



**FRESHWATER
CHALLENGE**

The Freshwater Challenge

Business Supporter Program

Version 1.0

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For the latest information on the Freshwater Challenge, an overview of current business supporters, and Frequently Asked Questions on the Business Supporter Program, please visit <https://www.freshwaterchallenge.org/joining>.

Executive Summary

The country-led [Freshwater Challenge](#) (“FWC”) is the largest global effort to restore and protect freshwater ecosystems, aiming to restore 300,000 km of degraded rivers and 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands by 2030, while securing the protection of freshwater ecosystems important for biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The **FWC Business Supporter Program** offers an opportunity for companies to **contribute directly** to these goals, **reduce water-related impacts, risks and dependencies**, align with **emerging sustainability frameworks and government plans and strategies**, **build on existing initiatives and platforms**, and **demonstrate leadership** in protecting and restoring critical natural resources.

Through collective action, robust assessments, transparent reporting, and active engagement with governments and civil society, **business supporters can help drive large-scale impact on rivers, wetlands, and the communities and economies that depend on them.**

By joining the program, **companies commit to support the FWC and its restoration and protection goals**, including by undertaking activities under the ACT-D framework:

- **Assess:** Assess operations and value chain impacts, dependencies and risks on freshwater ecosystems, and identify opportunities to enhance FW ecosystems;
- **Commit:** Align commitments to the FWC goals, and support advocacy and policy engagement;
- **Transform:** Catalyse catchment-level action to protect and restore freshwater ecosystems, important for business risks and dependencies, and government priorities;
- **Disclose:** Report on FWC-aligned impacts and activities, through existing reporting.

The program aims to align and substantiate business efforts to serve the FWC goals, accelerate collective action, foster public-private sector collaboration, and increase transparency.

1. What is the FWC (business supporter program)?

The [Freshwater Challenge](#) (“FWC”) is the largest global effort to restore and protect freshwater ecosystems. It is an unprecedented, country-led initiative that aims to support, integrate and accelerate the **restoration of 300,000 km of degraded rivers and 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands by 2030, while securing the protection of freshwater ecosystems important for biodiversity and ecosystem services.** [49 countries and the European Union](#) have joined the Freshwater Challenge so far. The Challenge aims to substantiate, elevate and accelerate targeted interventions for rivers, lakes and other inland wetlands, connecting these with national plans and strategies. It will increase the overall investment into the restoration and conservation of freshwater ecosystems, and substantially increase the social and economic returns on those investments.

While country-led, businesses have an important role to play to collaborate and help meet the ambitious aims of the Challenge. Healthy freshwater ecosystems are central to climate change mitigation and adaptation, reversing nature loss, and building more resilient societies and economies. By aligning private sector efforts with public sector goals, businesses can help create greater efficiencies and leverage, enabling them to tackle the shared challenges and risks, and more strategically improve nature and society outcomes.

Businesses can join the “FWC business supporter program”, which encourages, tracks, and accounts for business in-kind and financial contributions to FWC objectives, and fosters public-private collaboration. It builds heavily on existing business initiatives, including on water stewardship, and platforms, such as the TNFD and SBTN, thereby minimizing additional workload. It also creates opportunities for businesses that desire to advance conservation beyond the value chain. Overall, the program aims to align and substantiate business commitments to serve the goals of the FWC, as well as to accelerate action and transparency/disclosure. Becoming a Business Supporter of the Freshwater Challenge enables companies to directly contribute to the delivery of global agendas and international environmental frameworks and agreements, such as the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, the Global Biodiversity Framework, the SDGs, etc., as well as contribute to the restoration and protection of freshwater ecosystems, which are important for biodiversity, climate adaptation and mitigation, water security, etc., while addressing key impacts, risks and dependencies in the business value chains.

The Freshwater Challenge is supported by 8 core partners: WWF, IUCN, TNC, UNCCD, UNEP, Secretariat to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Conservation International, and Wetlands International. These organizations are committed to engaging, in a supportive role for FWC implementation, with member countries and other actors, including business supporters. These core partners work alongside other supporting partners, including companies joining the FWC business supporter program, in the pursuit of the FWC goals.

What do the public and experts think?

A recent WWF and GlobeScan survey of the public and water stewardship experts found strong support for companies to undertake activities under the Freshwater Challenge ACT-D framework (see annex 1), with such actions boosting credibility and recognition. Key findings:

- Both experts and the public want to see increased private sector (and government) action on the restoration and protection of freshwater ecosystems.
 - Corporate targets on freshwater ecosystems are seen as more credible versus some of the more commonly seen corporate water stewardship targets.
 - There's a clear call for leadership from both companies and governments.
 - Experts stress the importance of focusing on basin / catchment-level water issues to address, through collective action, environmental challenges, manage risks, and support supply chains.
- The public sees it as important, and credible, for companies to engage in advocacy, demonstrate policy action, and support governments on freshwater.
- 'Water pollution', 'climate change', and 'natural resource depletion' rank as top public concerns, while experts highlight flood risk as a top risk issue; Freshwater ecosystem restoration and protection can effectively address all of these.

PUBLIC VIEWS


Over 60% 
of people in all 31 countries polled believe companies should **actively support policies** to protect fresh water.

More than 2/3 
of people believe **governments and companies are most responsible** for conserving and protecting water, yet most people view the performance of both as poor.

For the public, **"protecting water"** and **"pollutant-free"** are the most positively perceived water-related terms when it comes to corporate action

EXPERT VIEWS

68% 
of experts strongly agree that companies need to put much more effort into **addressing upstream impacts**.

70% 
of experts strongly agree that companies' water programs and stewardship need to be **much more integrated** with other sustainability programs (e.g., climate, nature/biodiversity).

Restoration and Protection among the highest ranked terms and/or concepts that experts see as **most meaningful and credible to describe companies' water stewardship targets**:

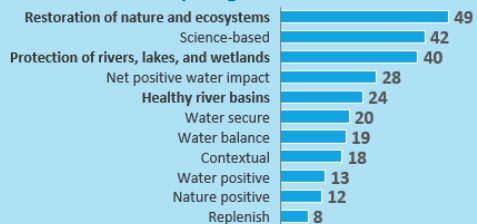


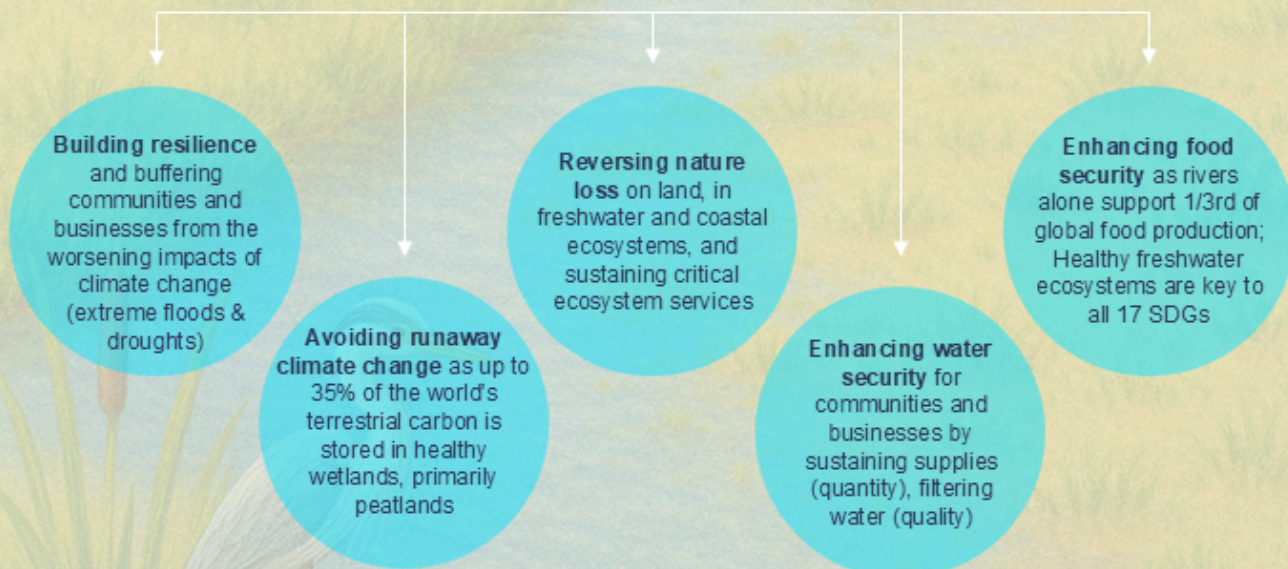
Figure 1: Highlights from 'The Future Water Agenda Report', more insights can be found in the original report; Source: The Future Water Agenda Report (Globescan & WWF, 2025); <https://wwf.panda.org/?13784966/Water-pollution-tops-global-concerns-as-companies-urged-to-invest-in-collective-action-to-address-water-challenges>

Freshwater ecosystems are the most impacted, affecting communities, businesses and economies. And the degradation of rivers, lakes and wetlands is continuing at an alarming pace:

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1/3</p> <p>of the world's wetlands have been lost in the last five decades; Of the world's rivers remain free-flowing</p> | <p>85%</p> <p>collapse of freshwater species populations on average since 1970.</p> | <p>40%</p> <p>of global biodiversity is supported by Wetlands, but many are in declining health.</p> |
| <p>Half</p> <p>of the world's population faces water scarcity for at least one month per year.</p> | <p>Over 90%</p> <p>of recent natural disasters are water-related; >US\$250Bn global economic losses annually, disrupting supply chains, drowning/stranding assets</p> | <p>46%</p> <p>of global GDP could be affected by high water risk by 2050. Water risks featured in WEF's top 5 long term global risks for past 10 years</p> |

Restoring and protecting the planet's rivers, lakes and other wetlands is critical

Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands are central to:



A whopping **US\$58 trillion p.a.** in direct (\$7 tr.) and indirect (\$51 tr.) **value of water and freshwater ecosystems are at risk** if we do not accelerate efforts to protect and restore rivers, lakes and wetlands - losses that would disrupt business models & supply chains, undermining societies & economies.

2. Why should businesses join the program?

Deliver on commitments and adapt to the changing policy, legal, and regulatory landscape, while addressing freshwater ecosystem risks, impacts and dependencies to and/or from businesses

Most businesses depend on healthy ecosystems for the sustainability of their operations and/or value chains. There is growing recognition of the important services provided by freshwater ecosystems, including the provision of freshwater (quantity and quality), and climate adaptation and mitigation. Investing in protecting and restoring these ecosystems, therefore, makes business sense, and there is increased emphasis in legislation and voluntary initiatives to that effect, including within the framework of GBF Target 15. Building on the latest polling data from GlobeScan and WWF (see above), both the public and experts see protection and restoration of ecosystems as the most meaningful and credible pathways to action on freshwater.

By joining the business supporter program and committing to freshwater ecosystem restoration, protection and/or sustainable management, businesses will:

- **Position themselves to deliver on SBTN Freshwater targets** (through recognized ‘response options’), and **establish a credible way to address TNFD/CSRD identified and disclosed material impacts, risks, and dependencies**;
- **Build resilience in operations and value chains** - Freshwater ecosystems are central to climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience, and reversing biodiversity loss;
- **Maintain the ‘license to operate’** and reduce policy, operational (e.g. supply chain disruptions, water scarcity) and reputational risks (the “*social* license to operate”); and
- **Embrace more integrated sustainability and support delivery of broader climate, socio-economic, and/or nature targets**, through the restoration and/or conservation of ecosystem services provided by freshwater ecosystems.

Gain recognition for supporting the FWC goals and national plans and strategies, and showcase leadership

Businesses are increasingly driven to demonstrate action and offer solutions for the triple planetary crisis (climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss). The Freshwater Challenge is a concrete way in which businesses can tackle all three aspects and engage at national and global level with government and civil society to effect change and contribute to reaching global and national goals. By joining the FWC, business supporters will:

- **Have the opportunity to engage with member countries and showcase their leadership and commitment to freshwater ecosystem restoration and protection, and alignment with national plans and strategies, and global agreements/agendas** such as the SDGs (6 and 15 especially), GBF (including targets 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10; and 15), Global Goal on Adaptation, etc.
- **Be acknowledged for their support**, including through the global communications channels of the FWC and its Core partners.

- **Demonstrate meaningful progress on freshwater to customers and the public**, through the use of protection/restoration metrics that are seen as most relevant.

Advance opportunities for collective action, scaling finance & impact

As a network of countries, NGOs, civil society and businesses, the Freshwater Challenge offers opportunities to prioritise and scale action to ensure appropriate resourcing and impact for safeguarding freshwater ecosystems. As part of the FWC, business supporters can expect to:

- Convene at **a scale that can help tackle shared issues through collective action**, including through:
 - **Mapping of catchments and basins where there are opportunities for establishing collective action partnerships.** Working with FWC country members can help businesses **understand how to invest and act more strategically, including to support delivery of national plans and strategies** (e.g. on adaptation or biodiversity), and be incentivized for sustainable use of freshwater ecosystems.
 - Linking with national governments ensures **efforts by businesses will create greater leverage and efficiencies** (including geographically), e.g. by enabling setting & implementing "shared basin target(s)", matching funding, etc.
 - **FWC as additional convener** - where no platforms exist yet - for engagement and collective action linked to conservation and restoration of freshwater ecosystems, bringing together (national) governments, businesses, NGOs, CSOs, etc.
- Contribute to **identifying opportunities for capacity-building of member countries and other stakeholders, co-financing and exploring innovative finance mechanisms for the conservation and restoration of priority ecosystems, including conservation trust funds and water funds.** This may also include matching public- and private sector funding (creating greater efficiencies and leverage), leveraging seed funding from the private sector for proposals to multilateral funds, etc.

Engage in capacity building on freshwater ecosystem conservation & restoration

With the collective subject matter expertise and experience of the Core partners, the FWC will help curate and develop guidance and training to support robust delivery of FWC goals.

Business supporters will:

- **Join a global movement**, aimed at sharing, inspiring, learning, and accelerating action together, including through the support and convening power of the supporting NGOs/agencies;
- **Access guidance/methodologies, tools and metrics** that are developed/consolidated and curated as part of the FWC for the member countries, where those are relevant/adapted for a business audience;
- **Engage in capacity-building opportunities for Business Supporters** (needs-based); A **community of practice** may be established for sharing knowledge, case-studies, and

best practices amongst businesses and national partners - if it is not possible to build on existing platforms; and

- **Have the opportunity to pilot new collaboration and financing mechanisms,** including with public sector partners.

Participate in policy engagement & advocacy opportunities

The FWC has strong policy and advocacy components, focused on strengthening national policy environments around FWC goals and advocating for improved recognition of the importance of safeguarding freshwater ecosystems in multilateral environmental agreements and global agendas. With recent polling data suggesting very strong public demand across the globe for greater corporate advocacy on freshwater, the FWC offers opportunities for business supporters to participate through:

- **National- and global-level coordinated opportunities for joint advocacy and/or engagement around policy development/reform** linked to freshwater ecosystems:
 - FWC Core Partners will - where appropriate - coordinate and share opportunities for businesses to engage in joint advocacy, participate in business advisory groups, shape business action plans, etc.
 - A platform to help businesses elevate water at the global agenda, aligned with the “Open Call”¹ many businesses signed at UN Water 2023.
- **Invitations to participate in policy and high-level events,** as well as the opportunity to bring country members’ and/or Core partner representatives to your own events.

Supporting the FWC directly supports:



¹ <https://wateractionnow.org/>

3. How can businesses join and get started?

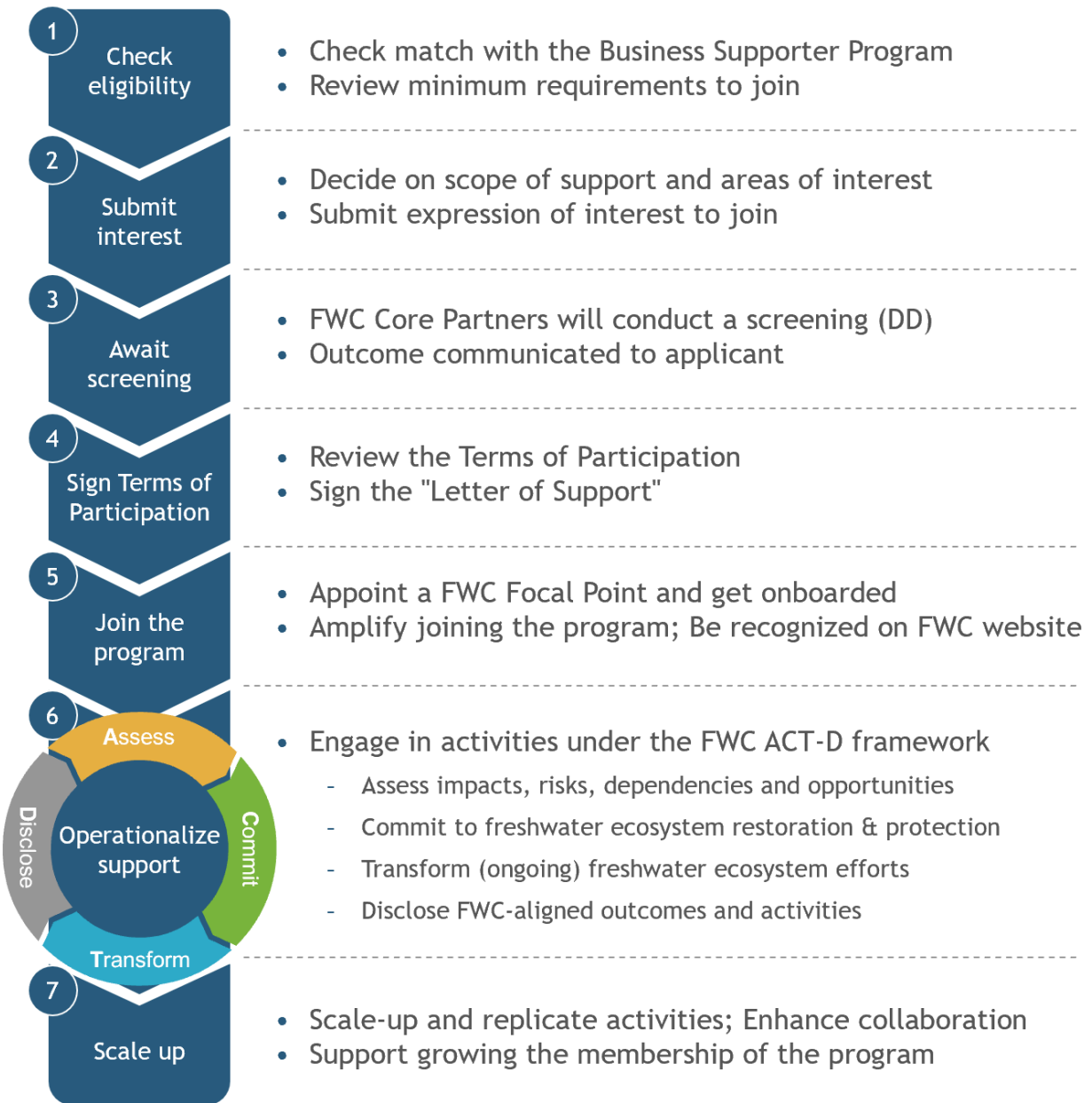


Figure 2: High-level overview of the process to apply to, join, and operationalize the FWC Business Supporter Program.

Step 1: Businesses to check ‘match’ with the FWC business supporter program

- Entity should set an ambition² to contribute to the Freshwater Challenge goals of accelerating the restoration of 300,000 km of degraded rivers and 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands by 2030, as well as protection of freshwater ecosystems important for biodiversity and ecosystem services, and publicly disclose progress against this ambition (see annex 1 for guidance on e.g. metrics, frequency). This is a voluntary commitment by the company to engage in freshwater ecosystem conservation, but it does not require a (new) quantified target to be set.
- Entity should publicly³ support and promote the Freshwater Challenge, and articulate the rationale for supporting it to inspire others to act (i.e. industry roundtables, supplier engagement and/or other (global) fora).
- Entity should be open to contribute to developing the business case for freshwater ecosystem conservation and restoration, including through sharing best practices and contributing to business-related sustainability disclosure mechanisms.
- Entity should meet the business screening criteria (see step 3).

Step 2: Decide on scope of support and submit expression of interest

Businesses can select (and pair) scope(s) to support the FWC, based on their interest, footprint, and/or available resources.

See table in annex 2 for full option space. This document will focus on “Global Business Supporters”, i.e. the members of this FWC Business Supporter Program.

Submit an expression of interest (email to info@freshwaterchallenge.org) to become a Business Supporter, outlining scope of support, summarizing evidence of (future) alignment with criteria for engagement, and indicating geographies of interest.

Step 3: FWC carries out Business screening/Eligibility check

After receiving an Expression of Interest from businesses to become a global business supporter, FWC Core partners will carry out a screening on the company, which will include:

- Using Reprisk and ISS-ESG databases where needed, complemented with other databases (Sustainalytics, MSCI, Bridger, etc.), desk research, and additional data requests. In some cases a bespoke third-party assessment may be required.
- Being a country-led initiative, the FWC Core partners will also notify the FWC contact point of the member country where the applicant has its HQ (if a member country) and any member countries of particular interest to the applicant.

² Ambition to engage in activities under the FWC ACT-D framework (see annex 1), including those that drive quantifiable progress to the FWC goals; If already identified, companies can highlight specific activities / programmes / projects they plan to execute / align to support the FWC goals as part of announcing their support, which can be global or place-based; For this ambition, there is no minimum threshold in place for (the number of) activities and the outcomes of these (e.g. the # of hectares restored)

³ At a minimum highlight the decision to join the program at a FWC event, through corporate communication channels, and/or an annual/ESG report

- The FWC Core partners will screen business applicants on whether the criteria (and others as deemed relevant) are met:

| Criteria | Details |
|--|---|
| <p>Applicant Reputation, Policies, and Practices are not a Material Risk to the FWC</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation, policies, and practices (including environmental risks; human rights violations / similar abuses; ongoing civil, administrative or criminal environmental liability proceedings in FWC member countries; highly-publicized controversies related to the corporation, among others) must not present a material risk to the FWC's reputation or ability to achieve its objectives. • Negative environmental impacts, particularly direct or indirect harmful effects on freshwater ecosystems within protected and conserved areas, social impacts (e.g., engagements with IP & LCs), governance issues (e.g. allegations of corruption), and memberships of trade associations or lobbying organizations will be reviewed. • Not directly engaged in activities inconsistent with UN Security Council Sanctions, Resolutions, and other similar measures, and do not appear on the UN ineligibility list. |
| <p>Commitments to Conservation and Environmental Sustainability are set by the applicant:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a commitment to advancing conservation and environmental objectives of significant, lasting, and measurable scope. • Have policies or practices to address its significant environmental impacts, including in the business' value chain, or intend to develop these through or during its engagement with the FWC. • Report transparently on its progress in implementing these policies and practices. |

This process is foreseen to be largely led and conducted by the FWC Core Partners, but if any data gaps/red flags arise, the business supporter applicant may be asked to respond. Once the screening is completed, the decision is communicated to the business applicant.

Step 4: Business “supporter letter” agreed and signed, acknowledging and agreeing to the ‘Terms of Participation’

Step 5: Business appoints FWC focal point and gets onboarded; Acknowledgement as supporter through FWC media channels

- Appoint a FWC contact point (e.g., water stewardship lead) in the organization and attend an onboarding call with your designated FWC focal point (i.e., a representative of one of the core partners) to outline expectations and requests, exchange ideas, etc.
- FWC core partners will work with global business supporters to develop a plan for incorporating and aligning to the FWC, and adopting activities under the ACT-D (Assess, Commit, Transform, Disclose) framework (See Annex 1).

- Businesses will receive guidance/toolkit for communication (e.g., on their social media channels) on them supporting the FWC.
- All global business supporters are listed 'equally', with logos appearing in alphabetical order on the FWC website. In the future, the FWC may start to work with tiers of supporters (e.g. Gold, Silver, ...) based on the level of engagement and support.

Step 6: Operationalization of support to the FWC

Operationalizing business support to the FWC will vary by company based on, *inter alia*, the company's maturity in water stewardship, footprint, sector, etc. The recommended process for supporting the goals of the FWC is to follow the ACT-D framework (see annex 1), while, in parallel, identify short-term opportunities to align/expand ongoing projects/programmes to already support delivery of the FWC objectives. The main actions are summarised below:

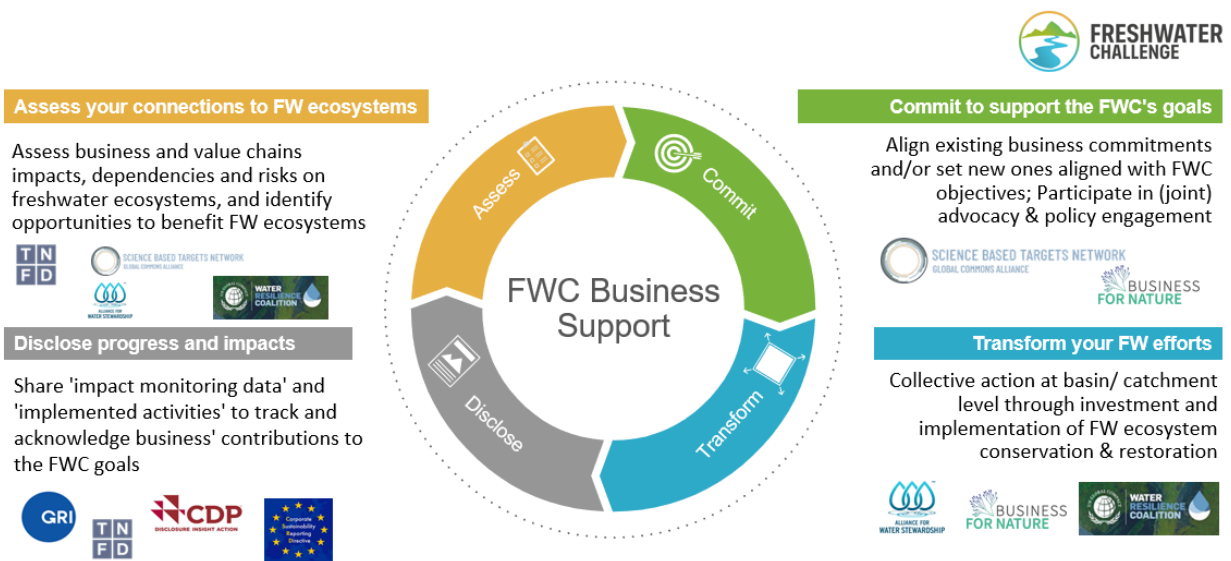


Figure 3: The FWC Business Supporter Program ACT-D framework, with a (non-exhaustive) indication of complementary private sector initiatives & platforms. More in Annex 1

Assess your connections to Freshwater Ecosystems:

The Assess pillar of the FWC Business Supporter Program focuses on filling existing data gaps, as well as helping businesses and countries to understand what efforts in which places (“prioritization”) are most needed. The recommendation for businesses to perform this assessment (if not (partially) done already) is aligned to the ask under e.g. SBTN (Step 1,2), TNFD (LEAP), ESRS/CSRD, etc..

As part of the program, FWC Business Supporters are encouraged to assess their operations’ and value chains’ (where material):

- Impacts on freshwater ecosystems; and
- Risks and dependencies related to healthy freshwater ecosystems.

And identify opportunities to benefit freshwater ecosystems

This step is encouraged, for business supporters, if a similar assessment has not been done in the last 18-24 months. Sharing this data is not mandatory, but sharing at least a summary is highly encouraged to inform and shape opportunities.

See annex 1 - **Assess** for more details and guidance

If a business supporter has not yet identified priority areas/interventions and still needs to perform this assessment, they can relatively quickly determine short-term focus areas to already get started, by undertaking a high-level geographic scoping of basins/catchments that:

- are material to their value chain and are high risk (e.g., based on SBTN step 1, TNFD, WRI aqueduct, WWF's Water Risk Filter), and/or have ongoing water stewardship / landscape projects or programs by the business supporter;
- have good opportunities for collective action (WRC 100 priority basins, overlap with AWS collective action accelerators, etc.)..

Based on this longlist, businesses can check for overlap with FWC country membership, and - where already defined - the priority basins within these countries, as set by governments in their respective national plans and strategies.

Commit to support the FWC:

The '**commit**' pillar of the FWC Business Supporter Program focuses on articulating and aligning business contributions to FWC goals. It does not require businesses to develop new commitments *per se*, but rather encourages companies to understand existing efforts that contribute to the protection and restoration of freshwater ecosystems, and also identify opportunities to prioritize these ecosystems in company interventions, building on the data gathered under '**Assess**'.

As part of the program, FWC Global Business Supporters are encouraged to publicly articulate global, national and/or project-level objectives that support the FWC goals on freshwater ecosystem protection and restoration, in line with SMART⁴ criteria. The objectives could be set/quantified under (existing) corporate nature, water (e.g. SBTN, NPWI, replenish), biodiversity, climate (mitigation and/or adaptation - e.g. BVCM), resilience, humanitarian, and/or other relevant strategies/targets.

Example objectives:

- X Ha / Km of freshwater ecosystems (enabled/supported to be) placed under protection / restored / sustainably managed by 2030 (or earlier)
- X USD invested in protection and/or restoration of freshwater ecosystems by 2030 (or earlier)
- Or other objectives relevant to FWC goals⁵

⁴ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound

⁵ List of applicable objectives is evolving based on e.g. FWC Member Countries' national targets, and alignment to country-level indicators

See annex 1 - **Commit** for more details and guidance on how to set/align targets

These objectives can be informed by connecting, through the FWC, with national (and local) governments to discuss their plans and strategies / catchment conservation plans / priority basins, and possible business contributions to these (some may have a 'business action plan' ready or shared basin targets in place, etc.).

Transform your Freshwater efforts:

The '**transform**' pillar of the FWC Business Supporter Program focuses on catalysing basin/catchment-level action to protect and restore freshwater ecosystems, especially those prioritized under the '**assess**' pillar (i.e. those with strong impacts, risk and dependencies in the business supporter's value chain) and under national plans and strategies. It, therefore, involves engagement at (sub-)national levels to prioritise and implement freshwater ecosystem protection, restoration and sustainable management. Collective action engagements are encouraged as part of the transform pillar.

As part of the program, FWC Business Supporters are encouraged to:

- Engage at sub-national level (catchments/basins) to prioritize, implement and invest in protection, restoration and sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems;
- Develop partnerships with government(s), industry/water users, and local communities, among other actors, for collective action, including for matching funding/co-financing;
- Participate in policy development and governance mechanisms to create the right framework conditions for businesses to make an effective contribution towards freshwater ecosystem protection and restoration.

See annex 1 - **Transform** for more details and actions to consider

Disclose the impact of your efforts:

Wherever engaged in FWC-related efforts, global business supporters are required to publicly disclose impact monitoring data and, in general, are required to annually disclose progress on their support to the FWC's goals on freshwater ecosystem restoration and protection).

They are also encouraged to (continue to) disclose other FWC-related performance data in line with other indicators, such as TNFD's global core (and additional) indicators and metrics, through existing reporting.

See annex 1 - **Disclose** for more details and guidance on what and how to disclose

Businesses are also encouraged to contribute to the development of case studies.

Step 7: Scale up / replicate actions and enhance collaboration

Based on the outcomes of the '**Assess**' pillar, the evolution of the FWC, and the member countries' implementation progress, businesses should seek to expand their efforts to other locations, or aim to expand current efforts by scaling collaboration ("collective action") and

finance. This could also include promoting the FWC in industry roundtables, supplier engagement, etc., to urge others to join the FWC and/or relevant freshwater ecosystem restoration/protection efforts.

A more comprehensive overview of potential and additional actions to help support the FWC can be found in annex 1, especially under '**Transform**', and annex 2.

Annex 1: FWC business supporter program ACT-D framework

Assess your connections to Freshwater Ecosystems:

Summary

The **Assess** pillar of the FWC Business Supporter Program focuses on filling existing data gaps, as well as helping businesses and countries to understand what efforts, in which places (“prioritization”) are needed. The recommendation for businesses to perform this assessment (if not (partially) done so already) is aligned to the asks under e.g. SBTN (Step 1,2), TNFD (LEAP), ESRS/CSRD, etc..

As part of the program, FWC Business Supporters are encouraged to assess their operations’ and value chain’s (where material):

- Impacts on Freshwater Ecosystems
- Risks and dependencies related to (healthy) Freshwater Ecosystems

And identify opportunities to benefit Freshwater Ecosystems

This step is encouraged, for business supporters, if a similar assessment has not been done in the last 18-24 months.

Detailed description of Assess Pillar:

The Assess pillar will help shape actions and commitments from businesses that address their key impacts, risk, and dependencies.

As part of the program, FWC Business Supporters are encouraged to assess their operation’s and value chain’s⁶:

- Impacts on Freshwater Ecosystems - e.g., mapping impact drivers on FW ecosystem health and extent - for example, pollution run-off, land-use change, barriers to free-flowing rivers, etc., including impacts on freshwater ecosystems within protected and conserved areas.
- Risks and dependencies related to healthy freshwater ecosystems.
 - Risks may include e.g., water security risks linked to operational shutdowns, risk of floods and droughts, but also reputational and legal risks.
 - Dependencies could be based on the ecosystem services provided by the FW ecosystem such as water supply, purification, biodiversity provision, or navigation.

⁶ Where material, businesses are highly encouraged to include their value chain beyond own operations (i.e. upstream and downstream) in this assessment. Guidance on how to select activities, sectors, geographies, etc. to include (based on materiality) can be found in e.g. SBTN’s step 1a and 1b. Geographical prioritization can be conducted based on e.g. SBTN State of Nature Water Layers, WWF’s Risk Filter Suite, or other alternatives

For examples of impact (drivers), risk and dependencies related to Freshwater ecosystems, businesses can refer to the [TNFD guidance on biomes](#).

Sharing these outcomes with the FWC and/or publicly (beyond what is legally required - e.g., by CSRD) is not required by the FWC, but sharing at least a summary is highly encouraged, as it will help national governments and the FWC Core Partners to identify threats and opportunities.

Businesses are also asked to identify opportunities to benefit Freshwater Ecosystems. This may, for example, include, not being limited to:

- Avoiding and Reducing impacts on Freshwater ecosystems in your own operations (e.g., via resource efficiency, responsible water sourcing, identifying alternatives to the usage of hydropower, etc.) - in line with the [response options hierarchy from e.g. SBTN](#)
- Freshwater ecosystem restoration, improved management and protection in the wider basin, including to address earlier identified impacts, risk and dependencies;
- Opportunities to influence peers and/or high-materiality suppliers to reduce their water withdrawals, pollution run-off, etc.;
- Contributing to sector and business models to reduce negative impacts and increase positive impacts on rivers and streams and other wetlands, for example, by participation in IWRM/Planning/Water Governance mechanisms (see 'Transform') and financial or in-kind contributions to conservation trust funds;
- Providing technical / financial support for the identification of priority freshwater ecosystems for area-based conservation and/or for the management of protected and conserved areas in ways that support freshwater biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Gathering (and sharing) this data will help advance progress towards the FWC objectives:

- **Businesses** should have a clearer understanding of their impacts, risks, and dependencies on freshwater ecosystems as well as any measure underway to protect and restore freshwater ecosystems in their operations.
 - This will help to prioritize countries/basins/sites to act in; and
 - Support unlocking organizational support/resources; (*see commit pillar*)
- **Countries** should have a better understanding of opportunities and threats to freshwater ecosystems, as well as relevant businesses to include in dialogues/efforts on certain FW ecosystems – even if the business does not have operations there (but, e.g., a top supplier).
- Aggregated, this data will also help identify where incentives and legislation are needed or can be leveraged to prevent negative impacts and understand which FW ecosystems have strong economic, social and environmental values at risk as part of the basin prioritization discussions, and how they can best be conserved or restored.

How the FWC Core Partners can help business supporters to ‘Assess’⁷:

- Provide high-level guidance on which assessment frameworks, datasets, experts, and tools are available to businesses to conduct the ‘assessment’; and
- Provide frameworks, expertise, and/or data (including member country commitments and priorities) to, e.g., prioritize focus geographies, identify opportunities to benefit FW ecosystems, and potential partnerships through high-level guidance of key stakeholders in the relevant basins (where those are known to the Core Partners)

How is ‘Assess’ linked to other (water stewardship) initiatives and commitments:

- Assessment ask is in line with guidance/obligations under, e.g., [TNFD \(LEAP approach\)](#), [CSR⁸](#) - but with a focus on Freshwater Ecosystems.
- Assessment can be built upon tools such as [WWF’s water risk filter](#), [WRI’s Aqueduct](#), [SBTN SoN data layers](#), [TNFD biomes guide](#), etc.
- [SBTN’s \(step 1\) guidance](#) on materiality in the value chain can help prioritize, e.g., suppliers, geographies, verticals, etc. to include in the FWC assessment.
- ‘Assess’ under the FWC can help guide businesses to prioritize catchments/basins/sites, supplier vertical/geographies, BUs, etc. for freshwater action, and identify opportunities to address risks and dependencies, as well as impacts. This may also help to identify with whom and where to engage - e.g., which of the [100 priority basins](#), which industry roundtables, (national) governments, PPPs, etc.
- The assessment also complements [AWS standard](#) step 1 - most notably steps 1.5 / 1.6 - but goes beyond ‘own sites’ as it includes a business’ value chain.

Commit to support the FWC:

Summary

The **commit** pillar of the FWC Business Supporter Program focuses on articulating and aligning business contributions to FWC goals. It does not necessarily require businesses to develop new commitments per se⁹, but rather encourages companies to understand existing efforts underway that may contribute to the protection and restoration of freshwater ecosystems, to identify opportunities to prioritize those ecosystems in company interventions and, as needed, to envision new targets and strategic actions (where existing efforts have yet to encompass freshwater ecosystems actions).

As part of the program, FWC Global Business Supporters are encouraged to commit to publicly articulate global, national, and/or project-level objectives that support the FWC goals on freshwater ecosystem conservation / restoration, in line with SMART¹⁰ criteria. The objectives

⁷ Exact scope of support is to be determined and will depend on available resources, and the needs of supporters

⁸ Conducting an ‘assessment’ as set out in the FWC business supporter program should not be seen as automatically complying with any regulatory obligations, as these requests and boundaries may differ

⁹ Currently only a limited number of companies have a ‘water target’ and/or ‘biodiversity target’.

¹⁰ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound

could be set/quantified under (existing) corporate nature, water (e.g. SBTN, NPWI, replenish), biodiversity, climate (mitigation and/or adaptation - e.g. BVCM), Resilience, Humanitarian, and/or other relevant strategies/targets.

Example objectives:

- X Ha / Km of freshwater ecosystems (enabled/supported to be) placed under protection / restored / sustainably managed by 2030 (or earlier).
- X USD invested in protection and/or restoration of freshwater ecosystems, by 2030 (or earlier);
- Or other objectives relevant to FWC goals¹¹

Not all actions related to water stewardship/replenishment/... will count as progress towards the FWC goals, e.g., based on VWBA categorization:

- All activities under “Aquatic habitat restoration: (wetland protection, wetland restoration and creation, floodplain inundation/reestablish hydrologic connection, barrier removal, etc.) could typically be counted.
- Actions under “Land conservation and restoration”, “Water supply reliability”, and “Water quality” could be counted for, however there needs to be proof of meaningful impact on the health and/or extent of freshwater ecosystems, or the improvement of its biodiversity and ecosystem services, to directly contribute to the FWC goals.
- Activities classified as “water governance” and “catalytic activities” are encouraged and help to progress the implementation of the FWC, but typically not a quantifiable contribution to the overall FWC goals.

Actions that could be counted do not need to fall squarely under the WWBA categorization (this is merely used above as a recognizable categorization), but they do generally need to be coming under the umbrella of freshwater ecosystem conservation, i.e., protection, improved management or restoration, including establishment of, support for, protected and conserved areas with freshwater outcomes, source water protection/restoration for water security, wetland conservation for climate mitigation, etc).

When in doubt about which actions could count towards global and/or national goals, businesses can engage with the FWC Core Partners and member countries to check. On the FWC website, an FAQ will be kept up to date and will include some specific examples of projects and how and when these do / don't count towards the FWC goals.

Detailed description of Commit Pillar:

Following the ‘**assess**’ pillar, businesses should have a clearer understanding of their impacts, risks, and dependencies on freshwater ecosystems as well as any measure underway to protect / restore freshwater ecosystems in their operations or through support for efforts led by others.

The commit pillar helps businesses to use this information to more clearly articulate the business case for protecting and restoring freshwater ecosystems and enable them to set / align

¹¹ List of applicable objectives is evolving based on e.g. FWC Member Countries’ national targets, and alignment to country-level indicators

goals on freshwater ecosystem protection and restoration linked to the FWC goals. Opportunities to prioritise specific freshwater ecosystems would also be identified under this pillar.

Under the **commit** pillar, businesses are encouraged to do the following:

- Integrate freshwater ecosystem protection and restoration as a goal within their water- or sustainability-related policies;
- Publicly articulate (sub-)targets linked to freshwater ecosystem protection and restoration (e.g., ha of wetland restored, #kms of enabled river re-connectivity/conserved connectivity, ha of private water protected or conserved areas established or funded, etc.);
- Build internal capacity around freshwater ecosystems.

By publicly supporting the Freshwater Challenge and committing to and transparently disclosing FWC-aligned activities and outcomes, businesses can also more credibly:

- Engage in joint advocacy to encourage more countries to join/support the FWC and act (e.g., target-setting, resource allocation), e.g.
 - Support/sign a call for a country to join the FWC
 - Contribute to influencing member countries to set (ambitious) FW ecosystems targets in their national plans & strategies (e.g. NBSAPs, NDCs, NAPs), develop implementation plans, provide clear strategic direction, allocate budgets, etc.
 - Example could be e.g. the EU Nature Restoration Law – which saw successful business influencing – as now the EU countries’ national governments have to prepare National Restoration Plans, where businesses can play a role in ensuring the goal of restoring 25,000kms of free-flowing rivers is embedded in these plans through national goals adding up to the EU-wide number
 - Participation in, e.g., Business for Nature’s Call to Action, or the UNGC’s faster forward initiative can complement this.
- Engage in shaping “business action plans” - e.g., under NBSAPs - and/or join “business advisory groups” or similar mechanisms to ensure business contributions towards national plans and strategies - including for FW ecosystems - are planned for and enabled.
- Support countries to prioritize areas for their FWC plans, and resource allocation - through sharing insights gathered under ‘**Assess**’ and already planned efforts.
- Align behind clear, consistent policy insights and recommendations, as developed by the FWC Core Partners, to influence global conventions and agendas, or nationally:
 - Support/sign Call to actions/Open letters, such as the ['Call to action on water and wetlands at UN Convention on Biological Diversity COP16'](#), and attend high-level (FWC) events at the COPs
 - Contribute to development of progress reports (e.g. are FW Ecosystems included in national plans & strategies? – *example [here](#)*), country-to-country learning/sharing, building case-studies, (policy) recommendation papers, etc.

- Use influence/networks to encourage others (e.g. peers, suppliers) to join the Business Supporter Program and set ambitions that include Freshwater Ecosystem Restoration and Protection

How the FWC Core Partners can help business supporters to ‘Commit’¹²:

- Provide examples of freshwater ecosystems targets and sub-targets, and high-level guidance on to how approach target-setting
- Provide high-level guidance, including case studies, on how to identify / estimate benefits of freshwater ecosystem interventions, such as climate, biodiversity, water security / volumetric, etc.
- Coordinate and share (joint) advocacy opportunities, highlight policy engagement opportunities, share invitations to policy events, etc.
 - Supported by the development of clear, consistent policy insights and recommendations towards member countries, that businesses can align behind;
- Aim to connect business and country FWC contact points where relevant - e.g., to discuss national plans and strategies, and potential business contributions/needs.

How is ‘Commit’ linked to other (water stewardship) initiatives and commitments:

- Freshwater Ecosystem restoration and protection are recognized as ‘responses’ (in [Step 4: act](#)) to deliver on corporate [Science Based Targets Network \(SBTN\) freshwater targets](#) (both quality and quantity), and have the ability to address material impacts, risks and dependencies related to freshwater through, e.g., TNFD, CSRD.
- The restoration and protection of FW ecosystems through private sector support/execution is a direct contribution to the [Global Biodiversity Framework Targets](#) (most notably targets 2, 3, and 15), as well as supporting any climate, broader nature, or many humanitarian commitments set by corporates. It also is a direct contribution to the [SDGs](#), most notably SDGs 6 and 15.1, 15.3 and 15.5.
- Most actions aligned to the FWC objectives will also yield replenish volumes, with, e.g., [VWBA](#) methodologies enabling translation between the FWC and replenish metrics.
- (Joint) advocacy and policy engagement (e.g., shared basin goals) activities can link into the [CEO Water Mandate’s/WRC’s 100 priority basins](#) and [forward faster](#) initiatives (where overlapping with the FWC)
- An FWC commitment can also help to progress against [NPWI](#) ambitions, with FWC activities building towards healthy basins.
- Contributing to the FWC objectives will directly contribute to the ‘[Race to Zero](#)’ (e.g., restored wetlands will sequester carbon) and the ‘[Race to Resilience](#)’ (e.g., FW ecosystems help to build resilience and adapt against climate change impacts such as increased floods and droughts, but FWC-aligned activities can also drive increased productivity of soil, aquaculture, etc., building further community resilience).
- Investments into FW ecosystems (often overlapping with [SBTi FLAG](#) ‘response options’), where delivering CO2 sequestration, could contribute to SBTi targets if interventions occur within the value chain or in areas ecologically connected to the value chain/scope 3 boundaries. Investments into FW ecosystems are also a way to deliver ‘[beyond value chain Mitigation \(BVCM\)](#)’

¹² Exact scope of support is to be determined and will depend on available resources, and the needs of supporters

Summary

The **Transform** pillar of the FWC Business Supporter Program focuses on catalysing basin-level action to protect and restore freshwater ecosystems, especially those prioritized under the ‘**assess**’ pillar (i.e. those with strong impacts, risk and dependencies in the supporter’s value chain and under national plans & strategies). It therefore involves engagement at (sub-)national levels to prioritise and implement freshwater ecosystem conservation, sustainable management and restoration. Collective action engagements are encouraged as part of the transform pillar.

As part of the program, FWC Business Supporters are encouraged to:

- Engage at both national and basin-level to prioritize, implement and invest in sustainable management, protection, and restoration of freshwater ecosystems;
- Develop partnerships (incl. with government and local communities) for collective action;
- Participate in policy development to create the right framework conditions for business to make an effective contribution towards FW ecosystem conservation and restoration.

Detailed description of the Transform Pillar:

Building on the **commit** pillar, businesses will identify place-based interventions aligned to the goals they have set linked to FW ecosystems. This will be done within their existing frameworks and processes.

The transform pillar requests prioritising important freshwater ecosystems in the countries and basins where the company operates / has a value chain presence and emphasises selecting intervention areas based on i) the company’s ability to influence, ii) opportunities to engage in collective action and iii) support government commitments such as under the national plans and strategies, as well as iv) risk and opportunity considerations.

Under the transform pillar businesses are encouraged to:

- Identify and select priority catchments / basins¹³ for investment and implementation of FW ecosystem conservation and restoration, incl. by finding matching public sector and other partners, including project implementers and co-funders;
- Align corporate grants, investments, and other support to the FWC, including to FWC-relevant national plans & strategies;

Note: Companies should in parallel reduce the impacts of their operations on freshwater ecosystems (e.g., use, withdrawals, pollutants, etc.)

Business should ensure that their freshwater ecosystem interventions:

- Employ appropriate & credible methods related to habitat and river and other wetland

¹³ Initial focus/scope at a catchment level (i.e. HydroBASIN level 6-9) to enable moving at scale and at pace, in line with AWS recommendations

restoration, protection, and management (e.g., Volumetric Water Benefit Accounting, combined with other qualitative and quantitative criteria on FW ecosystems extent and condition (water quality, connectivity, habitat, hydrologic regime, and biotic composition);

- And similarly adhere to all relevant social and broader environmental safeguards;
- Where possible, actively seek out matching or leveraged public sector funding and establish Public Private partnerships (PPPs) to encourage greater leverage from your basin investments.

At the local level, (e.g., in key basins identified as high priority for you), the following activities should be considered:

- Become an active participant in exploring financing options, including blended finance with governments at all levels to secure funds for FWC-relevant projects
- Where fora exist, actively and positively participate in catchment governance structures that support the goals of the Challenge.
- Include objectives in water stewardship initiatives on protection/restoration of FW ecosystems.
- Support national targets through financial and technical support (where relevant - e.g. consultancies, or those with monitoring capabilities) for government and community protection and restoration projects and management;
- Through supporting/originating (individual/collective) private sector-led protection and restoration projects - especially in/next-to areas identified as priority by FWC member countries.
- Also consider bringing in suppliers (water-intense, high pollution, or otherwise material) that are operating in these areas

How the FWC Core Partners can help business supporters to ‘Transform’¹⁴:

- Providing visibility on (sub-)national priority locations and activities, as set by FWC member countries
- Support identifying and connecting with key catchment actors and stakeholders
- Providing high-level frameworks for engagement/collective action, etc. - to guide which roles various actors and stakeholders could play
- Providing thought leadership and case studies on NBS and ecosystem based adaptation - including “bankable NBS”, restoration / conservation benefits, etc.
- Support in identifying opportunities to create leverage on investments (e.g., proposals to multilateral funds, potential co-financiers) or guide on possible financial mechanisms that support the scaling or replication of existing/planned efforts
- Local capacity building (needs based, where resources available)

How is ‘Transform’ linked to other (water stewardship) initiatives and commitments:

- [AWS Collective Action Accelerators](#) - where overlapping - can help to convene and activate catchment stakeholders, where FWC can ensure education on, and alignment to national/catchment plans & strategies, and enhance public sector representation
- Collective action, PPPs, and collaboration with (national) governments can progress delivery against [NPWI](#), including to address gaps identified in NPWI step 4

¹⁴ Exact scope of support is to be determined and will depend on available resources, and the needs of supporters

- Replenish undertaken at scale with the public sector, can support the FWC by helping to deliver freshwater ecosystem conservation aligned to public policy aims; Replenish projects/investment can be seed funding / leveraged for larger-scale efforts, while linking into [YWBA](#) for appropriate allocation of benefits between actors
- FWC and the [CEO WM](#) / [WRC](#) can complement stakeholder convening efforts, and leverage assets (e.g. [CEO WM NBS toolkit](#)). Transform is also well-aligned with the “[Open Call](#)” as it fosters collaboration with governments and helps to identify strategic NbS/resilience solutions to invest in. FWC supporters can identify and list (FWC) projects/efforts through the ‘[water action hub](#)’ or similarly the ‘[Restor](#)’ platform
- The FWC will also actively engage with these and other platforms/initiatives to explore how the FWC objectives can be adopted and endorsed
- Working across these platforms will also create opportunities to connect national governments and the private sector on opportunities for co-investment, co-finance, and/or private sector-led interventions that can be captured in country-level monitoring.

Disclose the impact of your efforts:

Summary

Wherever engaged in FWC-related efforts global business supporters are required to publicly disclose impact monitoring data, and in general are required to annually disclose progress on their support to the FWC(’s global goals on freshwater ecosystem restoration and protection)

Global Businesses supporters are also encouraged to disclose other FWC-related performance data in line with, e.g., TNFD’s global core, additional, and placeholder indicators and metrics, through existing reporting.

Detailed description of the disclose pillar:

Required disclosure:

What to disclose?

This request covers activities wherever you are engaged in freshwater ecosystem conservation, including wetland habitat restoration, river connectivity and sustainable flows or other activities aimed at FW ecosystem protection, restoration, and sustainable management.

- This includes activities outside of FWC Member Countries, as these can also be recognized as a Business Supporter contribution and a fulfilment of the ambition set when joining the program

We are requiring Business Supporters to publicly disclose along 2 main categories:

- FWC-aligned outcomes/impacts/KPIs of (supported) projects/programs during the reporting year, where those are quantifiable, i.e.: hectares/kilometers of rivers/wetlands restored/protected/sustainably managed
 - If a project/investment is supported by multiple parties (e.g. under a Collective Action program), the business supporter may choose to either:
 - Report the aggregate, if clearly stating the figures are the total of the program and specifying project name and partners; Or
 - If deciding to only report on the individual contribution, allocation of the

impacts may be required. The FWC Core partners can advise on this and may recommend which (benefit) allocation approach to follow.

- Business Supporters are requested to specify the type of freshwater ecosystem and the classification of the outcomes (e.g. restoration vs. sustainable management)
- Activities implemented during the reporting year to advance towards FWC-aligned outcomes. For example: “Identified xx wetlands for restoration”, “supported an e-flow study for river yy”, “convened with yy to discuss opportunities for Freshwater Ecosystem Restoration and Protection”, etc.

We encourage business supporters to be as exhaustive as possible in their reporting, highlighting as many project outcomes/activities as possible / comfortable to disclose.

Monitoring of any project’s impacts should be carried out by the Business Supporter, or more typically by the project delivery partner, and is not conducted by the FWC - however, the FWC can support by providing guidance on M&E approaches.

- Where FWC-aligned activities are happening with support of one or multiple of the FWC Core Partners - e.g. through a partnership between the NGO and the Business Supporter - typically the FWC Core Partner would be monitoring and reporting on the FWC-aligned outcomes/KPIs and/or activities towards these.
- The FWC is explicitly asking for ‘extent’ metrics - aligned to e.g., TNFD’s global core metrics, and the Global Biodiversity Framework - and not e.g., volumetric metrics (but noting organizations reporting on volumetric benefits typically will have access (through a technical partner) to an ‘extent’ metric as well).

We acknowledge that there is currently a lack of a harmonized methodology and reporting framework/indicators when it comes to Freshwater Ecosystem protection, sustainable management, and especially restoration. The Freshwater Challenge’s Technical Assistance Working Group is developing a set of recommended indicators under a framework which, will be based on, for example, the framework for ecosystem restoration monitoring (FERM) developed by a Working Group convened by FAO, as well as the indicators under the Global Biodiversity Framework for Targets 1-3 and the Global Goal on Adaptation. Initially for countries, but this will also be tailored for businesses where as much as possible, alignment with existing business reporting frameworks and metrics will be aimed for.

In the meantime business supporters can get guidance from FWC Core Partners, or build on some of the following resources:

Generic across ecosystems:

ten principles for ecosystem restoration:

<https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/publications/principles-ecosystem-restoration-guide-united-nations-decade-2021-2030>

Standards of practice to guide ecosystem restoration:

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/fb87513e-cd4d-42dd-a78d-48fd29afd4ca>

IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions:

<https://iucn.org/our-work/topic/iucn-global-standard-nature-based-solutions>

International standards for the practice of ecological restoration (2nd Edition):

<https://www.ser.org/page/SERStandards>

Freshwater ecosystems specific:

https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/rtr11_peatland_rewetting_restoration_e.pdf

https://tourbehorticole.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/Guide_4.1_Planning_Restoration_ANG_Web.pdf

<https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/guide/guide-restoration.pdf>

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/239d42d2-8c95-43f3-a861-1e0068414a31>

Relevant other (impact) metrics to disclose (not for tracking, but for, e.g., case studies, next steps, etc.) could be based on e.g., TNFD's global additional indicators and metrics, or the metrics discussed under the UN Decade of restoration or other metrics guided by the key ecological attributes of freshwater ecosystems (connectivity, water quality, habitat, hydrological regime, and biotic composition).

Companies are also encouraged throughout the year to proactively highlight their Freshwater ecosystem activities (e.g. projects, initiatives) - e.g., via the 'Water action hub', or 'Restor':

- This will help the Core partners to proactively reach out to/track business contributions; and support with the '**Transform**' pillar to seek out partners - including public sector - for collective action.
- The FWC does not seek to create an additional 'projects visibility platform' - but will facilitate showcasing success stories / case studies / opportunities to showcase on the website/during events.

When, Where, and How to disclose?

When: Business Supporters are required to at least annually disclose progress on their support to the FWC and its goals. While the frequency is fixed, the timing can be based on existing corporate reporting timelines (e.g. ESG report launch, NGO partnership reporting timelines, etc.), to avoid additional burden.

Where: Business Supporters are required to disclose *publicly*. FWC-related disclosure can therefore be for example part of existing reporting structures such as an Annual/ESG report, company website, TNFD reporting, NGO partnership reporting (if publicly available), or via other platforms/reports that are publicly accessible.

How: The FWC will, on an annual basis, check-in with the FWC focal point to help the FWC Core Partners to identify where the progress is disclosed, asking the business supporter to point to the right location(s) by sharing web-links to any relevant reporting.

While the FWC would be open to pro-actively web-source the information, typically the disclosure data would not be consolidated in one place, and asking the business supporters to provide this ensures we are more exhaustive in capturing the progress.

The response will be shared with the "Technical Assistance and Knowledge Sharing Working Group¹⁵", comprised of relevant experts, who will classify and aggregate the inputs before publishing the progress on an aggregated (see below for details) basis. Individual company data (where not public - e.g. if providing additional details) will not be shared with member countries

¹⁵ Working Group consisting of members of IUCN(-SSC), WWF, FAO, Conservation International, UNEP, TNC, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Wetlands International

or other business supporters, unless explicitly agreed otherwise.

Updates of success stories and impacts can be shared with the FWC throughout the year, which will aim to capture such in news stories, events, etc.

How will the disclosed progress be tracked/visualized?

The FWC is envisioning a tracking dashboard - either specific to the FWC, or as part of an existing tracker - that shows the progress vs. the global and national goals, in kms/hectares of rivers and other inland wetlands restored or protected. The tracking is expected to have 2 types¹⁶ of progress figures:

- 1) Progress reported by Member Countries, through their official reporting to the relevant (e.g. CBD, UNFCCC) conventions, towards their national (and the global) FWC goals.
 - This aggregated national progress figure for each member country may include private sector contributions (including those of Business Supporters) but that is to be decided by the respective Member Country and guided by their reporting and data-gathering processes.
- 2) Progress self-reported by Business Supporters and others (e.g. CSOs)
 - For Business Supporters, the tracker will show an aggregated (across business supporters), self-reported figure representing the total contribution (across both Member and Non-Member Countries) of Business Supporters.
 - The FWC does not foresee publishing all individual business contributions as they should not be compared on a like-for-like basis given differences in location, approaches, baselines, etc.

The FWC may highlight specific/individual Business Supporter contributions/impacts in, e.g., news articles, case studies, impact reports, etc. where relevant, and mutually agreed upon.

When businesses share their contributions publicly through their own channels, Business Supporters should adhere to the communication guidelines, which are part of the 'Terms of Participation' agreed upon when joining the program. Most importantly, Business Supporters cannot state any direct contribution to the Freshwater Challenge goals - global and/or national - without validation and explicit agreement by the relevant Member Countries.

Other Disclosure (not required by FWC, only encouraged):

For applicable disclosure & reporting frameworks (e.g., CDP, TNFD, CSRD, GRI, etc.), businesses are encouraged (to continue) to disclose broader Freshwater Challenge-related performance indicators (not for tracking purposes by the FWC, but for informing, e.g., future investments/priorities).

- Performance indicators may include, but not limited to: change in impact drivers of 'Freshwater ecosystem connectivity, biotic composition, hydrological regime, water quality, and habitat; 'health and extent' changes; freshwater ecosystem coverage by protected and conserved areas or extent under restoration. (See also e.g. TNFD suggested global additional metrics), e.g.: Water withdrawals and consumption, Pollution, Land use-change, etc., and indicators on community engagement

¹⁶Progress will likely be broken down across various aggregates, reflecting the variety in nature of outcomes and/or Member Country targets - e.g. restoration of riparian zones reported as a separate figure from kms of free-flowing rivers restored.

How the FWC Core Partners can help business supporters to ‘Disclose’¹⁷:

- Providing guidance on how to disclose on FWC progress based on existing corporate reporting (frameworks);
- Advise on monitoring approaches and metrics related to the identified interventions, etc.;
- Help raise the profile of the supporter in contribution to the FWC and its goals

How is ‘Disclose’ linked to other (water stewardship) initiatives and commitments:

- [NPWI](#)'s list of ‘recommended indicators’ can be complemented by the FWC indicators, most notably hectares/kms restored/protected/sustainably managed, with existing NPWI indicators supporting disclosure against broader performance of the business on FWC-related issues such as pollution, withdrawal, etc.
- There’s alignment between [AWS standard](#)'s step 5.4 and FWC disclosure, but FWC may require some additional details to be disclosed to enable tracking against the goals.
- The metrics required and encouraged to disclose on by the FWC is aligned with e.g., [TNFD's global core, additional and placeholder metrics](#), [SDG indicators](#) 6.6.1, 15.1.2, GBF indicators, and reporting under GRI Biodiversity 101 2024, etc.
- Through [CDP](#), companies can disclose their impacts, management, governance, use and stewardship of water resources; Disclosing against FWC indicators currently requires inputs to open questions such as under the forest or water questionnaires which ask to list any conservation activities and the impacts (in hectares).
- In general, the FWC Core partners will engage with private sector platforms/initiatives and their members around harmonizing private sector results, impacts, and lessons learned, including their disclosures on freshwater ecosystem-relevant contributions using recommended indicators from the FWC minimum indicator framework. Where indicators deviate from existing asks in these most commonly used frameworks, the FWC Core partners will discuss opportunities for alignment with the recommended indicators (including, e.g., VWBA complementary indicators, step 5 of NPWI, etc.)

¹⁷ Exact scope of support is to be determined and will depend on available resources, and the needs of supporters

Annex 2: Scope options for FWC business support

| Scope of FWC support | For who? | Specific Asks: | Specific benefits: |
|--|---|---|--|
| Global | Businesses (typically MNCs) with operations or value chain activities in multiple FWC member countries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See program requirements above (step 1, chapter 3) • Encouraged to engage with the FWC (country members) on a regular basis - e.g. on priority areas, policy engagement, ongoing efforts • Encouraged to showcase best practices, and adopt the ACT-D framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledged by having logo on a designated page on FWC website • Invited to take part in FWC events (e.g., at COPs), capacity building opportunities, and global/regional-scale advocacy and policy engagement opportunities • Early access to FWC developed resources |
| National Supporter to a national program, In selected member countries where these are active. | <p>Businesses/SMEs with operations in (mostly) 1 FWC member country, community-owned enterprises</p> <p>Global Supporters can also join at national level if/when they have priority geographies they would like to further contribute to, and where programs exist</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May vary by country - but member countries are encouraged to adopt similar requirements and activities in their national programs as under the global program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledged by national governments for contribution to national plans & strategies • Focused engagement with a national government and other domestic actors, but where possible/relevant invited to some global FWC events/engagements • Other benefits vary by program <p><i>Note the maturity and design of these national supporter/engagement programs vary</i></p> |

Note: No membership fees will be in place for global business supporters, however businesses will also not have any decision-making power in the global FWC initiative. They will of course be important stakeholders to the initiative.

Other (additional) options for support to the FWC that are open to businesses:

Note: this can be in addition to being a 'global/national business supporter'

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|--|
| Sponsor | Corporate and non-corporate foundations, Consultancies, businesses who would like to fund FWC implementation, support to member countries, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contributing either financially, or 'in kind' ● Contribution needs to be deployable to progress implementation of the FWC - as recommended by the 'Resource Mobilization WG' of the FWC and/or the member countries (if for implementation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acknowledged on sponsor page on the FWC website / resources / other channels ● Supporting the work of the FWC global working groups and/or directly fund the Challenge's implementation by member countries or other actors ● Generate large-scale impact through catalyzation |
| Knowledge partner | Academia, NGOs, Consultancies, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contributing to FWC resources or providing technical assistance to member countries and/or FWC supporters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acknowledged for support on the FWC website / resources / other channels ● Supporting the FWC to deliver on highly-requested knowledge development & capacity building |



FRESHWATER CHALLENGE