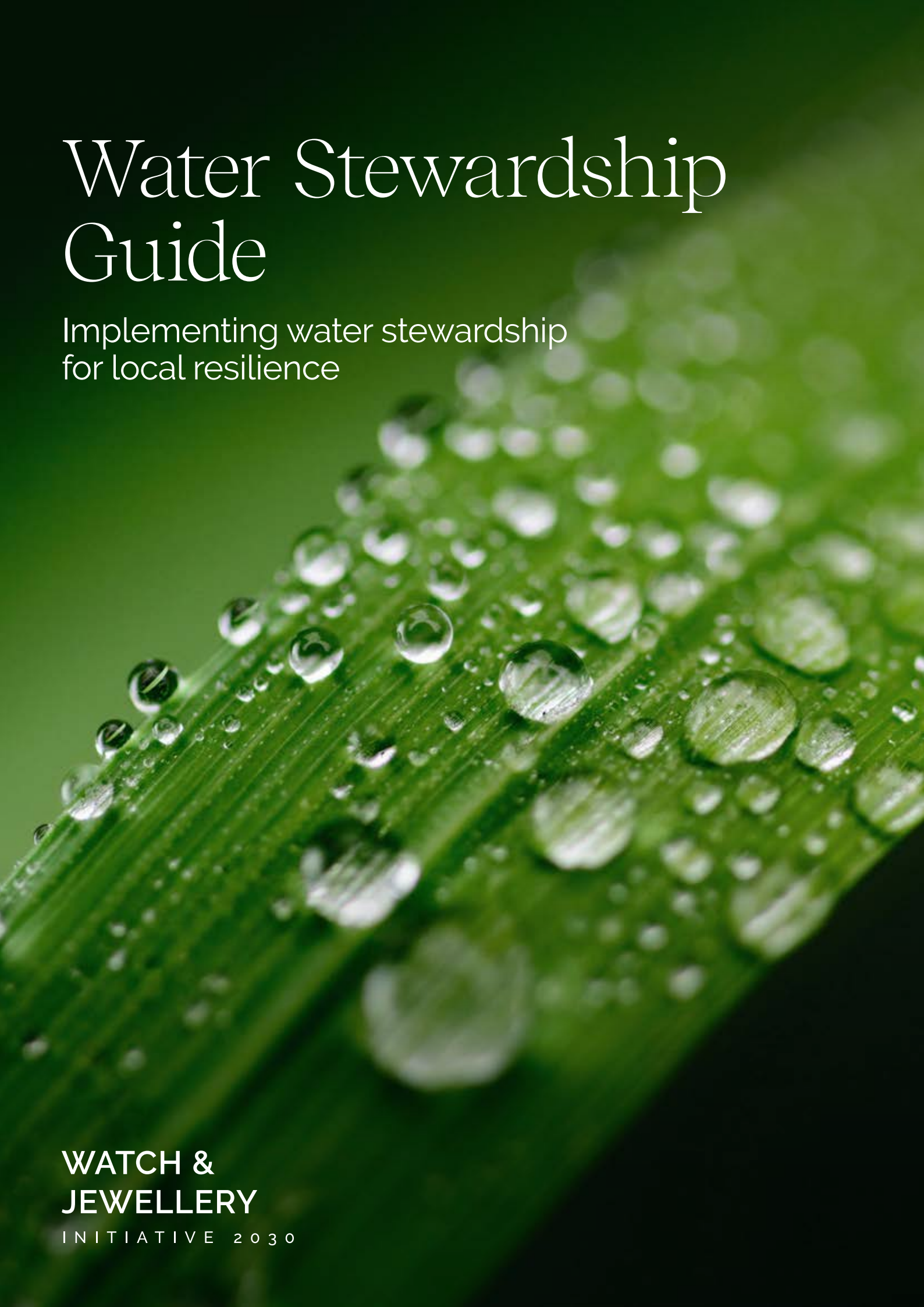

Water Stewardship Guide

Implementing water stewardship for local resilience

WATCH & JEWELLERY
INITIATIVE 2030

Quantis
A BCG COMPANY

Prepared in collaboration with Quantis
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Contents

Foreword

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Water is one of the most precious resources we share, and one of the most endangered. Around the world, water scarcity, pollution, and weak governance are deepening at an alarming pace, affecting ecosystems, communities, and economies alike. Every step of our industry's value chain, from mining in Botswana and Angola to gold refining in India and Latin America, relies on stable and healthy freshwater systems, many of which are already under severe stress.

For the Watch & Jewellery Initiative 2030, water stewardship is not an isolated environmental topic. It is central to our mission of preserving resources, fostering inclusiveness, and securing resilience for generations to come, much like the commitments laid out in our Nature Roadmap. Water is where climate, nature, and social equity converge. When water is mismanaged, it is often the most vulnerable communities, who bear the greatest burden.

Water stewardship builds resilience. For companies, it reduces operational disruption and strengthens long-term competitiveness. For communities, it enhances access, fairness, and safety. For ecosystems, it supports recovery at a time when freshwater species and habitats are declining faster than any other biome on Earth. Implementing this guidance is therefore a direct contribution to stabilizing key planetary boundaries.

As with all WJI 2030 resources, this guidance is part of a collective journey. No company can solve basin-level challenges alone. But together, through shared learning, coordinated supplier engagement, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, we can achieve the depth and scale of transformation needed.

I encourage all companies to implement this guidance in the locations identified as high-risk within your Nature Roadmap. Start where you are. Take the first step to move from water management to water stewardship. Together, we can ensure that the story of water in our sector becomes not one of risk, scarcity, or inequity, but a story of regeneration, collaboration, and resilience.

Water Stewardship Assessment Tool

The Water Stewardship Assessment tool is designed to support watch and jewellery manufacturing sites in developing Water Stewardship Plans that address their specific water-related risks and challenges. The goal is to help each facility build resilience and contribute positively to the health of the water basin in which it operates.

In using this tool, site managers will build an understanding of their exposure to water-related risks, the context of the basin their site is located in, identify other relevant stakeholders at the level of the basin as well as their water-related challenges, and ultimately be able to build a site-specific Water Stewardship Plan to respond to local water challenges.

XLS

DOWNLOAD EXCEL TOOL

This guide, as well as the supporting assessment tool, is a living document. WJI 2030 strives to update all materials annually to ensure they remain relevant and fit for purpose, incorporating all feedback received from users.

For any feedback or questions, please email insight@wjinitiative2030.org

1. The Business Case for Water Stewardship

1.1. Global outlook and drivers

Water is fundamentally a local issue.

Its availability, quality and governance vary greatly between regions, yet water challenges are increasingly pervasive across all geographies. Around the world, increasing demand and a changing climate are placing immense pressure on freshwater resources. Already, 4 billion people experience severe water scarcity for at least one month each year[1], and more than 2.2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water services[2] with profound implications for public health, productivity, education, and gender equality.

Water and climate are inseparable.

Water is the primary medium through which climate change is felt. Each degree of warming intensifies floods, droughts and changing precipitation patterns, disrupting communities and industries alike. 90% of climate-related disasters are water-linked[3], from storms and floods to droughts and wildfires. Freshwater ecosystems such as wetlands, lakes and rivers play a critical role in regulating these impacts, but they are deteriorating faster than any other ecosystem type. The Living Planet Report[4] shows that freshwater wildlife populations have declined by 85% since 1970, a clear signal of ecosystem collapse.

Overconsumption and pollution are accelerating the crisis.

Growing demand and inefficient use have pushed many basins beyond sustainable limits. Meanwhile, 80% of wastewater is released untreated[5], polluting rivers and aquifers. Intensive agriculture and industrial discharges degrade water quality, reducing the amount of clean water available for people, ecosystems, and business operations alike. The result is a vicious cycle where scarcity drives over-abstraction, which worsens ecosystem decline and heightens competition for remaining resources.

Water is affecting companies' balance sheets.

An estimated US $301 billion of business value is at risk globally due to water scarcity, pollution and climate change[6]. Shortages or poor-quality water can interrupt production, disrupt supply chains, and raise costs; contamination or inequitable use can trigger regulatory, community and reputational backlash. For manufacturers, maintaining the required water quality is essential as untreated wastewater can cause environmental degradation and disease, while high-quality treatment safeguards ecosystems and communities.

Effective water governance is key to ensure equitable water allocation among users.

Weak or absent water governance results in unpredictable operating environments, conflict among users and heightened reputational risk. Pollution or depletion of shared water sources can undermine local fisheries, affect food security and erode livelihoods, particularly in vulnerable communities. Lack of access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene leads to lost working days, health impacts and setbacks in education and gender equality.

Water and Nature

Nature, as defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), includes both biodiversity and the ecosystems and natural processes that sustain life, of which water is a fundamental part. Freshwater ecosystems and the water cycle shape habitats, regulate climate, and support species. In essence, water forms a fundamental, and instrumental part, of the wider nature agenda.

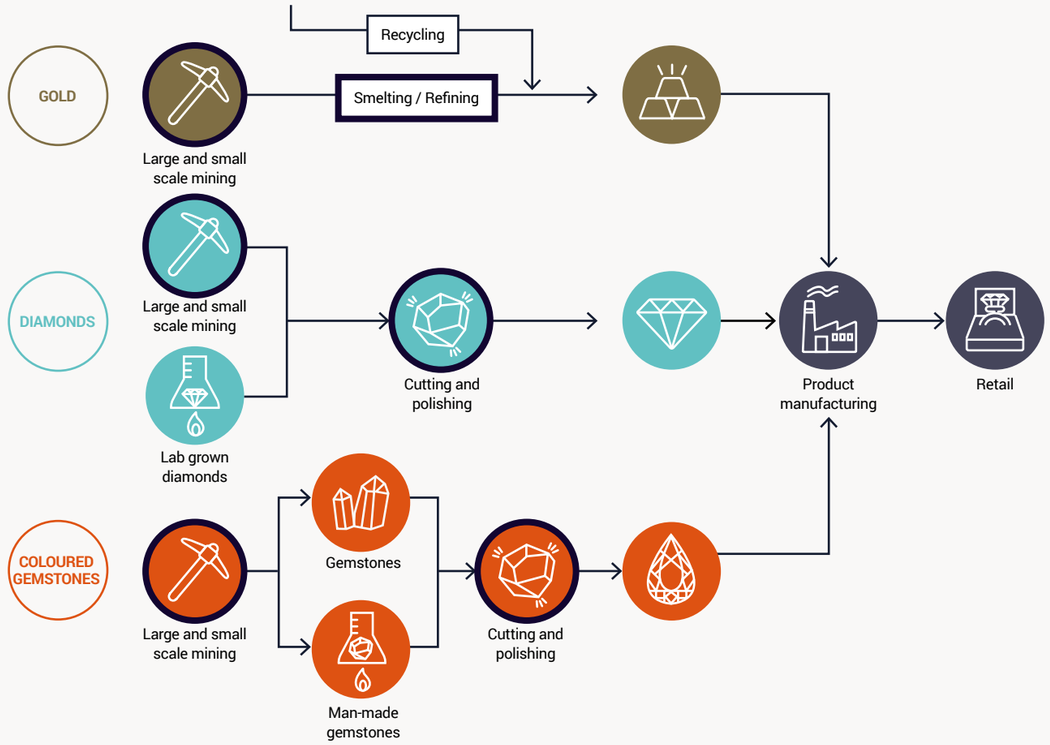
1.2. Water in the Watch & Jewellery Industry

1.2.1. Water-related impacts and dependencies

The global watch and jewellery sector is **heavily dependent on water; at the same time, the sector drives significant impacts on water resources**.

Precious metals such as gold and silver, as well as diamonds, are the foundation of the industry's value chains. Their extraction and processing are highly water-intensive and often linked to severe ecological and social consequences.

A simplified jewellery supply chain



WJI 2030 (Adapted from BSR)

Watches and Jewellery production heavily relies on water for notably:

Quantis (2025)

Gold mining

The WJI 2030 Nature Roadmap[7] notes that more than 45% of the world's gold consumption is used in jewellery manufacture. Gold mining contributes to land use change, ecosystem fragmentation deforestation, soil and water pollution, and creates significant pressures on biodiversity. These impacts extend beyond the environment and generate human health risks for communities living in mining regions. Exposure to toxic substances like mercury and cyanide contaminates local water bodies, affecting food security and livelihoods. For example, in Brazil and neighbouring countries, artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASM) has been directly linked to mercury poisoning in rivers, impacting both ecosystems and Indigenous communities[8].
In this context, watch and jewellery brands lacking traceability of their gold sourcing expose themselves to significant levels of reputational risk.

Diamond mining

Diamond mining is equally water intensive. Large-scale open-pit and alluvial mining operations in Botswana, South Africa, and Angola consume significant volumes of water for ore processing, cooling machinery, and suppressing dust. Beyond consumption, these operations often disrupt groundwater flows and create tailings ponds that pose risks of seepage into freshwater systems. The environmental consequences include habitat destruction and reduced water availability for nearby rural populations who rely on rivers and wetlands.

Mining also depends on water-related ecosystem services to remain functional. As the **WJI 2030 Nature Roadmap** explains, healthy ecosystems regulate floods, storms, and landslides – all of which can devastate mining infrastructure. ASM sites rely on local vegetation to stabilize shafts and reduce risks of collapses. When these natural stabilizers are removed, miners face increased risks of accidents and fatalities.[9]

Leather production

Leather production also carries significant water impacts. Cattle farming requires substantial water for feed and is often located in regions already facing water stress. Tanning processes use large water volumes and can release pollutants such as chromium and sulphides when wastewater is not properly treated. In major leather hubs – which can be found for example in parts of India, Brazil, and Italy – these discharges have contributed to the contamination of local rivers, affecting ecosystems and nearby communities' health and livelihoods.

1.2.2. Water risk exposure of the industry & water-related opportunities

Water-related risks translate directly into business risks: operational shutdowns, supply disruptions, reputational damage, and increased costs for water treatment and compliance. According to the WEF Global Risks Report[10], extreme weather events, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, strongly linked to water risks, have been identified as the two global threats over the next decade. For watchmaking, which often sources raw materials from high-risk basins, the potential and actual financial implications are profound. Investors and regulators increasingly demand evidence that companies are actively managing these dependencies. Failure to act can erode consumer trust and investor confidence. This also means that a diversity of business opportunities emerges from such challenges such as operational resilience, costs avoidance, competitive advantage and improved productivity.

Water risks in the watch and jewellery industry are systemic — affecting every step of the value chain from raw material extraction to manufacturing and refining. These risks can be grouped into three main categories: physical, regulatory and reputational, and financial and strategic.

1. Physical Risks

Physical risks arise where operations or suppliers depend on basins facing high levels of water stress (leading to droughts), floods or declining quality.

- ***Example:*** *In Botswana, diamond mines operate in semi-arid regions where groundwater depletion creates tension with nearby communities. In South Africa, droughts and acid mine drainage have disrupted gold extraction and refining. Manufacturing clusters also face risks from flooding and water contamination, which can damage infrastructure and production continuity.*

When water scarcity, pollution, or flooding restricts operations, these risks translate into higher costs, supply disruptions, and in some cases stranded assets.

Key figures[11,12]

90% of diamonds are mined in areas exposed to high or very high-water risk (e.g., Botswana, Namibia, South Africa).

90% of global gold production is sourced from regions facing medium to high water risks (e.g., Ghana, Uzbekistan, and South Africa).

90% of global silver production occurs in high-risk regions such as Mexico and Peru.

2. Regulatory and Reputational Risks

Regulatory frameworks are tightening rapidly, requiring companies to measure and disclose water withdrawals, discharges, and basin impacts.

- ***Example:*** *Over 40% of G20+ jurisdictions are introducing water-related disclosure rules[13] such as the EU CSRD with ESRS E3 on water and marine resources. Companies failing to comply may face fines, reputational damage, and loss of market access. In* ***India****, the closure of nearly 100 tanneries in Kanpur due to toxic effluent discharges[14] illustrates how poor water management can halt production and erode brand credibility. Similar incidents in refining or polishing could quickly ripple through global supply chains.*

In parallel, voluntary mechanisms such as CDP Water, the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), Science-Based Targets for Nature (SBTN) are accelerating more transparent reporting on water use, quality, and basin engagement. The combined effect of voluntary and mandatory frameworks is clear: companies must now demonstrate measurable, credible action on water.

Reputational risks on water are significant: given that water-related challenges are both caused and must be solved by multiple actors at the same time (see text box below), no one company operating or sourcing from basins exposed to water risks is safe from stakeholder challenges, and for losing their social license to operate. In a global survey of 30'000 individuals conducted by Globescan and WWF, water pollution was identified as the most serious global problem by the public, and surveyed individuals across all continents identify action on water pollution as the most important area of action for a responsible company[15]. At the same time, the share of companies putting in place actions and targets to address water pollution is still very low[16].

Implications for Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

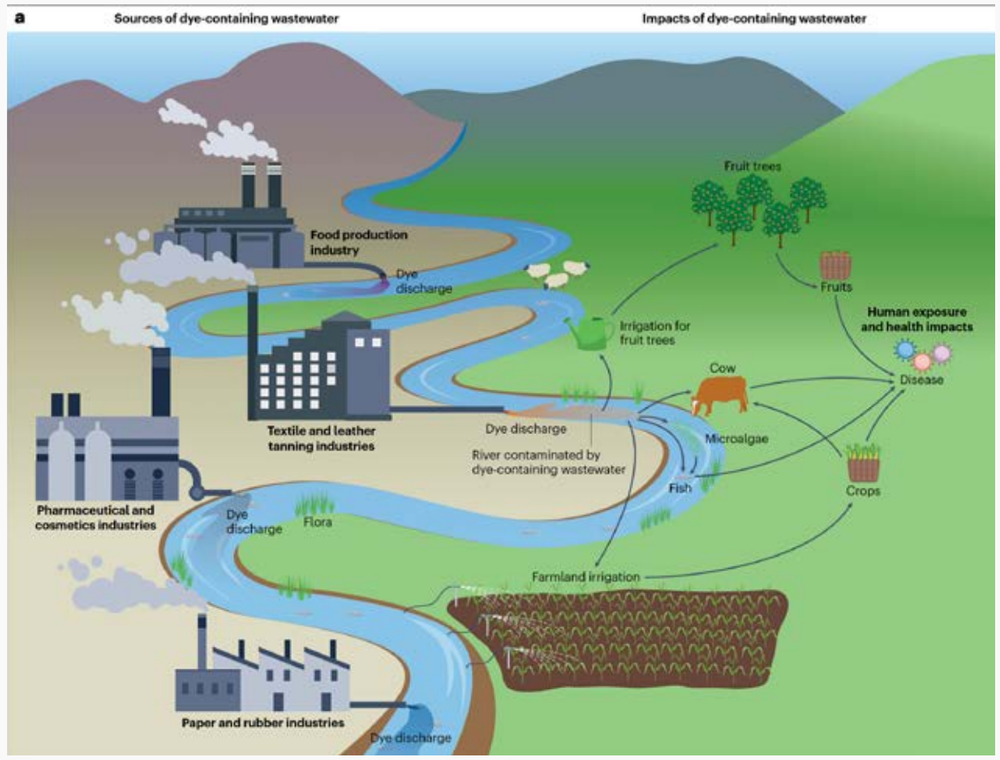
SMEs may find it challenging to align with emerging regulations, but collective industry platforms like WJI 2030 can support alignment. When in doubt, refer to your local (*HQ-based for international companies*) regulations as compliance will be required.

When regulation is not available or lacks pertinence, following international best practice frameworks is advised.

No clean fish in a dirty pond

The metaphor 'no clean fish in a dirty pond' illustrates the systemic risks of water mismanagement. When one sector discharges pollutants or abstracts excessively, the entire basin is degraded, affecting communities, industries, and ecosystems alike. For watchmaking, this implies that securing resilient water supplies cannot be achieved in isolation – it requires collective stewardship with other basin users.

Environmental impacts and remediation of dye-containing wastewater[17].



Source: Lin, J., Ye, W., Xie, M. et al. Environmental impacts and remediation of dye-containing wastewater. *Nat Rev Earth Environ* **4**, 785–803 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-023-00489-8

3. Financial and Strategic Risks

When water becomes scarce, polluted or more expensive, financial exposure grows across the value chain.

Companies that fail to integrate water security into sourcing and capital planning risk under-pricing their exposure and losing competitiveness.

- ***Example:*** *Investor frameworks are increasingly flagging water security as a material risk driver. Failure to anticipate water-related capex and opex pressures can weaken competitive positioning, limit growth opportunities (e.g., new mines, refineries, manufacturing plants) and hamper value creation.*

The opportunity of implementing Water Stewardship

As water-related physical, regulatory, and reputational risks intensify, the watch and jewellery industry has a powerful **opportunity** to transform these pressures into drivers of resilience, innovation, and brand value. For an industry reliant on long-term access to natural resources and artisanal supply chains, building basin-level resilience is not only a safeguard against disruption, but also a strategic advantage that strengthens business continuity and financial performance. Proactively mitigating water risks can reduce costs, secure access to key materials, and protect supply reliability while enhancing operational efficiency and investor confidence. Recent research by CDP backs this up: the cost of mitigating water risks is estimated to be about five times cheaper than the potential losses from materialising water risks if no actions are taken.[18]

Shifting stakeholder and consumer expectations also open new market and brand opportunities. As conscious consumption gains traction, brands can use sustainability to reinforce premium positioning aligning high quality with lower environmental impact and more deliberate purchasing behaviour.

Demonstrating measurable progress through sustainability proof points (responsible water management, certified or recycled materials, and robust animal-welfare and sourcing standards) enhances credibility.

In parallel, the growing scrutiny of sustainability claims presents a moment to elevate ethical marketing and transparent storytelling, connecting craftsmanship with care for people and planet. By communicating responsibly and investing in supplier engagement, brands can build authentic trust with consumers, regulators, and investors alike.

In this context, Water Stewardship offers a path to competitive advantage: resilient value chains, stronger stakeholder relations, and enhanced brand equity in an era where luxury is increasingly defined not just by rarity and refinement, but by responsibility.

1.3. Water within the Wider Sustainability Agenda

1.3.1. Water, Nature & Climate

How does water link to the Nature and Climate Agenda?

Water is central for the achievement of both the Nature and Climate Agendas. Water-related ecosystems such as wetlands, rivers and lakes are home to a disproportionate share of biodiversity based on their surface. Similarly, water-related ecosystems are essential for climate change adaptation and mitigation: wetlands, peatlands act as important carbon sinks, and lakes and rivers regulate local climates.

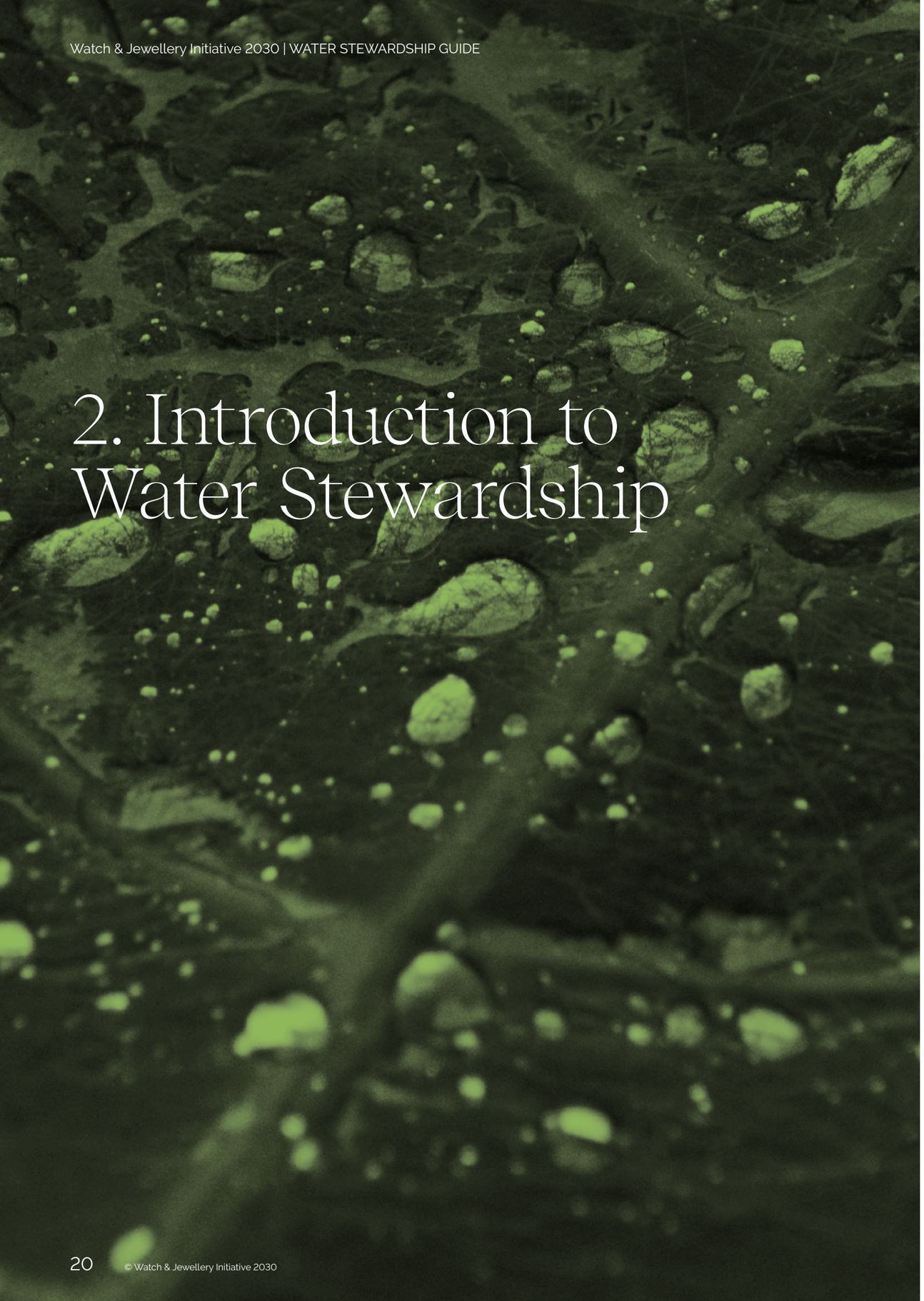
Healthy water systems are therefore essential to restoring planetary resilience. Responsible Water Stewardship helps maintain local freshwater boundaries, supports ecosystem recovery, and strengthens nature's capacity to regulate the climate.

1.3.2. Water, Human Rights & the SDGs

How is water connected to the Human Rights and Social Agenda?

Access to water is a human right and is directly linked to the realization of basic rights to health, food, and safe living conditions. When mismanaged, it undermines livelihoods and deepens inequality. Indigenous Peoples and local communities, custodians of nearly half of terrestrial lands and one-third of inland waters, must be engaged through Free, Prior and Informed Consent to safeguard freshwater systems. In mining regions such as Angola or Botswana, poor water governance has displaced communities, polluted rivers, and created competition over scarce resources.

Lack of clean water and sanitation also heightens health risks, especially for women who bear the unpaid burden of water collection. By integrating gender-responsive water actions under the Women's Empowerment Principles, companies can enhance community well-being and resource governance. Water Stewardship is also fundamental to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular through SDG 6 (access to clean water and sanitation). SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) turning environmental action into tangible social progress and advancing the WJI 2030 goals on Preserving Resources and Fostering Inclusiveness.



2. Introduction to Water Stewardship

2.1. Defining Water Stewardship

2.1.1. The concept of Water Stewardship

The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) defines water stewardship as

"the use of water that is socially and culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable, and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves both site- and catchment-based actions."

This definition underscores three central dimensions: equity, sustainability, and economic benefit, all implemented through collective engagement.

Water Management vs. Water Stewardship

Water management focuses on internal company actions: improving efficiency, compliance, and pollution control within a facility. It captures the efficient management of water to reduce dependency on these resources as much as possible.

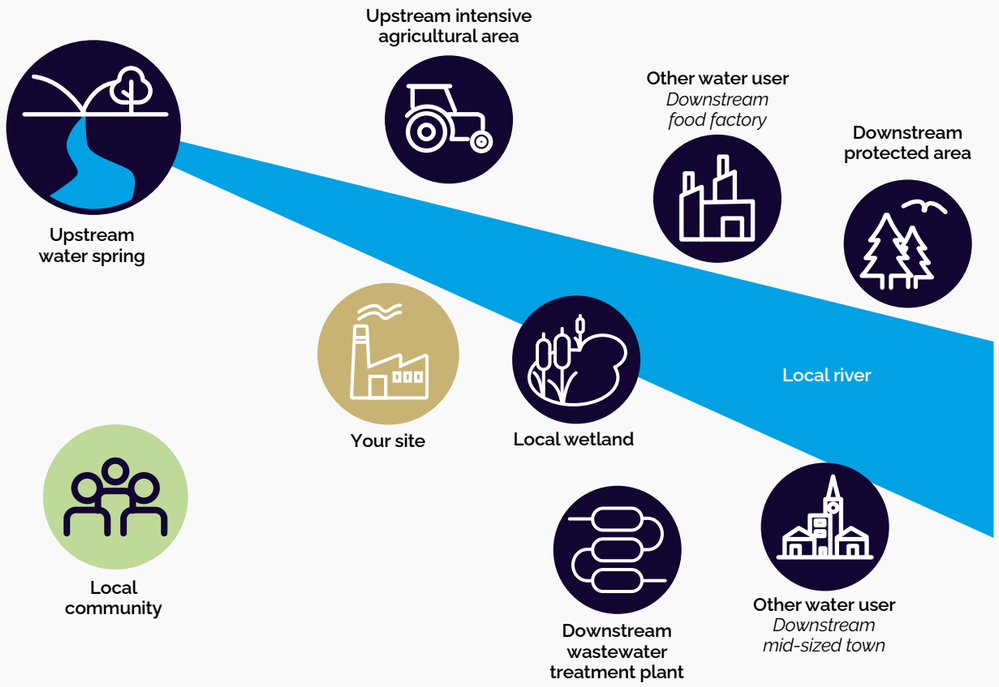
Water stewardship, by contrast, looks beyond the factory or mine gate, addressing basin-level challenges and working collaboratively to ensure water security for all users. It describes the approach of solving shared water challenges through a combined approach of water management and collective action together with other water users in the same basin.

Understanding the Water Basin

A **water basin** (or catchment[1]) is the geographical area draining into a common water body such as a river, lake, or aquifer. Basins are shared between multiple users and are the foundation for water stewardship. Actions that affect one user will often have consequences for others.

A water basin can be compared to a glass with many straws: each straw representing a water user. Sustainable water management requires all users to coordinate how much they withdraw and what they return to the system.

Illustrative river basin map



Source: Quantis

[1]For the purposes of this report, the terms of basin and catchment are used interchangeably. However, basins often represent larger geographical areas (the scale of larger policy engagement), whereas catchments represent smaller geographical areas (the scale more appropriate for project implementation).

Shared Water Challenges

Shared water challenges are those that no single actor can solve alone. They include:

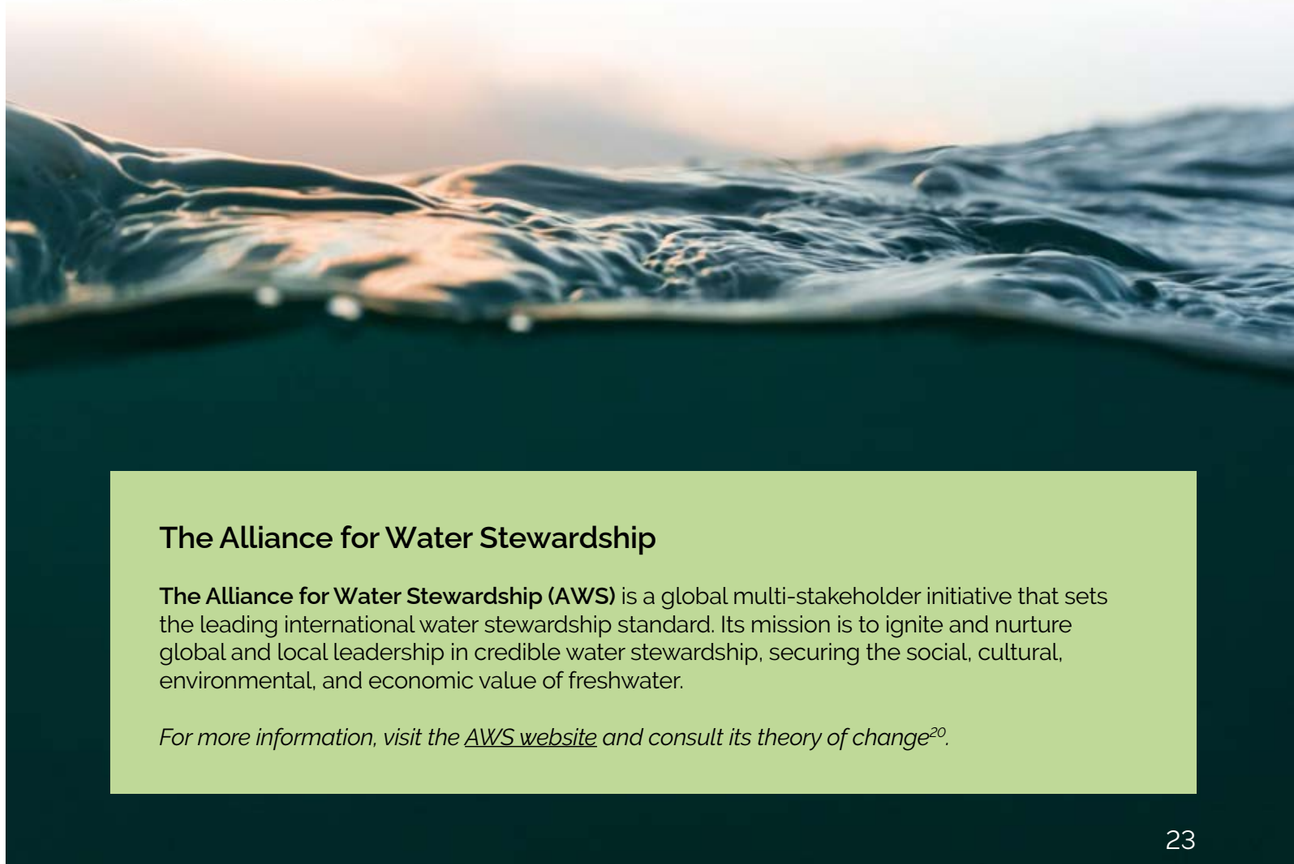
- Water scarcity and over-abstraction of surface or groundwater.
- Pollution from industrial, mining or municipal discharges.
- Flooding and poorly managed stormwater.
- Inequitable access to clean water and sanitation (WASH).
- Weak water governance and inadequate regulatory enforcement.

Addressing these challenges requires collaboration across sectors since insufficient water management practices lead to negative impacts for all water users in that basin. These cumulative pressures create system-level risks that are to be avoided.

From Commitment to Collective Action

Water stewardship requires companies to first "get their own house in order", ensuring efficient use and responsible wastewater management within their operations, then engage beyond their boundaries to contribute to basin health. Collaborative and basin-wide action among water users is essential to maintain the health and resilience of the system, ensuring all users have sufficient access to good quality water.

This WJI 2030 Water Stewardship Guidance builds on these principles and inspired by the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) standard, sets out a pathway for companies to implement Water Stewardship, as will be described in Section 3 of this document.



The Alliance for Water Stewardship

The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is a global multi-stakeholder initiative that sets the leading international water stewardship standard. Its mission is to ignite and nurture global and local leadership in credible water stewardship, securing the social, cultural, environmental, and economic value of freshwater.

For more information, visit the AWS website and consult its theory of change[20].

2.1.2. Introducing the AWS five-step improvement journey

Implementing the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS)[21] standard allows sites to move from water management to comprehensive water stewardship, combining operational action with collective basin-level engagement.

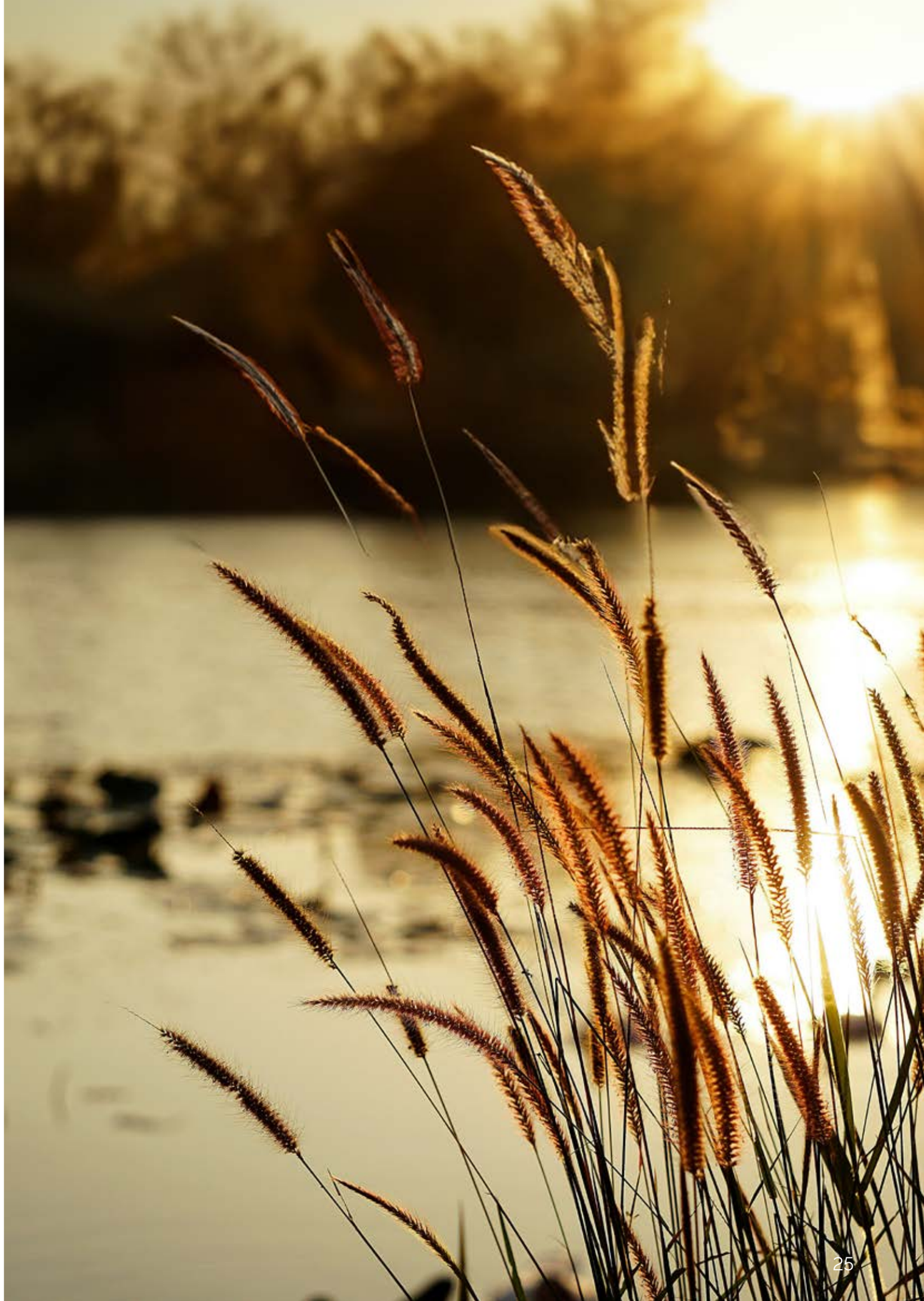
To do so, the AWS Standard is centered around a five-step continuous improvement journey:

- First, to gather and understand: collect data to understand shared water challenges and risks
- Second, to commit and plan: commit to being a responsible water steward and develop a plan
- Third, to implement: act on the water stewardship plan to improve impacts
- Fourth, to evaluate: assess performance against the plan to learn and inform future efforts
- Fifth, to communicate and disclose: share water stewardship efforts to encourage transparency and accountability.

Sites can be audited and certified against the AWS Standard. By following it, they will understand their water use and water risk exposure, catchment context and shared water challenges, plan and implement actions to improve their water balance, quality and governance, engage stakeholders to address basin-level issues and track and disclose progress transparently. Sites will also understand the links with social impact: ensuring WASH access, supporting cultural water values and promoting basin equity.

The standard provides a globally recognized framework for credible, science-based action leading to credible and independently verified claims.[ii] This will also help companies demonstrate responsible sourcing and align with CDP, Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) reporting requirements.

[ii]The AWS standard serves as international best practice on water stewardship and acts as a frame of reference for sector-specific standards and guidance. For example, the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM)'s water stewardship maturity framework is aligned with the AWS standard.



2.2. Why Water Stewardship matters for Watch & Jewellery companies

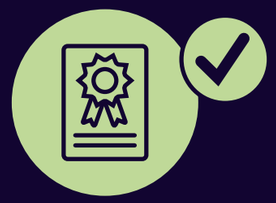
Water is essential to nearly every stage of the watch and jewellery value chain, from mining and refining precious metals to gem cutting, polishing, plating, and manufacturing. Yet, many of these activities occur in water-stressed or poorly governed basins, such as southern Africa's diamond belts, India's gold-refining clusters, and Latin America's artisanal mining regions.

For companies in this sector, advancing water stewardship is therefore both a business imperative and a moral responsibility.

Water stewardship can bring:

Operational and financial benefits:

Implementing water stewardship will contribute to driving efficiency, resilience, and cost savings. By improving water use and wastewater management, companies reduce dependency on volatile local supplies and mitigate production risks linked to droughts or regulation. Efficient water management also decreases energy use and waste-treatment expenses, reinforcing operational resilience.



A license to operate:

In high-risk basins such as Botswana's semi-arid diamond regions or Peru's artisanal gold zones, competing demands between industries and communities can trigger social tensions and regulatory scrutiny. Proactive water stewardship strengthens a company's social license to operate. It ensures compliance with evolving global standards (AWS, CSRD, TNFD) and local water regulations, protecting continuity of operations and reducing legal exposure.

Brand and ESG leadership:

In an era of heightened transparency and ESG expectations, strong water performance supports credible sustainability claims and builds consumer trust. Luxury consumers increasingly expect brands to demonstrate responsibility across their supply chains[22], particularly on environmental and social issues such as water use and human rights. Transparent disclosure through CDP Water and CSRD-aligned reporting helps companies substantiate sustainability narratives, attract responsible investors, and differentiate themselves in a competitive market.

Catchment-level and community benefits:

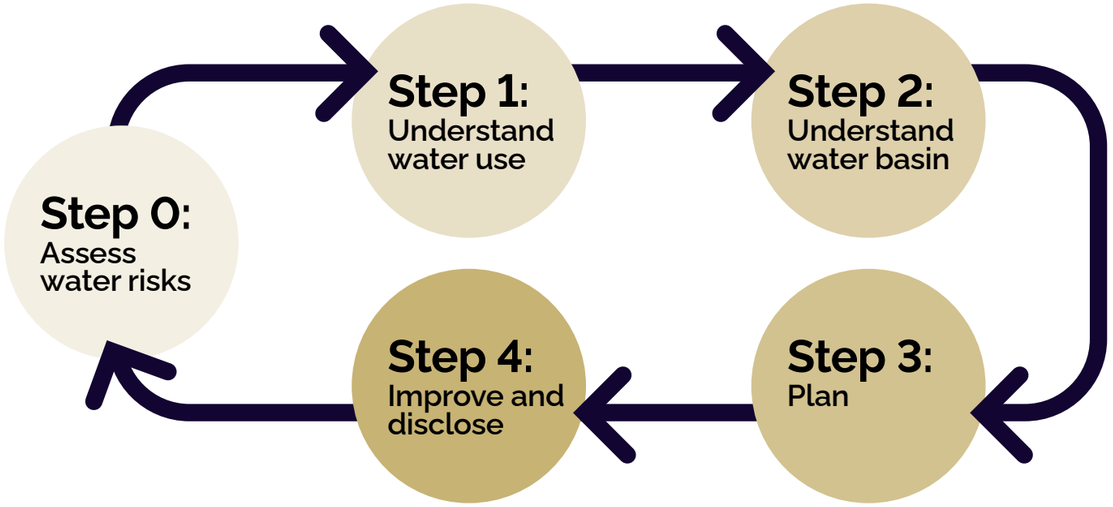
At the basin level, responsible practices (such as addressing systemic basin-wide water pollution issues, supporting local water and sanitation access projects, or restoring wetlands) enhance water quality, governance, and ecosystem resilience. These actions benefit both businesses and local communities, reducing shared risks like pollution, flooding, and scarcity. They also demonstrate alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (notably SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation) and contribute to collective resilience in regions where water is central to livelihoods.

Finally, failing to address water risks can lead to production interruptions, higher operational costs, community opposition, and reputational damage (corresponding to considerable cost of inaction).

Companies that ignore water stewardship may face exclusion from responsible sourcing frameworks or investor portfolios, and struggle to attract skilled employees seeking purpose-driven employers.

3. Implementing Water Stewardship

3.1. 5-Step Process Introduction



Implementing water stewardship is a practical, stepwise process that enables facilities to understand their relationship with water and to take meaningful action to safeguard shared resources. The process proposed by WJI 2030 follows five steps (Step 0–4) and is designed to be applied at the site or facility level, led by managers or representatives who have detailed knowledge of the site's operations and its historical water use.

This implementation pathway translates the broader ambitions of corporate sustainability commitments into local action, where water-related challenges and opportunities materialize.

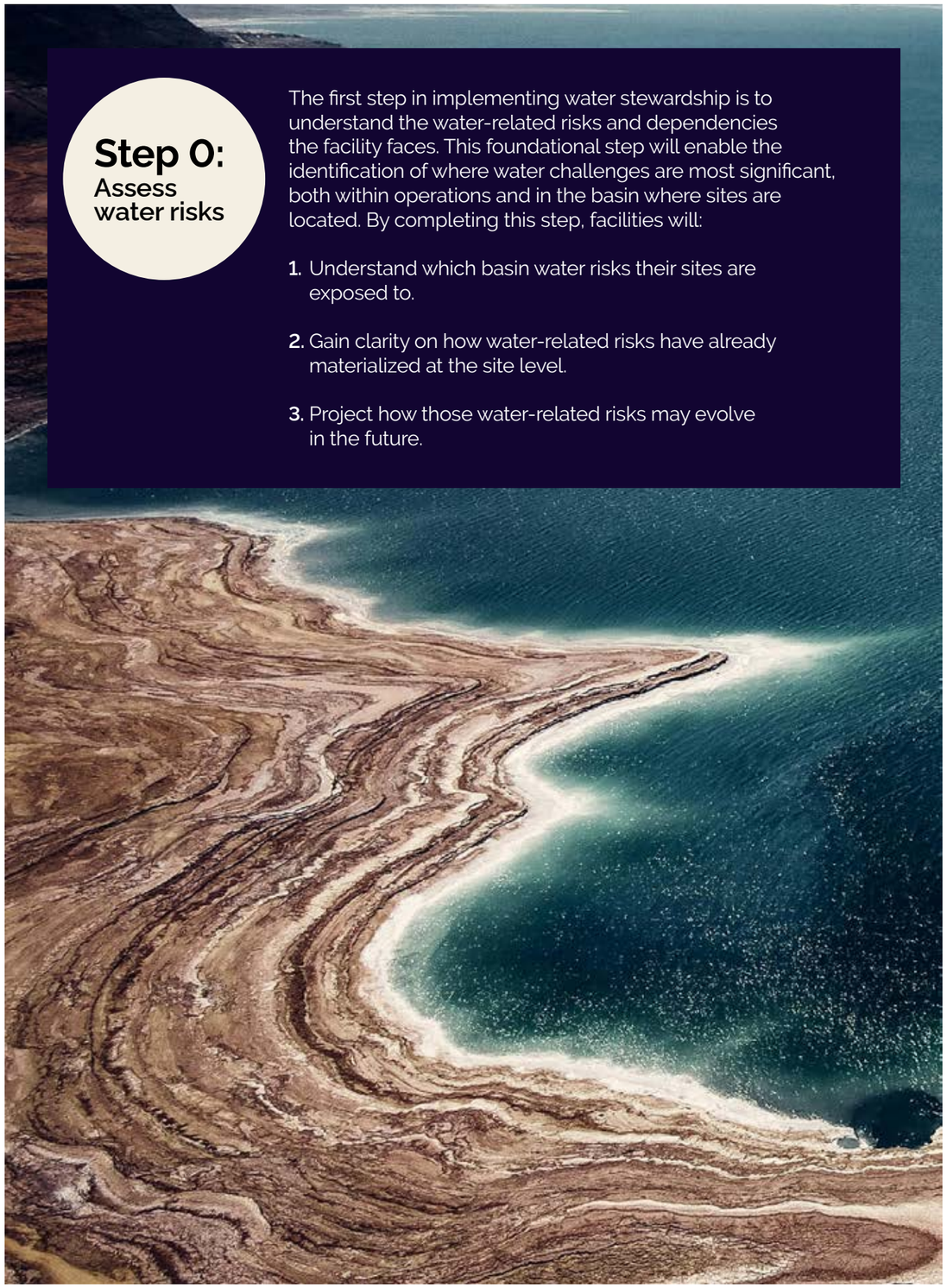
It is aligned with globally recognized frameworks such as the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) Standard, the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN) guidance on freshwater, and WWF's Water Risk Filter. These methodologies emphasize both internal management and collective action beyond the facility's boundaries.

Ultimately, the goal is to enable each site to understand its water impacts and dependencies, assess basin-level challenges, and identify clear, science-based actions to contribute to the improvement of the water basin's health. This includes strengthening water efficiency, quality management, and engagement with other users in the basin, recognizing that water is a shared resource and that collaboration is essential to long-term resilience.

Implications for Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

Some indicators and elements are more advanced and therefore optional for companies at the early stages of their water strategy.

For all, the process provides a structured framework to move progressively from awareness and assessment to concrete action, accountability and basin-level impact.



Step 0: Assess water risks

The first step in implementing water stewardship is to understand the water-related risks and dependencies the facility faces. This foundational step will enable the identification of where water challenges are most significant, both within operations and in the basin where sites are located. By completing this step, facilities will:

1. Understand which basin water risks their sites are exposed to.
2. Gain clarity on how water-related risks have already materialized at the site level.
3. Project how those water-related risks may evolve in the future.

Understanding Basin Water Risks

Water risks are deeply influenced by local conditions. Each site operates within a specific water basin, where availability, quality, and governance determine long-term sustainability. Using the WWF Water Risk Filter[23], facilities can assess the extent to which their site is exposed to physical water risks (scarcity, flooding, drought, or declining water quality) and regulatory risks (access to safe drinking water and access to sanitation).

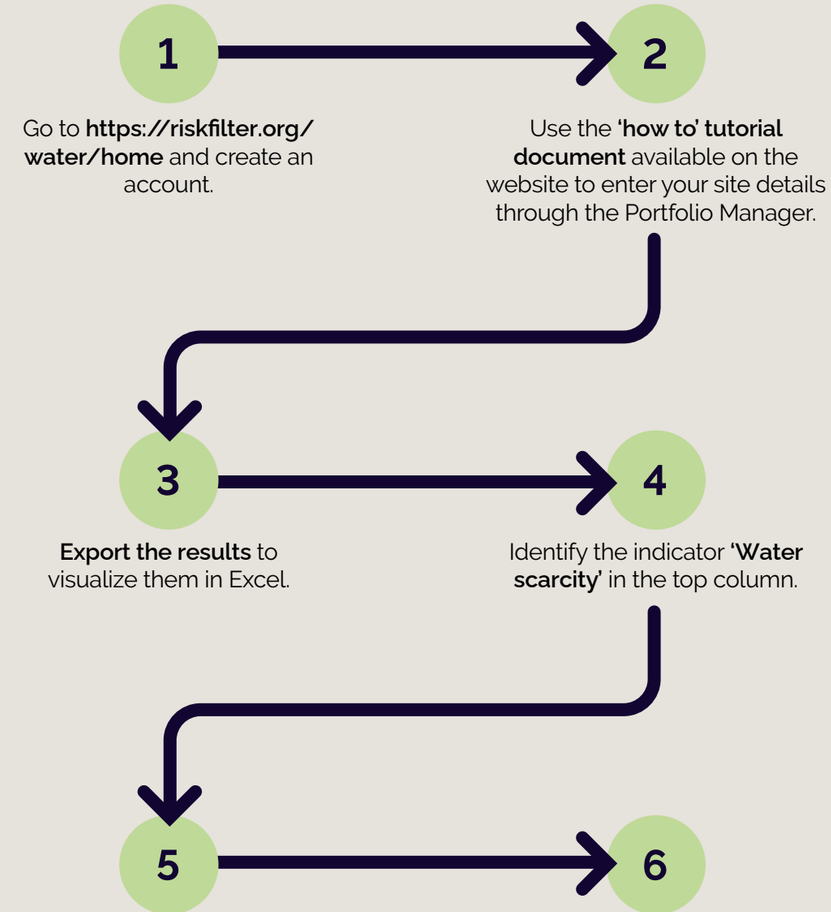
- **Basin Physical Risk** represents both natural and human-induced conditions of river basins. It includes four types of physical risks: water availability, drought, flooding, and water quality, plus the condition of ecosystem services. Physical risks occur when water is too scarce, too abundant, polluted, or when ecosystems are damaged, in turn negatively impacting water services.
- **Access to Safe Drinking Water** measures the percentage of people using at least basic water services. This indicator encompasses both people using basic water services as well as those using safely managed water services. Basic drinking water comes from improved sources—like pipes, boreholes, protected wells, or delivered water—if collection takes 30 minutes or less per trip.
- **Access to Basic Sanitation** measures the percentage of people using at least basic sanitation services, that is, improved sanitation facilities that are not shared with other households. It includes both basic and safely managed sanitation. Improved facilities include flush toilets connected to sewers or septic tanks, ventilated pit latrines, composting toilets, and latrines with slabs.
- **Water Availability** refers to how much freshwater is present in an area. Low availability can disrupt production, raise costs, or limit growth. It depends on the amount of surface and groundwater.
- **Drought** happens when there is little or no rain for a long time, causing water shortages and affecting the economy over time.
- **Flooding** occurs when water covers normally dry land, often from heavy rain, snowmelt, dam failure, or storm surges. Floods can halt operations, damage infrastructure, and disrupt supply chains.
- **Water Quality** indicates whether water is safe for people and ecosystems. Poor quality can harm health, damage ecosystems, and increase business costs or limit production.

See the specific risk category and the WWF **documentation**[24] for more details.

This analysis will help understand the baseline state of the basin and where external water-related pressures may affect operations, supply continuity, or local communities.

3. STEP 0

How to use the WWF Water Risk Filter?



Assessing Operational Water Risks

Beyond external basin factors, it is equally important to examine how water risks have materialised within a company's operations. This includes reviewing how past droughts, floods, or quality incidents have affected production, costs, or community relations.

- **Evaluate** whether the facility has faced challenges in the past three years withdrawing sufficient water of required quality for production, or experienced drought or flooding events affecting operations.
- **Identify** any significant water-related regulatory changes in the past three years (e.g., increased water tariffs, reduced permits, or stricter wastewater regulations) impacting the facility.
- **Review** any local, national, or global media coverage in the past three years linking the facility, its parent company, or the watch and jewellery sector to negative water related issues within the basin.
- **Determine** if the facility is considered a major water user or discharger compared to others within a ~50 km radius.
- **Assess** whether facility operations or nearby water users have actual or potential negative impacts on community access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).

Water Stewardship Fostering Inclusiveness

Assessing whether facility operations or neighbouring water users negatively affect community access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is both an environmental consideration and a human rights obligation.

Ensuring equitable access to water directly supports WJI 2030's third pillar, focused on promote decent working conditions and respect for human rights across their operations and supply chains, in line with ILO core conventions. By addressing water impacts and social impacts together, companies strengthen community well-being, protect workers' rights, and build more resilient value chains.

The results of this self-assessment, based on site experience, monitoring data, and stakeholder input, will reveal how exposed the facility is to both basin-level risks and how these may have materialised at the site.

This knowledge forms the foundation for setting priorities, defining actions, and engaging with stakeholders in the following steps of a water stewardship journey.

Step 1: Understand water use

Once the site's exposure to basin and operational water risks has been assessed, the next step is to understand how the facility uses water and how the management practices align with those risks. This step enables sites to gain clarity on the context of their water use: how water enters, is used, treated, and leaves the site and how effectively these processes are governed.

By completing this step, sites will be able to:

- Understand the context of water use within the facility by mapping all water-related infrastructure.
- Measure water uses across facility operations and identifies the origins of withdrawn water.
- Manage discharged water quality and identify the destinations of discharged water.
- Develop and maintain a water balance that quantifies all water flows within the facility boundary, addressing any unaccounted volumes.

Establishing a Facility Boundary Map

One of the first elements will be to develop a facility boundary map that captures the site's water-related infrastructure and its interactions with the surrounding environment.

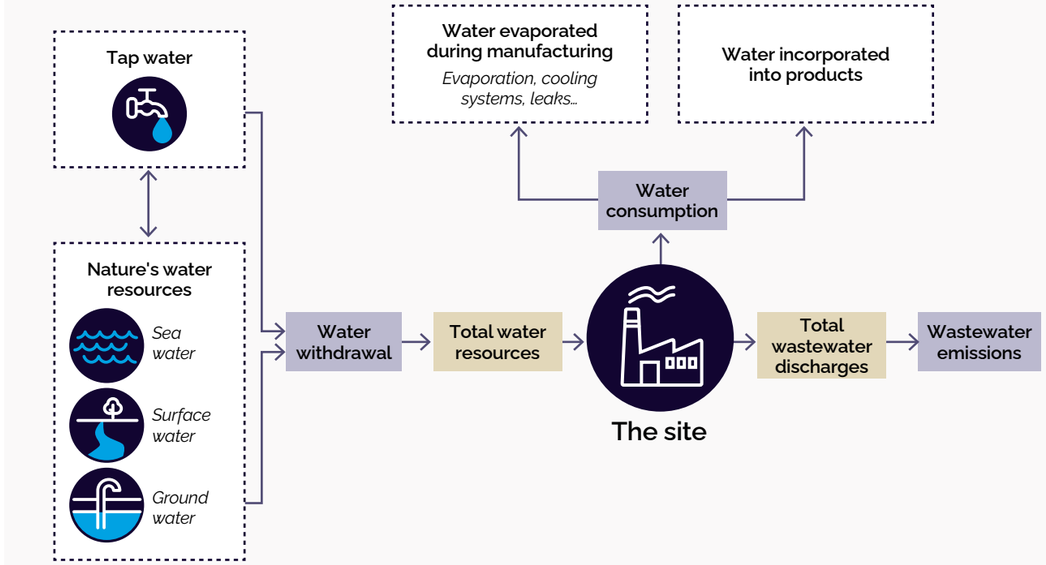
This map should include:

- **Water sources and inflows**, such as municipal supplies, boreholes, or surface water abstraction points.
- **On-site infrastructure**, including treatment units, storage tanks, and process areas.
- **Discharge points** or outflows to surface water, groundwater, or sewer systems.

The boundary map helps visualize how water moves through the facility and provides a foundation to start quantifying these flows.

Example of facility boundary map

Source: Quantis (2025)



Mapping and Quantifying Water Flows

Next, sites will need to map and measure the water inflows, usage, and outflows to build a complete picture of their water use. This includes:

- **Inflows:** volumes of water withdrawn from each source.
- **Use and consumption:** how water is distributed across processes (e.g., cooling, cleaning, production). Water consumption is calculated as withdrawals minus discharges. Water consumption includes evaporation and water incorporated in the product.
- **Outflows:** quantity, quality, and destination of wastewater, including any losses through evaporation or leakage.

Quantifying these water flows helps build a water balance that shows how much water is used, where it is used, and where losses may occur. If more than 5% of the water is missing or unaccounted for (as per the AWS standard[25]), the causes should be investigated and an action plan developed to address them.

Step 2: Understand water basin

Step 2 focuses on the water basin in which the facility operates, and the stakeholders connected to it. This step enables a deeper understanding of the local hydrological, social, and governance context and helps the facility identify who shares the same water resources, what challenges exist, and where collaboration may be needed.

By completing this step, facilities will:

- Gain clarity on the basin characteristics and identify the facility's operating water basin and develop a corresponding map.
- Map and understand key stakeholders — including local authorities, water agencies, NGOs, and vulnerable groups — and their water-related challenges.
- Confirm whether a formal platform exists for dialogue between the facility and basin stakeholders (e.g., regulators, industries, farmers, municipalities) on water issues.
- Assess current and future shared water challenges within the basin and outline potential responses.

Understand Basin Characteristics

The next task is to understand the facility's hydrological context:

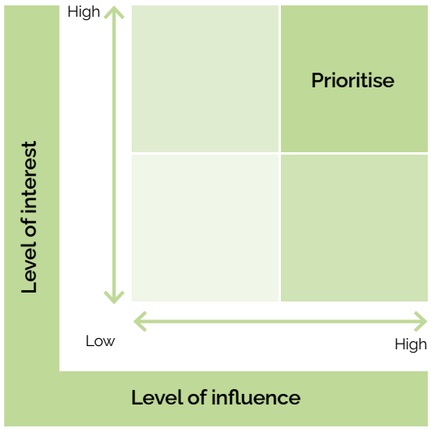
- Identify the name of the basin and where it is located (using WWF Water Risk Filter, or national hydrological maps).
- Map the geographical delimitation of the basin area relevant to the facility.

Mapping Basin Stakeholders

The next task is to identify all relevant stakeholders within the basin. This includes:

- Those who impact the facility (upstream users, regulators…).
- Those affected by the facility's activities (neighbouring communities, other users…).
- Those with shared interests (other industries or collective initiatives…).
- Neutral actors, such as academic or research institutions, who may play a facilitative or knowledge role.

Once identified, stakeholders are mapped according to their level of interest in improving the basin's condition and their level of influence over water-related decisions. This analysis (interest × influence) enables a clearer view of which actors are most critical for engagement and collaboration.



Source © Quantis (2025)

Collaborative Water Governance

The next task is to identify whether an official forum or platform exist where the facility and key stakeholders — such as local water authorities, other industries, farmers, and municipalities — regularly meet to discuss and address water-related issues within the basin.

Such platforms supports coordinated decision-making and collective action to improve water management and basin health.

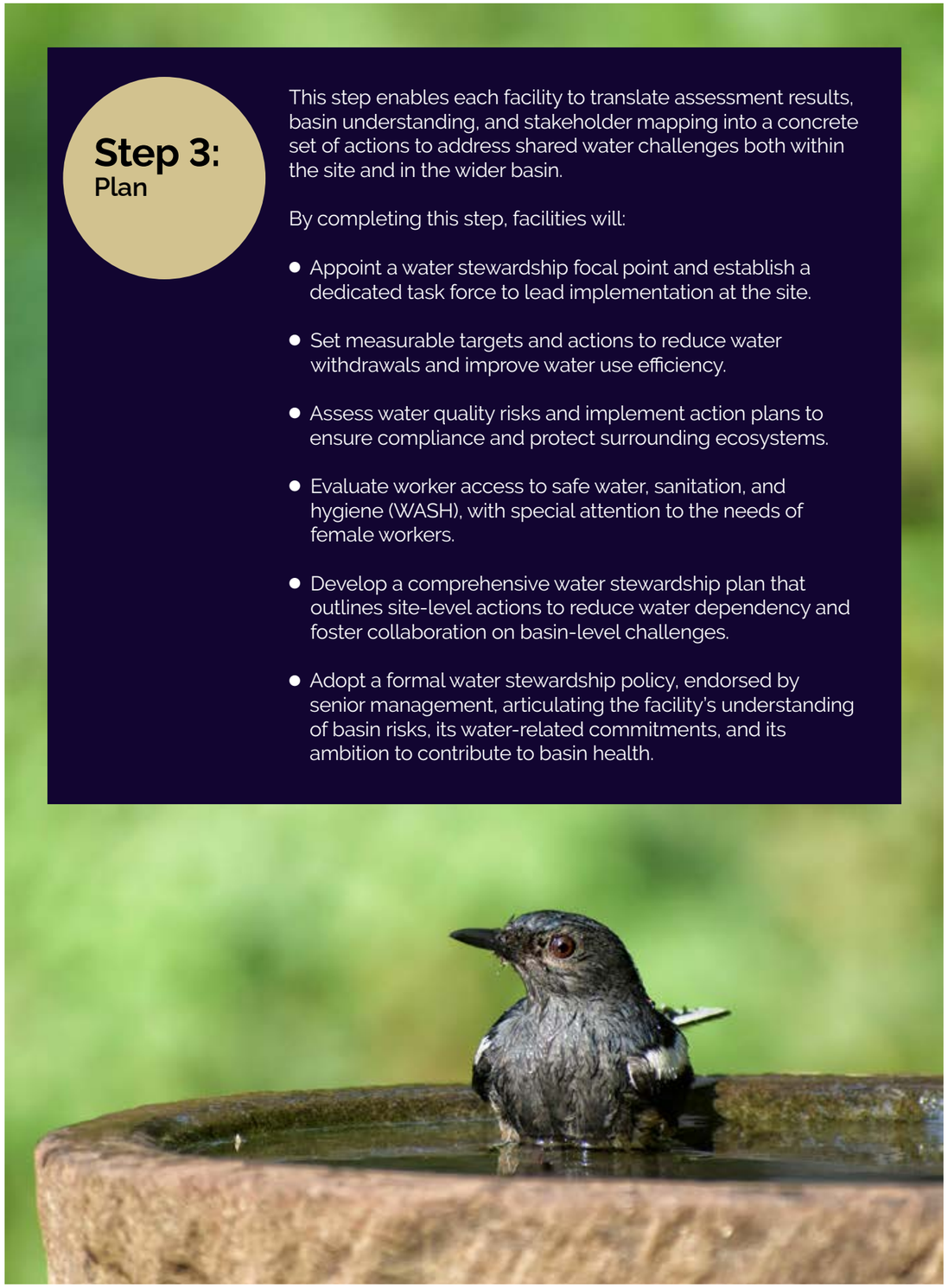
Identifying Water-Related Challenges

The next step is to identify and document the main current and future shared water-related challenges in the basin, both those that affect the facility directly and those that impact the broader watershed and community. Challenges may include:

- Insufficient water availability to meet stakeholder needs or operational requirements.
- Seasonal or chronic water scarcity.
- Declining water quality or untreated wastewater discharges.
- High water or wastewater pricing, affecting operational and community resilience.
- Limited access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) for local populations.

Understanding who the key stakeholders are and what water-related issues they face provides the context necessary to move from site-level water management to basin-level water stewardship. This understanding will guide future engagement and inform joint actions in subsequent steps of the process.

3. STEP 3



Step 3:
Plan

This step enables each facility to translate assessment results, basin understanding, and stakeholder mapping into a concrete set of actions to address shared water challenges both within the site and in the wider basin.

By completing this step, facilities will:

- Appoint a water stewardship focal point and establish a dedicated task force to lead implementation at the site.
- Set measurable targets and actions to reduce water withdrawals and improve water use efficiency.
- Assess water quality risks and implement action plans to ensure compliance and protect surrounding ecosystems.
- Evaluate worker access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), with special attention to the needs of female workers.
- Develop a comprehensive water stewardship plan that outlines site-level actions to reduce water dependency and foster collaboration on basin-level challenges.
- Adopt a formal water stewardship policy, endorsed by senior management, articulating the facility's understanding of basin risks, its water-related commitments, and its ambition to contribute to basin health.

Developing the Water Stewardship Plan

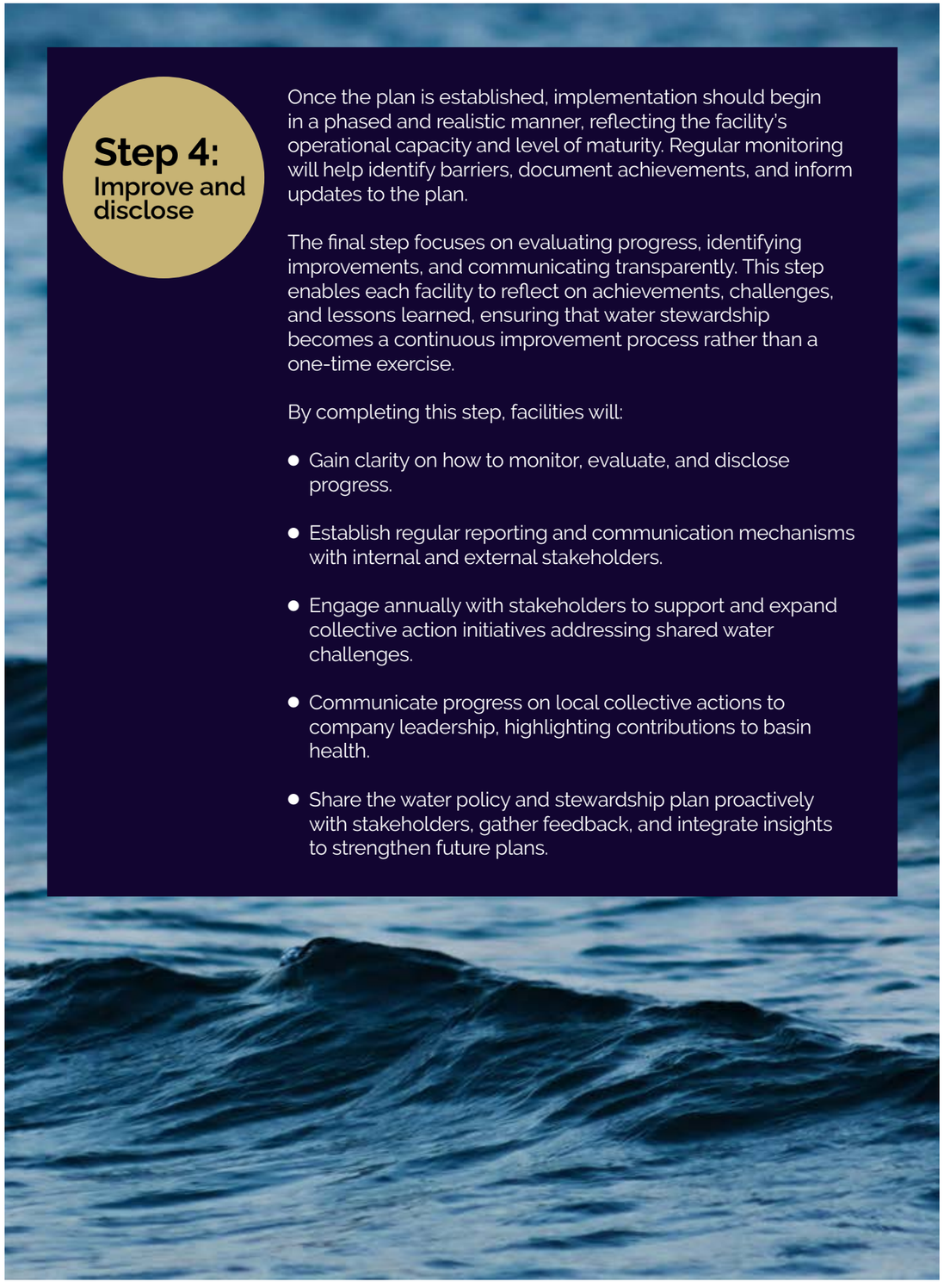
The facility's Water Stewardship Plan outlines what will be done to manage water responsibly at site level and within the basin context. It provides a structured roadmap that connects site actions with basin priorities and stakeholder engagement. Each plan should include the following components:

- Description of actions: a clear definition of each action to be undertaken to address specific risks or opportunities (e.g., efficiency improvements, wastewater treatment upgrades, community engagement, or basin restoration projects).
- Timeline: a schedule for implementation, showing key milestones and expected completion dates.
- Responsibilities: identification of key persons or teams responsible and accountable for each action.
- Monitoring: mechanisms to regularly track progress and verify that implementation is on course.
- Key performance indicators (KPIs): measurable criteria to evaluate success and guide adjustments where needed.

SPRING Water Stewardship – Danone's comprehensive methodology and practical toolbox to empower sites to enhance water management and resilience

Danone's SPRING programme empowers facilities and connected communities to protect the natural water sources they depend on, combining science-based hydrogeological assessments with long-term local partnerships.

By integrating watershed conservation, social engagement and shared governance, SPRING offers a model for any facility seeking to become true stewards of their basins.



Step 4: Improve and disclose

Once the plan is established, implementation should begin in a phased and realistic manner, reflecting the facility's operational capacity and level of maturity. Regular monitoring will help identify barriers, document achievements, and inform updates to the plan.

The final step focuses on evaluating progress, identifying improvements, and communicating transparently. This step enables each facility to reflect on achievements, challenges, and lessons learned, ensuring that water stewardship becomes a continuous improvement process rather than a one-time exercise.

By completing this step, facilities will:

- Gain clarity on how to monitor, evaluate, and disclose progress.
- Establish regular reporting and communication mechanisms with internal and external stakeholders.
- Engage annually with stakeholders to support and expand collective action initiatives addressing shared water challenges.
- Communicate progress on local collective actions to company leadership, highlighting contributions to basin health.
- Share the water policy and stewardship plan proactively with stakeholders, gather feedback, and integrate insights to strengthen future plans.

Evaluating Water Governance

The governance practices in place for managing water at the facility level will need to be assessed. This includes responsibilities, monitoring routines, maintenance, and staff awareness.

Understanding governance structures ensures that water management is embedded in operations and linked to broader sustainability objectives.

Assessment and Improvement

The Water Stewardship Plan should be reviewed annually and updated as needed to reflect progress, evolving risks, or changes in basin conditions. This iterative approach ensures that water management remains responsive, relevant, and aligned with the facility's long-term sustainability objectives. Facilities should evaluate their performance against the objectives set in the Water Stewardship Plan. This includes:

- Measuring progress against defined KPIs and milestones.
- Identifying gaps, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.
- Updating the plan accordingly to reflect new priorities, changing conditions, or stakeholder input.

Communication and Disclosure

Transparent communication is key to maintaining accountability and stakeholder trust. Internally, a reporting mechanism should be established to summarise progress for company leadership at regular intervals.

Externally, facilities should ensure transparent disclosure of progress through sustainability reports, company websites, or other communication channels. Facilities are encouraged to share their water policy and plan with basin stakeholders and incorporate their feedback into future updates.

Awareness should also be raised among the workforce to reinforce understanding of shared water challenges and collective responsibility.

By consistently evaluating, communicating, and improving, facilities can demonstrate accountability, strengthen partnerships, and contribute meaningfully to a less impactful future.

Implications for Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

Not all facilities will progress through the five steps at the same pace or in the same level of depth. Larger or more advanced companies may already have elements of water stewardship embedded in their systems, while smaller enterprises or those beginning their journey may focus first on the most material aspects.

The purpose of this framework is not to prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach, but to provide a clear and practical pathway for every facility to begin understanding and improving its relationship with water. By progressively applying these steps, according to capacity, maturity, and local context—each site can make meaningful contributions to reducing its water impacts, strengthening basin resilience, and fostering long-term sustainable water management across the industry.

Call to Action

For the watch and jewellery sector, water stewardship is not a niche environmental concern but a **strategic business imperative**—one that links long-term resilience with social equity and the protection of fragile ecosystems. By leveraging robust frameworks such as the **AWS Standard**, partnering through industry initiatives like **WJI 2030**, and engaging in meaningful multi-stakeholder action, companies can shift from fragmented, compliance-driven activities to **integrated stewardship approaches** that safeguard both luxury value chains and the well-being of the communities that support them.

Achieving true, industry-wide resilience requires **urgent and coordinated collective action**. Because most water-related impacts and dependencies occur deep within supply chains—particularly at the **mining and raw material extraction stage**—it is critical that watch and jewellery companies work together to strengthen traceability for key precious metals, enhance supplier transparency and accountability, and ensure that extraction practices respect ecological limits and uphold community needs. Through WJI 2030, members will collaborate to address shared water impacts, deploy their collective influence to raise expectations across the sector, and help drive responsible practices that benefit people, nature, and business alike.

Implications for Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

For large brands, resilience means using purchasing power to demand better water practices from suppliers, investing in basin restoration, and engaging in multi-stakeholder dialogues.

For SMEs who often face limited capacity to invest in water management, the pathway lies in partnerships (with universities, NGOs…), shared consultants, phased approaches and sector-wide tools provided by initiatives like WJI 2030. Both types of actors have a role to play, and their collaboration is essential to drive systemic change.

4.Annex

4.1 Glossary

Basin	An area of land where all flowing surface water converges to a single point, such as a river mouth, or flows into another body of water, such as a lake or ocean. For simplicity, basin can be used interchangeably with the terms catchment or watershed.
Basin water risks	The types of risks present in a basin, and that impact all water users in that basin. These risks can eventually only be solved through collective action by all the water users present in the basin, although individual steps by different water users also key.
Collective action	Joint efforts by multiple stakeholders (such as businesses, governments, NGOs, and communities) to address shared water challenges in a basin that cannot be effectively solved by a single actor.
Collective action initiatives	Multistakeholder (meaning representatives from NGOs, private sector, civil society, local or regional government) and address shared water challenges within a basin. Collective action initiatives often exist as independent entities and have dedicated funding.
Freshwater	Water that contains low concentrations of dissolved salts and other total dissolved solids, typically less than 1,000 milligrams per litre. It includes water found in rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands, glaciers, and groundwater, and is the primary source of water for most terrestrial ecosystems and human uses such as drinking, agriculture, and industry.
Shared water challenges	Water-related issues that are of interest or concern to all stakeholders in the basin and which, if addressed, will provide positive impacts, or prevent negative impacts.
Stakeholder	Person, group, or organization that has an interest or stake in a shared water challenge, and/or can influence the state of the basin positively or negatively.
WASH	Acronym for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. It is used in the international development sector to refer to the combined area of effort to address basic human water needs and rights related to access to safe and sufficient water for drinking, food preparation and washing. It also includes the provision of good washing and toilet facilities and the principle of hygiene education to combat the spread of water-related illnesses and disease.
Wastewater	Used water of reduced quality discharged from a site. It is usually contaminated in its raw state, but should be treated, either on site, or delivered (by pipe or truck) to an authorised wastewater treatment facility. Treated wastewater should be legally compliant and of a high enough quality to present no risk to the receiving water body (or land where applicable). Safe or treated wastewater may be re-used on site, or by other users to reduce original water demand and/or wastewater discharge volumes. Examples of re-use include irrigation of gardens or crops, washing vehicles and other uses not demanding high quality water.

Water balance	An accounting of all water entering, used, stored, and leaving a site. It tracks inflows (such as municipal supply, groundwater abstraction, or rainwater), outflows (like discharge, evaporation, or product content), and changes in on-site storage. A site water balance helps identify whether water is being managed efficiently and highlights opportunities to reduce waste or dependency on external sources.
Water management	The planning and control of water within a site or site to ensure reliable supply, efficient use, treatment, discharge, and compliance with legal and environmental requirements. It focuses on operational practices and infrastructure that manage water on site.
Water quality	The quality of a natural water body in terms of physical, chemical and biological parameters. The relevant quality standards are defined by national or local regulation and guidelines. Where these are absent, then international standards and guidelines should be applied. Good water quality status is where it meets the requirements of native flora and fauna, and for human needs where applicable. The status is not required to be pristine (i.e. contaminant free) or of drinking water quality (which would be classed as high water quality status).
Water recycling	The process of treating wastewater to a high standard so that it can be used again for the same purpose it was originally used for, or for other applications requiring high-quality water (e.g., industrial processes, cooling, or irrigation). Recycling usually implies multiple cycles of use through treatment.
Water-related challenges	A water-related issue (as defined through a water risk assessment, see page 28) that affects a stakeholder, both in the immediate term and in the long term.
Water reuse	The practice of using wastewater or treated water again for a beneficial purpose (such as irrigation, industrial use, or groundwater recharge), instead of discharging it to the environment. Reuse does not always require advanced treatment and can cover a broader range of applications than recycling.
Water scarcity	The lack of sufficient available water resources to meet the demands of water usage within a region for environmental and human needs. Physical water scarcity is when there is insufficient water in natural water bodies. It may be a natural condition (e.g. in arid regions) or may result from excessive water abstractions for human uses. Economic water scarcity is when there is insufficient supply to humans when water is naturally abundant. It is a result of under investment in water supply infrastructure, whether due to poverty or mismanagement.
Water stewardship	The use of water that is socially and culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that includes both site and catchment-based actions.
Water stewardship (action) plan	Outlines the actions a site will take to mitigate its water risks and improve the state of the basin, through internal and collective action with stakeholders in the basin.
Water stewardship policy	Outlines the guiding principles that help the site take decisions that involve its impacts and dependencies on water.
Water use efficiency	A measure of how effectively a site or process uses water to achieve its intended purpose, often expressed as output achieved per unit of water withdrawn, highlighting opportunities to reduce waste.

4.2. Relevant Initiatives

The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS)
(https://a4ws.org/)
A multi-stakeholder body advancing best practice on water stewardship. The International Water Stewardship Standard (https://a4ws.org/standard/) lays out best practice on water stewardship implementation at site level, against which sites can get certified.

CEO Water Mandate
(https://ceowatermandate.org/)
A special initiative of the UN Global Compact (UNGC) which mobilizes companies to address global water challenges through water stewardship. The CEO Water Mandate has defined a list of 100 priority basins (https://ceowatermandate.org/basins/) where water-related action is most needed; its Water Resilience Coalition is driving action in those basins (https://ceowatermandate.org/resilience/). Its Net Water Positive Impact (NWPI) (https://ceowatermandate.org/net-positive-water-impact/) methodology provides a framework for companies to initiate and monitor actions and engage at basin level.

Science-Based Targets Network (SBTN)
(https://sciencebasedtargetsnetwork.org/)
Developing guidance for companies to set science-based targets for nature, including water. Targets should be based on the local context (i.e., the state of the basin).

WASH4Work
(https://wash4work.org/)
A global multistakeholder coalition advancing implementation of sound WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) practices in workplaces. The WASH4Work Self-assessment Tool (https://wash4work.org/resources/) allows sites to self-assess whether they align with international best practices on WASH provision.

WWF Water Risk Filter and WWF Biodiversity Risk Filter
(https://waterriskfilter.panda.org/)
Open-source tools that allow water users to assess basin-level water and biodiversity risks across different categories based on GPS points. The tools use global datasets to determine risk levels. WWF Biodiversity Risk Filter: https://riskfilter.org/biodiversity

Freshwater Accountability Navigator (FAN)
(https://www.wbcsd.org/freshwater-accountability-navigator-fan/)
A platform mapping existing frameworks and tools for companies beginning or continuing their water stewardship journey. It also includes a high-level decision tree that helps businesses assess their level of maturity regarding water stewardship.

4.3. Endnotes

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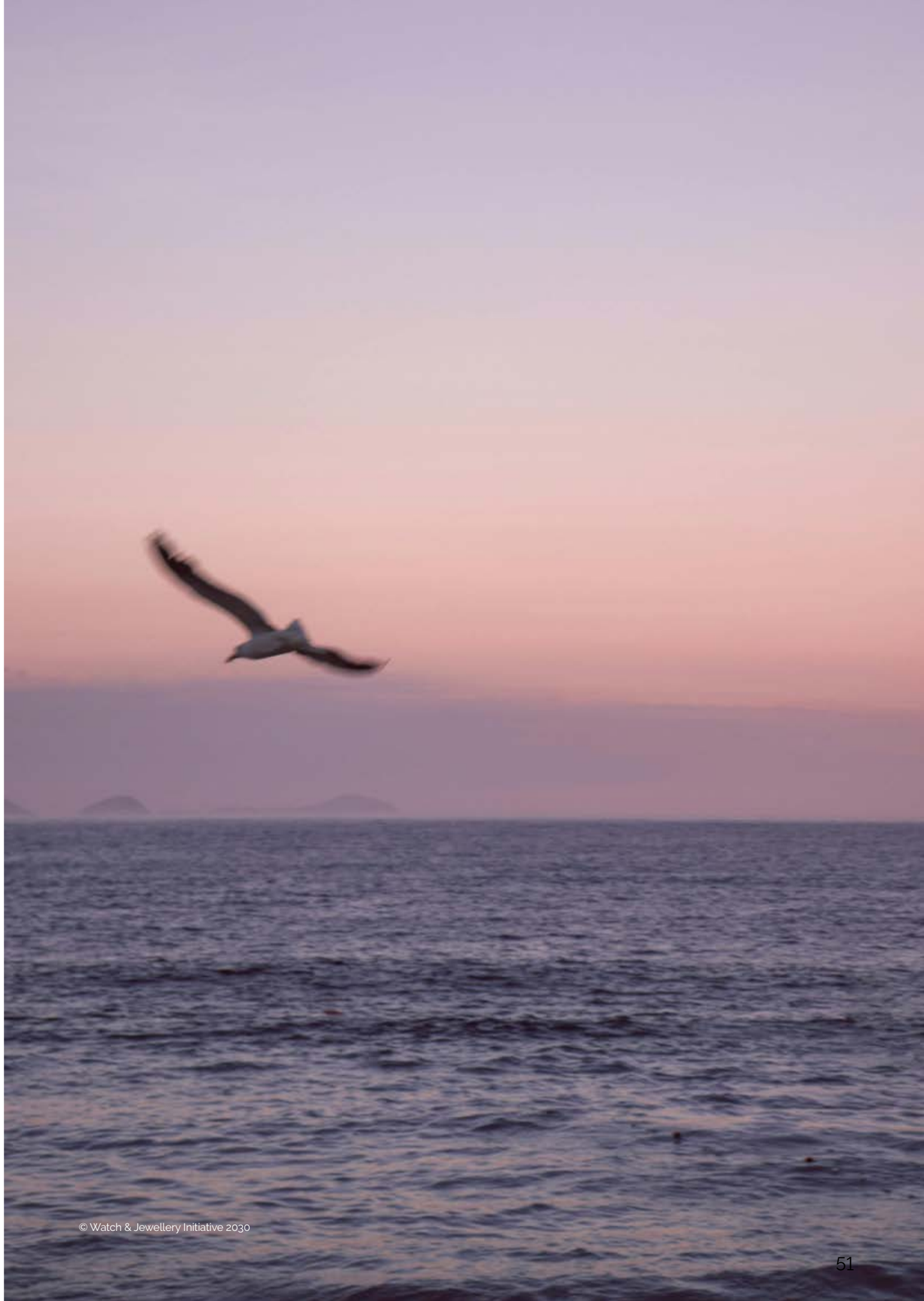

WATCH &
JEWELLERY
INITIATIVE 2030