GRI STANDARDS

GRI GSSB

GRI 303: WATER AND EFFLUENTS 2018

GRI 303

Contents

About this Standard

Responsibility	This Standard is issued by the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB). Any feedback on the GRI Standards can be submitted to standards@globalreporting.org for the consideration of the GSSB.
Scope	*GRI 303: Water and Effluents* sets out reporting requirements on the topic of water and effluents. This Standard can be used by an organization of any size, type, sector or geographic location that wants to report on its impacts related to this topic.
Normative references	This Standard is to be used together with the most recent versions of the following documents: *GRI 101: Foundation* *GRI 103: Management Approach* *GRI Standards Glossary* In the text of this Standard, terms defined in the Glossary are underlined.
Effective date	This Standard is effective for reports or other materials published on or after 1 January 2021. Earlier adoption is encouraged.

Note: This document includes hyperlinks to other Standards. In most browsers, using **'ctrl' + click** will open external links in a new browser window. After clicking on a link, use **'alt' + left arrow** to return to the previous view.

Introduction

A. Overview

This Standard is part of the set of GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards (GRI Standards). The Standards are designed to be used by organizations to report about their impacts on the economy, the environment, and society.

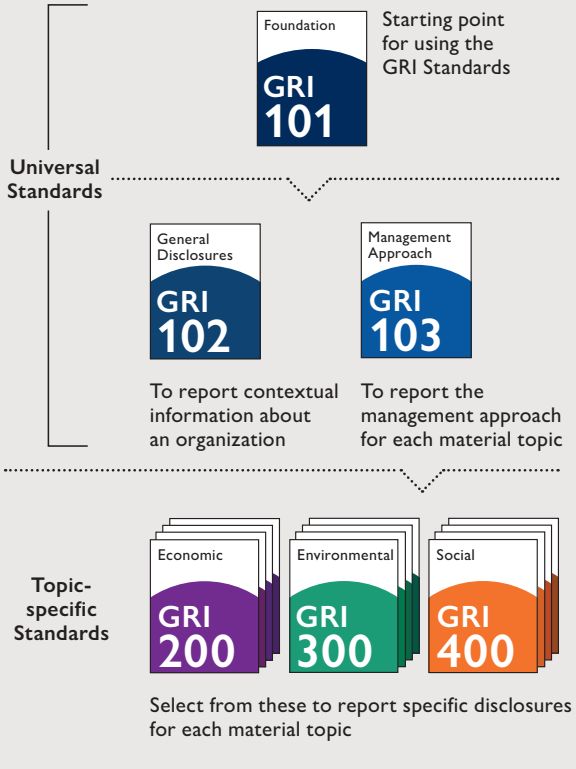
The GRI Standards are structured as a set of interrelated, modular standards. The full set can be downloaded at www.globalreporting.org/standards/.

There are three universal Standards that apply to every organization preparing a sustainability report:

GRI 101: Foundation
GRI 102: General Disclosures
GRI 103: Management Approach

GRI 101: Foundation is the starting point for using the GRI Standards. It has essential information on how to use and reference the Standards.

Figure 1
Overview of the set of GRI Standards



An organization then selects from the set of topic-specific GRI Standards for reporting on its material topics.

See the Reporting Principles for defining report content in *GRI 101: Foundation* for more information on how to identify material topics.

The topic-specific GRI Standards are organized into three series: 200 (Economic topics), 300 (Environmental topics), and 400 (Social topics).

Each topic Standard includes disclosures specific to that topic, and is designed to be used together with *GRI 103: Management Approach*, which is used to report the management approach for the topic.

GRI 303: Water and Effluents is a topic-specific GRI Standard in the 300 series (Environmental topics).

B. Using the GRI Standards and making claims

There are two basic approaches for using the GRI Standards. For each way of using the Standards there is a corresponding claim, or statement of use, which an organization is required to include in any published materials.

1. The GRI Standards can be used as a set to prepare a sustainability report that is in accordance with the Standards. There are two options for preparing a report in accordance (Core or Comprehensive), depending on the extent of disclosures included in the report.

   An organization preparing a report in accordance with the GRI Standards uses this Standard, *GRI 303: Water and Effluents*, if this is one of its material topics.

2. Selected GRI Standards, or parts of their content, can also be used to report specific information, without preparing a report in accordance with the Standards. Any published materials that use the GRI Standards in this way are to include a 'GRI-referenced' claim.

See Section 3 of *GRI 101: Foundation* for more information on how to use the GRI Standards, and the specific claims that organizations are required to include in any published materials.

Reasons for omission as set out in *GRI 101: Foundation* are applicable to this Standard. See clause 3.2 in *GRI 101* for requirements on reasons for omission.

C. Requirements, recommendations and guidance

The GRI Standards include:

Requirements. These are mandatory instructions. In the text, requirements are presented in **bold font** and indicated with the word 'shall'. Requirements are to be read in the context of recommendations and guidance; however, the organization is not required to comply with recommendations or guidance in order to claim that a report has been prepared in accordance with the Standards.

Recommendations. These are cases where a particular course of action is encouraged, but not required. In the text, the word 'should' indicates a recommendation.

Guidance. These sections include background information, explanations and examples to help organizations better understand the requirements.

An organization is required to comply with all applicable requirements in order to claim that its report has been prepared in accordance with the GRI Standards. See *GRI 101: Foundation* for more information.

D. Background context

In the context of the GRI Standards, the environmental dimension of sustainability concerns an organization's impacts on living and non-living natural systems, including land, air, water, and ecosystems.

GRI 303 addresses the topic of water and effluents.

Access to fresh water is essential for human life and wellbeing, and is recognized by the United Nations (UN) as a human right. The Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the UN as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, include key targets related to sustainable water management under Goal 6: 'Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all'. These targets aim, for example, to achieve universal access to safe and affordable drinking water, improve water quality, and address water scarcity.

The amount of water withdrawn and consumed by an organization and the quality of its discharges, can impact the functioning of the ecosystem in numerous ways. Direct impacts on a catchment can have wider impacts on the quality of life in an area, including social and economic consequences for local communities and indigenous peoples.

Since water is a shared resource, and water-related impacts are localized, organizations are increasingly being encouraged to:

- prioritize action in areas with water stress;
- understand and respond to local contexts, including local social and environmental impacts;
- aim to benefit and respect the needs and priorities of all water users in an area;
- align their approaches and collective actions with other water users and with effective public policy.

Through a comprehensive understanding of its water use, an organization can assess the impacts it has on water resources that benefit the ecosystem, other water users, and the organization itself. An organization, particularly a water-intensive one, can use this information for effective water management.

The disclosures in this Standard are designed to help an organization better understand and communicate its significant water-related impacts, and how it manages them.

Due to the strong relationship between water withdrawal, consumption, and discharge, the reporting organization is expected to report on all three topic-specific disclosures of *GRI 303*. Since water-related impacts are often localized, the organization is encouraged, as much as possible, to support any quantitative aggregate-level information with narrative descriptions of any contextual factors that were considered when compiling the information. This will provide a more comprehensive overview of the organization's water use.

GRI 303: Water and Effluents

This Standard includes disclosures on the management approach and topic-specific disclosures. These are set out in the Standard as follows:

- Management approach disclosures
  - Disclosure 303-1 Interactions with water as a shared resource
  - Disclosure 303-2 Management of water discharge-related impacts
- Topic-specific disclosures
  - Disclosure 303-3 Water withdrawal
  - Disclosure 303-4 Water discharge
  - Disclosure 303-5 Water consumption

1. Management approach disclosures

Management approach disclosures are a narrative explanation of how an organization manages a material topic, the associated impacts, and stakeholders' reasonable expectations and interests. Any organization that claims its report has been prepared in accordance with the GRI Standards is required to report on its management approach for every material topic.

An organization that has identified water and effluents as a material topic is required to report its management approach for this topic using both the disclosures in *GRI 103: Management Approach*, and the management approach disclosures in this section.

The disclosures in this section focus on how an organization identifies and manages its water-related impacts. This section is therefore designed to supplement – and not to replace – the content in *GRI 103*.

Reporting requirements

1.1 The reporting organization shall report its management approach for water and effluents using *GRI 103: Management Approach*.

Guidance

Background

The disclosures in this section request essential information to help understand how an organization manages water-related impacts. The reporting organization can report any additional information about its water stewardship efforts and practices.

An effective management approach accounts for the local context of water use, and acknowledges the importance of stewarding water as a shared resource. An organization can reduce its water withdrawal, consumption, discharge, and associated impacts through efficiency measures, such as water recycling and reuse, and process redesign, as well as through collective actions that extend beyond its operations within the catchment. It can improve water quality through better treatment of water discharge.

Disclosure 303-1
Interactions with water as a shared resource

Reporting requirements

Disclosure 303-1

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

a. **A description of how the organization interacts with water, including how and where water is withdrawn, consumed, and discharged, and the water-related impacts caused or contributed to, or directly linked to the organization's activities, products or services by a business relationship (e.g., impacts caused by runoff).**

b. **A description of the approach used to identify water-related impacts, including the scope of assessments, their timeframe, and any tools or methodologies used.**

c. **A description of how water-related impacts are addressed, including how the organization works with stakeholders to steward water as a shared resource, and how it engages with suppliers or customers with significant water-related impacts.**

d. **An explanation of the process for setting any water-related goals and targets that are part of the organization's management approach, and how they relate to public policy and the local context of each area with water stress.**

Reporting recommendations

1.2 The reporting organization should report the following additional information:

1.2.1 An overview of water use across the organization's value chain;

1.2.2 A list of specific catchments where the organization causes significant water-related impacts.

Guidance

Guidance for Disclosure 303-1

Through its value chain, an organization can affect both the quality as well as the availability of water. If the reporting organization has identified significant water-related impacts in the value chain, which includes entities with which the organization has a direct or indirect business relationship and which either: (a) supply products or services that contribute to the organization's own products or services, or (b) receive products or services from the organization, it is required to report information about these impacts. For describing where the impacts occur (i.e., topic Boundary), see Guidance for Disclosure 103-1-b.

The description of how the organization interacts with water can include information on specific catchments where water is withdrawn, consumed, and discharged, and information on what the water is used for in direct operations and elsewhere in the value chain (e.g., for cooling, storage, incorporating in products, growing crops).

In the context of this Standard, suppliers with significant water-related impacts may include suppliers of water-intensive commodities or services, suppliers located in areas with water stress, and/or suppliers with significant impacts on the local water environment and the related local communities.

If applicable, the organization can describe its environmental impacts caused by runoff, and how they are addressed. For example, runoff can carry high-nutrient and pollution loads due to the organization's activities, leading to eutrophication and other negative impacts on local waterbodies.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-1-b

When assessing impacts, it is important that the organization consider its future impacts on water quality and availability, as these factors can change over time.

Tools and methodologies for identifying impacts can include life cycle assessments, environmental impact assessments, water footprint assessments, scenario analysis, and stakeholder engagement. If information is estimated or modeled, rather than sourced from direct measurements, the organization can explain its estimation or modeling methods.

Disclosure 303-1
Continued

Guidance for Disclosure 303-1-c

Working with stakeholders is critical for an organization to steward water as a shared resource and account for the needs of other water users of the catchment. An organization's stakeholders can include:

- suppliers with significant water-related impacts;
- users of its products and services;
- local communities and action groups;
- employees and other workers;
- other water users in its sector or industry;
- governments, regulators, and civil society organizations;
- global initiatives, trade associations, and partnerships.

The organization can describe how it participates in discussions with stakeholders, the frequency of this engagement, and its role in these discussions. Outcomes of working with stakeholders can include, for example, collective target-setting for water use, increased investment in infrastructure, policy advocacy, and capacity building and awareness raising.

When reporting on its engagement with suppliers, the organization can describe:

- how the organization engages with its suppliers to help them improve their water management practices;
- the number of suppliers engaged;
- the outcomes of this engagement;
- the amount of procurement that the proportion of engaged suppliers represents;
- why information is not requested from suppliers with significant water-related impacts;
- future plans and goals for working with suppliers to reduce water-related impacts.

Water impacts related to products and services might be addressed by, for example, improving product design, providing information and advice on the responsible use of products and services, and holding regular consultations with users.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-1-d

Meaningful targets for managing water-related impacts:

- account for the local context where water is withdrawn and discharged;
- are scientifically informed by sustainable thresholds and the social context of a given catchment;
- align with public sector efforts, such as the water-related targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 6, or targets set by national and local government institutions;
- are informed by the advocacy of other stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, trade associations, and action groups.

See references 2 and 4 in the References section.

The organization can report its progress against goals and targets using clause 1.5 in *GRI 103: Management Approach*.

Guidance for clause 1.2.1

The organization can present the overview of water use across its value chain as a breakdown, in graphic or written form, showing, for example, parts of the value chain where water consumption is significant and the commodities to which it is related, or the percentage of commodity sourcing that comes from catchments located in areas with water stress. The organization is encouraged to include information about upstream as well as downstream water use (e.g., use of water for consumer products, such as soaps, shampoos, and cleaning solutions).

Guidance for clause 1.2.2

To identify catchments where it causes water-related impacts, the organization can use global catchment data sets. These include the CEO Water Mandate 'Interactive Database of the World's River Basins'[1], and the WWF 'HydroSHEDS'[2].

[1] CEO Water Mandate, *Interactive Database of the World's River Basins*, riverbasins.wateractionhub.org/, accessed on 1 June 2018.
[2] WWF, *HydroSHEDS*, http://www.hydrosheds.org/, accessed on 1 June 2018.

Disclosure 303-2
Management of water discharge-related impacts

Reporting requirements

Disclosure 303-2

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

a. A description of any minimum standards set for the quality of effluent discharge, and how these minimum standards were determined, including:

- **i. how standards for facilities operating in locations with no local discharge requirements were determined;**
- **ii. any internally developed water quality standards or guidelines;**
- **iii. any sector-specific standards considered;**
- **iv. whether the profile of the receiving waterbody was considered.**

Guidance

Guidance for Disclosure 303-2

Minimum standards are those that go beyond regulatory requirements in controlling the quality of effluent discharge.

Water quality refers to the physical, chemical, biological, and taste-related characteristics of water. It is a measure of water suitability for a given purpose or function, including its use as a human right. Water quality standards help uphold water quality in order to protect ecosystems, wildlife, and human health and welfare, and can be based on water properties, such as temperature or pH value.

The specific choice of water quality standards and parameters can vary depending on an organization's products, services, and facility locations, and can depend on national and/or regional regulations, as well as the profile of the receiving waterbody.

2. Topic-specific disclosures

Disclosure 303-3
Water withdrawal

Reporting requirements

Disclosure 303-3

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

a. Total water withdrawal from all areas in megaliters, and a breakdown of this total by the following sources, if applicable:

- **i. Surface water;**
- **ii. Groundwater;**
- **iii. Seawater;**
- **iv. Produced water;**
- **v. Third-party water.**

b. Total water withdrawal from all areas with water stress in megaliters, and a breakdown of this total by the following sources, if applicable:

- **i. Surface water;**
- **ii. Groundwater;**
- **iii. Seawater;**
- **iv. Produced water;**
- **v. Third-party water, and a breakdown of this total by the withdrawal sources listed in i-iv.**

c. A breakdown of total water withdrawal from each of the sources listed in Disclosures 303-3-a and 303-3-b in megaliters by the following categories:

- **i. Freshwater (≤1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids);**
- **ii. Other water (>1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids).**

d. Any contextual information necessary to understand how the data have been compiled, such as any standards, methodologies, and assumptions used.

2.1 When compiling the information specified in Disclosure 303-3, the reporting organization shall use publicly available and credible tools and methodologies for assessing water stress in an area.

Reporting recommendations

2.2 The reporting organization should report the following additional information:

2.2.1 A breakdown of total water withdrawal in megaliters by withdrawal source categories listed in Disclosure 303-3, at each facility in areas with water stress;

2.2.2 Total water withdrawal in megaliters by suppliers with significant water-related impacts in areas with water stress.

Disclosure 303-3
Continued

Guidance

Background

The volume of water withdrawal from areas with water stress can indicate an organization's impacts in sensitive locations.

To learn more about locations where water-related impacts might be significant, and where actions to address them are most needed, the reporting organization can also report the information requested in Disclosure 303-3 for each facility in areas with water stress. This can give stakeholders more confidence in the organization's water stewardship efforts and practices.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-3

For an example of how to present information on requirements in Disclosure 303-3, see Table 1.

Surface water includes collected or harvested rainwater. Third-party water includes water supplied by municipal water networks or other organizations.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-3-b

Water stress refers to the ability, or lack thereof, to meet the human and ecological demand for water. Water stress can refer to the availability, quality, or accessibility of water.

Publicly available and credible tools for assessing areas with water stress include the World Resources Institute 'Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas', and the WWF 'Water Risk Filter'.

Based on these tools, water stress in an area may be assessed using either of the following indicators and their thresholds:

- The ratio of total annual water withdrawal to total available annual renewable water supply (i.e., baseline water stress) is high (40-80%) or extremely high (>80%)[3];
- The ratio of water consumption-to-availability (i.e., water depletion) is moderate (dry-year depletion, where for at least 10% of the time, the monthly depletion ratio is >75%), high (seasonal depletion, where for one month of the year on average, the depletion ratio is >75%), or very high (ongoing depletion, where the depletion ratio on average is >75%)[4].

The organization may use these indicators even though they account only for quantity and not the quality or accessibility of water as per the inclusive approach to the definition of water stress.

The organization can complement the results from these tools with their own assessments, to provide more granular local-level data. Water stress in an area may be measured at catchment level at a minimum.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-3-b-v

If water is supplied by a third party, the organization is required to request information about its withdrawal sources, listed in Disclosures 303-3-b-i to 303-3-b-iv, from the third-party water supplier. The organization can report any additional information about third-party water, such as who the third-party water suppliers are and the volume of water supplied by them.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-3-c

The organization is required to provide a breakdown of the water withdrawn from each of the sources listed in Disclosures 303-3-a and 303-3-b (surface water, groundwater, seawater, produced water, third-party water) by the categories freshwater and other water. The organization is only required to provide this breakdown for the sources it has withdrawn water from. If all water withdrawn from a source belongs only to one category (i.e., to freshwater or to other water), the organization can report the volume for the remaining category as zero. For example, if all the withdrawn seawater belongs to the other water category, the organization can report the volume of freshwater under this source as zero.

Other water constitutes any water that has a concentration of total dissolved solids higher than 1,000 mg/L. Other water is therefore all water that does not fall into the freshwater category.

The organization is, at a minimum, required to report a figure for other water withdrawal for each of the sources listed in Disclosures 303-3-a and 303-3-b. The organization can additionally report any further breakdowns for other water withdrawal based on its water management and reporting practices, as long as it explains the approach used to define water quality using Disclosure 303-3-d. The organization can report additional information on how water quality has been determined, including consideration of the potential value of water to its users, as well as any absolute physical and/or chemical criteria used.

[3] Indicator used in the World Resources Institute, *Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas*, www.wri.org/our-work/project/aqueduct/, accessed on 1 June 2018.
[4] Indicator used in WWF, *Water Risk Filter*, waterriskfilter.panda.org, accessed on 1 June 2018.

Disclosure 303-3
Continued

Guidance for clause 2.2.1

To compile this information, the organization can use the following approach: (a) determine which facilities are located in areas with water stress, (b) for each of these facilities, report a breakdown of the total water withdrawal by surface water, groundwater, seawater, produced water, and third-party water. For an example of how to present this information, see Table 2.

Guidance for clause 2.2.2

To compile this information, the organization can use the following approach: (a) determine which suppliers are located in areas with water stress, (b) determine which of these suppliers cause significant water-related impacts, (c) add up the total water withdrawal of each of these suppliers, (d) report the sum. For an example of how to present this information, see Table 3.

Disclosure 303-4
Water discharge

Reporting requirements

Disclosure 303-4

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

a. Total water discharge to all areas in megaliters, and a breakdown of this total by the following types of destination, if applicable:

- **i. Surface water;**
- **ii. Groundwater;**
- **iii. Seawater;**
- **iv. Third-party water, and the volume of this total sent for use to other organizations, if applicable.**

b. A breakdown of total water discharge to all areas in megaliters by the following categories:

- **i. Freshwater (≤1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids);**
- **ii. Other water (>1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids).**

c. Total water discharge to all areas with water stress in megaliters, and a breakdown of this total by the following categories:

- **i. Freshwater (≤1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids);**
- **ii. Other water (>1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids).**

d. Priority substances of concern for which discharges are treated, including:

- **i. how priority substances of concern were defined, and any international standard, authoritative list, or criteria used;**
- **ii. the approach for setting discharge limits for priority substances of concern;**
- **iii. number of incidents of non-compliance with discharge limits.**

e. Any contextual information necessary to understand how the data have been compiled, such as any standards, methodologies, and assumptions used.

2.3 When compiling the information specified in Disclosure 303-4, the reporting organization shall use publicly available and credible tools and methodologies for assessing water stress in an area.

Reporting recommendations

2.4 The reporting organization should report the following additional information:

2.4.1 The number of occasions on which discharge limits were exceeded;

2.4.2 A breakdown of total water discharge to all areas in megaliters by level of treatment, and how the treatment levels were determined;

2.4.3 Percentage of suppliers with significant water-related impacts from water discharge that have set minimum standards for the quality of their effluent discharge.

Guidance

Background

Quantifying the volume of water discharge can help an organization understand its negative impacts on the receiving waterbody.

The relationship between water discharge and negative impacts is not linear. An increase in the total volume of water discharge does not necessarily correspond to greater negative impacts, since these impacts depend on the quality of the water discharge and the sensitivity of the receiving waterbody. An organization with a high volume of water discharge, but also a high level of treatment and strict quality standards, can have positive impacts on the receiving waterbody.

To learn more about locations where water-related impacts might be significant, and where actions to address them are most needed, the reporting organization can also report the information requested in Disclosure 303-4 for each facility in areas with water stress.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-4

For an example of how to present information on requirements in Disclosure 303-4, see Table 1.

See Guidance for Disclosure 303-3-b for how to assess areas with water stress.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-4-a-iv

An example of third-party water discharge is when an organization sends water and effluents to other organizations for use. In these instances, the organization is required to report the volume of this water discharge separately.

Guidance for Disclosures 303-4-b and 303-4-c

The organization is required to provide a breakdown of the water discharged to all areas and to all areas with water stress by the categories freshwater and other water. Other water constitutes any water that has a concentration of total dissolved solids higher than 1,000 mg/L. Other water is therefore all water that does not fall into the freshwater category.

The organization is, at a minimum, required to report a figure for other water discharged. The organization can additionally report any further breakdowns for other water discharge based on its water management and reporting practices, as long as it explains the approach used to define water quality using Disclosure 303-4-e. The organization can report additional information on how water quality has been determined, including consideration of the potential value of water to its users, as well as any absolute physical and/or chemical criteria used.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-4-d

In the context of this Standard, substances of concern are those that cause irreversible damage to the waterbody, ecosystem, or human health.

Discharge limits for substances of concern can be based on regulation and/or other factors determined by an organization. In countries where no regulations for discharge limits are available, the organization can develop its own discharge limits.

'Discharge consent' is the permission granted to an organization, allowing it to discharge a set amount of a substance. The organization can report any unauthorized discharges that exceed these limits using Disclosure 303-4-d. The organization can also describe any plans to reduce unauthorized discharges in the future.

Guidance for clause 2.4.2

Reporting water discharge by level of treatment can provide insight into the effort an organization is making to improve the quality of its water discharge. When reporting how the treatment levels were determined, the organization is expected to include the reasons why a certain level of treatment was set.

The level of treatment can be reported for any water or effluents at the point of discharge, whether treated by the organization onsite or sent to a third party for treatment.

Water treatment involves physical, chemical or biological processes that improve water quality by removing solids, pollutants, and organic matter from water and effluents. Minimum requirements for treatment might be specified in national, state, or local legislation; however, the organization is expected to consider its overall water discharge impacts and the needs of other water users in setting treatment levels.

Disclosure 303-4
Continued

The organization can break down its water discharge by the following treatment levels:

- Primary treatment, which aims to remove solid substances that settle or float on the water surface;
- Secondary treatment, which aims to remove substances and materials that have remained in the water, or are dissolved or suspended in it;
- Tertiary treatment, which aims to upgrade water to a higher level of quality before it is discharged. It includes processes that remove, for example, heavy metals, nitrogen, and phosphorus.

An organization might withdraw and discharge water of good quality that does not require treatment. If so, the organization can explain this in its report.

Guidance for clause 2.4.3

Minimum standards are those that go beyond regulatory requirements in controlling the quality of effluent discharge. For more information on water quality standards, see Disclosure 303-2 in the Management approach disclosures section.

To compile this information, the organization can use the following approach: (a) determine the number of suppliers with significant water-related impacts from water discharge, (b) determine how many of these suppliers have set minimum standards for the quality of their effluent discharge, (c) calculate the percentage using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage of suppliers with significant water-related impacts from water discharge that have set minimum standards for the quality of their effluent discharge} = \frac{\text{Number of suppliers that have set minimum standards for the quality of their effluent discharge}}{\text{Number of suppliers with significant water-related impacts from water discharge}} \times 100$$

For an example of how to present this information, see Table 3.

Disclosure 303-5
Water consumption

Reporting requirements

Disclosure **303-5**

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

a. Total water consumption from all areas in megaliters.

b. Total water consumption from all areas with water stress in megaliters.

c. Change in water storage in megaliters, if water storage has been identified as having a significant water-related impact.

d. Any contextual information necessary to understand how the data have been compiled, such as any standards, methodologies, and assumptions used, including whether the information is calculated, estimated, modeled, or sourced from direct measurements, and the approach taken for this, such as the use of any sector-specific factors.

Reporting recommendations

2.5 The reporting organization should report the following additional information:

2.5.1 Total water consumption in megaliters at each facility in areas with water stress;

2.5.2 Total water consumption in megaliters by suppliers with significant water-related impacts in areas with water stress.

Guidance

Background

Water consumption measures water used by an organization such that it is no longer available for use by the ecosystem or local community in the reporting period. Reporting the volume of water consumption can help the organization understand the overall scale of its impact due to water withdrawal on downstream water availability.

Guidance for Disclosure 303-5

For an example of how to present information on requirements in Disclosure 303-5, see Table 1.

See Guidance for Disclosure 303-3-b for how to assess areas with water stress.

If the reporting organization cannot directly measure water consumption, it may calculate this using the following formula:

Water consumption
=
Total water withdrawal
-
Total water discharge

Guidance for Disclosure 303-5-c

If the water in storage has been identified as having a significant water-related impact, the organization is required to report change in water storage. The organization may calculate change in water storage using the following formula:

Change in water storage
=
Total water storage at the end of the reporting period
-
Total water storage at the beginning of the reporting period

Guidance for clause 2.5.1

To compile this information, the organization can use the following approach: (a) determine which facilities are located in areas with water stress, (b) for each of these facilities, report the total water consumption. For an example of how to present this information, see Table 2.

Guidance for clause 2.5.2

To compile this information, the organization can use the following approach: (a) determine which suppliers are located in areas with water stress, (b) determine which of these suppliers cause significant water-related impacts, (c) add up the total water consumption of each of these suppliers, (d) report the sum. For an example of how to present this information, see Table 3.

Table 1. Example template for presenting information for Disclosures 303-3, 303-4, and 303-5

Table 1 offers an example of how to present information for Disclosures 303-3, 303-4, and 303-5. The reporting organization can amend the table according to its practices, for example by reporting additional information.

Water withdrawal (303-3)				
			All areas	**Areas with water stress**
Water withdrawal by source	Surface water (total)		ML (303-3-a-i)	ML (303-3-b-i)
	Freshwater (≤1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-i)	ML (303-3-c-i)
	Other water (>1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-ii)	ML (303-3-c-ii)
	Groundwater (total)		ML (303-3-a-ii)	ML (303-3-b-ii)
	Freshwater (≤1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-i)	ML (303-3-c-i)
	Other water (>1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-ii)	ML (303-3-c-ii)
	Seawater (total)		ML (303-3-a-iii)	ML (303-3-b-iii)
	Freshwater (≤1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-i)	ML (303-3-c-i)
	Other water (>1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-ii)	ML (303-3-c-ii)
	Produced water (total)		ML (303-3-a-iv)	ML (303-3-b-iv)
	Freshwater (≤1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-i)	ML (303-3-c-i)
	Other water (>1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-ii)	ML (303-3-c-ii)
	Third-party water (total)		ML (303-3-a-v)	ML (303-3-b-v)
	Freshwater (≤1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-i)	ML (303-3-c-i)
	Other water (>1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-3-c-ii)	ML (303-3-c-ii)
	Total third-party water withdrawal by withdrawal source	Surface water		ML (303-3-b-v)
		Groundwater		ML (303-3-b-v)
		Seawater		ML (303-3-b-v)
		Produced water		ML (303-3-b-v)
Total water withdrawal	Surface water (total) + groundwater (total) + seawater (total) + produced water (total) + third-party water (total)		ML (303-3-a)	ML (303-3-b)
Water discharge (303-4)				
			All areas	**Areas with water stress**
Water discharge by destination	Surface water		ML (303-4-a-i)	
	Groundwater		ML (303-4-a-ii)	
	Seawater		ML (303-4-a-iii)	
	Third-party water (total)		ML (303-4-a-iv)	
	Third-party water sent for use to other organizations		ML (303-4-a-iv)	
Total water discharge	Surface water + groundwater + seawater + third-party water (total)		ML (303-4-a)	ML (303-4-c)
Water discharge by freshwater and other water	Freshwater (≤1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-4-b-i)	ML (303-4-c-i)
	Other water (>1,000 mg/L Total Dissolved Solids)		ML (303-4-b-ii)	ML (303-4-c-ii)
Water discharge by level of treatment Note that this is recommended, but not required	No treatment		ML (clause 2.4.2)	
	Treatment level	[Provide the title for treatment level]	ML (clause 2.4.2)	
	Treatment level	[Provide the title for treatment level]	ML (clause 2.4.2)	
	Treatment level	[Provide the title for treatment level]	ML (clause 2.4.2)	
Water consumption (303-5)				
			All areas	**Areas with water stress**
Water consumption	Total water consumption		ML (303-5-a)	ML (303-5-b)
	Change in water storage, if water storage has been identified as having a significant water-related impact		ML (303-5-c)	

Table 2. Example template for presenting facility-level information

Table 2 offers an example of how to present information on facilities located in areas with water stress as per the reporting recommendations specified in Disclosures 303-3 (clause 2.2.1) and 303-5 (clause 2.5.1). The reporting organization can amend the table according to its practices, for example by reporting water discharge information.

Facilities in areas with water stress		**Facility A**	**Facility B**	**[Facility X]**
Water withdrawal (clause 2.2.1)	Surface water	ML	ML	ML
	Groundwater	ML	ML	ML
	Seawater	ML	ML	ML
	Produced water	ML	ML	ML
	Third-party water	ML	ML	ML
Water consumption (clause 2.5.1)	Total water consumption	ML	ML	ML

Table 3. Example template for presenting supply chain information

Table 3 offers an example of how to present information on the organization's suppliers as per the reporting recommendations specified in Disclosures 303-3 (clause 2.2.2), 303-4 (clause 2.4.3), and 303-5 (clause 2.5.2). The reporting organization can amend the table according to its practices, for example by reporting the location of suppliers.

Water withdrawal (clause 2.2.2)	Total water withdrawal in megaliters by suppliers with significant water-related impacts in areas with water stress	ML
Water discharge (clause 2.4.3)	Percentage of suppliers with significant water-related impacts from water discharge that have set minimum standards for the quality of their effluent discharge	%
Water consumption (clause 2.5.2)	Total water consumption in megaliters by suppliers with significant water-related impacts in areas with water stress	ML

Glossary

This Glossary includes definitions for terms used in this Standard, which apply when using this Standard. These definitions may contain terms that are further defined in the complete *GRI Standards Glossary*.

All defined terms are underlined. If a term is not defined in this Glossary or in the complete *GRI Standards Glossary*, definitions that are commonly used and understood apply.

catchment

area of land from which all surface runoff and subsurface water, flows through a sequence of streams, rivers, aquifers, and lakes into the sea or another outlet at a single river mouth, estuary, or delta

Note 1: Catchments include associated groundwater areas and might include portions of waterbodies (such as lakes or rivers). In different parts of the world, catchments are also referred to as 'watersheds' or 'basins' (or sub-basins).

Note 2: This definition is based on the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), *AWS International Water Stewardship Standard, Version 1.0*, 2014.

effluent

treated or untreated wastewater that is discharged

Note: This definition is based on the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), *AWS International Water Stewardship Standard, Version 1.0*, 2014.

freshwater

water with concentration of total dissolved solids equal to or below 1,000 mg/L

Note: This definition is based on ISO 14046:2014; the United States Geological Survey (USGS), *Water Science Glossary of Terms*, water.usgs.gov/edu/dictionary.html, accessed on 1 June 2018; and the World Health Organization (WHO), *Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality*, 2017.

groundwater

water that is being held in, and that can be recovered from, an underground formation

Note: This definition comes from ISO 14046:2014.

impact

In the GRI Standards, unless otherwise stated, 'impact' refers to the effect an organization has on the economy, the environment, and/or society, which in turn can indicate its contribution (positive or negative) to sustainable development.

Note 1: In the GRI Standards, the term 'impact' can refer to positive, negative, actual, potential, direct, indirect, short-term, long-term, intended, or unintended impacts.

Note 2: Impacts on the economy, environment, and/or society can also be related to consequences for the organization itself. For example, an impact on the economy, environment, and/or society can lead to consequences for the organization's business model, reputation, or ability to achieve its objectives.

indigenous peoples

indigenous peoples are generally identified as:

- tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;
- peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

Note: This definition comes from the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, 'Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention', 1989.

infrastructure

facilities built primarily to provide a public service or good rather than a commercial purpose, and from which an organization does not seek to gain direct economic benefit

Note: Examples of facilities can include water supply facilities, roads, schools, and hospitals, among others.

local community

persons or groups of persons living and/or working in any areas that are economically, socially or environmentally impacted (positively or negatively) by an organization's operations

Note: The local community can range from persons living adjacent to an organization's operations, to those living at a distance who are still likely to be impacted by these operations.

material topic

topic that reflects a reporting organization's significant economic, environmental and social impacts; or that substantively influences the assessments and decisions of stakeholders

Note 1: For more information on identifying a material topic, see the Reporting Principles for defining report content in *GRI 101: Foundation*.

Note 2: To prepare a report in accordance with the GRI Standards, an organization is required to report on its material topics.

Note 3: Material topics can include, but are not limited to, the topics covered by the GRI Standards in the 200, 300, and 400 series.

produced water

water that enters an organization's boundary as a result of extraction (e.g., crude oil), processing (e.g., sugar cane crushing), or use of any raw material, and has to consequently be managed by the organization

Note: This definition is based on CDP, *CDP Water Security Reporting Guidance*, 2018.

product

article or substance that is offered for sale or is part of a service delivered by an organization

reporting period

specific time span covered by the information reported

Note: Unless otherwise stated, the GRI Standards require information from the organization's chosen reporting period.

runoff

part of precipitation that flows towards a river on the ground surface (i.e., surface runoff) or within the soil (i.e., subsurface flow)

Note: This definition is based on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *UNESCO International Glossary of Hydrology*, 2012.

seawater

water in a sea or in an ocean

Note: This definition comes from ISO 14046:2014.

sector

subdivision of an economy, society or sphere of activity, defined on the basis of some common characteristic

Note: Sector types can include classifications such as the public or private sector, and industry specific categories such as the education, technology, or financial sectors.

service

action of an organization to meet a demand or need

stakeholder

entity or individual that can reasonably be expected to be significantly affected by the reporting organization's activities, products and services, or whose actions can reasonably be expected to affect the ability of the organization to successfully implement its strategies and achieve its objectives

Note 1: Stakeholders include entities or individuals whose rights under law or international conventions provide them with legitimate claims vis-à-vis the organization.

Note 2: Stakeholders can include those who are invested in the organization (such as employees and shareholders), as well as those who have other relationships to the organization (such as other workers who are not employees, suppliers, vulnerable groups, local communities, and NGOs or other civil society organizations, among others).

supplier

organization or person that provides a product or service used in the supply chain of the reporting organization

Note 1: A supplier is further characterized by a genuine direct or indirect commercial relationship with the organization.

Note 2: Examples of suppliers can include, but are not limited to:

- Brokers: Persons or organizations that buy and sell products, services, or assets for others, including contracting agencies that supply labor.
- Consultants: Persons or organizations that provide expert advice and services on a legally recognized professional and commercial basis. Consultants are legally recognized as self-employed or are legally recognized as employees of another organization.
- Contractors: Persons or organizations working onsite or offsite on behalf of an organization. A contractor can contract their own workers directly, or contract sub-contractors or independent contractors.
- Distributors: Persons or organizations that supply products to others.
- Franchisees or licensees: Persons or organizations that are granted a franchise or license by the reporting organization. Franchises and licenses permit specified commercial activities, such as the production and sale of a product.

- Home workers: Persons at home or in other premises of their choice, other than the workplace of the employer, who perform work for remuneration and which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used.
- Independent contractors: Persons or organizations working for an organization, a contractor, or a sub-contractor.
- Manufacturers: Persons or organizations that make products for sale.
- Primary producers: Persons or organizations that grow, harvest, or extract raw materials.
- Sub-contractors: Persons or organizations working onsite or offsite on behalf of an organization that have a direct contractual relationship with a contractor or sub-contractor, but not necessarily with the organization. A sub-contractor can contract their own workers directly or contract independent contractors.
- Wholesalers: Persons or organizations that sell products in large quantities to be retailed by others.

surface water

water that occurs naturally on the Earth's surface in ice sheets, ice caps, glaciers, icebergs, bogs, ponds, lakes, rivers, and streams

Note: This definition is based on CDP, *CDP Water Security Reporting Guidance*, 2018.

third-party water

municipal water suppliers and municipal wastewater treatment plants, public or private utilities, and other organizations involved in the provision, transport, treatment, disposal, or use of water and effluent

topic Boundary

description of where the impacts occur for a material topic, and the organization's involvement with those impacts

Note: Topic Boundaries vary based on the topics reported.

value chain

An organization's value chain encompasses the activities that convert input into output by adding value. It includes entities with which the organization has a direct or indirect business relationship and which either (a) supply products or services that contribute to the organization's own products or services, or (b) receive products or services from the organization.

Note 1: This definition is based on United Nations (UN), *The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights: An Interpretive Guide*, 2012.

Note 2: The value chain covers the full range of an organization's upstream and downstream activities, which encompass the full life cycle of a product or service, from its conception to its end use.

water consumption

sum of all water that has been withdrawn and incorporated into products, used in the production of crops or generated as waste, has evaporated, transpired, or been consumed by humans or livestock, or is polluted to the point of being unusable by other users, and is therefore not released back to surface water, groundwater, seawater, or a third party over the course of the reporting period

Note 1: Water consumption includes water that has been stored during the reporting period for use or discharge in a subsequent reporting period.

Note 2: This definition is based on CDP, *CDP Water Security Reporting Guidance*, 2018.

water discharge

sum of effluents, used water, and unused water released to surface water, groundwater, seawater, or a third party, for which the organization has no further use, over the course of the reporting period

Note 1: Water can be released into the receiving waterbody either at a defined discharge point (point-source discharge) or dispersed over land in an undefined manner (non-point-source discharge).

Note 2: Water discharge can be authorized (in accordance with discharge consent) or unauthorized (if discharge consent is exceeded).

water stewardship

use of water that is socially equitable, environmentally sustainable, and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves facility- and catchment-based actions

Note 1: Good water stewards understand their own water use; catchment context; and shared risk in terms of water governance, water balance, and water quality; and engage in meaningful individual and collective actions that benefit people and nature. Further:

- Socially equitable water use recognizes and implements the human right to water and sanitation and helps ensure human wellbeing and equity;
- Environmentally sustainable water use maintains or improves biodiversity and ecological and hydrological processes at the catchment level;
- Economically beneficial water use contributes to long-term efficiency, and development and poverty alleviation for water users, local communities, and society at large.

Note 2: This definition is based on the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), *AWS International Water Stewardship Standard, Version 1.0*, 2014.

water storage

water held in water storage facilities or reservoirs

water stress

ability, or lack thereof, to meet the human and ecological demand for water

Note 1: Water stress can refer to the availability, quality, or accessibility of water.

Note 2: Water stress is based on subjective elements and is assessed differently depending on societal values, such as the suitability of water for drinking or the requirements to be afforded to ecosystems.

Note 3: Water stress in an area may be measured at catchment level at a minimum.

Note 4: This definition comes from the CEO Water Mandate, *Corporate Water Disclosure Guidelines*, 2014.

water withdrawal

sum of all water drawn from surface water, groundwater, seawater, or a third party for any use over the course of the reporting period

References

The following documents informed the development of this Standard and can be helpful for understanding and applying it.

Authoritative intergovernmental instruments:

1. United Nations (UN) Resolution A/RES/64/292, 'The human right to water and sanitation', 2010.
2. United Nations (UN), 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', 2015.

Other relevant references:

3. Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), *AWS International Water Stewardship Standard, Version 1.0*, 2014.
4. CDP, The CEO Water Mandate, The Nature Conservancy, Pacific Institute, World Resources Institute (WRI), and WWF International, *Exploring the Case for Corporate Context-based Water Targets*, 2017.
5. Minerals Council of Australia (MCA), *Water Accounting Framework for the Minerals Industry, User Guide, v1.3*, 2014.
6. The CEO Water Mandate, *Corporate Water Disclosure Guidelines, Toward a Common Approach to Reporting Water Issues*, 2014.
7. World Resources Institute, *Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas*, www.wri.org/our-work/project/aqueduct/, accessed on 1 June 2018.
8. WWF, *Water Risk Filter*, waterriskfilter.panda.org, accessed on 1 June 2018.

standards@globalreporting.org
www.globalreporting.org

GRI
PO Box 10039
1001 EA
Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Legal liability

This document, designed to promote sustainability reporting, has been developed by the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) through a unique multi-stakeholder consultative process involving representatives from organizations and report information users from around the world. While the GRI Board of Directors and GSSB encourage use of the GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards (GRI Standards) and related Interpretations by all organizations, the preparation and publication of reports based fully or partially on the GRI Standards and related Interpretations are the full responsibility of those producing them. Neither the GRI Board of Directors, GSSB nor Stichting Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) can assume responsibility for any consequences or damages resulting directly or indirectly from the use of the GRI Standards and related Interpretations in the preparation of reports, or the use of reports based on the GRI Standards and related Interpretations.

Copyright and trademark notice

ISBN: 978-90-8866-092-4