



Virginia Lee

## Why Water Savings Makes Sense

*The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is aiming to make water conservation a priority with the creation of its new WaterSense program. The partnership program makes it easy for consumers to save water and protect the environment by easily identifying certified water-efficient products. Stephanie Harris, managing editor of Water Quality Products, recently spoke with WaterSense's team leader, Virginia Lee, to learn more about the program.*

**Stephanie Harris:** *What is the WaterSense program and what are its objectives?*

**Virginia Lee:** WaterSense is a volunteer partnership program that was established within the EPA to work to preserve safe, drinkable water supplies for future generations. Populations are growing and water supplies have stayed the same, so we're working to increase efficiency across the country.

One of the primary tools that we created when we started this was a label to put the power into the consumer's hands to know what the most efficient products and services are and what the benefits of those are.

**Harris:** *Are new certification specifications being developed to label products as being water efficient?*

**Lee:** Yes—right now we have specifications for residential toilets and faucets. Indoors, toilets are the largest water users and probably water wasters. Those specifications are complete and there are products that are labeled and available in stores right now. Outdoors is also an issue as more and more people are installing irrigation systems in their yards and homebuilders are installing these systems in new homes as standard features, and they waste tremendous amounts of water. We are working to develop specifications for irrigation systems, but these are not finished yet.

In the mean time, we're working with the irrigation industry and the professionals that design, install and audit these systems to ensure that they are up to speed on the most water-efficient practices and products. We have labeled certification programs that they can complete and any professional who completes one of these can be a partner with us. This says to consumers that this

professional has some expertise and knowledge on water efficiency.

**Harris:** *What will the WaterSense label represent?*

**Lee:** The label represents to consumers that the product is water efficient. Also, because we know about the negative connotations associated with low-flow products, we include performance criteria in every specification that we release. The product has to meet an efficiency and performance measure because we want to make sure that the product works and saves water, otherwise they really are not efficient.

**Harris:** *How long does the process take for a product to become WaterSense certified?*

**Lee:** It depends entirely on the manufacturer and the organization that tests the product for them. We have set up a third-party certification process, and there are seven organizations that currently certify products to our specification. With toilets and faucets, for instance, those manufacturers have their products tested regularly for health and safety measures. For them it is really easy—they have their products tested anyway, now they just say, 'can you also test for WaterSense?'

**Harris:** *How can a manufacturer obtain and utilize the label?*

**Lee:** This can be done through the company's regular third-party certification agency.

**Harris:** *How will WaterSense benefit consumers—how can they utilize the program?*

**Lee:** The program gives simple, clear information from an unbiased source that a product is a good environmental choice—that it's a green product,

it saves water and it protects water resources. In addition, it helps consumers manage their utility bills.

**Harris:** *Who is the EPA WaterSense partnering with for this program?*

**Lee:** We are trying to promote the products that our partners are labeling, so for any area where we have a product specification—for instance, faucets—we invite any manufacturer of faucets to join, as well as any retailers, distributors and sellers of those products. We provide them with the tools to sell and promote those products.

Another category we have is nonprofit government organizations that have a similar interest in promoting the program—that's the promotional partner.

**Harris:** *How can an interested manufacturer become a partner?*

**Lee:** We are hoping to grow the program, but the partnerships are limited to manufacturers of those particular products that we have specifications for (i.e., toilets and faucets for right now). Those manufacturers can go to our website and sign a partnership agreement that commits them to manufacturing at least one labeled product within a year, and then it can grow from there. *wqp*

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Tech Center  
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tel: 303.779.1234  
[www.cowatercongress.org](http://www.cowatercongress.org)

### February

**12 – 14 Mountain States Ground Water Expo**  
Aquarius Casino Resort  
Laughlin, NV  
tel: 480.609.3999  
[www.mountainstatesgroundwater.com](http://www.mountainstatesgroundwater.com)

### March

**08 – 12 Pittcon Conference & Expo 2009**  
McCormick Place  
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tel: 412.825.3220  
[www.pittcon.org](http://www.pittcon.org)

**17 – 21 WQA Aquatech USA 2009 Conference & Exhibition**  
Donald E. Stephens  
Convention Center  
Chicago (Rosemont), IL  
tel: 630.505.0160  
[www.wqa.org](http://www.wqa.org)

### April

**19 – 23 NGWA 2009 Ground Water Summit**  
Hilton Tucson  
El Conquistador Resort  
Tucson, AZ  
tel: 800.551.7379  
[www.ngwa.org](http://www.ngwa.org)

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