Nutrien Accelerates Water Stewardship Through WAVE





Nutrien, the world's largest provider of crop inputs, services and solutions, turned to The Water Council's WAVE program to continue building a strong water stewardship foundation.

WAVE helped enable Nutrien to accelerate its water stewardship initiatives in ways relevant to Nutrien's own organizational risks. WAVE is the only continuous improvement methodology for improving, reporting and recognizing good corporate water stewardship.

Through WAVE participation, Nutrien has prioritized water-related action where it matters most—and can enhance its communications with stakeholders about its water stewardship performance.

Nutrien

Nutrien plays a critical role in helping growers increase food production in a sustainable manner.

From the production and distribution of nitrogen, potash and phosphorus, to more than 2,000 retail locations and approximately 3,900 agronomists and field experts, its global operations serve growers in 13 countries.



Situation

Water is critical to producing Nutrien's products of potash, nitrogen and phosphate. The company works closely with farmers, who need access to sufficient, clean water to sustainably grow crops. Thus, water is an important ESG (environmental, social and governance) topic for Nutrien.

As a leader in sustainable agriculture, Nutrien was seeking to meaningfully engage in effective water stewardship. The company was already actively managing water for efficiency and permit compliance, but it wanted to build a cohesive context-based water stewardship strategy that addressed local needs.

To build its pathway to water stewardship, Nutrien partnered with The Water Council in 2021 to pilot the WAVE acceleration program.

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Process

The WAVE process includes understanding water use and risks, approving a corporate water stewardship policy, prioritizing sites for stewardship action and communicating a corporate action plan.

Nutrien operates production sites; transportation, distribution and logistical sites; and retail locations. Nutrien identified 27 manufacturing sites and terminals across North and South America for a watershed risk assessment.

"A watershed risk assessment helped Nutrien think about water in a different way", said Mike Nemeth, Senior Advisor for Agricultural and Environmental Sustainability. "We started looking at the watersheds that we operate in, not just our sites and the water that they need." Company leaders learned that water needs to be addressed locally as all watersheds face different challenges.

Outcomes/Next Steps

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.

Developing a corporate water stewardship policy that was approved by the entire Executive Leadership Team was key. "From the very top of our organization all the way down, we now know our water priorities and have a better plan to be good water stewards in our sector," Nemeth said.

This pathway includes setting meaningful goals and context-based targets for site-based water management in its operations, which helps mitigate identified water-related risks and leverage its position in the agri-food value chain. Ultimately, Nutrien aims to meaningfully participate in global water stewardship efforts for collective action and impact.

"WAVE helped us understand, accelerate and formalize our pathway and processes for water stewardship. I would encourage others to use WAVE as a springboard to start those discussions and figure out where they want to go and how they're going to get there.

"The more companies that do it, the more you change the global mindset on water, which is how progress happens."

–Mike Nemeth, Senior Advisor, Agricultural and Environmental Sustainability, Nutrien

As part of the WAVE process, Nutrien created a cross-functional water targets team committed to a goal of setting water targets by 2023. The company has identified one high-risk site in Alberta, Canada, located in a drought-prone watershed. Nutrien plans to not only identify and act on risk-mitigation opportunities there but also work with local stakeholders in the water basin. "Those shared water challenges can be better identified and addressed in the community rather than as an individual site," Nemeth said.

