



# SCS Certification Standard for Water Stewardship and Resiliency

## SCS-116 Standard



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# SCS standards

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## Record of Revisions

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This Standard is periodically updated. It is the responsibility of the document reader to ensure use of the most current version of the document.

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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 The Certification Standard for Water Stewardship and Resiliency (hereinafter SCS-116) describes the requirements for a third-party certification of an organization's site-specific water stewardship and water resiliency practices.
- 1.1.2 This Standard sets site-specific water stewardship and resiliency certification requirements for all sectors, provides a structured approach to guide organizations to implement site-specific actions and decision-making, and sets performance criteria for climate- and water-related risks, quality monitoring and responsible water use practices.
- 1.1.3 SCS-116 is designed to encourage organizations to strive for the highest level of water stewardship and resiliency practices at a specific site, and aims to:
- Recognize organizations that implement responsible water practices;
  - Encourage organizations to respond to, and reduce systemically and holistically, climate related risks through adaptation and resiliency measures;
  - Assist organizations in managing water-related risks effectively, reducing associated costs, and strengthening brand reputation;
  - Encourage organizations to adopt nature-based solutions and innovative technologies to increase their water resiliency and resource management;
  - Encourage organizations to engage with their surrounding communities; and
  - Promote transparency by communicating an organization's impact on the environment, as well as the organization's progress over time.

## 1.2 Intended Users

- 1.2.1 The SCS-116 Standard is applicable to organizations of all sizes worldwide, across various industries, that are seeking to demonstrate their commitment to implementing effective water stewardship and resiliency practices at a site level.

# 2. Scope and Limitations

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## 2.1 Scope

- 2.1.1 The SCS-116 Standard applies to any site (e.g., construction site, industrial facility, manufacturing plant, farm, office building) that uses, consumes, and discharges water during its operations.
- 2.1.2 This Standard also applies to organizations seeking to make operational and financial decisions with regard to water metrics, climate and water-related risks, and opportunities for improvement.

## 2.2 Limitations

Users shall note that conformity with the requirements of this Standard is no guarantee of regulatory compliance. It is the user's responsibility to establish appropriate conditions for such considerations and to determine the applicability of regulatory limitations before use.

## 3. Conformance

### 3.1 Conformance Structure

3.1.1 In order to be considered conformant to this Standard, the user shall meet all applicable requirements.

3.1.2 The criteria in the Standard are arranged in tiers (i.e., Tier 1, Tier, 2, and Trailblazer) and are described in sections 6-10. See Table 1 for the conformance requirements by tier and audit year, and as follows:

- 3.1.2.1 To achieve initial certification, the site shall meet all applicable Tier 1 requirements.
- 3.1.2.2 By or before the time of the first recertification audit, and every year thereafter, the site shall meet all applicable Tier 2 requirements to renew and maintain certification.
- 3.1.2.3 To maintain certification, the site shall undergo annual audits and demonstrate continued conformity with the Standard.

3.1.3 At any time, a site can opt to meet Trailblazer requirements that allow it to achieve recognition under one or more of the following Trailblazer categories, which promote best practices and behavioral change:

- 8.7 Natural Habitat and Biodiversity Impacts
- 8.8 Nature Based Solutions
- 8.9 Innovative Technologies
- 8.10 Water Circularity
- 8.11 Net-Zero Water Use
- 8.12 Net-Positive Water Use
- 8.13 Water Quality Improvement
- 9.3 Community Engagement

**Table 1. Conformance Requirements**

	Initial Audit (Year 0)	Surveillance Audit 1 (Year 1)	Surveillance Audit 2 (Year 2)	Recertification Audit (Year 3)
Required	Tier 1	Tier 1, and progress toward Tier 2	Tier 1, and progress toward Tier 2	Tier 1 Tier 2
Optional	Tier 2 Trailblazer	Tier 2 Trailblazer	Tier 2 Trailblazer	Trailblazer

- 3.1.4 A site shall undergo annual audits against this Standard by an SCS Standards-approved certification body according to the SCS-116 Certification Body Requirements.
- 3.1.5 To support conformance with SCS-116, the organization can petition its certification body to consider data collected for other recognized third-party certification standards.<sup>1</sup> Recognized third-party certification standards include:
- ISO 14001
  - Alliance for Water Stewardship
  - The Water Council WAVE program

## 3.2 Complaints and Appeals

- 3.2.1 An organization has the right to appeal a certification decision within 30 days of receiving the final report. Appeals shall be submitted to the certification body for evaluation and resolution.
- 3.2.2 Complaints shall be handled directly by the approved certification body. If a satisfactory resolution is not found, a complaint may be elevated to SCS Standards.

## 3.3 Language

- 3.3.1 The verb “shall” is used in criteria to indicate a requirement of the standard. The term “should” is used to indicate a recommendation. The verb “can” is used to express an ability to perform an action. The verb “may” is used to express permission to perform an action that is not a requirement but a voluntary disclosure. The verb “might” is used to express a condition that could potentially exist.

## 4. Normative References

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- SCS Standards Certification and Approval Requirements
- SCS-116 Certification Body Requirements

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<sup>1</sup> An organization may propose a third-party certification program for SCS Standards’ consideration by contacting [standards@scsstandards.org](mailto:standards@scsstandards.org) and providing a rationale for the request.



## 5. Terms and Definitions

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**Adaptation (to climate change).** The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects. (Sourced from IPCC, 2022)

**Base year.** The year (time period) used to determine the baseline.

**Baseline.** Starting point used for comparisons.

**Biodiversity.** The variability of organisms living in terrestrial, marine, and aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes they form. (Sourced from GRI 101: Biodiversity 2024)

**Claim.** Oral, written, implied, or symbolic representation, statement, or advertising or other form of communication presented to the public or buyers of products that relates to a product's environmental benefit.

**Climate Change Mitigation.** A human intervention to reduce or prevent the sources, or enhance the sinks, of greenhouse gases from human activities. (Sourced from IPCC 2022)

**Climate Change Resilience.** The capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to adapt to climate change, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, or structure. Resilience is a positive attribute when it maintains capacity for adaptation, learning and/or transformation. (Adapted from IPCC 2022)

**Climate Impacts.** The consequences of realized risks on natural and human systems, where risks result from the interactions of climate-related hazards (including extreme weather and climate events), exposure and vulnerability both to actual impact and to potential future impacts. Impacts generally refer to effects on all stakeholders such as human lives; livelihoods; health and well-being; ecosystems and species; economic, social and cultural assets; services and infrastructure. Impacts may be referred to as consequences or outcomes and can be adverse or beneficial. (Sourced from IPCC 2022)

**Commitment Statement.** A signed statement reflecting commitment from an organization's senior management to improve water stewardship and resiliency, address water-related challenges and promote responsible water use.

**Community.** Local communities, indigenous and tribal groups, municipal and regional governments, NGOs, businesses and industries, water utilities, farmers, academic and research institutions, environmental agencies, industry associations, local businesses and small enterprises, community-based organizations, water user groups, regulatory bodies, healthcare providers, residents, and homeowners.

**Context Analysis.** An examination of the current situation of an organization, strategy, program, or project with respect to its environment.



**Ecosystem:** Biotic and abiotic components linked together through nutrient cycles and energy flows. Ecosystems are defined by the network of interactions among organisms, and between organisms and their environment, they can be of any size but usually encompass specific, limited spaces.

**Effluent.** Water or wastewater discharged from a site after being used, excluding drainage and runoff. The quality of effluent may range from good to polluted, depending on its origin, use, and treatments applied.

**Freshwater.** Water that is naturally occurring on the Earth's surface in ice sheets, ice caps, glaciers, icebergs, bogs, ponds, lakes, rivers, and streams, and has a low concentration of dissolved solids. Includes surface water, rainwater, water from wetlands, rivers, and lakes.

**Groundwater.** Water which is being held in, and that can be recovered from, an underground formation. (Sourced from ISO 14046:2014)

**Water-related Infrastructure.** The network of physical structures, systems, and facilities designed to manage the abstraction, treatment, distribution, and disposal of water resources within the system boundary.

**Innovative Technology.** New or improved technology, tool, system, or process that brings about significant advancements or breakthroughs (e.g., Internet of Things (IoT) monitoring, artificial intelligence, satellite monitoring, desalination, nanoparticle water filtration).

**Nature-based Solution.** Actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural and modified ecosystems in ways that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, to provide both human well-being and biodiversity benefits. (Sourced from IUCN, 2016)

**Net-Positive Water.** An increase in water availability due to higher water replenishment than water consumption. Net-positive targets, goals, and projects should address relevant challenges specific to the location of a site (facility), taking into consideration both water quality and access. (Adapted from WWF Guidance Note, 2022)

**Net-Zero Water.** Limiting the consumption of water resources and returning it back to the same watershed so as not to deplete the resources of that region in quantity or quality over the course of the year. (Sourced from US EPA: Net Zero Concepts and Definitions)

**Offsite Shipment.** Water that is shipped offsite for treatment through any means other than a municipal sewage system.

**Organization.** In this Standard, refers to the entity that owns or manages a certified site.

**Product.** An item with defined materials, function, and styles.

**Quality Management System (QMS).** A set of policies, processes and procedures required for planning and execution (production/development/service) in the core business area of an organization (i.e., areas that can impact the organization's ability to meet customer requirements. (Sourced from ISO 9001)

**Recirculated Water.** Water that is used in a closed-loop system, or that exits the closed-loop system when it evaporates, is flushed/cleaned or is used/consumed. (Adapted from Epic Cleantec)

**Records.** Any information in written, visual, or electronic form that documents the activities undertaken by an organization to demonstrate conformance with this Standard.

**Recycled Water.** A water resource derived from the treatment and purification of wastewater. Recycled water meets stringent safety and quality standards, and is suitable for various applications, including irrigation, industrial use, and even potable purposes, contributing to water conservation, reducing environmental impact, and supporting sustainable water management practices. (Adapted from Epic Cleantec)

**Risk.** The potential for consequences where something of value is at stake and where the outcome is uncertain, recognizing the diversity of values. In the context of climate change and water risk impacts, risks (physical, regulatory, reputational) resulting from dynamic interactions between climate-related hazards with the exposure and vulnerability of the affected human or ecological system to the hazards. (Sourced from IPCC 2014, IPCC 2022)

**Shared Water Issues.** Issues of interest or concern to both the site and to relevant stakeholders.

**Site.** A named facility, factory, plant, or farm within a specific geographical location with defined boundaries (“inside the fence”) that encompass physical features, operational activities, and functional areas such as parking and storage areas. In this Standard, the site is the subject of certification.

**Stakeholders.** Individuals, groups, or entities who are directly or indirectly affected by actions taken by the site, or whose actions can affect the site in return. Examples include customers, workers, partners, contractors, suppliers, etc.

**Surface Water.** Any body of water found above ground, including streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, reservoirs, creeks, and the ocean.

**System Boundary:** Boundary based on a set of criteria that establish the unit processes that are a part of the system under study.

Note: In this Standard, the system boundary is synonymous with the site’s boundary but may be expanded to achieve certain trailblazer recognition.

**Traditional Wastewater.** Water that is discharged to a municipal water treatment plant through municipal sewage system.

**Utility Water.** Water provided by any private water company, a municipality or other public entity.

**Waste.** Anything for which the generator or holder has no further use, and which is discarded or is released to the environment. (Sourced from ISO 14021:2016)

**Wastewater.** The sum of effluents, used water, and unused water released to surface water, groundwater, seawater, or a third party, for which the organization has no further use. (Sourced from GRI 303:2018)

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).** Strategies to ensure safe and sufficient freshwater for drinking, food preparation, and washing, and the provision of hygienic washing and toilet facilities to combat the spread of water-related illnesses and diseases.

**Water Balance.** Result of an analysis of the withdrawals and discharges of water within a specific system boundary over a defined period of time.

**Water Circularity.** Maximizing environmental benefits by reducing over-consumption of water, preserving and enhancing the natural environment, improving the quality of wastewater, and ensuring minimum disruption to natural water systems from human interaction and use.

**Water Consumption.** The total water withdrawal minus the total water discharged at a site over a defined period of time that has been incorporated into products, used in the production of crops or generated as waste, has evaporated, transpired, or been consumed by humans or livestock, or is polluted to the point of being unusable by other users, and is therefore not discharged back to surface water, groundwater, seawater, or a third party over the course of the annual reporting period. (Adapted from GRI)

**Water Demand.** The quantity of water required for various needs over a given period as conditioned by economic, environmental, and/or social factors.

**Water Discharge.** Water effluents discharged to subsurface waters, surface waters or sewers that lead to rivers, oceans, lake, wetlands, treatment facilities, and groundwater.

**Water Efficiency.** Optimization of water consumption for an equivalent purpose or volume of production (for example, using less water to produce the same amount or weight of final product.)

**Water Quality.** The physical, chemical, biological, and organoleptic (taste-related) properties of water. (Sourced from CDP Water Security, 2022)

**Water Resiliency.** The ability of water systems, including natural and human-made infrastructure, to withstand, adapt to, and recover from various challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, and other disruptions. It encompasses the capacity to provide safe, reliable water supply and wastewater treatment services under both normal and adverse conditions.

**Water Scarcity.** The situation where there is an inadequate supply of water to meet the demands of a particular region or population.

**Water Stewardship.** The responsible management and conservation of water resources. Water stewardship encompasses a holistic approach that considers social, environmental, and economic factors as well as stakeholders in water management decisions.

**Water Stewardship and Resiliency Policy.** A set of guidelines that outline an organization's plan for addressing water-related issue(s). A policy communicates the organization's vision and values, setting out an action plan of objectives to manage impact, risk, and opportunities.

**Water Stress.** The ability, or lack thereof, to meet the human and ecological demand for water. Water stress includes water scarcity and shortage as well as water quality, ecological flows, and accessibility of water. (Adapted from The Global Compact, 2014)

**Water Targets.** Objectives an organization establishes to measure the progress related to water management initiatives. These targets are typically aligned with broader sustainability goals and aim to address various aspects of water stewardship and resiliency, including conservation, efficiency, replenishment, and social responsibility. (Sourced from Waterplan)

**Well Water.** A manmade excavation to access groundwater.

**Water Withdrawal.** The sum of all water drawn into the boundary of a site from all sources for any use over a defined period of time.

**Watershed.** A land area that channels rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams, and rivers, and eventually to outflow points such as reservoirs, bays, and the ocean. The size of a watershed (also called a drainage basin or catchment) will vary and is defined based on the geography that is most relevant to its specific area. (Adapted from NOAA & USGS)

# Certification Requirements

## 6. General

**Objective:** To set the foundation for the water stewardship and resiliency management system through responsible practices, comprehensive documentation, legal compliance, and skilled personnel

Indicator		Tier
<b>6.1 Organizational Context Analysis</b>		
Understanding of organizational context to manage and influence water management and conservation efforts		
6.1.1	The organization shall conduct a context analysis of the site and identify water-related practices in its value chain and processes that have a material impact on the environment.	1
6.1.2	The organization shall maintain up to date information.	1
<b>6.2 Statement of Commitment</b>		
Organization's commitment to water stewardship and resiliency		
6.2.1	The organization shall provide evidence of a clear water stewardship and resiliency statement of commitment from senior management. NOTE: An organization's site Water Stewardship and Resiliency Policy and Statement of Commitment may be the same document.	1
6.2.2	The organization shall allocate resources for the implementation of water stewardship and resiliency practices.	1
<b>6.3 Record Keeping</b>		
Maintaining records to facilitate transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement		
6.3.1	All relevant, documented information shall be available and suitable for internal and external uses, including audits by the approved certification body.	1
6.3.2	Documents and records shall be adequately protected and retained for 6 years.	1
6.3.3	The organization shall develop and implement a process to control and retain documentation and records.	1

Indicator		Tier
<b>6.4 Legal Obligations</b>		
Framework for mitigating potential organizational liabilities or penalties		
6.4.1	The organization shall identify and remain up to date with all relevant local, regional, state and/or federal water and wastewater regulations.	1
6.4.2	The organization shall attest that, to the best of their knowledge, the site is compliant with all applicable laws and regulations and that any previous violation has been effectively addressed.	1
<b>6.5 Personnel Competence</b>		
Requisite skills, knowledge, and qualifications to maintain conformance with this Standard		
6.5.1	The organization shall determine the competence criteria and qualifications for the person(s) responsible for maintaining conformance with this Standard.	1
6.5.2	The organization shall designate the individuals with authority at the site and organizational level to implement the Water Stewardship and Resilience Policy, including the allocation of necessary resources to meet the requirements of this Standard.	1
6.5.3	The organization shall document roles and responsibilities of personnel involved in implementing and monitoring systems required by this Standard.	1
6.5.4	The organization shall develop and implement an annual training program for personnel responsible for maintaining conformance with this Standard.	1

## 7. Water Stewardship and Resiliency Management System

**Objective:** To set up the site’s water stewardship and resiliency management system

Indicator		Tier
<b>7.1 Water Stewardship and Resiliency Policy</b>		
Commitment to improving the organization’s water stewardship and water resiliency practices		
7.1.1	The organization shall establish a Water Stewardship and Resiliency Policy relevant to the site, that defines its organizational objectives to protect the environment through ensuring climate change adaptation and environmental preservation of watersheds and ecosystems, specifically water quality, sustainable water use, and/or improved efficiency. NOTE: An organization’s site Water Stewardship and Resiliency Policy and Statement of Commitment may be the same document.	1
7.1.2	The organization shall review its Water Stewardship and Resiliency Policy annually and update it as necessary.	1
<b>7.2 System Boundaries</b>		
The geographical area and activities of the site in the scope of certification		
7.2.1	The organization shall identify and define the contiguous geographical area where the site is located.	1
7.2.2	The organization shall identify and define all operations and processes within the system boundary where water is used, extracted, or discharged. This includes all water-related infrastructure, including piping networks that are owned or managed by the site.	1
7.2.3	The organization shall identify and define in a flowchart all water-related infrastructure it controls (owns and/or manages) within the boundary of the site.	1
7.2.4	The organization shall identify the site’s water source(s), such as rivers, lakes, ground water, aquifers, or utility water supply.	1



Indicator	Tier	
<b>7.3 Risk Assessment</b> Identification, prevention, mitigation, and control of site operation impacts		
7.3.1	<p>An organization shall perform a water risk assessment and impact analysis of the site's operations that includes, at a minimum, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. All critical control points in its processes and critical limits according to local, regional, state, and federal regulations;</li> <li>b. Water scarcity/water stress (e.g., the availability of water in a specific region may be limited due to drought, increased demand, or other factors which could pose a risk to operations);</li> <li>c. Extreme weather events (e.g., flooding from stormwater and sewage overflow, disaster and emergency preparedness with early warning systems);</li> <li>d. Infrastructure decay (e.g., damage to property/facility, implementation of smart green infrastructure);</li> <li>e. Water quality issues (e.g., potential sources of pollution or contamination at the site could pose a risk such as inadequate effluent management, or a production accident could affect the suitability of water for various uses, including industrial processes and drinking water);</li> <li>f. Regulatory landscape (e.g., failure to meet local, regional, national or international water regulations could result in legal penalties or operational disruptions);</li> <li>g. Financial risk over short, medium, or long-term (e.g., associated with water scarcity, quality issues, or other water related issues);</li> <li>h. Stakeholder risk (e.g., communities might be affected by or affect the site's activities);</li> <li>i. Insufficient adaptation to climate change, e.g., infrastructure/technology to handle extreme weather events, vulnerabilities to infrastructure, assets, and people;</li> <li>j. Reputational risk (e.g., wastewater/pollution, diversion of water, accidents, which could damage the organization's reputation and may also lead to penalties); and</li> <li>k. Risks to human health and the environment (e.g., PFAS).</li> </ul>	1
7.3.2	<p>The organization shall establish a contingency and emergency response plan for any water-related incidents that may occur at the site.</p>	1
7.3.3	<p>The water risk assessment and impact analysis shall include, at a minimum, the following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identification of positive and negative impacts of business processes, activities, and dependencies on environmental assets and ecosystem;</li> <li>b. Evaluation of risks considering impact, severity, likelihood, and internal control; and</li> <li>c. Grading of risks (e.g., high, medium, low) and responses to risks (e.g., No action required; Action required; Opportunity for Improvement).</li> </ul>	1

Indicator		Tier
<b>7.4 Water Stewardship and Resiliency Targets</b>		
Establishment and attainment of organization objectives		
7.4.1	The organization shall establish measurable, local, and contextually relevant targets consistent with the objectives of its Water Stewardship and Resiliency Policy and relevant to the outcome of the risk assessment that are planned, measured, monitored, communicated, and updated at least annually.	1
7.4.2	The targets shall include performance in water withdrawal, discharge, consumption, balance, and quality (see Section 8).	1

## 8. Water Stewardship and Resiliency Practices and Performance Monitoring

**Objective:** To monitor progress against the organization’s water stewardship and resiliency targets

Indicator		Tier
<b>8.1 Methodology</b>		
Approach to measuring site performance		
8.1.1	The organization shall measure the site’s baseline water performance for each indicator as per requirements in sections 8.2-8.6.	1
8.1.2	The organization shall maintain valid and up-to-date operational permits applicable to the site’s operations and region.	1
8.1.3	The organization shall implement a monitoring system that is data-driven and evidence-based to track performance progress against its stated targets.	1
8.1.4	Each year, the organization shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Re-measure the site’s water performance baseline;</li> <li>b. Compare its updated water performance against the previous year’s performance;</li> <li>c. Demonstrate continuous efforts to improve its baseline year over year; and</li> <li>d. Demonstrate performance improvement toward meeting its established targets.</li> </ul>	2
<b>8.2 Water Withdrawal</b>		
Evaluation of water withdrawn		
8.2.1	The organization shall measure the site’s total annual volume of water withdrawal (e.g., in gallons, cubic meters) from the sources identified within its system boundary, including surface water, ground water, rainwater, and utility water supply as relevant.	1
<b>8.3 Water Discharge</b>		
Evaluation of water discharged		
8.3.1	The organization shall measure the site’s total annual volume of water discharged using the following formula: $\text{Water discharge} = \text{traditional wastewater} + \text{sanitary use wastewater} + \text{offsite shipment} + \text{industrial stormwater} + \text{surface water} + \text{effluents} + \text{other (if applicable)}$	1
<b>8.4 Water Consumption</b>		
Evaluation of water consumed		
8.4.1	The organization shall measure the site’s total annual internal water consumption using the following formula: $\text{Water consumption} = \text{Total water withdrawal} - \text{Total water discharge}$	1

Indicator		Tier
<b>8.5 Water Balance</b>		
Evaluation of water balance		
8.5.1	The organization shall measure its annual water balance for the site's operations using the following formula <sup>2</sup> : $\text{Water Balance} = \text{Water withdrawal} + \text{Storage volume} - \text{Water losses} - \text{Water discharge}$	1
<b>8.6 Water Quality</b>		
Evaluation of water quality		
8.6.1	The organization shall measure the water quality of the site's water source(s) through the Freshwater Quality Index (WQI) <sup>3</sup> or other SCS-approved tool. <sup>4</sup>	1
<b>8.7 Trailblazer: Natural Habitat and Biodiversity Impacts</b>		
Quantification and reduction of the organization's impacts on nature, local habitats, and ecosystems		
8.7.1	The organization shall expand, document, and justify its system boundary beyond the site to include relevant natural habitats, ecosystems and protected areas that are, or could be, impacted by the site's activities.	Trailblazer
8.7.2	The organization shall identify and evaluate the environmental health of the ecosystem within the system boundary to determine the baseline, considering at a minimum the following, as relevant to the system boundary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Terrestrial and aquatic habitat availability and quality;</li> <li>b. Terrestrial and aquatic habitat connectivity;</li> <li>c. Abundance and diversity of natural plant and animal species; and</li> <li>d. Resilience to disturbance and shock.</li> </ul>	Trailblazer
8.7.3	The organization shall establish measurable and relevant targets aimed at conserving and enhancing biodiversity (i.e., to halt or reverse biodiversity/nature loss).	Trailblazer
8.7.4	The organization shall allocate the resources needed (e.g., financial, personnel) to effectively address the identified habitat and biodiversity challenges.	Trailblazer
8.7.5	The organization shall implement activities to meet the targets to manage their impacts on nature and surrounding communities.	Trailblazer
8.7.6	The organization shall develop and implement a monitoring plan to track actions taken and their effectiveness against the organization's targets.	Trailblazer
8.7.7	Each year, the organization shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Compare its updated performance against the previous year's performance;</li> <li>b. Demonstrate continuous efforts to improve its baseline year over year; and</li> <li>c. Demonstrate performance improvement toward meeting its established targets.</li> </ul>	Trailblazer

<sup>2</sup> Additional variables such as recycled or recirculated water may be included in the measurement of a site's annual water balance.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/salish-sea/freshwater-quality>

<sup>4</sup> Requests for approval of other tools may be submitted to [standards@scsstandards.org](mailto:standards@scsstandards.org)

Indicator	Tier	
<b>8.8 Trailblazer: Nature-Based Solutions</b> Incorporation of natural features or processes into the built environment to promote adaptation and resilience		
8.8.1	The organization shall meet the Natural Habitat and Biodiversity Impacts Trailblazer requirements (section 8.7).	Trailblazer
8.8.2	The organization shall identify and map habitat size, type, and condition of the site to determine the baseline.	Trailblazer
8.8.3	The organization shall establish measurable and relevant targets directed to one or more of the following habitat and biodiversity challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Management and protection of designated protected areas, sustainable land use to minimize habitat destruction;</li> <li>b. Conservation efforts towards rewilding projects and species migration;</li> <li>c. Restoration of degraded ecosystems such as wetlands, forests, coral reefs; and</li> <li>d. Creation of new habitats and green infrastructure.</li> </ul>	Trailblazer
8.8.4	The organization shall identify relevant nature-based solutions to improve natural processes based on the site’s local geography, habitat, and water challenges.	Trailblazer
8.8.5	The organization shall allocate the resources needed (e.g., financial, personnel) to effectively address the implementation and maintenance of its nature-based solutions.	Trailblazer
8.8.6	The organization shall implement activities to meet its targets.	Trailblazer
8.8.7	The organization shall develop and implement a monitoring plan to track actions taken and their effectiveness against the organization’s targets.	Trailblazer
8.8.8	To maintain trailblazer recognition, each year, the organization shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Compare its updated performance against the previous year’s performance;</li> <li>b. Demonstrate continuous efforts to improve its baseline year over year; and</li> <li>c. Demonstrate performance improvement toward meeting its established targets.</li> </ul>	Trailblazer

Indicator	Tier	
<b>8.9 Trailblazer: Innovative Technologies</b> Identification and implementation of technologies to improve the organization’s water management and adaptation to climate related challenges		
8.9.1	The organization shall identify water-related (quantity or quality) technology-driven opportunities related to the site’s business processes, supply chain, value chain, and relevant stakeholders.	Trailblazer
8.9.2	The organization shall establish measurable and relevant targets that can be met through the application of technologies.	Trailblazer
8.9.3	The organization shall identify the technologies that will help meet its targets.	Trailblazer
8.9.4	The organization shall allocate the resources needed (e.g., financial, personnel) to effectively address the implementation and maintenance of the technologies.	Trailblazer
8.9.5	The organization shall implement activities to meet the targets.	Trailblazer
8.9.6	The organization shall develop and implement a monitoring plan to track actions taken and their effectiveness against the organization’s targets.	Trailblazer
8.9.7	Each year, the organization shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Compare its updated performance against the previous year’s performance;</li> <li>b. Demonstrate continuous efforts to improve its baseline year over year; and</li> <li>c. Demonstrate performance improvement toward meeting its established targets.</li> </ul>	Trailblazer
<b>8.10 Trailblazer: Water Circularity</b> Reuse, recycle, and restore water for various applications		
8.10.1	The organization shall identify water-related opportunities, whether quantity or quality focused, related to the organization’s site-specific business processes, supply chain, value chain, and relevant stakeholders.	Trailblazer
8.10.2	The organization shall set measurable and relevant targets aimed at preventing avoidable water discharge.	Trailblazer
8.10.3	The organization shall identify the circular water practice(s) that will help meet its targets.	Trailblazer
8.10.4	The organization shall allocate the resources needed (e.g., financial, personnel) to effectively implement and maintain the site’s circular water process(es).	Trailblazer
8.10.5	The organization shall implement activities to meet its targets.	Trailblazer
8.10.6	The organization shall develop and implement a monitoring plan to track actions taken and their effectiveness against the organization’s targets.	Trailblazer
8.10.7	To maintain trailblazer recognition, each year, the organization shall continue to reuse, recycle, and restore water for various applications as per 8.10.1-8.10.6.	Trailblazer

Indicator		Tier
<b>8.11 Trailblazer: Net-Zero Water Use</b>		
Minimization of local water usage toward the goal of achieving no net negative impact on water availability		
8.11.1	The organization shall identify and map water scarcity issues in the region where the site operates.	Trailblazer
8.11.2	The organization shall measure the total volume of water withdrawn and consumed at the site based on the direct water use for the site's operations.	Trailblazer
8.11.3	The organization shall allocate the resources needed (e.g., financial, personnel) to effectively address net-zero water on-site.	Trailblazer
8.11.4	The organization shall establish and implement a plan to achieve and maintain a net-zero impact on water resources at the site that includes internal and external water practices, efficient and innovative solutions, and/or alternative sources of water, to reduce dependency on local freshwater and environmental flows within watersheds where the site operates or has an impact.	Trailblazer
8.11.5	The organization shall demonstrate that the site's total water replenishment and restoration efforts balance out its water consumption and depletion – i.e., making the site's water balance net-zero. NOTE: The use of water credits is not allowed to achieve net-zero.	Trailblazer
8.11.6	To maintain trailblazer recognition, each year, the organization shall review its plan and demonstrate continued net-zero impact on water resources at the site.	Trailblazer
<b>8.12 Trailblazer: Net-Positive Water Use</b>		
Demonstration of a net positive impact on local water resources		
8.12.1	The organization shall meet the Net-Zero Water Trailblazer requirements.	Trailblazer
8.12.2	The organization shall demonstrate that the site's total water replenishment and restoration efforts exceed its water consumption and depletion at the site – i.e., making the site's water balance net positive. NOTE: The use of water credits is not allowed.	Trailblazer
8.12.3	To maintain trailblazer recognition, each year, the organization shall review its plan and demonstrate continued net-positive impact on water resources at the site.	Trailblazer



Indicator	Tier	
<b>8.13 Trailblazer: Water Quality Improvement</b> Improve the quality of wastewater effluent(s) over time and manage water quality risks associated to water discharges		
8.13.1	The organization shall identify and map sources of wastewater effluent(s).	Trailblazer
8.13.2	The organization shall measure the quality of water withdrawn at the site and the quality of the site’s wastewater effluent(s) to determine the baseline.	Trailblazer
8.13.3	The organization shall select one or more water quality indicators from the list below that are relevant to the baselined quality of water withdrawn and wastewater effluent(s), to the risks and vulnerabilities of the site’s operations, and to the local communities. Water quality indicators <sup>5</sup> shall include one or more of the following: <sup>6</sup> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Regulated contaminants: Heavy metals (lead, selenium, arsenic, manganese, Iron, chromium) phosphates, Nitrate (measured as Nitrogen), Hydrogen Sulfide, Volatile Organic Compound (VOC), Cyanide, Disinfection byproducts (DBPs);</li> <li>b. Microcontaminants: Microplastics (MPs), Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), Perchlorate;</li> <li>c. Physical/Chemical/Biological: Total dissolved solids (TDs), Total suspended solids (TSS), Water temperature, Sediment, Biological oxygen demand (BOD), Chemical oxygen demand (COD), pH;</li> <li>d. Agriculture: pesticides, herbicides, and</li> <li>e. Storm water run-off.</li> </ol>	Trailblazer
8.13.4	The organization shall implement processes and activities to increase water quality at the site.	Trailblazer
8.13.5	The organization shall allocate the resources needed (e.g., financial, personnel) to effectively address water quality improvement.	Trailblazer
8.13.6	The organization shall measure the water quality of the site’s water withdrawal and its wastewater effluent(s) and demonstrate increased water quality using the indicators selected in 8.13.3.	Trailblazer
8.13.7	To maintain trailblazer recognition, each year, the organization shall continue to monitor and improve the site’s water quality as per indicators 8.13.1-8.13.5.	Trailblazer

<sup>5</sup> These indicators shall be measured by an ISO 17025 accredited laboratory.

<sup>6</sup> Requests for other indicators to be recognized may be submitted to [standards@scsstandards.org](mailto:standards@scsstandards.org).

## 9. Stakeholder Engagement, WASH, and Community Engagement

**Objective:** To increase the organization’s transparency, inclusivity, and accountability and involve local communities

Indicator		Tier
<b>9.1 Stakeholder Engagement</b>		
Involving interested parties to ensure their perspective and feedback are considered		
9.1.1	The organization shall identify and map internal and external stakeholders who are or could be interested in the site’s activities, be impacted by the site, or have an impact on the site.	1
9.1.2	The organization shall identify existing and potential shared water issues, such as water quality or water scarcity.	1
9.1.3	The organization shall communicate its water stewardship statement of commitment and engage with stakeholders.	1
9.1.4	Each year, the organization shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Engage with stakeholders to implement or build on existing initiatives and resources, and to address shared water issues; and</li> <li>b. Maintain ongoing stakeholder engagement.</li> </ul>	2
<b>9.2 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)</b>		
Ensure access to safe and sufficient water supply, adequate sanitation, and effective hygiene practices		
9.2.1	The organization shall identify WASH issues at the site to determine the baseline.	1
9.2.2	The organization shall set relevant and measurable targets to address identified issues.	1
9.2.3	The organization shall define and implement activities to meet the targets.	1
9.2.4	The organization shall allocate the resources needed to effectively address the implementation and maintenance of the WASH activities, e.g., investing in a desalination plant, installation of hand-washing stations at the site.	1
9.2.5	Each year, the organization shall demonstrate continued improvement in WASH-related areas at the site and toward meetings its targets.	2

Indicator	Tier	
<b>9.3 Trailblazer: Community Engagement</b> Collaborative process of working with local individuals and groups to participate and influence in decisions that impact their communities		
9.3.1	The organization shall expand, document, and justify its system boundary beyond the site to include relevant neighboring communities that are, or could be, impacted by the site’s activities.	Trailblazer
9.3.2	The organization shall engage communities affected by the site’s operations (e.g., through surveys, town halls) to identify existing and potential impacts, whether positive or negative, and direct or indirect.	Trailblazer
9.3.3	Based on the identification of existing and potential impacts identified through the community consultation process, the organization shall develop a timebound action plan to address such impacts for the site.	Trailblazer
9.3.4	The organization shall allocate the resources needed (e.g., financial, personnel) to effectively address community engagement	Trailblazer
9.3.5	The organization shall implement the action plan in collaboration with the relevant communities to address the impacts identified.	Trailblazer
9.3.6	The organization shall maintain ongoing community engagement, demonstrate progress, and update its action plan at a minimum annually.	Trailblazer

## 10. Communications, Claims, and Labeling

**Objective:** To report and communicate results truthfully and transparently

Indicator		Tier
<b>10.1 Communications</b>		
Transparently communicate relevant information to interested parties		
10.1.1	The organization shall make available upon request the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Information about its water stewardship and resiliency management system, including its statement of commitment, Water Stewardship and Resiliency Policy, risk assessment, and targets; and</li> <li>b. Legal license to operate in a specific location.</li> </ol>	1
10.1.2	The organization shall make available the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Company governance structure related to the site operations, including roles and responsibilities;</li> <li>b. Overall performance in water stewardship and resiliency, including achievements, challenges, and progress towards meeting established objectives and targets;</li> <li>c. Water-related projects, technologies, and infrastructure to enhance water stewardship and resiliency practices; and</li> <li>d. Ongoing efforts toward continuous improvement in water stewardship and resiliency, including updates on initiatives, lessons learned, and future plans.</li> </ol>	1
<b>10.2 Violations</b>		
Transparently communicate regulatory violations		
10.2.1	The organization shall make available upon request any violations of water-related regulations, permits, or standards to relevant regulatory authorities and affected stakeholders.	1
10.2.2	The organization shall make available upon request details of water-related compliance violations, including causes, the extent of the non-compliance, and the actions taken or planned to remedy the situation.	1
10.2.3	The organization shall establish clear procedures and timelines for reporting and addressing water-related compliance violations, ensuring swift corrective actions to prevent reoccurrence and mitigate potential impacts on people, ecosystems, and regulatory compliance.	1

Indicator	Tier	
<b>10.3 Public Claims</b> Statements made by the organization to communicate their achievements regarding this standard		
10.3.1	Any claims made by the organization in connection with this Standard shall only be in reference to its own certification.	1
10.3.2	The organization may publicize that the evaluated site has been certified to this Standard once it has been certified by an approved certification body to meet the requisite Tier 1 and Tier 2 requirements. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Publication or distribution of a copy of its valid certificate;</li> <li>b. A basic claim that the “[SITE NAME] is certified to meet the SCS-116 Water Stewardship and Resiliency Standard”; and</li> <li>c. Any approved variation on the basic claim, e.g., “[SITE NAME] is certified by [NAME OF CERTIFICATION BODY] to the SCS-116 Certification Standard for Water Stewardship and Resiliency, demonstrating [ORGANIZATION NAME]’s commitment to responsible water practices and continuous improvement.”</li> </ul>	1
10.3.3	The organization may additionally claim that the certified site meets one or more Trailblazer designations, provided that its certification includes demonstrated conformance with the relevant trailblazer requirements.	1
10.3.4	The organization may make an on-product claim for products made at a site certified under this Standard, using an approved certification mark.	1
10.3.5	Claims and logo usage shall be reviewed and approved by the certification body.	1
10.3.6	All uses of a certification label or references to the certification on the product and in product advertising shall be conducted in conformance with applicable national and local guidelines and requirements (e.g., U.S. Federal Trade Commission).	1
10.3.7	The organization shall conform to all labeling and language requirements of the certification scheme and certification body.	1

## Appendix A. Additional References

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- AA1000 Assurance Standard V3.0
- Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) Standard V2.0 2019
- Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), Water Security, <https://www.cdp.net/en/water>
- ClimateSmart Cities Assessment Framework 2.0 (CSCAF 2.0) CSRD, [https://smartcities.gov.in/climatesmart\\_cities](https://smartcities.gov.in/climatesmart_cities)
- Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks
- EU Water Framework Directive (EUWFD) (2000/60/EC)
- European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), ESRS - 3 Water and Marine Resources, [https://www.efrag.org/Assets/Download?assetUrl=%2Fsites%2Fwebpublishing%2FSiteAssets%2FESRS%2520E3%2520Delegated-act-2023-5303-annex-1\\_en.pdf](https://www.efrag.org/Assets/Download?assetUrl=%2Fsites%2Fwebpublishing%2FSiteAssets%2FESRS%2520E3%2520Delegated-act-2023-5303-annex-1_en.pdf)
- Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards
- GRI 101: Biodiversity 2024
- GRI 303: Water and Effluents 2018
- International Capacity Development Network for Sustainable Water Management (Cap-Net), <https://cap-net.org/>
- IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management Systems
- ISO 14046:2014 Environmental management – Water footprint – Principles, requirements, and guidelines
- Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)
- NITI Aayog, Report on Water Neutrality for Indian Industry, Standardization of the definition and approach, July 2023.
- Science Based Targets (SBT) for Freshwater, <https://sciencebasedtargetsnetwork.org/our-mission/issue-hubs/water/>
- The Ceres Aqua Gauge 2011, <https://www.ceres.org/resources/tools/ceres-aqua-gauge-comprehensive-assessment-tool-evaluating-corporate-management>
- UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 19 December 2022), <https://www.cbd.int/gbf>
- UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/water-and-sanitation>
- Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), <https://tnfd.global/>
- WAVE: Water Stewardship Verified, <https://thewatercouncil.com/waterstewardship/wave/>