

MGFC Activity Report: May – December 2020

Jennifer Garard, PhD

UNEA Regional Facilitator for North America
Science Officer, Future Earth
Research Manager, Sustainability in the Digital Age

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. UNEP North America and its partners designed this regional consultative process to ensure broad and diverse stakeholder participation. Playing a crucial role in the design and implementation of the process were the four UNEA Regional Facilitators for North America.

As UNEA Regional Facilitator for North America, Jennifer attended all six consultations. She acted as rapporteur, engaged in discussions, and actively listened to different perspectives from across the region on nature-based solutions. She also engaged in developing the reports from the various consultations as well as the summary report for UNEA-5.

The six consultations were executed as follows:

- **May 20, 2020:** Youth consultation (United States), in partnership with United Nations Association of the United States of America, via their Global Engagement Online Series platform
- **June 18, 2020:** Youth consultation (Canada), in partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada
- **September 3, 2020:** Public sector consultation (Canada), in partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada
- **September 24, 2020:** Private sector consultation (Canada), in partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada
- **October 8, 2020:** "Apex" major groups consultation (United States and Canada), in partnership with MIT Solve
- **October 14, 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 concrete 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. 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, engagement 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 de-risking nature-based solutions.
- Private sector entities should rise to the challenge of integrating sustainability into core business values.

In addition to the North America consultations, Jennifer also participated in the following meetings in her capacity as UNEA Regional Facilitator for North America:

- **June 7-10, 2020**: The Act #ForNature Global Forum:
 - June 8: Turning the Tide on Marine Plastics: How UNEA-5 Can be a Turning Point (Townhall)
 - June 10: Youth Voices for Nature: Environmental Governance in the Time of COVID-19 (Townhall)
- **June 8, 2020**: Dialogue Session between the UNEA and Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Bureaus and Representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (Closed Session)
- **May – December 2020**: Major Groups Facilitating Committee, Regional Facilitators, and UNEP regular meetings (participation in Skype meetings whenever possible)