



Tom Palkon

Greening Water Quality

The Water Quality Assn.'s (WQA) new eco-labeling initiative seeks to cut through the clutter of environmental product claims to prevent consumer confusion and promote sustainability. *Water Quality Products* Assistant Editor Kristin Muckerheide recently spoke with WQA's Tom Palkon to get the scoop.

Kristin Muckerheide: Tell us about the new eco-labeling initiative.

Tom Palkon: The Water Quality Assn. currently is developing an eco-labeling product certification program for consumer and residential water treatment products. This program will include standards with credible metrics for evaluating the sustainability of a product, enable consumers to easily differentiate between products and provide the industry with an eco-labeling product certification program.

The standards encompass the three pillars of sustainability by evaluating social, economic and environmental impacts. To participate in the program, companies will first have to pass [a] sustainable management standard, which evaluates corporate policy and responsibility toward the environment.

Beneath the management component of the program will be sustainability standards specific to each type of drinking water treatment product. These product standards are being established through task forces [composed] of interested stakeholders. The first two product standards that were developed cover activated carbon and POU [point-of-use] filters that utilize activated carbon. Future standard development efforts will be aimed at other product categories, such as reverse osmosis systems, UV [ultraviolet] systems and distillation systems.

Muckerheide: How did this initiative come to be?

Palkon: This project began early in 2011 when the WQA board decided to take a proactive approach to addressing the sustainability of our industry's products. A task force was assembled and has been actively working under the leadership of WQA and PE Intl. Inc. & Five Winds Strategic Consulting. PE Intl. Inc. & Five Winds Strategic Consulting brings considerable expertise in the area of product sustainability, as well as practical experiences and insights for the process, based on ongoing work with other industry associations (e.g. AHAM [Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers], ICMM [International Council on Mining and Metals], etc.) in developing sustainability standards.

Muckerheide: What prompted WQA to develop an eco-labeling standard?

Palkon: WQA member companies are committed

to leadership and continuous improvement in sustainability. This effort is a vehicle for raising sustainability performance levels industry wide.

There are literally hundreds of environmental labels in the market and various environmental product claims, which have caused confusion in the market and a high predisposition to the growing problem of "green-washing." This scheme will provide market clarity and will serve to minimize spurious environmental claims.

Muckerheide: How will the eco-labeling program work?

Palkon: Certified products will be allowed to use a registered seal on labeling, signifying compliance with a multi-attribute product sustainability standard. The program will be rigorous in order to help advance sustainability within the sector. As such, the requirements for compliance will be set at a level that will challenge organizations seeking certification for their product and will continually increase in rigor with time.

Muckerheide: When will the standards be ready?

Palkon: Three standards are currently going through pilot testing: a sustainable management systems standard; a sustainability standard for activated carbon; and a sustainability standard for POU water filtration systems that utilize activated carbon.

Pilot testing is on track for completion by the fourth quarter of 2012. After pilot testing, the task force may make additional changes to the standards, or decide to move immediately toward implementation.

Muckerheide: How can WQA members participate in the standards development process?

Palkon: Interested parties should contact [me] at tpalkon@wqa.org or Eric Yeggy at eyeggy@wqa.org.

Tom Palkon is director of product certification for the Water Quality Assn. Palkon can be reached at tpalkon@wqa.org or 630.505.0160.

Kristin Muckerheide is assistant editor for *Water Quality Products*. For more information, contact *WQP* at wqpeditor@sgcmail.com.

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Pilot Test of Electrochemical Demineralization Standard Complete

The Water Quality Assn. (WQA) began organizing a task force to draft a performance standard for electrochemical demineralization systems late last year. The task force recently completed its standard development work, and WQA is now preparing to pilot test the standard.

Microbial Assessment Guidance Announced

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service announced



the first Microbial Risk Assessment guideline. This new guideline will improve the quality of data collected by public health scientists charged with protecting Americans from pathogen-related risks in food and water.

NGWREF Campaign to Fund Groundwater Projects

The National Ground Water Research and Educational Foundation (NGWREF) launched a fundraising campaign to underwrite national and international groundwater projects. The foundation's goal is to raise at least \$3 million over the next 18 months, with 100% of funds raised going to foundation programs.

Third Edition of UV Guidelines Provides Updated Protocol

The National Water Research Institute announced the publication of the third edition of the "Ultraviolet Disinfection Guidelines for Drinking Water and Water Reuse" at the International Ultraviolet Assn. 2012 Americas Conference. These guidelines provide regulatory agencies and utilities across the country with a common basis for evaluating and implementing UV disinfection.



Fracking Poses Substantial Water Pollution Risks, Analysts Say

Risk analysts from Stony Brook University concluded that the disposal of contaminated wastewater from hydraulic fracturing (fracking) wells producing natural gas in the Marcellus Shale region poses a substantial potential risk of water pollution. Analysts say regulators and others should consider additional mandatory steps to reduce the potential of drinking water contamination from salts and naturally occurring radioactive materials. *wqp*

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