

# Notice of Intent Regarding WaterSense® Irrigation Partner and Professional Certification Program Specification Restructure

look for



Amber Lefstead  
EPA WaterSense Program

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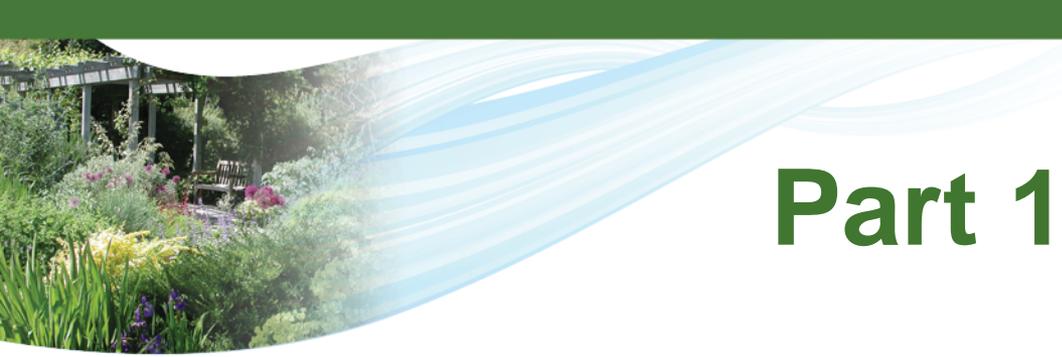
# Meeting Objectives

- Provide background on proposed changes
- Review proposed changes in detail
- Provide clarification on NOI for Stakeholders
- Obtain feedback from stakeholders on NOI questions or other points

# Agenda



- Introduction to WaterSense®
- Overview of existing program
- Background on NOI
- Proposed Specification Restructure and Development
- Proposed Changes to Irrigation Partnership
- Other Issues
- Next Steps



# Part 1

## Introduction to WaterSense and Background on NOI

# What Is WaterSense?

**A partnership program  
sponsored by the U.S. EPA**

Promotes the value of water and helps Americans make smart decisions regarding water use and water-using products

Aims to increase the adoption of water-efficient products, new homes, and services by consumers and organizations



# Professional Certification Program Specifications

- In 2006, WaterSense released three final specifications for professional certification programs:
  - *Specification for WaterSense Labeling of Certification Programs for Irrigation System Designers;*
  - *Specification for WaterSense Labeling of Certification Programs for Irrigation System Auditors; and*
  - *Specification for WaterSense Labeling of Certification Programs for Irrigation System Installation and Maintenance Professionals.*

# Where we are today

- Labeled PCO Programs
  - 3 specifications – irrigation design, install/maintain, audit
  - 9 professional certifying organization (PCO) programs
- Irrigation Partner Criteria
  - Certified through labeled program
  - Submit partnership application
  - Renewal every 1-2 years; submit proof of continued ed.
- Certified professionals
  - 4,200 certified by labeled programs
  - 1,300 signed on as WS partners (~220 new/year)



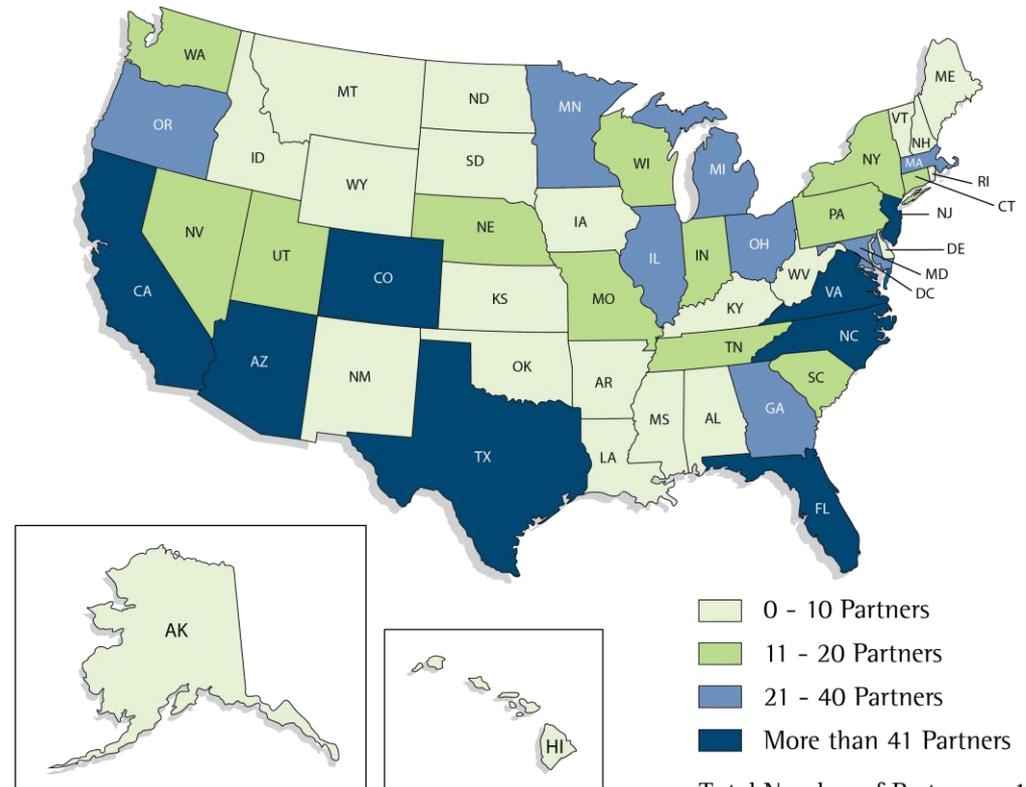
# WaterSense Irrigation Partners

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## – Labeled Certification Programs

- Irrigation Association – CID, CIC, CLIA, CGIA
- Sonoma Marin Saving Water Partnership's QWEL program (+8 adopting organizations)
- Rain Bird Certified Residential and Light Commercial Irrigation Installer
- CA Landscape Contractors Association's Certified Water Manager
- NJ Landscape Irrigation Contractor Examining Board's Certification
- TX AgriLife Extension, Irrigation Technology Center's Certified Auditor



0 - 10 Partners  
11 - 20 Partners  
21 - 40 Partners  
More than 41 Partners

Total Number of Partners = 1,314  
Partners as of October 23, 2012

Note: Number of partners does not include those in Canada or U.S. territories.



# Irrigation Partner Program



- Irrigation Partnership Program Offerings
  - Preference for jobs in WaterSense labeled homes, Federal Facilities, and LEED for Homes
  - Promotional materials and tools to advertise ones skills as a water-efficient irrigation professional to consumers
  - Credentials and credibility through EPA affiliation
  - Being set apart from the competition



# NOI Background – Proposed Changes



The program changes outlined in the NOI are two-fold:

1. Restructure current specifications for PCOs by creating a consolidated and common set of general requirements that will apply to all PCOs
2. Remove individual irrigation partnership designation and expand benefits of partnership to all professionals certified by WaterSense labeled programs, without requiring submission of a partnership application

# Why the proposed changes?



- WaterSense aims to review/revise specifications every 3-5 years
- Saw need to evaluate the entire program, specifications and irrigation partnership, to see if program was achieving goals
- Needed to improve coordination with PCO and partners
- Needed to improve coverage of partners for other programs such as New Homes

# Program Evaluation

- Evaluation Purpose
  - Evaluate the benefits and challenges of the WaterSense irrigation partnership program
- Interview Participants over program stakeholders
  - EPA Staff and Contractors (8)
  - Utility Partners (9)
  - Irrigation Professionals (15)
  - Labeled Professional Certifying Organizations (7)
- This NOI is a continuation of the process to seek input from other stakeholders

# Research Findings

- Initial research revealed benefits and challenges to program
  - Successes
    - Certified professionals recognized by utilities as being “best of the best”
    - Logo and materials benefit partners
  - Challenges
    - Professional certification is strongest indicator of commitment to water efficiency, not partnership
    - Not able to verify water savings from program
    - Limited partnership base makes recommending partners difficult



# Irrigation Partner Coverage for New Homes Program



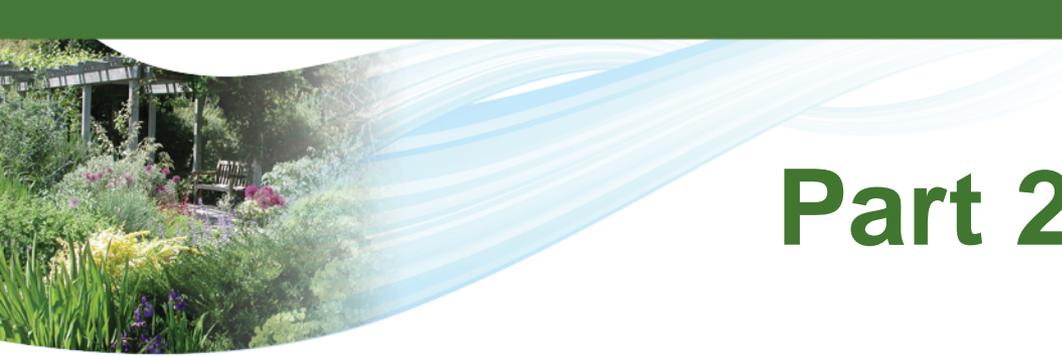
# Research Findings

## – Additional Challenges

- Current structure requires some PCOs to promote WaterSense irrigation partners above other certified members.
- There is a substantial administrative burden on EPA associated with managing irrigation partnership in its current form.
- This administrative burden has limited WaterSense's ability to work with other professional groups that also influence water savings.

# WaterSense Goals

- Share program benefits with more professionals
- Work with those committed to water-efficient practices as demonstrated by their certification through a labeled program
- Expand labeling of programs to other professional groups who also impact water savings
- Adapt the program to reduce resources spent while continuing to provide benefits



# Part 2

## Proposed Specification Restructure Development



# General Requirements Document



- Consolidated and common set of general requirements applicable to all PCOs regardless of program sector
- Will contain all general criteria that PCOs need to meet for their programs to earn the WaterSense label
- Requirements specific to particular types of certification programs will continue to be defined by individual specifications



# General Requirements Document



General Requirements will address:

- PCO eligibility requirements
- Application and labeling processes
- PCO roles and responsibilities
- EPA roles and responsibilities



# General Requirements Document



Benefits of this new structure include:

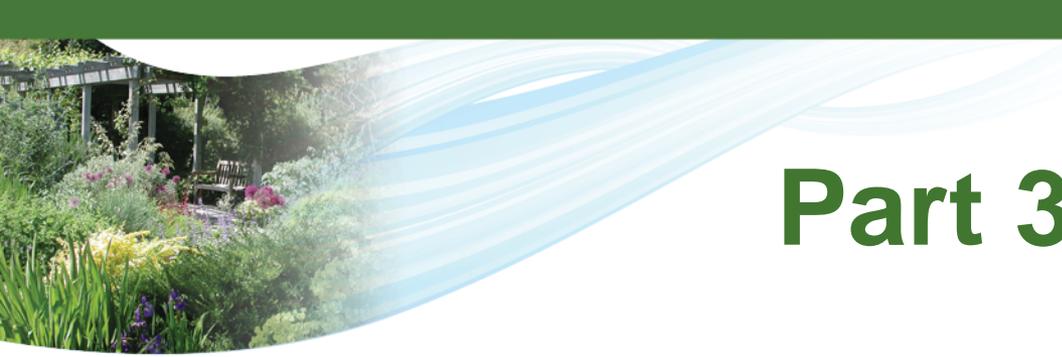
- Establishes a level of consistency among different types of PCOs with WaterSense labeled programs
- Aligns the labeling process for professional certification programs with the labeling process for water-efficient products and new homes
- Allows WaterSense to streamline the development of specifications by focusing on sector-specific requirements

# Process

- A PCO will be required to meet the criteria in the general requirements document in order to apply for a certification program to be labeled.
- Currently labeled programs must reapply for the WaterSense label under this new system once it is finalized and appropriate transition times have been established.

# Discussion

- Questions?
- Discussion:
  - Please provide feedback on the range and type of criteria proposed for inclusion in the general requirements document. Are there any other general criteria that should be addressed by this document?
  - WaterSense will provide a transition period for existing programs to meet new requirements. How long will it take to implement changes and reapply under the new structure?



# Part 3

## Proposed Changes to Irrigation Partnership

# Overview of Changes

- Include all professionals certified by WaterSense labeled programs
- Transfer some EPA responsibilities to PCOs
  - Communicating with certified professionals about WaterSense
  - Tracking individuals' certification status
- Expand WaterSense efforts to develop supporting materials and tools for certified professionals
- Expand the program to other types of professional certification programs such as additional outdoor and plumbing professionals

# Changes Affecting WaterSense Irrigation Partners



- The term “WaterSense irrigation partner” would be phased out, along with the use of the WaterSense partner logo for irrigation professionals.
- Professionals would instead promote themselves as “certified by a WaterSense labeled program” and use the “Ask About” WaterSense promotional label.



# Benefits to Certified Professionals

- Expand benefits of WaterSense partnership to all professionals certified by a WaterSense labeled program. Including:
  - New and existing irrigation partner promotional materials
  - Access to work opportunities on WaterSense new homes, federal facilities, and LEED projects
- WaterSense will educate green building programs and state and municipal codes that require irrigation system work be performed by WaterSense irrigation partners about this change



# Changes Affecting Irrigation PCOs

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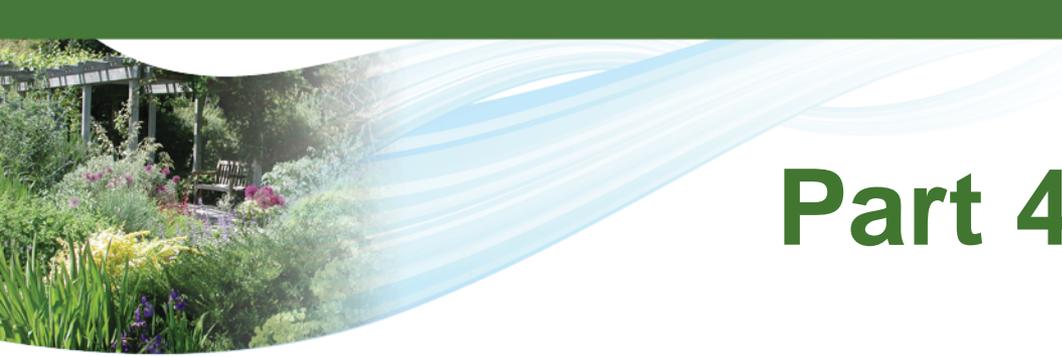
- PCOs would become the primary conduit for WaterSense information to irrigation professionals, communicating important program updates.
- PCOs would submit annual data to EPA on their WaterSense labeled programs, including the number of individuals who have obtained certifications.
- PCOs would maintain an online listing of all certified professionals and their service areas.

# Benefits to Current and Future PCOs

- Enhances value of earning WaterSense label because program benefits will be provided to all certified professionals
- Reduces administrative burden of the certification renewal process on PCOs by eliminating coordination with WaterSense on the status of individual professionals

# Discussion

- Questions?
- Discussion:
  - WaterSense makes many resources available to irrigation partners on the WaterSense partner website. Should WaterSense continue to make these resources available?
  - Which resources are most useful? What additional materials would be useful to certified professionals?
  - What additional support can WaterSense provide to PCOs to maintain a strong program presence with professionals?
  - Are there additional ways WaterSense can recognize certified professionals' accomplishments or support professionals in the promotion of WaterSense?
  - Should there be a unified list on the EPA website that includes all certified professionals rather than pointing interested parties to individual PCO websites to find them?



# Part 4

## Other Issues and Next Steps

## Other Issues

- The resources associated with developing professional certification specifications are considerable.
- Although WaterSense focuses on adding water-efficiency content to certifications, performance and proficiency of the underlying professional services must be ensured.
- WaterSense expanding to evaluate many different types of services will be difficult and expensive.
- WaterSense is interested in feedback on how to achieve its goal of labeling additional certification programs without creating substantial burden on EPA or PCOs.

## Other Issues

- Requiring third-party accreditation for certification programs to receive the label is a consideration.
- The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) accredit certification programs.
- The cost of accreditation can be significant for PCOs and could limit access to the WaterSense label for smaller organizations.
- Accrediting to existing standards is a rigorous process. May not be relevant to the professional programs that WaterSense would label.

# Timeline for Revision

- Phase I (October 2012):
  - NOI to develop a PCO general requirements document and restructuring irrigation partnership.
- Phase II (spring 2013):
  - Draft PCO general requirements document for public comment.
  - NOI to revise current specifications and develop a new specification for professional certification programs.
- Phase III/IV (schedule to be determined):
  - Final general requirements document.
  - Final specification for revised irrigation PCO specifications.
  - Implement changes to irrigation partnership program.
  - Draft specifications for new PCO specification.

# Timeline for Revision

## Phase I

October 2012 – Early 2013

## Phase II

Early 2013 - 2014

## Phase III

TBD 2014

**NOI** – Restructure irrigation partnership program

**NOI** – General Requirements Document

**Draft** – General Requirements Document

**NOI** – Revise current irrigation specifications and create new specifications

**Implement** – Restructure irrigation partnership program

**Final** – General Requirements Document

**Final** – Revised current irrigation specs  
**Draft** – New specs

# Discussion

- Questions?
- Discussion:
  - Some federal agencies require accreditation to existing credentialing standards for approved programs. Should WaterSense consider moving in this direction? Are there other ways WaterSense can achieve the goals outlined in this NOI without accreditation?
  - What other areas should WaterSense consider for professional certification program specification development?
  - Short of labeling professional certification programs, are there alternative approaches that WaterSense should consider that would help expand consideration of water efficiency in professional services?

# Next Steps

- WaterSense is seeking feedback on all concepts and topics included in the NOI.
- However, WaterSense is specifically requesting feedback on the questions listed at the end of the NOI.
- Please send feedback to [watersense-programs@erg.com](mailto:watersense-programs@erg.com) before December 11, 2012.



# More Information



EPA  
**WaterSense**

Web site: [www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense)

E-mail: [watersense@epa.gov](mailto:watersense@epa.gov)

Helpline: (866) WTR-SENS (987-7367)