



January 30, 2008

Arthur B. Weissman, Ph.D.  
President & CEO  
Green Seal, Inc.  
Attn: Household Cleaners  
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 827  
Washington, DC 20036

RE: Proposed Revisions to the Green Seal Environmental Standard for General-Purpose, Bathroom, Glass, and Carpet Cleaners Used for Industrial and Institutional Purposes (GS-37)

Dear Dr. Weissman:

The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA) would like to take this opportunity to comment on the proposed revisions to the *Green Seal Environmental Standard for General-Purpose, Bathroom, Glass, and Carpet Cleaners Used for Industrial and Institutional Purposes (GS-37)*.

The Soap and Detergent Association is a 100 plus-member national trade association representing the formulators of soaps, detergents and general cleaning products used in household, industrial, institutional and commercial settings, and the companies that supply ingredients and packaging for these products.

Ensuring human health and safety and environmental safety are major priorities for The Soap and Detergent Association. The organization and its members take this responsibility very seriously. Throughout our 80+ year history, SDA's sound, technical, risk-based research has demonstrated the safe, beneficial and proper use of cleaning products and their ingredients. In cases where the impacts were of concern, SDA members freely, willingly and without hesitation adapted and innovated, introducing new and better technologies and ingredients to mitigate environmental effects. It is this continual voluntary innovation that leads to both responsible formulation and improvements in public health and the quality of life.

It is with this in mind that SDA submits the following comments on GS-37. Our general comments address the Green Seal approach; the specific comments focus on the standard itself as it applies to general-purpose, bathroom, and glass cleaners.

#### *General Comments*

We believe that ignoring exposure- and hazard-based risk assessment does not provide environmental or human safety benefit. In fact, this could harm innovation, hampering the design of products which *would* provide a safety benefit. The criteria in the standard are hazard-based only, and the limits or cut-off values are not justified by any meaningful scientific

rationale. As such, we do not believe that products that comply with this standard would have any environmental benefits when compared to products that do not meet the standard

To the best of our knowledge, no data exists to show that the Green Seal standards have led to real and measurable environmental improvements. Further, this standard provides a much lower level of safety and environmental protection than exposure and risk-based safety assessment methodologies widely used by the soap and detergent industry to assess the safety of products on a routine basis. Exposure and risk-based assessment often considers many more endpoints, including sorption, wastewater treatment removal, overall exposure (total volumes emitted to the environment and concentration at target sites), long-term toxicity, bioaccumulation, etc. Background materials and examples of these assessments can be viewed at:

[http://cleaning101.com/files/Exposure\\_and\\_Risk\\_Screening\\_Methods\\_for\\_Consumer\\_Product\\_Ingredients.pdf](http://cleaning101.com/files/Exposure_and_Risk_Screening_Methods_for_Consumer_Product_Ingredients.pdf)

<http://www.sdahq.org/AMINEOXIDES/>

<http://www.heraproject.com/Index.cfm>

<http://www.heraproject.com/RiskAssessment.cfm>

As with other similar GS standards, this one also provides a set of stagnant criteria that do not change in time, and ignores progress in technology and innovation. This proposed revision of the standard can also be a hurdle to innovation, which may potentially lead to more effective cleaning products with real environmental improvements.

### *Specific Comments*

#### **1.0 Scope**

The *Background Document to the Proposed Revisions to GS-37* indicates that toilet bowl cleaners, carpet spot removers, graffiti removers, and dry erase board cleaners will be included in the revised standard, but it is not mentioned in the proposed standard document. We recommend that the scope of the standard be clarified. If these products are to be included, we recommend the *Proposed Revision* document be amended to allow stakeholders to re-review the proposal with that in mind.

#### **2.0 Definitions**

##### 2.10 Ingredient

We recommend removing the phrase, "...or known to be a contaminant..." from this definition. Contaminant should be separately defined.

##### 2.11 Intentional Component

We recommend removing this definition. By defining "Ingredient" and "Contaminant", this term is unnecessary.

## 4.0 Product –Specific Environmental Requirements

### 4.1 Oral Toxicity

We recommend this section be made clearer. The test used to determine oral toxicity is an ACUTE toxicity test for RATS. The underlying reasoning for the increase is for the protection of children's and other vulnerable populations' health. This should be stated in the revised standard. Also, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Code allows for exemptions to labeling a product as toxic (16 Code CFR Chapter II, Part 1500, Section 82). Green Seal should also take this into account.

### 4.3 Carcinogens and Reproductive Toxins

The requirement that the product not contain any ingredients that are known to cause these toxicities without consideration of the risk posed by those ingredients is inappropriate.

### 4.7 Ingredients that Cause Asthma

We recommend this criterion be deleted. This term is not standardized. The designation of substances as "asthmagens" is under constant review by the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC) as stated on their website. Therefore, this criterion is a moving target with ingredients being added and deleted from AOEC's list and should not be included in the standard.

### 4.8 Volatile Organic Compounds

Concerns exist with the proposed VOC limits for products. Green Seal should consult the rules as applied by CARB, EPA and other regulatory bodies in determining VOC levels and align the proposed standard with those rules.

### 4.9 Toxicity to Aquatic Life

Consideration of aquatic toxicity should only be done in the context of environmental risk assessment. Only applying criteria for aquatic toxicity for products fails to consider the environmental fate of aqueous cleaning products which are typically disposed into wastewater treatment systems and, thus, do not directly enter the environment. The ability of a product to exert aquatic toxicity in the environment is a function of many factors beyond just its toxicity, including the mitigation due to fate mechanisms and dilution levels upon discharge into the environment.

### 4.10 Aquatic Biodegradability

The proposed revision to the standard requires that all organic ingredients are readily biodegradable, effectively excluding the use of certain performance chemicals, such as polymers and chelants that are safe at the low levels that they are used. At the same time, they provide significant performance improvements which allow for the use of less product for the same standard cleaning job. From a holistic Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) viewpoint, products without these performance chemicals may not have a superior environmental profile than products containing them.

### 4.11 Eutrophication

It is well known that phosphorus can contribute to nutrient-loading in water bodies, leading to adverse effects on water quality. The relative loadings of phosphorus to surface waters from detergents should be put into context. The relative phosphorus contribution from cleaning products, particularly household cleaners, has been demonstrated to be negligible or non-existent (Legislative Report: Detailed Assessment of Phosphorus Sources to Minnesota Watersheds,

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 2004;  
<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/hot/legislature/reports/phosphorus-report.html>).

#### 4.13 Other Prohibited and Restricted Ingredients (e.g., Alkylphenol ethoxylates, Optical brighteners)

All product ingredients should be assessed against the same criteria. Also, prohibiting all members of a class of ingredients (e.g., optical brightener) without regard to differences within the class inappropriately captures chemicals of varied environmental impacts and creates disincentives to innovation within the class. For example, optical brighteners should be removed from the list of prohibited ingredients. Innovation may in the future offer a fully biodegradable and non-toxic brightener, which under this standard would be banned. Finally, this criterion inappropriately focuses on the hazard potential of ingredients and not the risk they pose as a result of use in cleaning products.

Data show that APEs biodegrade under anaerobic conditions and that removal is greater than 99% in sewage treatment plants (Nimrod and Benson 1996; Keith 1997). Therefore, APEs are in the environment at concentrations well below effects concentrations. Because there is low likelihood of injury to the environment, this ingredient should be deleted from the criterion.

#### 4.14 Fragrances

The requirement for fragrances to be disclosed on MSDSs could entail disclosure of confidential business information. Provisions should be included in the criterion to allow protection of fragrance information that is confidential.

### **5.0 Packaging Requirements**

The proposed packaging provisions are extremely vague. SDA manufacturers would be unable under the proposed definitions and provisions to ascertain which products would be covered. While favorable references are made to the California Rigid Plastic Packaging Container Act, with the goal of “allowing industry to select from those environmental-preferred packaging options,” it is unclear what “options” would be permitted: what specific provisions and exemptions, if any, would apply? Moreover, how would the GS-37 standard interact with recognized U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and United Nations packaging rules and provisions? Without further clarification, SDA is unable at this time to provide more substantive comment on specific aspects of the standard.

### **6.0 Training and Labeling Requirements**

#### **Addendum**

Many of the optional claims being proposed are either currently under review (USDA is designating the biobased content of many product categories such as glass cleaners, bath and tile cleaners), or are considering guidelines for making such claims (the Federal Trade Commission is looking at carbon offsets). At this time, we recommend that Green Seal avoid using these claims until guidance is established by government.

#### *Summary and Conclusions*

SDA and its member companies encourage Green Seal to review our comments on the proposed revisions on GS-37 and make recommended changes. Our comments reflect our continuing efforts to protect human and environmental health and safety and we remain concerned that Green Seal standards assure neither.

Please contact us at any time if you have questions.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kathleen Stanton*

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