

## WaterSense® Labeled Homes Program Transition to Version 2

### 1.0 Introduction

In February 2021, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the program documents supporting Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program, which aims to further promote residential water efficiency and help enable market transformation in the building industry. This document is intended to provide guidance on the transition to Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program and outline the roles of key stakeholders. For more information on the details of the updated program, please see the following documents:

#### IMPORTANT DATES

Stakeholders may continue to pursue certification using the *WaterSense New Home Specification, Version 1.2* for any projects with permits issued by **June 30, 2021**. Certification of these homes must be finalized by **December 31, 2021**.

- [WaterSense Specification for Homes, Version 2.0](#): Includes technical requirements that homes must meet to earn the WaterSense label. This version of the specification is replacing the *WaterSense New Home Specification, Version 1.2*.
- [WaterSense Specification for Homes, Version 2.0 Supporting Statement](#): Provides details for stakeholders to learn more about the revised program.
- [WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 2.0](#): Outlines organizational requirements a prospective Home Certification Organization (HCO) must meet to certify homes for WaterSense; describes requirements for and process by which EPA will evaluate an HCO's proposed certification method (PCM); and defines the requirements, roles, and responsibilities for all parties involved in the construction, verification, certification, and labeling of WaterSense labeled homes. This version of the certification system is replacing the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3*.
- [WaterSense Technical Evaluation Process for Approving Home Certification Methods](#): Describes the calculations and assumptions EPA uses to evaluate a PCM.

All documents listed above are effective as of February 2021. The *WaterSense Specification for Homes, Version 2.0* is available for stakeholders to use for the labeling of homes for WaterSense as of this date.

### 2.0 Background and Version 2 Pilot Program

EPA has initiated changes to the overall structure of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program with Version 2. Previously, a single approved Program Administrator and its approved Licensed Certification Providers (LCPs) administered the program (though the program remained open to other applicants), and homes had to meet a prescriptive set of requirements to earn the WaterSense label. With Version 2, EPA is encouraging additional organizations (known as HCOs) to participate and offer certification to earn the WaterSense label in ways conducive to their existing organizational structures and the needs of their stakeholders. Furthermore, EPA has incorporated flexibility in the specification criteria. The specification now requires that a home demonstrate water efficiency at a level the specification prescribes, which is beyond that of a home with characteristics typical of new construction. HCOs use its WaterSense Approved Certification Method (WACM) to certify that a home meets this water efficiency level.

To stay current with changes in the market for home certifications and performance ratings, and in anticipation of releasing Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program, EPA published the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3* on May 14, 2020. This document outlined the requirements, roles, and responsibilities for all parties involved in the construction, verification, certification, and labeling of homes for WaterSense. As described in the [Explanation of Revisions to the WaterSense Home Certification System](#), Version 1.3 of the certification system reflected changes in the industry, established the necessary certification infrastructure (including approval of HCOs) to operate the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program in the current marketplace, and helped bridge the gap between Version 1.2 and Version 2.0. EPA subsequently instituted a pilot program to evaluate the efficacy of the draft Version 2 program requirements and specification criteria.

From the implementation of the pilot program, EPA identified and made minor clarifications when finalizing the Version 2 program documents, but otherwise confirmed its functionality in the home certification marketplace and effectiveness at meeting EPA's goals. EPA has also formalized the requirements for development, approval, and implementation of certification methods that were articulated in the draft Version 2.0 publications of the *WaterSense Home Certification System* and *WaterSense Specification for Homes*.

### **3.0 Transition of Technical and Certification Requirements**

The following subsections summarize the transition process and timing applicable to the technical and certification requirements for homes to earn the WaterSense label.

#### **3.1 Specification and Technical Requirements**

The *WaterSense Specification for Homes, Version 2.0* is available for stakeholders to use for the labeling of homes for WaterSense immediately upon release.

Stakeholders may continue to pursue certification using the *WaterSense New Home Specification, Version 1.2* for any projects with permits issued by June 30, 2021. Certification of these homes must be finalized by December 31, 2021. After this date, all builders pursuing the WaterSense label for a home must meet the technical requirements of the *WaterSense Specification for Homes, Version 2.0*.

#### **3.2 Certification and Oversight Requirements**

The transition from Program Administrators to HCOs that was initiated by the release of the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3* in May 2020 establishes the certification infrastructure needed to support Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program. As of January 1, 2021, this process is complete and all homes must be certified by an approved HCO.

Visit the [WaterSense HCO Directory](#) for a list of approved HCOs.

### **4.0 Summary of Impacts to Existing and Prospective Stakeholders**

The following subsections summarize changes to key stakeholders' roles with the transition to Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program.

#### 4.1 HCOs Approved Under the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3*

EPA will coordinate directly with the HCOs approved under Version 1.3 to ensure they meet the requirements of the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 2.0*. EPA will also coordinate with HCOs participating in the Version 2 pilot program to ensure their respective certification methods are evaluated using the final *WaterSense Technical Evaluation Process for Approving Home Certification Methods* to confirm they are able to differentiate homes that meet WaterSense's water efficiency requirement. Given that the core oversight requirements between Version 1.3 and Version 2.0 of the certification system are largely identical and the modest nature of other changes between the April 2019 draft and the final Version 2.0 program documents, EPA anticipates being able to approve HCOs participating in the Version 2 pilot without a disruption in support for their builder and verifier partners, and without requiring that they re-apply for licensing.

#### 4.2 Prospective HCOs

Prospective HCOs interested in certifying and labeling homes in accordance with the *WaterSense Specification for Homes, Version 2.0* can now apply by completing the [Application for Home Certification Organization \(HCO\) and Proposed Certification Method \(PCM\) Approval](#), available on the WaterSense website. EPA encourages prospective HCOs to contact the WaterSense Helpline at [watersense@epa.gov](mailto:watersense@epa.gov) prior to completing the application to have a preliminary discussion about HCO requirements.

#### 4.3 Licensed Certification Providers (LCPs)

Under the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3*, EPA began transitioning away from a certification structure and direct partnership that involves LCPs (or "WaterSense Providers"). Version 1.3 established a process whereby HCOs are licensed to issue the WaterSense label as well as provide training and oversight of verifiers. This transition process concluded as of January 1, 2021, with LCPs no longer being licensed directly to issue the WaterSense label or provide the training required to verify homes for the WaterSense label.

While LCPs are no longer directly licensed to issue the WaterSense label or training, they remain a vital part of the certification and quality assurance structure approved for RESNET (an approved HCO for Version 1.3 and the Version 2 pilot, and previously the sole Program Administrator with authority to approve LCPs under Version 1.2 and prior versions of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program). If they have not already done so, former WaterSense LCPs should contact RESNET to learn more about continuing their involvement with the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program as a HERS<sub>H2O</sub>/WaterSense Provider.

#### 4.4 Builder Partners

Existing builder partners do not need to take any action and existing partnership agreements remain in effect. Builder partners in the process of obtaining certification and the WaterSense label are able to pursue certification using the *WaterSense New Home Specification, Version 1.2* for any projects with permits issued by June 30, 2021. Certification of these homes must be finalized by December 31, 2021. After December 31, 2021 all homes must meet the technical requirements of the *WaterSense Specification for Homes, Version 2.0* to earn the WaterSense label.

The Version 2.0 specification and requirements are available for stakeholders to use for labeling of homes for WaterSense immediately upon release. Builders interested in obtaining certification under Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program can coordinate immediately with [approved HCOs](#) and/or their [approved verifiers](#) to learn more about the HCOs' WACM requirements and the process of certifying and labeling homes in accordance with the *WaterSense Specification for Homes, Version 2.0*.

As a continued WaterSense program requirement and in keeping with previous versions of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program, builders interested in having homes certified and labeled must have a partnership agreement in place with EPA. As stated above, partnership agreements for current builder partners are not affected by the release of Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program and remain in full force and effect. Prospective builder partners interested in participating in the program can apply by completing the [Builder Partnership Agreement](#) on the WaterSense website.

#### **4.5 Water Efficiency Inspectors/WaterSense Home Verifiers**

All WaterSense home verifiers (akin to the previous water efficiency inspectors and sometimes referred to as "WaterSense raters") will need to receive training and authorization from an approved HCO to verify homes in accordance with Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program. This includes those previously approved to verify homes to the *WaterSense New Home Specification, Version 1.2*.

As noted above, verifiers working on current projects scheduled for completion before December 31, 2021, may be able to use the Version 1.2 specification. It is recommended that verifiers coordinate with their HCO on this subject.

#### **5.0 For More Information**

If you have questions about the transition to Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program, please contact the WaterSense Helpline at [watersense@epa.gov](mailto:watersense@epa.gov) or (866) WTR-SENS (987-7367).