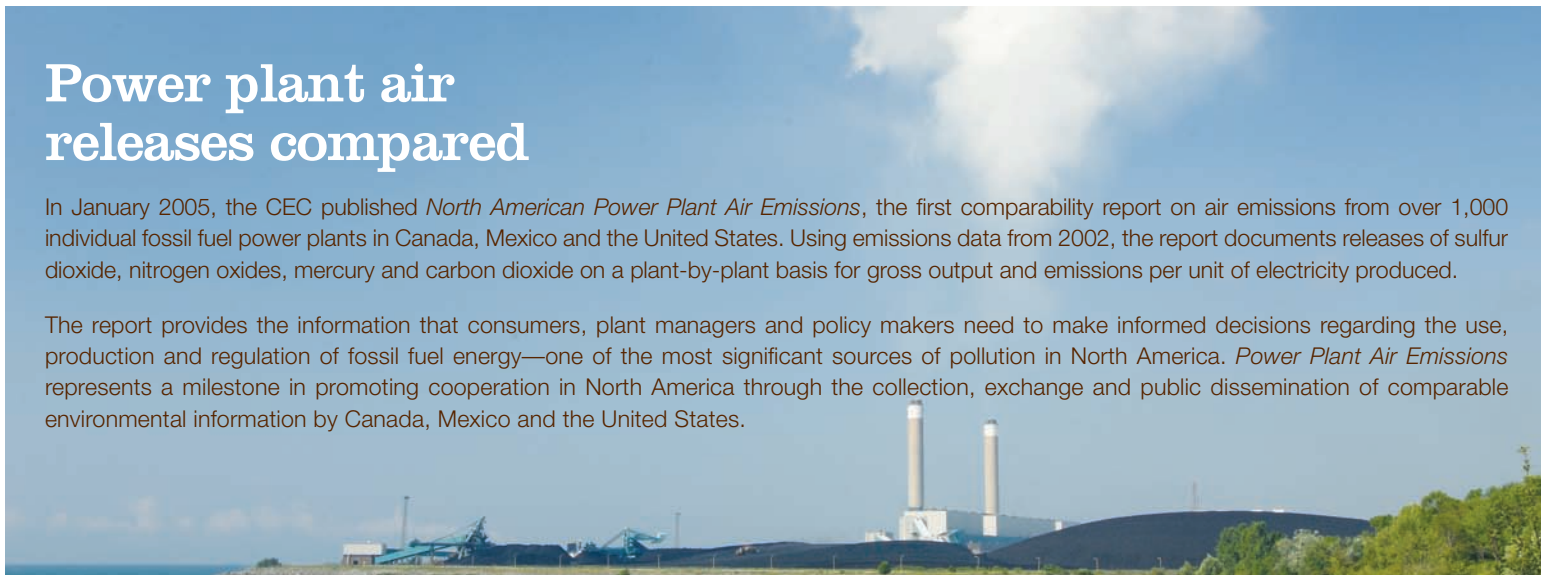
Capping the year, the CEC was honored with a Regional Award from the International Association for Impact Assessment for "outstanding effort to address regional environmental concerns in North America, helping to prevent potential trade and environmental conflicts, and for promoting the effective enforcement of environmental law."

This activity report profiles just a few of the highlights of the past year. It is clear as we look back that we have much to celebrate. At the same time, we have many challenges before us. We invite you to continue to work with us to protect and enhance the environment of North America.

Power plant air releases compared

In January 2005, the CEC published *North American Power Plant Air Emissions*, the first comparability report on air emissions from over 1,000 individual fossil fuel power plants in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Using emissions data from 2002, the report documents releases of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, mercury and carbon dioxide on a plant-by-plant basis for gross output and emissions per unit of electricity produced.

The report provides the information that consumers, plant managers and policy makers need to make informed decisions regarding the use, production and regulation of fossil fuel energy—one of the most significant sources of pollution in North America. *Power Plant Air Emissions* represents a milestone in promoting cooperation in North America through the collection, exchange and public dissemination of comparable environmental information by Canada, Mexico and the United States.



Mexico to eliminate lindane

At a CEC meeting of the North American Task Force on Lindane in October 2004, Mexican officials announced their intention to phase out all uses of the toxic chemical lindane. The meeting was held as part of a trilateral effort to develop a North American Regional Action Plan to reduce or eliminate lindane through the CEC's Sound Management of Chemicals program (SMOC).

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reiterated its plans to reevaluate the continuing registration of the remaining six lindane seed treatments after the receipt of additional test data. The agency expects the reevaluation will be completed by August 2006. Canada, meanwhile, eliminated lindane in agricultural uses at the end of 2004.

Lindane is a persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic chemical that accumulates in the environment, animals and fish, and concentrates in human body fat and breast milk. The chemical has long been associated with skin irritation and nausea, but can even cause convulsions and death with acute exposure.



Maize report completed

After more than two years of independent study, *Maize and Biodiversity: The Effects of Transgenic Maize in Mexico* was published in November 2004. The report includes a series of key findings and recommendations made by an international advisory group appointed by the CEC Secretariat.

In 2002, the CEC Secretariat was petitioned to investigate the effects of transgenic maize in Mexico under Article 13 of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. The petitioners, 21 indigenous communities of Oaxaca and three Mexican environmental groups, were concerned about the potential impacts of genetically modified (GM) corn upon native varieties.

The report concluded that current varieties of transgenic corn found in Mexico are unlikely to have negative impacts on biodiversity, genetic diversity, or human health. Nonetheless, given that very few studies have been conducted in Mexico, the advisory group made a series of precautionary recommendations to reduce the chance of unintended introgression by educating farmers, and labeling or milling imported corn from countries where transgenic corn is planted unless it is directed specifically to certified end uses.

The report is not intended to reflect the views of the CEC Council or the governments of Canada, Mexico or the United States. A copy of the report can be downloaded from www.cec.org/maize.





Mapping first for North America

The first map of North America to be prepared jointly by all three North American countries and updated online for public use was completed last year under a project of the CEC, in conjunction with Natural Resources Canada's Atlas of Canada, Mexico's *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática* and the National Atlas of the United States.

In producing this "living" map, cartographers combined and harmonized national data for roads, railroads, populated places, political boundaries, hydrology, bathymetry, sea ice and glaciers at a 1:10,000,000 scale to form a consistent seamless map of North America.

The data can be freely used by anyone wishing to create their own map, be it resource-based, environmental, social or economic. For example, the CEC mapped environmental information with its release in June 2005 of the *B2B: A blueprint for conservation from Baja California to the Bering Sea* map, which used the Atlas as a base to highlight priority eco-regions spanning the three nations.

How green is your organization?

As awareness of both the economic and environmental benefits of green purchasing grows, so does the need for reliable tools and information for implementing green purchasing initiatives. In response, the CEC has developed an online Ecological Self-Assessment Tool (dubbed "Eco-SAT") through its North American Green Purchasing Initiative. The tool consists of a best practices guide as well as a self-assessment questionnaire that can be used to score the green purchasing initiatives of a company or organization and compare them to those of other leaders in the field.

Eco-SAT serves both as a framework for evaluation and an educational tool that will increase awareness and action regarding environmental matters. It is designed to help professional buyers evaluate and improve their organization's purchasing initiatives.

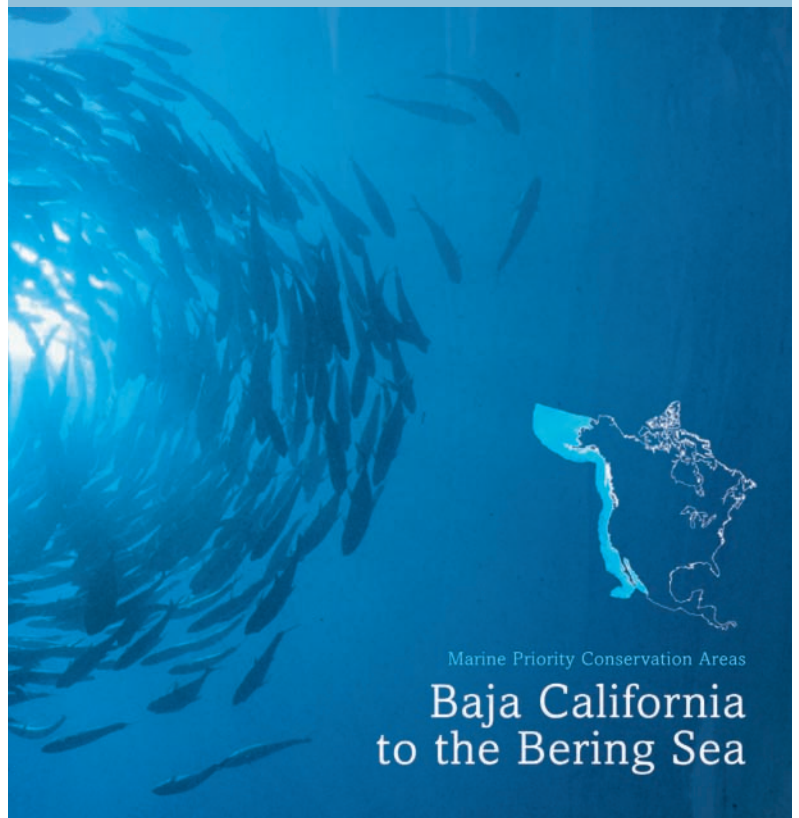
Access Eco-SAT at www.cec.org/eco-sat.

Critical ocean habitats identified

To mark World Oceans Day 2005, the CEC and Marine Biology Conservation Institute launched a new book and map identifying 28 aquatic environments that marine experts consider essential to safeguarding the biological diversity of the west coast of North America.

The book, *Marine Priority Conservation Areas: Baja California to the Bering Sea*, presents key information regarding the biodiversity, ecological significance and threats found in each area. The priority conservation areas (PCAs) were identified on the basis of their ecological significance to North America, and the opportunities to advance conservation efforts, given the threats to biodiversity.

An associated map, *B2B: A Blueprint for Conservation from Baja California to the Bering Sea*, illustrates the 28 PCAs and highlights three migratory species that are currently the focus of trilateral conservation efforts: the humpback whale, the pink-footed shearwater and leatherback turtle. All three marine species were chosen last year as subjects for the first North American Conservation Action Plans. The plans are intended to establish a common conservation approach to reduce threats, share expertise and provide key information to the public and wildlife officials.



Marine Priority Conservation Areas
**Baja California
to the Bering Sea**

TAKING STOCK

2002 North American Pollutant Releases and Transfers



Lead emissions focus of *Taking Stock*

This year's *Taking Stock* featured the most complete picture ever documented of the release and transfer of lead and its compounds from industrial facilities in North America. The ninth annual report, which matches comparable data of 203 chemicals submitted by industrial facilities to the governments of Canada and the United States, tracked 43.3 million kg of lead releases in 2002—including over 960,000 kg emitted to the air.

In the past, mobile sources were the major contributor of atmospheric lead emissions; however, policy efforts in Canada and the United States have dramatically decreased lead concentrations in the environment. In the United States alone, lead concentrations in the air fell by 94 percent between 1983 and 2002.

Overall, 1.5 million tonnes of toxic chemicals were released into the air, water, land and injected underground, with an additional one million tonnes transferred for recycling and a half-million tonnes transferred for energy recovery.

The CEC continues to support the development of a mandatory and publicly accessible pollutant release and transfer register in Mexico, the *Registro de Emisiones y Transferencia de Contaminantes*. In 2005, Mexico confirmed a list of 104 chemicals for mandatory reporting and will begin releasing data publicly in 2006.

To access the national pollutant release and transfer registries, or to search the *Taking Stock Online* database by chemical, facility, industry sector and geographic region, please visit www.cec.org/takingstock.

Air inventory nears completion

State and federal officials from Mexico, the US Western Governors' Association, US EPA and the CEC gathered in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, recently to announce the completion of an air emissions inventory for six northern Mexican states as the foundation of a national air inventory to be completed later this year.

The information it generates will help air quality planners focus their efforts on the most important sources of air pollution harming the environment and the health of US and Mexican border community residents.

This is an effort the CEC has consistently supported for the past four years. Last year, the CEC assisted the Mexican environment secretariat (Semarnat) and the *Instituto Nacional de Ecología* in workshops bringing together emissions inventory developers from each Mexican state. The workshops also included training for state officials on the new RETC reporting requirements at the state level.

Citizen submissions reach high

In 2004, the Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) unit matched the highest number of submissions received in a year with seven submissions. The tenth and most recent factual record, Molymex II, was released in October 2004. The Secretariat has received eight submissions since July 2004, three of which have been closed and five of which remain active. Six earlier submissions also remain active.

Currently, four draft factual records are being prepared for these active submissions: Pulp & Paper, Ontario Logging I and II, Montreal Technoparc and Alca-Iztapalapa II. A fifth factual record is near completion (Tarahumara). Council votes on the Secretariat's recommendations for factual records are pending for the Quebec Automobiles, Alca-Iztapalapa II and Lake Chapala II submissions. Additionally, the Secretariat is considering whether or not to recommend factual records for the Coal-fired Power Plants and Crushed Gravel in Puerto Peñasco submissions and has allowed time for additional information to be provided for the Coronado Islands submission.

All factual records and citizen submissions are accessible online at www.cec.org/citizen.



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