

The Alliance for Water Stewardship

The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is a new international partnership working to establish the world's first freshwater stewardship enterprise—a comprehensive global freshwater certification program similar to programs operating in the forestry, marine, organic farming, and other fields. Work is already underway through the AWS to design, develop, and implement this program.

The mission of the AWS is to establish a program under which large water users and water utilities are voluntarily certified for meeting substantive standards that promote the use of fresh water in a way that is both *socially beneficial* and *environmentally sustainable*.

As used by the AWS, *environmentally sustainable* water use maintains or improves biodiversity and ecological processes at the watershed level, while *socially beneficial* water use recognizes basic human needs and ensures long-term benefits (including economic benefits) for local people and society at large.

Improving the use of freshwater resources:

It is critical that the use of our freshwater resources becomes sustainable in the decades ahead. The AWS views an all-inclusive certification program—one made up of voluntary participants and that is open to as broad a spectrum of water sector members as is possible—as having the potential to be truly transformative. It will stimulate and further a new global ethic in regard to the use of fresh water, and will stand beside regulatory processes that currently govern water issues in many parts of the world.



Communities, organizations, and industries around the world now clearly recognize the value of certification efforts that involve voluntary participants. Participants in the numerous international certification businesses already in effect (none exist in the freshwater field however) are able to demonstrate a transparency to and accountability for their activities that go beyond financial performance measures for the private sector; public sector participants in certification programs clearly benefit from the added social license to operate that inures from such participation.

In truth, increased public expectations are built through participation in certification efforts by demonstrating that participants, whether public or private sector, are managed effectively, are committed to improving operational performance, and that they are measuring themselves against standards that establish heightened responsibilities for the environment and community.

A growing partnership:

As of the 2008 World Water Week, participation in the AWS includes a growing coalition of business, conservation, and water utility interests. Involved in the effort to date are the two largest international conservation organizations in the world—The Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund (WWF); the Water Stewardship Initiative (WSI)—a business venture operated out of Brazil and Australia and supported by a wide range of Australian water stakeholders; and the Pacific Institute (PI), an internationally acclaimed research organization focusing on social and environmental issues and specializing in sustainable water management issues.

Certification performance standards developed by the AWS will be designed to encourage water users and providers to reduce, to the greatest extent feasible, their ecological and social impacts on local watersheds. Participation in the AWS is open to all. While the AWS will expand to be fully representative from geographic and water sector-related perspectives, in working to create a global water stewardship enterprise the AWS is committed to an open, inclusive process—one that welcomes a wide variety of entities



with an interest in and capacity for work on the spectrum of freshwater issues confronting us—environmental, economic, and social. Different levels of participation are being established within the AWS effort, and there will be stakeholder participation and outreach involved in every aspect of the design, development and implementation of the effort.

The AWS expects that designing and establishing a global water certification enterprise will take two to three years; it is currently scheduled for launch in 2011. In the meantime, while the business and governance structure, financial modeling, and branding and marketing mechanisms are worked out, the AWS will conduct pilot tests of certification standards, which will enable the AWS and its participants and stakeholders to refine the performance standards that will underpin the effort.

Be part of it!

Join us in the effort to create a sea change in how the world views and uses our precious freshwater resources. Together we can get water users and providers to adopt water management practices that secure both our environment and our communities.



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