

AWS Standard Draft Revision
Stakeholder Consultation
1 June 2018, Melbourne Australia
General Comments

*For step/criterion specific comments please refer to Stakeholder Comments PDF

1. Terminology

a) High Conservation Value

- This term may be confusing although it aligns with other standard uses of the term; it may be too technical / inaccessible to the average water user
- The word “high” may impose a value judgment; suggest the use of the word “priority” instead
- The word “value” implies “economic value” and usage of the term alongside the term “conservation” may imply to readers that areas with seemingly no economic value (e.g. wetlands) does not need to be considered

b) Best Practice

- This term may be confusing – who defines best practice? Best practice in industry, in geographical context? Consider alternate use of “benchmark” or “continuous improvement” or “improvement change”
- Include guidance/examples of what constitutes best practice, e.g. in transboundary catchments, as reference points for sites
- The water stewardship system rewards best practice, but does not give ample recognition to good efforts (especially for sites in Global South that may not be able to achieve best practice due to resource and knowledge asymmetries)
- Clarify linkages between water stewardship plan targets and best practice indicators

c) Water rights

- This term may be contentious as its legal definition may vary from country to country / state to state
- Consider rewording references to “water rights” to “access to water” or conceptually similar terms

d) Stakeholders

- The use of the term stakeholders could be revised to “relevant” or “prioritised” stakeholders in Steps 4 and 5

e) Metrics

- Use consistent, simple metrics throughout AWS Standard
- Use metrics that are aligned with other reporting / Standard conventions
- Provide detailed guidance where the Standard calls for an “average” measure; use consistent temporal measures

2. Accreditation process

- a) There should be a system of incentives for organisations with smaller pool of resources (e.g. SMEs, organisations in developing countries) to participate in AWS system
- b) AWS will need to specify how the Standard revision affects sites that have already been certified – how does it affect their certification and how does it affect the re-certification process

3. AWS Standard Structure

a) Perverse outcomes

- Are there clear guidelines on how to prevent perverse outcomes or environmental cost trade-offs? E.g. a site may be in compliance with legal and Standard requirements, but its business philosophy is not congruent with good water stewardship

b) Organisation of Criteria / Indicators within a Step

- (especially in Step 2) Site-related criteria can be presented before catchment-related criteria to strengthen structure of Standard

c) Advanced-level criteria

- Some advanced-level criteria may not be applicable to certain sites; allow for re-allocation of advanced-level points in these circumstances

4. Guidance

- a) Include case studies and examples, especially from certified sites