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ALLIANCE FOR WATER STEWARDSHIP RELEASES DRAFT STANDARD FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

World's first International Water Stewardship Standard aims to provide water users with a credible means to evaluate water impact and implement joint solutions across all sectors and regions

March 13, 2012/Marseille, France – The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), a global multi-stakeholder organization dedicated to promoting the responsible use of freshwater globally, today released the first draft of its International Water Stewardship Standard at the World Water Forum in Marseille, France. The AWS Standard, which is now open for public input, aims to support water users in taking appropriate actions to evaluate and improve their impacts on watersheds. It aims to build on other water-related tools, helping users to reduce their water risk and generate social, environmental and economic benefits. The Standard is designed for global application in all relevant sectors.

The draft Standard focuses around four principles: water governance, water balance, water quality, and important water areas. Each principle includes criteria and indicators against which compliance will be measured. The Standard recognizes both performance and process, aiming to both ensure rigour and maximize uptake. The Standard is accompanied with guidance materials for interpretation and, ultimately, a third-party verification system.

Following today's release, this first draft Standard will be open for a formal 90-day public consultation period during which stakeholders are encouraged to submit feedback through the AWS website. In addition, AWS will use this 90-day period to organize regional and international events to introduce the Standard to stakeholders, ensure understanding of both the process and content, and receive feedback from individuals and institutions. This period may be extended in order to ensure balanced stakeholder input. Feedback via the AWS website and stakeholder events will be passed to the ISDC and will inform subsequent drafts of the Standard. To view the standard and provide a comment between now and June 15, 2012, please visit the AWS website at <http://allianceforwaterstewardship.org>. A second draft of the Standard, based upon stakeholder feedback, will be released in late 2012 with a final Standard expected in mid-2013.

The Standard is being developed through an ISEAL Alliance standard-setting process that follows the best-practice model for developing social and environmental standards. The standard is the work of a multi-stakeholder committee appointed by AWS to represent the diversity of stakeholder interests from around the world: from industry, public sector and civil society. This committee, the International Standard Development Committee, uses input from stakeholders around the world, including that gathered by AWS regional initiatives.

The water roundtable is central to the work of AWS, whose board organizations are The Nature Conservancy, Water Stewardship Australia, the Pacific Institute, WWF, Water Witness International, the Water Environment Federation, the European Water Partnership, the International Water Management Institute, the UN Global Compact's CEO Water Mandate, and the Carbon Disclosure Project.



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The Alliance for Water Stewardship was formed in 2009 with the aim of collectively addressing some of the most serious impacts of water use worldwide. AWS believes that collective action – the involvement of all those with an interest in how water resources are managed – is the only way we can fully address the complex nature of the water challenges the world is facing. At the heart of AWS is the development of an International Standard and third-party verification system. Regional engagement processes are critical to the success of both the Standard and the wider stewardship program.



The CEO Water Mandate





Quotes

“The release of the first draft Standard is a major achievement and our compliments go to the International Standard Development Committee for their hard work and commitment,” said Adrian Sym, Executive Director, Alliance for Water Stewardship. “Now we enter a critical phase in this process: getting feedback through public consultations, targeted outreach and testing the draft in different sectors and settings. Consulting with stakeholders around the world and learning-by-doing are critical if we are to understand how this draft performs in practice”. – Adrian Sym, Executive Director, Alliance for Water Stewardship

“Water is essential for life, but it’s becoming a scarce resource in many regions of the world, jeopardizing people’s livelihoods and the habitats of some the world’s most threatened species. The shared risk we face as a planet when it comes to water can only be solved through shared responsibility, and the joint development of a global water stewardship standard will be an invaluable tool for companies and water service providers throughout the world.” – Alexis Morgan, Alliance for Water Stewardship / WWF

“Water issues are very complex. The challenge of the AWS Standard was to tackle these issues in addition to their regional specificities and different sectoral interests and concerns, having to address different economic sectors and the public/private entities. As first step the global AWS Standard is compiling these concerns across the globe and analyzing them finally to include them in the Standard, to make it applicable and comprehensive. Always with the ultimate goal in mind to promote good water resource management practices aimed at the well being of human society and the environment it lives in. I think we succeeded until now, and are waiting for the Stakeholders' inputs to improve it and adjust it as per their recommendation.” - Imane Abd el Al, Association of the Friends of Ibrahim Abd El Al, Lebanon

“Water, and the watersheds that provide us with it, are essential for every single human process. Over the last 2 years AWS has engaged over 180 multi-sector institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean to gather their unique experiences and points of view. This has contributed to the construction of the International Standard that we are all together proudly presenting today. This initiative, without precedent in Latin America and the Caribbean, offers the world the opportunity to address today’s water situation by involving everyone. We are very confident of its success,” - Vidal Garza, Director of FEMSA Foundation, one of the founding institutions of AWS-Regional Initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean.

“Nations cannot have healthy, stable economies without water. Businesses are worried about whether they will have enough water for their operations. And young people wonder whether they can live in a world without water woes. The goals of AWS are ambitious yet absolutely critical. This draft standard is a very exciting step towards making sustainable water use truly possible.” – Karin Krchnak, The Nature Conservancy



"When Water Stewardship Australia (WSA) embarked on its journey to develop a water stewardship system in 2006 one of the first issues we recognised was that this needed to be a global system that brought together local efforts into a single framework and brand; a system that would speak the same language, use the same definitions and hold the same meaning for customers and other stakeholders regardless of geographic place. We are delighted with the progress made by AWS and the work of the ISDC in developing a draft global standard. We will continue to contribute our thinking and experience to this project over the coming year as development work continues and exchange that with thinking and experience generated through the global process. There is still a way to go but we remain optimistic of achieving our goal of a unified global water stewardship system." – Michael Spencer, Water Stewardship Australia

"To achieve a globally harmonized understanding of Water Stewardship while recognizing regional characteristics it is required both: An overarching Global Standard and – where in place – locally developed and profiled Regional Standards. The European Water Stewardship (EWS), as recognized Regional Initiative and Member of Board of Directors of the AWS, strongly supports the AWS in its effort to define a quality baseline of the Water Stewardship approach. The launch Draft Global Standard is a crucial step forward and will definitely help to promote, communicate and implement Water Stewardship internationally. It will encourage the implementation of the Regional AWS initiatives and standards and will bring new sectors and regions on board!" - Dr. Sabine von Wirén-Lehr, European Water Stewardship (EWS) Coordinator

"The AWS is an important initiative which should help drive action towards better corporate water stewardship globally. Its mission is aligned with CDP's and our work is complementary as we seek to improve companies' understanding and management of the watersheds they operate in and to communicate the progress they are making in a meaningful way." – Marcus Norton, Carbon Disclosure Project

"The Water Environment Federation has been engaged in the protection of water quality since its founding in 1928 and although our original focus was on municipal water utilities, our mission has expanded over the decades to include more holistic watershed protection and the engagement of corporate entities in this mission. From that perspective, the Water Environment Federation was excited to engage early in the development of the Alliance for Water Stewardship. The development of a Global Water Stewardship Standard is a powerful tool in engaging those entities that have a profound impact on the health of a water basin. We believe the release of the draft Standard will again bring attention to the opportunities for comprehensive stakeholder engagement and help broaden the impact of the Standard when it is officially launched next year" – Matt Ries, Water Environment Federation

"The achievement of WWF's conservation goals rests on improving how water is collectively managed for people and nature. As water issues become more urgent, approaches that effectively bridge business activities with public water management are essential. As one such approach, the AWS Standard will play a crucial role in ensuring that businesses and other water users increasingly become part of the solution to our shared water challenges" – Stuart Orr, WWF



The release of the Draft Standard is a major step forwards and we warmly congratulate the ISDC for their vision and hard work. Our testing of regional standards in Africa clearly shows the important role that the international standard can play in delivering water security for all. However, many difficult questions remain and more work is needed to ensure that the standard will deliver in even the most challenging river basins: those with little data, high levels of poverty or where water is highly contested. We urge all stakeholders to help us to build on this draft standard in the coming years into a system which will transform the way we all use and consider water for the better. – Nick Hepworth, Water Witness International

"For more than 10 years, we have collaborated daily with our customers to improve their water efficiency through innovative product and service solutions, including our signature water efficiency program, aquaCheck.", says Ron Cotterman, Executive Director, Sustainability, Sealed Air Corporation. "International standards are necessary to establish the appropriate governance, baselines, targets and measured improvements. Since participation is voluntary, each company sets its own goals and improvement processes. The beauty of the proposed draft AWS Standard is that voluntary implementation raises the bar for all organizations, creating a virtuous cycle of water stewardship. We committed funding to the Alliance for Water Stewardship on this project to create water conservation targets for our customers to work towards, share the best practices we have developed over the years and better lead the industries we serve."