



The Alliance for Water Stewardship

A growing need for action

Rising populations, changing lifestyles and global climate change are all increasing the pressure on the planet's water resources. Both people and nature are threatened alike.

The world's major water users, from industry to cities to agriculture, recognise the acute need to manage the water resources they depend on more sustainably. In parts of the world, water scarcity is threatening the viability of business operations and economic activity. At the same time, decision-making processes around water-related policy are leaving millions without access to their human right to clean water and sanitation. Shareholders, governments and consumers are increasingly demanding that companies use natural resources in ways that are environmentally and socially sustainable. Water users are also realising that improving water quality and reducing water consumption can result in significant savings and increased profits.

Our globalised world demands an international approach to water stewardship that can be applied consistently across regions, sectors and complex supply chains. To address the major water challenges in a sustainable way, this must be a collective approach through which water users work together to identify common goals.

The Alliance for Water Stewardship works with organizations from all sectors, helping them to join together in being better stewards of the water resources on which they depend.

A collective response

Formed in 2008, the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is committed to the development of a new internationally recognised standard for sustainable water use. AWS brings together leading experts on sustainable water management with representatives of the world's major water users. Together they are defining a set of agreed principles for how to manage water in a way that is both environmentally and socially sustainable yet still economically viable.

The new standard for water stewardship will provide water users with a framework for evaluating their impact on the water shed they are operating within, and a series of steps that they can take to mitigate these impacts. A third-party verification system will ensure that compliance with the standard leads to local and international recognition for following best practices in water stewardship.

Progress to date

Key to the success of the new standard is achieving a broad level of participation in its development through a transparent process that includes representatives of all major water users across all regions. The AWS has demonstrated significant progress in important areas.

1. Board formation:

As of November 2011, the organizers of the AWS effort include entities that represent a wide range of business, conservation, social and water utility interests. Involved in the effort to date are WWF, Water Stewardship Australia, The Nature Conservancy, Water Witness International, the Water Environment Federation, the Pacific Institute, the European Water Partnership, the Carbon Disclosure Project, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the United Nation's Global Compact's CEO Water Mandate.

2. Stakeholder outreach:

AWS has launched a series of regional engagement processes to encourage regional participation in the development of the standard. Regional forums are active in Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa. More are planned for Central Asia, North Asia, South Asia and Asia Pacific.

3. International Standards Development Committee:

Comprised of 15 individuals representing a balance of regional and sectorial interests on water management, the International Standards Development Committee (ISDC) is leading the development of the new standard. The ISDC expects to present a first draft of the standard for comment and pilot testing in early 2012 with the goal of launching the final standard in 2013.

4. Piloting the new standard:

Throughout the process, pilots will be essential to ensure that the new standard can be applied to the complex local issues surrounding sustainable water use. A recent pilot completed in Kenya's Naivasha Basin examined the relevance of two forms of standards with two large producers supplying cut flowers and vegetables to Marks & Spencer, a major UK retailer. The pilot demonstrated the enthusiasm of both suppliers and customers to work together to establish sustainable water use in an international supply chain and recognised the important role that a global standard would play in this process.

Be part of the Alliance

The Alliance's ambition to develop a globally recognised standard for water stewardship is bold, but the time is ripe for action. AWS is engaging the right people through a robust process that will result in a transformational new standard for water stewardship

For more information on how you can support AWS in improving water stewardship around the world, please contact:

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