Intel's Corporate Water Stewardship Strategy

WHO

In implementing their corporate water stewardship strategy, Intel works with organizations such as Bonneville Environmental Foundation, LimnoTech, The Nature Conservancy, and others.

WHAT

Intel was the first large technology corporation to adopt a comprehensive water stewardship strategy and associated targets. Their three-pronged approach includes:

1. **Conservation of water in operations:** To reduce water used in manufacturing, Intel is investing in water efficiency and using reclaimed water purchased from municipalities.
2. **Creating technology solutions to enable others to rethink ways they use and conserve water:** Intel is leveraging the potential of its Internet of Things (IoT) business to facilitate water conservation and efficiency in other businesses and operations as well as their own.
3. **Collaboration on water initiatives with communities:** Intel is the first tech company to announce a public water goal to restore 100% of its global freshwater consumption by 2025. The goal is based on closing the gap in the company-wide water balance by funding a portfolio of projects in local watersheds. As of January 2020, Intel has made significant progress toward its goal and has funded 21 projects that are estimated to restore more than 1.6 billions gallons of water each year once complete.

WHY

Manufacturing computer chips and hardware is water-intensive, and many of Intel's facilities are in water scarce regions, which makes water a material issue for the company. Intel seeks to reduce business risk, and support the communities in which they operate, by practicing corporate water stewardship. The company also aims to influence peer companies to set similarly ambitious water targets, acknowledging the need for collaborative action to address the water challenges they face.

WHERE

Intel's operations in Arizona are one of the company's largest water users globally. To address water risks, the company has supported 11 water restoration projects that benefit Arizona's water resources.

One of Intel's water restoration projects in Colorado is supporting the conversion of alfalfa crops to low-water use pasture grasses and irrigation efficiency improvements to reduce water diversion from the Colorado River.

For more information visit: www.intel.com/water

CHALLENGES

- **Finding partnerships:** It can be difficult to find the right watershed conservation projects and on-the-ground partners that will meet Intel's objectives towards fulfilling its corporate water restoration commitments. This has been especially true for projects outside of the United States.
- **Impact measurement**: There is a lack of common understanding around water stewardship terms like "water neutral" and "replenish." Companies must self-define their water goals and select impact metrics. Because of this lack of common definitions and metrics, companies can struggle to defensibly measure and demonstrate their impact.
- **Communication:** Related to impact measurement, it can be difficult to communicate water stewardship outcomes when there is not a common language for doing so.

SUCCESSES

- Intel's water conservation projects supporting source watersheds have saved over 60 billion gallons of water over the last two decades.
- Intel is developing leadership in corporate water stewardship, sparking and accelerating action by others in the sector and developing new collaborations with peer companies.

KEY INSIGHTS

- Partnerships are key to making any progress on watershed conservation projects. It is important to identify and build relationships with an intermediary organization with expertise and relationship in the field. For example, working with the Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF) has helped to facilitate engagement with NGOs and navigate different ways of approaching projects.
- Internal buy-in and commitment is very important to achieving water conservation in operations. Intel has teams embedded in operations across the company to develop and advance leadership for water use efficiency.

SCALING & REPLICATING

For successful scaling of the number and impact of water stewardship projects, multistakeholder groups such as the California Water Action Collaborative (CWAC) are needed for every region to help develop partnerships and catalyze action. The lack of these platforms in regions where Intel would like to engage is slowing efforts to scale there.

TAGS

Stewardship Strategies

- Water Management in Direct Operations
- Value Chain Engagement
- Collaboration at Watershed Level
- Nexus Approaches

SDG 6 Targets

PACIFIC INSTITUTE

This case study was created by the Pacific Institute for the Walton Family Foundation.