



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Inspector General of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) examined whether the accomplishments reported by the EPA's WaterSense program reflected actual results. We evaluated EPA controls to assess the accuracy of WaterSense product label claims of water and energy savings, verify industry data used to estimate program accomplishments, and test the veracity of the program's annual accomplishment estimates.

WaterSense partners manufacture, distribute and sell WaterSense-labeled products and promote water efficiency. These products include faucets, showerheads, toilets, urinals, pre-rinse spray valves, and irrigation controllers.

This report addresses the following EPA goals or cross-agency strategies:

- *Protecting America's waters.*
- *Working toward a sustainable future.*

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EPA's Voluntary WaterSense Program Demonstrated Success

What We Found

The EPA's WaterSense program demonstrated adequate controls for ensuring that its estimated water and energy savings were reasonable. The program established goals, measured performance, and established controls for reducing program risk.

However, the program lacked effective control over one performance measure: the number of partners working to improve water efficiency. The EPA can improve its tracking of this measure. The EPA also can improve program accountability by adopting its tracked water savings as an agency outcome measure.

The EPA launched WaterSense in 2006, in part, to ensure the performance of water-efficient products. The EPA estimated that through 2015, the use of WaterSense-labeled products saved 1.5 trillion gallons of water and reduced the amount of energy needed to heat, pump and treat water by 212 billion kilowatt hours. As a result, consumers saved an estimated \$32.6 billion. The EPA reported that more than 1,738 partners had joined the WaterSense program through 2015.

The EPA's voluntary WaterSense program adhered to good practices in program management, achieved significant returns on investment, documented its controls on water savings and product performance, and obtained broad partner and consumer support. The EPA could identify and disseminate the good management practices of the WaterSense program to support the 2016 Performance Management Improvement Accountability Act's requirement to enhance program management across the agency. In our opinion, the WaterSense program is a sound model for voluntary programs. With adjustments, the program will strengthen its potential for producing beneficial results.

The EPA estimated that consumers saved over 1.5 trillion gallons of water through use of WaterSense-labeled products. Consumers saved an estimated \$1,100 for every federal dollar spent on the program.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Actions

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Water share WaterSense program management practices, evaluate the appropriateness of adopting water savings as a program measure, implement controls for partners to periodically reconfirm their commitment to the program, and revise annual partner reporting. The agency agreed with all recommendations and provided acceptable corrective actions and completion dates. All recommendations are resolved.