



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

SEP 16 2019

Sally Ann Gonzales, Chair
U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)
Arizona State Senate District 3
1700 W Washington Street STE 314
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Office of
International and
Tribal Affairs

Dear Ms. Gonzales:

Thank you for the Governmental Advisory Committee's (GAC) August 28, 2019 letter of advice reporting on your 52nd meeting held in Washington, D.C. on May 15 – 16, 2019. We value the time that members have dedicated to the GAC and appreciate your comments related to making health a priority, strategies for mitigating extreme events, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and the environment.

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

(1) Implementing a change in policy by making Health a Priority in all policies relating to Health and Environmental Issues

Thank you for your advice and sharing the State of Vermont's policy on prioritizing health in all policies related to health and the environment. EPA is in complete agreement with this recommendation. As stated in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's FY 2018–FY 2022 Strategic Plan, the agency's mission of protecting human health and the environment continues to resonate with all Americans; we all can agree that we want our future generations to inherit a cleaner, healthier environment that supports a thriving economy and we continue to ensure that health considerations are incorporated across all of our decision-making, including in our international commitments. The CEC has also incorporated health as a priority in many of its projects and initiatives.

(2) Strategies for mitigating Extreme Events include the following: Extreme events as defined by the CEC include wildfires, droughts, floods and extreme temperatures

We appreciate your detailed discussion on strategies for mitigating extreme events. Please be assured that EPA works closely with our partners at the federal, state, local and tribal levels to respond to extreme events or to mitigate their magnitude. This includes working with our partners on state emergency plans, sector connectedness, cultural sensitivity, community education and awareness. As a trilateral organization, the CEC focus tends to emphasize developing and supporting policies that build capacity and/or identify coordinated solutions to transboundary environmental challenges, often using pilots to test a model or strategy in a

particular locale or region, with the expectation that such pilots may provide models for others to replicate. The CEC has also launched extreme events initiatives to improve our preparedness, response and resilience to extreme event through enhanced capacity for drought monitoring, costing of floods, monitoring of wildfires and smoke, and remote sensing of fires.

(3) Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and the Environment

The GAC's recommendation to continue CEC interaction with TEK has been a priority for the USEPA many years – in large part because of recommendations from the GAC and NAC. Since 2015, the three Parties to the CEC agreed to incorporate TEK into CEC initiatives and to create linkages and collaborations with local and indigenous communities across North America in its ongoing projects and in its public outreach and stakeholder engagement activities. To assist with these efforts, the CEC created the TEK Expert Group to advise the Parties and the Joint Public Advisory Committee on traditional ecological knowledge.

In addition, we appreciate the GAC's thoughtful and enlightening vignettes on local and regional events with respect to trade and environment, as well as the other advice regarding the role of the NAC/GAC.

Thank you again for your commitment to protecting public health and environment in North America and support of our trilateral work in the CEC.

Sincerely,



Jane Nishida

Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator

cc:

Members of the U.S. National and Governmental Advisory Committees
Monisha Harris, Director, Federal Advisory Committee Management Division FACMD, EPA
Oscar Carrillo, Designated Federal Officer, FACMD, EPA
Mark Kasman, Director, Office of Regional & Bilateral Affairs, OITA, EPA
Louie Porta, Chair, Joint Public Advisory Committee
Richard A. Morgan, Executive Director, CEC