



WaterSense® Professional Certification Program Draft Labeling System and Draft Revised Specifications Public Meeting Summary

October 30, 2013, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Eastern, Webinar

Meeting Participants

Mohammed Al-Dhaien, Bofaris Corp.
Todd Alexander, Vigo Industries
Michael Baron, The Toro Company
Lindsey Berman, Regional Water Providers Consortium
Pamela Berstler, G3: Watershed Wise Training
Veronica Blette, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) WaterSense program
Tom Brudzinski, TOME, LLC
James Canyon, Echo Wireless Soil Sensors
Alex Cecil, Georgetown University
Bill Christiansen, Alliance for Water Efficiency
Lorena Colin, ProMexico
Emily Coll, Carlson Water Management
Bonny Cushman, Regional Water Providers Consortium
Peter Estournes, California Landscape Contractors Association
Raymond Eurto, Northern Designs, LLC
Bernard Everling, KTU+A
Karen Fligger, EPA
Darcy Franz, ICF International
June Fuller, Symmons Industries
Michael Garcia, Alpine Gardens
Billy Giblin, Nexant, Inc.
Tavia Gilbert, Ontario Clean Water Agency
John Gumm, The Toro Company
Deborah Hamlin, Irrigation Association
Richard Harris, East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD)
Amy Harrison, NSF International
Christine Hawkins, Ewing Irrigation Products
Brian Hinson, KWC AMERICA
Ted Hogan, Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG)
Elisabeth Jenicek, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Chuck Kellogg, Aqua Water Supply Corporation
Brian Kettl, U.S. Navy
Joanna Kind, ERG
John Koeller, MaP Testing
Gordon Kunkle, Portland Parks & Recreation
Brian Lee, Sonoma County Water Agency/Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership
Douglas Macdonald, Aqua Engineering, Inc.
Timothy Malooly, Water in Motion, Inc.
Kevin McCaleb, City of Lake Oswego Public Works



George McCarthy, New Jersey Landscape Irrigation Contractors Examining Board (NJLICEB)
Cary McElhinney, EPA Region 5
Brent Mecham, Irrigation Association
Gus Metz, South Rains Special Utility District
Dale Morehouse, Front Range Community College
Kathy Nguyen, Cobb County Water System
Neil Paradise, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Robert Pfeil, Rain Bird International, Services Division
Jonah Schein, EPA
Krishan Sharma, Save Environment and Welfare of Animals, Rajasthan, India
Matthew Shreves, John Deere Landscapes
Rebecca Stahlnecker, Green Building Certification Institute
Charles Swanson, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service
Cliff Thompson, Habitat for Humanity of Iowa, State Support Organization
Eileen West, Connecticut Irrigation Contractors Association
Bill Williams, American Society of Irrigation Consultants
Karen Wirth, EPA
Louis Wong, Kingston Brass
Eric Yeggy, Water Quality Association

Meeting Summary

Amber Lefstead (EPA's WaterSense program) welcomed everyone to the meeting before reviewing administrative instructions, meeting objectives, and the agenda. Agenda items included: an introduction to WaterSense, changes to the irrigation partnership designation; description of the draft *WaterSense Professional Certification Program Labeling System* (labeling system) and draft revised specifications; and next steps. The PowerPoint slides from this presentation can be reviewed on [WaterSense's website](#). The presentation's key points, as well as participant's questions and comments, are summarized below.

Introduction to WaterSense

Ms. Lefstead provided a brief overview of the WaterSense program; described the proposed changes to the professional certification program; and reminded participants of the reasons for these changes. WaterSense is proposing two primary changes to the professional certification program: expanding program benefits to all certified professionals by removing the individual partnership designation and consolidating the institutional requirements for professional certifying organization (PCO) partners into a unified program labeling system. With a labeling system in place, WaterSense will be able to ensure a base level of organizational competency among PCOs regardless of the type of professional certification program that earns the WaterSense label and ensure consistency in EPA's evaluation across all professional certification programs.

Changes to Irrigation Partnerships

Ms. Lefstead reviewed the changes to the irrigation partnership designation. WaterSense tentatively plans to discontinue its partnership agreements with individual irrigation partners in July 2014. At the same time, WaterSense will expand its outreach and communications to all

professionals certified through WaterSense labeled programs. This change will free up WaterSense resources to develop materials that support and help certified professionals. Ms. Lefstead discussed how current WaterSense irrigation partners will be affected and also reviewed the planned implementation timeline.

George McCarthy (NJLICEB) commented that state license programs have less flexibility than some other programs to implement program changes. New Jersey lists certified (licensed) irrigation professionals on the state's Department of Environmental Protection website and adding an additional listing would be difficult. Ms. Lefstead thanked Mr. McCarthy for bringing the issue to her attention and stated that she would like to have conversations in the future to better understand the challenge and find a practical solution.

Mr. McCarthy also commented that the NJLICEB is not in favor of giving all licensed professionals in New Jersey the benefits of WaterSense partnership. Contractors in New Jersey are required to be licensed by state law and some only do so to meet the minimum requirements. Removing the partnership designation actually works against the people who are trying to be responsible and do the right thing. For instance, a builder will just find a professional based on proximity to the job rather than looking for someone with credentials and who will do the work at a higher level. Ms. Lefstead thanked Mr. McCarthy for his comments and encouraged him to submit them in writing.

Richard Harris (EBMUD) asked if WaterSense has an existing list of WaterSense PCOs and their reach. Ms. Lefstead responded that WaterSense website hosts a list of PCOs, but the list does not include information about the PCO's reach. WaterSense plans to expand its list of PCOs to incorporate the states where the PCOs certify professionals in the future.

Emily Coll (Carlson Water Management) asked how the changes to the WaterSense professional certification program incorporate other certifying organizations. Ms. Lefstead responded that one reason WaterSense is streamlining the program labeling system is to allow for expansion to other types of programs in the future. Ms. Coll also wanted to know if WaterSense would require training. Ms. Lefstead responded that the specifications do not require training. The specifications require that a professional has taken a test and passed that test.* However, at this time, all PCO partners offer training alongside the testing.

Ms. Coll commented that utilities want to promote professionals who use best management practices for reducing water use and are trying to figure out the best way to identify those professionals. Ms. Coll does not feel that the current certification programs are adequate because professionals can earn the certifications but still use inefficient irrigation practices. The Conservation Committee of the Rocky Mountain Section of the American Water Works Association is looking into how to make landscaper training more robust and would like to work with WaterSense but the committee wants to be sure that efficient irrigation practices are actually being implemented. Ms. Lefstead responded that WaterSense does not have the capacity to monitor the performance of individual professionals. While some certification programs require professionals to report their jobs and associated water savings, doing so is not a WaterSense requirement. WaterSense's goal is to establish a baseline requirement of water

*Post-webinar note: Although WaterSense does not require PCOs to offer training, WaterSense specifications do require professionals to maintain continuing education.

efficient practices. This approach introduces a greater number of people to best practices and can then gradually enhance the requirements to be more stringent. WaterSense welcomes ideas that could increase the stringency of its requirements.

Peter Estournes (California Landscape Contractors Association) asked a question about the timeline for reapplication for PCOs. Ms. Lefstead responded that the reapplication process will be covered in the next session, but PCOs will have a year to reapply after the final requirements are released. The current plan is to release the final requirements in July 2014 and then PCOs would be required to reapply before July 2015.

Eric Yeggy (Water Quality Association) commented that the Water Quality Association is very supportive of WaterSense's professional certification program and thinks that there are a lot of opportunities for water savings if WaterSense expands its program. The Water Quality Association would support WaterSense's expansion to plumbing professionals. Mr. Yeggy wanted to know who he could speak with to get the process started. Ms. Lefstead responded that she would be the correct contact, but the current timeline is several years in the future. However, the process starts with background research and any information that they could provide would be helpful.

Mr. Yeggy asked a question about the process for determining which questions are required on certification exams. Ms. Lefstead responded that the specifications include nine to 15 subject areas that PCOs are required to test. WaterSense defines the subject area and PCOs develop the questions. When a certification program applies for the WaterSense label, they submit their test and WaterSense reviews that test to ensure the questions are adequate. WaterSense worked with industry professionals to determine which subject areas were most important. WaterSense is seeking feedback on these testing requirements and this presentation will provide more information about the specification development process.

Draft Labeling System

Joanna Kind (ERG) reviewed the draft labeling system and the revised draft specifications. The draft labeling system defines the organizational requirements that PCOs must meet to earn the WaterSense label for a certification program as well as the respective roles and responsibilities of PCOs and WaterSense. The draft labeling system also defines the types of PCOs and specifies each type's requirements, application forms, and roles and responsibilities. Ms. Kind emphasized that the draft specifications have been revised to include only criteria specific to a program area. WaterSense made two substantive changes to the specifications, including that the exams are required to address WaterSense labeled products, and 50 percent of a labeled program's continuing education requirements must now pertain to water efficiency.

Brian Lee (Sonoma County Water Agency/Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership) wanted to know whether WaterSense would continue to accept new PCOs under the current system while the new system is being implemented. Ms. Lefstead advised that that PCOs should wait until the new requirements are released. WaterSense will continue to accept PCOs under the current system; however, if a PCO does apply under the current system, it will be required to re-apply under the new system by July 2015.

George McCarthy (NJLICEB) asked for more information about the requirement that PCOs have in place procedures to revoke certification from certified professionals. He was concerned that if WaterSense received a complaint that a contractor was not competent, the Examining Board would not be able to revoke the contractor's license in response to the complaint. Ms. Lefstead stated that although PCOs must have the power to revoke a professional's certification, WaterSense would not request that PCOs revoke certifications. If WaterSense were to receive a complaint, EPA would pass that information along to the PCO, but it would be up to the PCO to decide whether or not to revoke the certification.

A participant wanted to know why EPA is planning to share a "preview" of the final labeling system and revised specifications with the PCOs before the documents are final in July. Ms. Lefstead responded that the preview will allow PCOs more time to prepare online listings of their certified professionals. WaterSense wants to link to PCOs' online listings of certified professionals at the same time the labeling system and revised specifications are released in final form.

Ms. Lefstead adjourned the meeting by providing a summary of the next steps. WaterSense is seeking comment on any concepts included in the draft documents. However, WaterSense listed questions in the draft program labeling system's cover letter for which the program has particular interest in receiving feedback. All comments should be submitted to watersense-programs@erg.com by November 19, 2013.