

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460
OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

December 6, 2002

Mr. Jon Plaut
JPAC Chair for 2002
Commission for Environmental Cooperation
393, rue St-Jacques ouest, bureau 200
Montréal (Québec) H2Y 1N9

RE: Response to JPAC Advice to Council 02-10 (The CEC and the Management of Freshwater in North America)

Dear Mr. Plaut:

Thank you for your recent Advice to Council, 02-10, on The CEC and the Management of Freshwater in North America. On behalf of the Council, we offer the following in response to your advice.

We are supportive of initiatives using eco-regional, ecosystem, and watershed approaches and actions to achieve sustainable freshwater management and would like to note that there are examples of these types of initiatives throughout North America. We are interested in exploring how the CEC can support these types of approaches within the North American context, including facilitating a high-level dialogue amongst a multitude of stakeholders.

Developing a programme of work on freshwater for the CEC will require strategic thinking and long-term vision based on a thorough understanding of ongoing work on related topics as well as up-to-date knowledge regarding freshwater issues, best practices, and new technologies. The dialogue amongst high-level stakeholders could then begin to identify the necessary elements of a strategic vision for the CEC in the freshwater area, which will take into account all ongoing activities and focus on where the CEC can add value. We also agree that CEC efforts on freshwater should be designed to complement other related CEC activities, such as invasive species and children's environmental health.

We appreciate and empathize with your concern for rapid action and education on freshwater issues. We do feel, however, that developing a strategic plan and assessing the most productive use of CEC's limited funds is a more useful exercise than launching forward without further exploration on the most productive use of funds. We feel that a more effective way to begin would be to start with a single project and build the freshwater component from there

We appreciate your comments and advice, which will be used to further clarify the Freshwater Options paper and to develop strategic goals and projects on freshwater in the coming years.

Sincerely,

[Original signed]

Judith E. Ayres
Alternate Representative for the United States
Assistant Administrator

cc: Norine Smith
Olga Ojeda Cárdenas
JPAC Members
CEC Acting Executive Director