

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What is The Water Council's WAVE program?

The Water Council's WAVE program provides an onramp for companies to develop thoughtful strategies, set meaningful goals and take impactful action on water.

This proven program assures investors, customers and other key stakeholders that the company is credibly and strategically addressing water challenges across the corporation and its value chain. Companies completing the accelerator demonstrate through independent verification that they are prioritizing water-related action where it matters most, ultimately mitigating water-related risk and addressing shared water challenges and opportunities while building a more water-resilient supply chain.

What is entailed in participating in the WAVE program?

The WAVE program is a methodology for companies to strategize, prioritize and take meaningful action on water stewardship across the enterprise.

The program provides companies with internal capacity-building for water stewardship, a proven methodology for ensuring credible water stewardship action and advisory support services from The Water Council's Water Stewardship Team. It concludes with independent verification to credibly demonstrate meaningful corporate water stewardship outcomes to external stakeholders and investors. In summary, your water stewardship journey will include:

- Understanding your company's water uses, impacts and risks
- Approving a corporate water stewardship policy
- Prioritizing facility sites where water-related risks can be mitigated
- Communicating your corporate action plan, goals and timeline

What is the time and staff commitment for my company to participate?

The WAVE program was developed to be managed by a single individual. However, due to the comprehensive nature of the methodology, The Water Council recommends a team of at least two individuals with working knowledge of the environmental factors of the company.

The Water Council will meet with interested parties to scope out the level of effort and resources required to complete the accelerator program. Depending on level of commitment, the program can be completed within 3-4 months.

The Water Council can also provide water stewardship training services for key corporate and site personnel responsible for implementing a water strategy and related actions. Training will cover, but not be limited to, the use of the international site-specific water stewardship standard, development of context-based targets and water stewardship best practices.

Companies who sign up for WAVE also receive implementation guidance as well as technical advisory support services from The Water Council.

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Is independent verification required?

Yes. Upon successful completion of the WAVE program, all participants will be independently verified by SCS Global Services.

This is an important conclusion to the process as it benefits your company by guarding against the greenwashing label. Securing the verification demonstrates to investors and other stakeholders that your company has prioritized water-related action where it matters most, ultimately mitigating water-related risk and addressing shared water challenges and opportunities while building a more water-resilient supply chain.

What is the public claim that my company can make once completing the program?

It is a fact, obtaining the credible independent verification of water stewardship efforts at the corporate level is critical for a company to help avoid being labeled as “greenwashing.”

By completing the WAVE program and being successfully verified by SCS Global Services, companies will be able to make the following public claim:

[COMPANY NAME] conforms to The Water Council’s WAVE (Water Stewardship Verified) (Version 1.0, January 2022). This corporation has assessed water-related risk across the enterprise, identified the highest water-related impacts using credible water-related data, and implemented best practice in improving water stewardship performance.



Why is ESG important?

Growing concerns over how climate change, environmental issues and threats to supply-chain resilience affect corporate brand value have compelled investors, asset managers and ratings agencies to reward more strategic corporate performance on a range of sustainability issues, including water.

External stakeholders, from investors to consumers, increasingly expect companies to implement meaningful sustainability and social impact strategies and initiatives. Most importantly, they want companies to demonstrate strategic, concrete actions and outcomes as opposed to generic, non-substantive reports. This expectation is reflected in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) investing, which rewards companies that strategically address ESG factors. At the same time, ESG-related claims are under close scrutiny as some corporations have engaged in “greenwashing.”

Why does my company need to make a commitment to water stewardship?

The growing ESG reporting movement has pressured companies to move well beyond non-substantive glossy reports as investors and other key stakeholders increasingly expect companies to make measurable progress on environmental priorities.

Although water and carbon are both high priorities in the sustainability movement, water stewardship is more complicated than carbon reduction. Water stewardship is also harder to characterize and quantify; whereas carbon reductions are fungible, water stewardship is necessarily place-based and the issues vary watershed to watershed.

Currently, carbon is the primary factor garnering investor attention in the “E” category, but water is next.

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Regrettably there is also a lack of understanding in the marketplace on what it means to be a “good corporate water steward.” On one hand, stakeholders are generally dissatisfied with how existing ESG frameworks address corporate water-related performance. On the other hand, current corporate water strategies and practices focus more on water efficiency than a holistic water stewardship approach that addresses risk mitigation and value creation. This results in companies with water targets that seem impressive on paper but do not adequately mitigate their true water risk, reflect local context or lead to credible water action through their value chain.

What is The Water Council?

The Water Council is a global hub dedicated to solving critical water challenges by driving innovation in freshwater technology and advancing water stewardship.

Over the years, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, home of The Water Council, has earned a global reputation as the freshwater technology capital of the U.S. due to its well-established water technology industry and extensive network of water innovators. The driving force behind The Water Council’s success is the spirit of collaboration between public and private sectors and a shared commitment to finding innovative solutions to critical global water issues.

Recognizing the need for smarter and more sustainable use of water worldwide, The Water Council also promotes water stewardship as a natural complement to water innovation in the effort to preserve freshwater resources around the world. With strategic partnerships in nine countries, The Water Council is an all-inclusive global connector.

The Water Council possesses a management team with decades of collective expertise and experience. Entities from Brookings Institute to Harvard Business School have acknowledged it as a case study for economic development cluster excellence.

What experience does The Water Council have in water stewardship?

We are in our second decade in collective sustainability program development and management experience. Our Water Stewardship Team have become recognized global leaders on helping companies as they begin and advance their water stewardship program.

Working with companies of all sizes on corporate water strategy development and site-specific implementation, over the past six years The Water Council has developed its water stewardship leadership and expertise as the North American Regional Partner for the Alliance for Water Stewardship. We have worked with large multinational corporations to small family-owned farms and manufacturers across North America to achieve standard certification for their facilities.

Through this work, The Water Council gained critical insight and experience in water stewardship and uncovered a gap in services for companies beginning their water stewardship journeys.

If your company requires new water technology solutions to improve your water stewardship performance, The Water Council is the only organization in the world that has the ability to make this seamless match.

Who else is offering a similar service/product?

Following extensive and continuous customer discovery through the National Science Foundation’s I-Corps program, The Water Council uncovered a critical need in the marketplace to bridge the gap between companies that have no water stewardship strategy and those that are ready to enact complex site-specific water stewardship action.

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Through its research, experience and extensive global relationships, The Water Council is not aware of any consultants or firms singularly focused on a comprehensive water stewardship strategy that connects enterprise-wide goals with site-level action that is then translated into comprehensive, credible ESG-related reporting AND that provides independent verification of performance and related claims (see "Claims" questions above). The added benefit The Water Council offers is the strength of connecting companies with the latest water technology that exists in the world.

Why should I participate in this water stewardship program as opposed to other options?

Companies participating in the water stewardship program demonstrate that they are prioritizing water-related action where it matters most, ultimately mitigating water-related risk and addressing shared water challenges and opportunities while building a more water-resilient supply chain.

No common understanding exists in the marketplace around what constitutes credible "good corporate water stewardship." Through our research, we have found stakeholders are generally dissatisfied with how existing ESG frameworks address corporate water-related performance. Current practices focus more on water efficiency than a holistic water stewardship approach and do not address risk mitigation and value creation. This results in companies with water targets that seem impressive on paper but do not adequately mitigate their true water risk, reflect local context or lead to credible water action through their value chain.

The Water Council's program is a proven methodology and action plan for corporations seeking to improve their water stewardship performance, public reporting and disclosure, as well as improve their overall business objectives.

Corporations that successfully follow and complete The Water Council's methodology signal to investors and other key stakeholders that they engage a strategic approach to water-related risk mitigation across the enterprise that responds to the materiality of water in their value chain.

Does this program only serve large public companies or can it assist small to medium private businesses?

While not always immediately evident, water is a critical resource for nearly every business in any industry. From food and beverage, chemical and personal care to general manufacturing, parts suppliers, hospitality and more, the availability of clean freshwater is critical to a business' operations and profitability.

The Water Council's program is targeted to:

- Large and medium-sized public and private companies that need to develop or accelerate their water strategy and goals
- Trade associations representing water-intensive business members
- Medium-sized private companies supplying to large publicly traded companies

Common among all the companies is that water is material somewhere within their value chain.

Will my claim be credible with investors and the public?

Companies successfully completing The Water Council's WAVE program will be independently verified by SCS Global Services.

Since 1984, SCS has been a pioneer and leading third-party certifier recognized as an independent verifier of programs covering a wide range of environmental, sustainability and quality certification credentials across multiple industry sectors accredited by American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

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Upon verification, companies can use the WAVE mark to help communicate their corporate water stewardship. The verification claim is valid for two years.

How can I use my claim?

After successful independent verification, WAVE companies will receive a comprehensive verification package that lays out the dos and don'ts of where and when you can use the claim.

In short, you may use the claim on company materials and communications such as sustainability reports, ESG disclosures, corporate websites and other media where you reference enterprise-wide achievements and commitments.

Can I extend my claim to my products and/or packaging?

Not at this time.

The Water Council is exploring opportunities to credibly and transparently extend WAVE-related claims to products and packaging in accordance with international best practices.

Has WAVE been tested and promised results achieved?

Yes, WAVE was pilot tested in 2021 by A. O. Smith Corporation, Badger Meter, Nutrien and Watts Water Technologies.

Through its work with The Water Council, Nutrien was able to understand internally and communicate externally its water strategy and path forward on water stewardship including setting meaningful goals and context-based targets for site-based water management in its operations. This pathway helped mitigate identified water-related risks and leverage its position in the agri-food value chain to meaningfully participate in global water stewardship efforts for collective action and impact.

“There’s always been a gap in a formalized process or program for companies to understand and accelerate their pathway into water stewardship.

WAVE certainly worked for us. I would encourage others who are looking into getting into this space to use it as a springboard to start those discussions and figure out where they want to go and how they’re going to get there.”

– Mike Nemeth, senior adviser for agricultural and environmental sustainability, Nutrien

Does The Water Council have any case studies on the accelerator program?

Yes, as a result of the testing the program, we have prepared two case studies describing the outcomes of utilizing the water stewardship accelerator.

- Nutrien, a company that is headquartered in Saskatoon, Canada, that produces and distributes over 25 million tons of potash, nitrogen and phosphate products for agricultural, industrial and feed customers worldwide.
- Watts Water Technologies, which is based in Boston and is a global manufacturer that provides one of the broadest plumbing, heating and water quality product lines in the world. The company employs 4,800 people across 27 countries.
- In addition, A. O. Smith Corporation and Badger Meter will provide testimonials.

What is the financial cost to participate in the WAVE?

There is no “one-size-fits-all” when it comes to corporate water stewardship. The financial investment by your company to participate in the WAVE program will vary depending on your size, industry, and the level of assistance needed from The Water Council to augment your staff’s current level of water stewardship knowledge and experience.

The Water Council will provide an initial complimentary assessment of your company’s water stewardship position and needs to develop a financially attractive proposal that can demonstrate a positive return on your investment that will enhance your efficiencies and critical public reporting to key stakeholders.

At the successful completion of the WAVE program, the required independent verification provided by SCS Global will include a separate, additional expense that your company will undertake.