

The AWS Standard is intended to drive water stewardship, defined as *the use of water that is socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves site- and catchment-based actions*. Good water stewards understand their own water use, catchment context and shared risk in terms of water governance, water balance, water quality and important water-related areas; and then engage in meaningful individual and collective actions that benefit people and nature.

Increased populations, growing food and material production, an additional demand for energy and more frequent droughts and floods are threatening the availability and quality of Earth's shared water resources. Meanwhile, the global recessions of recent years have left many governments with a lack of capacity to ensure access to clean water and sanitation to those in need, or adequately protect the important freshwater habitats and cultural areas of the planet.

All of these factors mean that water is becoming material to the bottom line of businesses and water service providers. Water issues can shut down operations, increase purification costs, ruin brands, affect the health of workers, and jeopardize productivity. At the same time, good water management result in significant savings, innovation and growth. As a result, shareholders, governments and consumers are increasingly demanding that companies understand their water impacts and mitigate their water risks. Furthermore, since water is a shared resource, any given water user cannot solve the challenges by themselves. They must work with others.

The Alliance for Water Stewardship Standard (the Standard) is an internationally-consistent approach that helps to ensure responsible water stewardship at the site, within the catchment and throughout the supply chain in an effort to mitigate risks and drive value for a water user. It builds on existing efforts in the field, recognizes global best practices, and ultimately drives benefits to not only companies, but society and the environment as well.

Applicability

The working assumption is that the Standard can be:

- implemented by all entities in all sectors (public and private) anywhere in the world
- applied to any site that interacts with water, i.e., uses, consumes, withdraws, sources, treats, supplies, or diverts water, or discharges into water bodies
- applied to all types of water, including: freshwater, effluent (contaminated water), recycled water, salt water (including brackish water), ground water, water in the atmosphere (including precipitation), and solid forms of water (snow, ice, glaciers, etc.)

The site-level focus is intended to keep efforts manageable and within the site's influence. It allows for impacts to be traced back to actions. However, water stewardship is centered on the recognition that water is a shared resource and requires collaborative solutions. Therefore, the Standard requires you to work *beyond* your property boundaries through engagement with stakeholders and within your catchment.

Structure of the Standard

The Standard is organized around six steps (Table 1; Figure 2), each of which contains a set of criteria and corresponding indicator(s) that are meant to verify process and performance. The six steps are also supported by two key appendices:

- 1) **Appendix A – Glossary**
- 2) **Appendix B – AWS Standard Guidance:**
Organized by step and criterion, **the guidance is an integral part of the Standard** and provides greater clarification and detail to how the criteria should be interpreted and implemented.

The Standard's structure allows for increasing levels of performance in water stewardship, which are recognized by Core, Gold and Platinum levels of recognition (Figure 2). At the Core level, all criteria are required. At the advanced levels, criteria have points attached to them which reflect both the degree of effort required and the anticipated impact. The aggregation of points results in Gold or Platinum level performance.

Outcomes of Water Stewardship

The Standard is designed to achieve four water stewardship outcomes: **(1) good water governance, (2) sustainable water balance, (3) good water quality status, and (4) healthy status of important water-related areas (IWRAs).**

Sites are expected to contribute to these outcomes via on-site management, engagement with others and help to drive the collective action necessary to ultimately achieve these outcomes.

Next Steps

The AWS is committed to an equitable, open and transparent standard-setting process, following the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards, and involving stakeholder interests from many different countries and sectors.

The Beta Standard (v_04_03_2013) will be open for public comment 22 March 2013 through the end of 2013 (go to <http://www.allianceforwaterstewardship.org/> to provide online feedback) with initial implementation to be completed throughout 2013 before a final version of the Standard, along with the verification system, is released in early 2014.

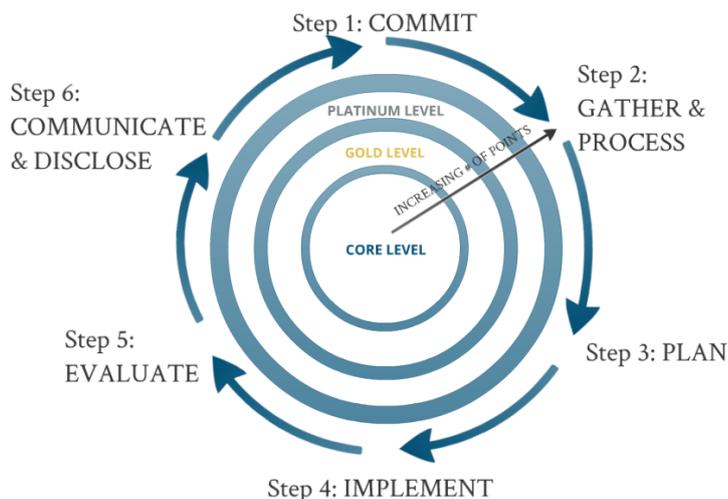


Figure 2 illustrates several aspects of the Standard including its steps and the performance levels

NOTE: Point allocations are not yet finalized. We will be seeking stakeholder input on the point values of non-core criteria included in this version of the Standard as part of the consultation.



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Table 1: Summary table of the Beta AWS Standard

	AWS Core Criteria	AWS Advanced-Level Criteria
STEP 1	<p>1.1 Establish a leadership commitment</p> <p>1.2 Develop a water stewardship policy</p>	<p>1.3 Commit to other water-related initiatives</p>
STEP 2	<p>2.1 Define the physical scope</p> <p>2.2 Define the socio-economic scope</p> <p>2.3 Understand legal and regulatory requirements</p> <p>2.4 Determine the site's and catchment's water balance</p> <p>2.5 Determine site's and sources' water quality status</p> <p>2.6 Identify the site's and catchment's IWRAs and describe their status</p> <p>2.7 Begin to understand your indirect water use</p> <p>2.8 Identify catchment plan</p> <p>2.9 Analyze data to understand impacts and risks</p>	<p>2.10 Identify catchment-wide issues leading to impaired water stewardship outcomes</p> <p>2.11 Advanced data gathering for criteria 2.1-2.4</p> <p>2.12 Advanced indirect water use evaluation</p> <p>2.13 Measure additional context indicators</p> <p>2.14 Determine your ability to contribute to e-flows</p> <p>2.15 Complete a voluntary Social Impact Assessment</p> <p>2.16 Gather information on future scenarios</p>
STEP 3	<p>3.1 Ensure a system for legal compliance</p> <p>3.2 Create a site water stewardship plan</p> <p>3.3 Notify catchment authority of your plans</p>	<p>3.4 Set ecologically-driven targets</p> <p>3.5 Set stakeholder-driven targets</p> <p>3.6 Plan for adaptation and resilience</p>
STEP 4	<p>4.1 Comply with legal and regulatory requirements</p> <p>4.2 Maintain or improve site water balance</p> <p>4.3 Maintain or improve site water quality</p> <p>4.4 Maintain or improve the status of the IWRAs located at the site</p> <p>4.5 Participate in catchment governance</p> <p>4.6 Drive improved indirect water use within your catchment</p>	<p>4.7 Achieve strong results on site water balance</p> <p>4.8 Achieve strong performance on site water quality</p> <p>4.9 Restore lost IWRAs at your site</p> <p>4.10 Support strengthened water stewardship governance and capacity</p> <p>4.11 Contribute to industry water-related benchmarking</p> <p>4.12 Re-allocate saved water</p> <p>4.13 Engage in collective action</p> <p>4.14 Drive reduced indirect water use throughout your supply chain</p> <p>4.15 Support stewardship actions within your sphere of influence</p> <p>4.16 Protect IWRAs in your catchment</p>
STEP 5	<p>5.1 Evaluate performance and context in light of water stewardship plan</p> <p>5.2 Evaluate emergency incidents</p> <p>5.3 Consult stakeholders on performance</p> <p>5.4 Update water stewardship plan</p>	<p>5.5 Board level review of water stewardship efforts</p> <p>5.6 Stakeholder performance evaluation</p>
STEP 6	<p>6.1 Disclose water-related internal governance</p> <p>6.2 Disclose annual water stewardship plan</p> <p>6.3 Disclose water-related opportunities, risks and mitigation efforts</p> <p>6.4 Disclose compliance</p> <p>6.5 Increase awareness of water issues within your site</p>	<p>6.6 Contribute to recognized disclosure frameworks</p> <p>6.7 Implement a program for water education</p>

Implementation:

Over the coming months, AWS will embark on work with our partners on implementing the Beta Standard in the field to learn and improve the Standard and ensure it has the desired characteristics: a robust system that reduces risks for sites and provides shared benefits to their catchments, while being cost-effective. This work will inform not only the Standard, but the verification system and the supporting programs that AWS will develop, such as water stewardship capacity building.

More than 10 sites on four continents are already putting the Standard to work and we encourage all interested parties to join the sites throughout the world who have already signed up to explore what it means to be a global leader in water stewardship.

About the Alliance for Water Stewardship



The CEO Water Mandate



AWS is a collaboration amongst some of the world's most innovative organizations in sustainable water resource management who are committed to driving collective responses to shared water risk through a stakeholder-endorsed international water stewardship standard. Our ten *board organizations* each brings specific expertise and perspectives needed to build a balanced and effective international water stewardship system. AWS regional initiatives are active in Australia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America, with additional outreach to many other parts of the world.

Our Vision is that **water users and managers are responsible water stewards, who protect and enhance freshwater resources for people and nature.**

Our Mission is **to promote responsible use of freshwater that is socially and economically beneficial as well as environmentally sustainable.**

For more information, please go to: www.allianceforwaterstewardship.org

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