

# Steps for Adopting the Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper Program as a WaterSense® Labeled Program

---



The North Coast Water Conservation Group's (NCWCG's) Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) Program has earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense label as an irrigation system auditor certification program. QWEL provides more than 20 hours of educational materials designed to equip those who complete the program with a better understanding of landscape water management for the landscape industry. The program has already proved successful in Sonoma and Marin counties, resulting in nearly 300 graduates in its first year. To expand upon the success achieved in these counties, NCWCG has expanded the QWEL program throughout California and nationwide in a campaign to improve landscape water management around the country.



If your organization chooses to adopt the QWEL program and is approved to offer it in your region, you will be eligible to promote your QWEL program as a WaterSense labeled professional certification program—a mark of distinction. Likewise, irrigation professionals certified through your approved program will be eligible to become WaterSense irrigation partners. The following summarizes the steps and ongoing requirements you must complete in order to offer the QWEL program in your area.

## STEP 1 – Submit an Application

You may apply in one of two ways: 1) you may write a brief explanation that demonstrates your instructors' proficiency in all subject areas covered by QWEL and submit this explanation along with your current resume to the address below, or 2) you may complete either the 12 week QWEL training course and pass the QWEL exam OR complete QWEL's "Train the Trainer" program (a two to three day intensive training). Then, mail evidence of your passing score along with a current resume and the date of the training you completed to the address below. Note, QWEL's materials may not be used until you receive written final approval from the Board of Directors and EPA's WaterSense program. The mailing address for your application is:

Sonoma County Water Agency  
Water Conservation Program  
Attn: QWEL Training  
P.O. Box 11628  
Santa Rosa, CA 95406

## STEP 2 – Earn Approval

You will receive a written denial or conditional approval from NCWCG after you submit an application. If you receive conditional approval you must complete the following steps:

- Revise Class One – "Overview" such that this section addresses the local sources of public water supplies and how water is collected for use. Class One should ensure that your students are knowledgeable about local programs for water conservation, instruct students on how to read a water meter and understand its uses for homeowners and landscapers, and teach students how to perform basic leak detection.
- Submit your revised Class One to QWEL for Board review and approval along with a signed copy of the QWEL Adopting Organization Terms and Conditions statement.
- Following QWEL Board review, NCWCG will issue a final letter of approval (and at this time NCWCG will notify WaterSense of your intention to adopt QWEL).
- To promote your QWEL program as a WaterSense labeled certification program, you must sign a Partnership Agreement with WaterSense as a professional certifying organization. To do this, complete

and submit a Partnership Agreement to WaterSense and include a copy of the final approval letter from NCWCG in lieu of the WaterSense Labeled Program Application Form.

- WaterSense will send you “welcome materials” with a signed copy of the Partnership Agreement, as well as graphic files of the WaterSense label and partner logo. NCWCG will not provide WaterSense program marks to any adopting organization.

Following program approval from NCWCG and partnership approval from WaterSense, your organization must stay up to date on the following “Ongoing Responsibilities” and adhere to the “Terms and Conditions” listed below.

### **STEP 3 – Ongoing Responsibilities**

- Teach the QWEL program in its entirety. You may not alter the educational content (aside from Course One) nor alter the QWEL exam.
- Issue certificates with unique ID numbers to program graduates using QWEL’s certificate template.
- Keep your list of QWEL graduates current on the QWEL website ([www.qweltraining.com](http://www.qweltraining.com)) by submitting updated lists of each graduate’s status to NCWCG after each training is complete and annually to facilitate the renewals process.
- Maintain a database of graduates and track and approve each graduate’s continuing education units (two CEUs per year) as specified in the QWEL training manual.
- Participate in QWEL Board quarterly conference calls.

### **Additional Terms and Conditions**

- All professional certifying organization partners, including those that adopt QWEL, must develop a process for tracking continuing education/renewals of professionals certified through their program. The primary contact with the organizations should be available for questions from WaterSense regarding the certification status of professionals certified through their program.
- WaterSense will include in its welcome materials guidance on how to talk about your partnership with WaterSense and how to correctly use the WaterSense program marks. You must adhere to this guidance.
- All QWEL adopting organizations must follow testing protocols outlined in the QWEL training manual. Your organization must administer and grade the exam in accordance with the procedures outlined in the QWEL training manual, including using QWEL’s passing score, who is eligible to administer and score the exam, safekeeping of the exam content, etc.
- As a professional certifying organization partner, your organization will be authorized to use the WaterSense partner logo in conjunction with your organization’s name. Your organization will be authorized to use the WaterSense label in conjunction with your QWEL certification program.
- NCWCG is responsible for ensuring that each adopting organization’s QWEL program continues to meet the requirements of the WaterSense specification for irrigation system auditor certification programs. If NCWCG is no longer comfortable with the integrity of the QWEL program offered by an adopting organization, NCWCG will notify WaterSense.
- Organizations must agree to use updated materials as the QWEL Board makes them available.

For more information on QWEL, please contact the Sonoma County Water Agency at (707) 547-1933 or City of Santa Rosa Water Conservation Program at (707) 543-3988.

For more information on WaterSense, please contact the WaterSense Helpline at (866) WTR-SENS (987-7367) or [watersense@epa.gov](mailto:watersense@epa.gov).