

# Water Stewardship Research: Current Perspectives and Approaches



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## Research Context

Following the success of Our 2050 World's action in net zero governance (including **ISO's Net Zero Guidelines, IWA 42: 2022**), BSI is considering launching a further **ambitious collaboration** designed to rally leadership and support from businesses, cities, regions, and investors for a **'water secure' world**. Per the approach to net zero, our strategy would be one which positions **standards** at the heart of the global transition to water security by **driving alignment, signposting to existing best practice** and ensuring that water is represented within the **international standards system**.

Addressing the world's water crisis through **improved water security** and **good water stewardship** is a **global priority** (as evidenced by Goal 6 of the UN's SDGs: 'to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all'). Yet it is our hypothesis that, despite several good initiatives and voluntary standards, there is a need for a new international standard at the enterprise level to address a **lack of consensus over approaches to water stewardship** and the definitions of specific elements of water stewardship plans (such as water positive) which currently risk **confusion**.

## Research Overview

Against this backdrop, we have commissioned a leading centre for independent social research, the **National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)** alongside **Water Foundry**, a global water strategy consultancy, to test our hypothesis. More specifically, to understand:

- 1) **Current approaches** to water stewardship and **challenges to reaching consensus**
- 2) The **enablers and barriers to understanding** and **implementing** water stewardship approaches
- 3) The **current landscape of water stewardship measurements** and **initiatives**
- 4) The **(potential) role of international standards** to **improve water stewardship**

## Research Approach

Research approach comprising **three simultaneous phases**, specifically:

- 1) Up-to-date **literature review** featuring 15 x recently published studies across a wide range of journal papers, reports, and case studies, which will include perspectives from the global south and marginalised groups
- 2) **15 x stakeholder interviews** amongst global corporations, NGOs / charities, and international standards development organizations, including across those based in the global north and south
- 3) **Mapping exercise** to establish the current landscape of water stewardship standards, initiatives, and guidance, including identification of provider organizations, the specifics of their approaches, target audience, adoption, and similarities and differences between approaches

## Current Status

- **Literature review:** identification of sources complete; review in progress
- **Stakeholder interviews:** approaches made to an initial set of interviewees; arranging / booking in interviews in progress
- **Mapping exercise:** initial identification of water stewardship standards, initiatives, and guidance in progress

## Timings

- At the time of writing, all research phases due to be complete by the end of **October 2023**
- **A report** (which brings together the literature review and stakeholder interviews into an overall narrative) will be made publicly available on the Our 2050 World website and various other channels at the earliest opportunity after
- The **standards development process** will begin should the research identify the need for a standards deliverable (of any type)

## Further Information

If you would like to find out more about the research or to get involved, we would love to hear from you. Please contact either:

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