



**PLANET**  
Professional Landcare Network

# ISSUE BRIEFING

**SUBJECT:**  
**EPA WaterSense Program**

**BACKGROUND:** On December 10, 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) WaterSense program released the final specification for single-family new homes. Under the specification, any new home constructed to meet the criteria defined in the specification will be eligible to be labeled as "water-efficient" under the WaterSense program.

A key component of the criteria defined in the specification is the requirement to meet one of two options regarding outdoor landscape design. One option is to use a clearly defined water budget tool, based on the best management practices of the Irrigation Association, and the other is to uniformly restrict a new home's turfgrass footprint to only 40 percent of the home's landscapable area, regardless of the location's climate and geography.

The landscape and turfgrass irrigation industry, which contributes nearly \$16 billion and 120,000 jobs to the nation's economy, believes in results through innovation and in the promotion of efficient irrigation technologies, products, and services. PLANET has significant concerns regarding the arbitrary "one-size-fits-all" turfgrass restrictions. PLANET continues to urge the EPA to support the water budget tool as the only viable option — one that is driven by local needs and data, and truly promotes the advancements of irrigation efficiencies and technologies.

The congressional authorization of WaterSense has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives as H.R. 1967. PLANET urges Congress to remove the "one-size-fits-all" turfgrass restriction component of the single-family new homes program as authorization is considered in the House and Senate.

Created in 2006 by the EPA, the WaterSense program is a voluntary public-private partnership program with the goal of enhancing the market for nonagricultural, water-efficient products and services. It includes labeling initiatives, landscape irrigation professional services, and landscape irrigation products. The landscape irrigation professional labeling program affords certified irrigation contractors the ability to promote themselves as EPA WaterSense partners, through the use of the WaterSense label.

**REQUESTED ACTION:** PLANET believes that the arbitrary "one-size-fits-all" turfgrass restriction, contained within the final specification for single-family new homes, will have a significant negative impact on the landscape industry and on the local environments where these homes will be built.

Recognizing this negative economic and environmental impact, PLANET asks you not support H.R. 1967 until it includes language that removes the restrictions associated specifically with turfgrass and promotes the water budget tool as the only option of the single-family new homes specification.