

Activity Report for Daniel Burns Regional Facilitator North American July 1 – December 31 2020

As one of the 4 Regional Facilitators for North America, my work for UNEP centered around consultations as an input to UNEA-5. Below is a summary of the process in which I took part and a list of key recommendations to UNEP/UNEA. In addition to these consultation events (online) I participated in a few MGFC meetings and several coordinating meetings with UNEP North America staff and my fellow Regional Facilitators.

In preparation for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5), the United Nations Environment Programme's North America Office (UNEP North America) hosted a series of six virtual consultation workshops on the theme of "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals." In partnership with MIT Solve, the World Environment Center, and the United Nations Associations in Canada and the United States, UNEP North America convened over 400 North American stakeholders across the Major Groups to explore the topic of nature as a solution to the climate and biodiversity crises.

Building on the distributed consultation model implemented in preparation for UNEA-4, UNEP North America and its partners designed this regional consultative process to ensure broad and diverse stakeholder participation in UNEA-5, given the challenges and restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Playing a crucial role in the design and implementation of the process were the four UNEA Regional Facilitators for North America. The Regional Facilitators were nominated by UNEA-accredited organizations, UNEP partners, and other stakeholders in the region, and were chosen by UNEP North America. They are:

- Regional Facilitator (Canada): Jennifer Garard, Science Officer, Future Earth
- Alternate Regional Facilitator (Canada): Dan Burns Board Member, One Earth Initiative
- Regional Facilitator (United States): Anne Bowser, Director of Innovation, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
- Alternate Regional Facilitator (United States): Celeste Connors, Executive Director, Hawai'i Green Growth

The six consultations were executed as follows:

- 20 May 2020: Youth consultation (United States), in partnership with United Nations Association of the United States of America, via their Global Engagement Online Series platform
- 18 June 2020: Youth consultation (Canada), in partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada
- 3 September 2020: Public sector consultation (Canada), in partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada
- 24 September 2020: Private sector consultation (Canada), in partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada
- 8 October 2020: "Apex" major groups consultation (United States and Canada), in partnership with MIT Solve
- 14 October 2020: Private sector consultation (United States and Canada), in partnership with MIT Solve and the World Environment Center

In each consultation, participants were asked to share examples of nature-based solutions and best practices in North America, reflecting on both successes and challenges, and to formulate key messages to policy makers about the enabling conditions needed to scale these best practices. In addition to highlighting strong North American examples of nature-based solutions (Annex 1), discussions across the six consultations converged around the following common themes and key messages.

Both top-down and bottom-up approaches must work in tandem to achieve effective, long-term solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises.

In designing nature-based solutions, coordination with stakeholders at the local level, particularly with indigenous communities, is key.

Cross-sector collaboration is required to implement and sustain nature-based solutions.

Empowering youth and communities through education can inspire the sustainable lifestyle transition and behavior change needed to achieve the SDGs.

Innovation, data, and technology have an unprecedented role to play in designing and demonstrating the benefits of nature-based solutions.

The standardization of language and metrics around nature-based solutions is needed to define collective rules and impact.

Stakeholders must invest in nature, financing and derisking nature-based solutions.

Private sector entities should rise to the challenge of integrating sustainability into core business values