

# Volumetric Water Benefits Accounting



COUNCIL OF THE GREAT LAKES REGION  
Solving for Sustainability

In a competitive, purpose-driven marketplace, ignoring water risks is not an option. By prioritizing water stewardship, businesses unlock strategic value, reducing costs, mitigating risk, and strengthening stakeholder trust. Lead boldly and turn vulnerabilities into opportunities for growth.

Implementing VWBA builds credibility by providing transparent, science-based metrics for water stewardship outcomes. Independent, volumetric accounting demonstrates accountability, strengthens stakeholder confidence, and differentiates your organization as a trusted sustainability leader. Acting now ensures your water initiatives deliver measurable impact and recognized value.



## VWBA: A Common Language for Measuring Water Impact

Volumetric Water Benefit Accounting (VWBA) provides a consistent, science-aligned method for companies to quantify and communicate the real water benefits of their stewardship actions. By converting efficiency upgrades, water reuse, green infrastructure, or watershed restoration into measurable volumetric outcomes, VWBA shows how corporate projects contribute to improved hydrology and reduced basin stress.

In the Great Lakes region, VWBA helps companies link site-level actions to basin-wide outcomes, strengthening transparency, comparability, and accountability across sectors. While centered on volumetric gains, the framework also emphasizes that meaningful impact requires sustained hydrological improvements and attention to social, ecological, and economic co-benefits during project design.

As interest grows in water credits, replenishment claims, and water-benefit markets, VWBA plays a critical governance role by:



Ensuring hydrological benefits are real, additional, and not overstated



Providing a credible basis for any participation in emerging water-credit or replenishment programs



Differentiating genuine basin improvement from accounting-only claims

By complementing global frameworks, such as AWS, SBTN, and the Water Resilience Coalition, VWBA strengthens corporate reporting and supports more informed, accountable decision-making.

## Measuring Impact through VWBA

VWBA 2.0 provides a standardized, science-based framework for quantifying, tracking, and communicating the volumetric water benefits of stewardship activities. It guides practitioners through understanding local catchment context, selecting and evaluating projects, quantifying benefits with robust methods, planning and implementing projects, and making credible claims. VWBA supports corporate water goals by providing transparent, comparable metrics that reflect positive hydrological changes and help mitigate shared water risks.

VWBA provides a clear, practical structure for designing credible water projects:

### Step 1 – Identify Shared Challenges

Assess local hydrology, water users, and basin priorities through data and stakeholder input.

### Step 2 – Choose the Right Activities and Partners

Select interventions that directly address basin needs, clarify partner roles, and avoid unintended impacts.

### Step 3 – Measure Benefits with Defensible Data

Set baselines, choose appropriate indicators, and calculate volumetric benefits using transparent, science-aligned methods.

Select Projects That Truly Matter - VWBA is most effective when projects respond to actual basin challenges and have community buy-in. Choose actions that advance multiple benefits such as better water quality, improved access, or restored ecosystems.

Make Claims That Are Credible and Clear - Ground volumetric claims in reliable data and transparent assumptions. Always document:

- How benefits were calculated
- How attribution was assigned
- The timeframe being claimed

Independent verification strengthens credibility and public reporting.

Connect VWBA to Your Broader Water Strategy - VWBA works best when paired with existing frameworks (such as AWS, CDP Water Security, GRI 303, and SBTN freshwater guidance), linking project outcomes to a company's larger water and nature strategy.

#### *Look Beyond Volumes Alone*

VWBA measures water volume, but meaningful impact goes beyond quantity. Leading companies pair volumetric results with non-volumetric benefits, such as ecosystem restoration, improved community outcomes, and greater climate resilience, to deliver durable, basin-aligned results.

## Adopt VWBA for Credible Impact

Water is a strategic business risk and a powerful lever for resilience and growth. To lead in a world where climate change amplifies water challenges, executives must act boldly and credibly. Here's how to set the standard for stewardship and deliver measurable impact:

- Adopt VWBA 2.0 as your benchmark for water stewardship accounting to ensure science-based, defensible claims that stand up to investor and stakeholder scrutiny.
- Integrate the VWBA process into your water strategy to align investments with shared catchment priorities and corporate objectives.
- Collaborate with trusted partners and fund projects that generate quantifiable volumetric benefits while delivering social, economic, and environmental value.
- Commit to transparent reporting and continuous improvement to build trust, demonstrate leadership, and accelerate progress toward SDG 6 and corporate water targets.
- Act now as water risks escalate, proactive stewardship is not optional; it's essential for resilience, reputation, and long-term business sustainability.

