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## NEWS RELEASE

### NEW GLOBAL WATER PRIZE ANNOUNCES WINNERS

#### *Winning Innovations Show Promise for Vastly Reducing Water Consumption*

SAN FRANCISCO, March 8, 2010 – A web application that alerts wine grape farmers when their vines are thirsty. Rainwater storage that's easy to install and fits in tight spaces. Technology that tells water utility customers their usage rate and rewards them for cutting back. These are the winning business ideas for the inaugural [Imagine H2O Prize](#) and they're ready to save the world hundreds of billions of gallons of water.

In its first year, the global competition rewarded business plans that offer the greatest promise of breakthroughs in the efficient use and supply of water. First Place went to [Fruition Sciences](#), which has developed an innovative way to give the vineyard farmer real-time status of key variables for growing wine grapes. Already used successfully by nine grape growers in California, Fruition's web application has generated significant water savings while decreasing or eliminating yield loss and improving quality.

"We saw a real challenge in the wine industry," says Sébastien Payen, co-founder of Fruition, which operates out of both California and France. "There were absolutely no plant-based sensors to optimize water management." So he combined his co-founder Thibaut Scholasch's dissertation research on vine water status variations with his own mastery of recent sensor and information technology and *voilà!* Their winning idea was born.

"Fruition showed us a very targeted plan, a promising technology and the ability to execute their idea," says Scott Bryan, Director of Operations of Imagine H2O, a nonprofit building a "Silicon Valley" for water in the Bay area. "In the water sector, most entrepreneurs want to be in every single market, but Fruition has started out with an intriguing niche market where they can polish their idea and then go broader into other agricultural markets."

[Rainwater HOG's](#) H2OG tank, which is a food-grade, rectangular module made of low-density polyethylene that can store water horizontally or vertically, was a runner-up. "The HOG makes it easy for people to harvest and use rainwater instead of city water for their irrigation and even inside their homes, and can thus reduce a building's city water use by more than 50%,"

says HOG designer Sally Dominguez, who co-founded the company with husband and CEO, Simon.

“Rainwater HOG showed us a clear plan and demonstrated they could scale it,” says Brian Matthay, Program Manager of Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O. “They have a clever approach to a very basic solution: rainwater collection. It’s a great way to water your lawn or keep emergency water on hand. You can even use HOGs as insulation around your house. And it will be a DIY project someday.”

Working as an architect in her hometown of Sydney, Australia, Dominguez noticed most of her clients were inner-city dwellers that wanted to save water but didn't want to lose valuable space. When she couldn't find a sustainable horizontal tank on the market, she designed her own. The H<sub>2</sub>O is available in the USA, Australia and the UK with markets being developed in India and Japan.

[WaterSmart Software](#) also earned runner-up status for its web-based application that allows water utilities to optimize their water conservation programs. WaterSmart empowers utilities’ residential customers to take water saving actions by providing water use information, customized recommendations, and rewards for their efforts. “The judges were impressed that within 60 to 90 days of being incorporated, WaterSmart had really made some inroads with major municipalities that demonstrated demand for their product,” says Matthay.

Once it goes to market (two pilot programs will launch this year), WaterSmart could save participating homeowners an average of 3,000 gallons of water per year. In some cases, a total water use reduction of 20%. “Conservation can be a cost-effective ‘new’ source of water,” says Peter Yolles, who co-founded San Francisco- and San Diego-based WaterSmart with Rob Steiner.

With more than fifty teams from all over the world submitting entries, the Prize was created to help find sustainable solutions to global water problems through entrepreneurship. The competition offers prizes of \$70,000 in cash, business, legal, accounting and tax support, and access to a network of partners, customers and financiers to help bring their ideas to market.

The winners will be honored at Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O’s [Water Innovator’s Showcase](#) March 11, 2010, from 7 – 9 p.m. at Terra Gallery, 511 Harrison Street, San Francisco. Hundreds of cleantech leaders from the Bay area and beyond, including water entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, water utility executives, investment bankers, cleantech lawyers, government officials and public policy experts, will gather to discuss where and how innovation is happening in the water sector. Ambassador John Bohn, Commissioner of the California Public Utilities Commission, will give the keynote speech. Tickets are available for purchase at: <http://imagineh2o.eventbrite.com/>

“We hope this competition can bring more attention to water and sustainability issues,” says First Place winner Scholasch. Indeed, “awareness has been an obstacle to moving the water

market forward," says Tamin Pechet, Chairman and Executive Director of Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O. "Be it public awareness of the looming water crisis, investors trying to ferret out potential business solutions, or would-be entrepreneurs networking with the vital players who can be of support. The Prize is intended to become a magnet for water entrepreneurship and give the finalists extraordinary exposure to the investment and business community."

The competition's inaugural prize focused on water efficiency in agriculture, commercial, industrial or residential applications, such as water demand reduction, improved water use, water recycling and/or reuse. "There are alternate sources of energy – but there are no alternate sources of clean water," says Ralph Petroff, member of the judging panel and a water technology CEO for 20 years, who currently advises technology start-ups as CEO of Magna Vista Group. "Increased water efficiency is the only solution. We will run out of clean water long before we run out of oil." Future years' competitions will have different prize topics addressing other critical water problems.

"Business has an important role to play in developing the next generation of solutions to the world's water challenges," said Gordon Nixon, President and CEO of RBC, founding sponsor of Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O. "We are thrilled to have played a role in bringing this inaugural competition to life and congratulate all the finalists and winners."

Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O has financial backing from [RBC\\*](#), the [Full Circle Fund](#), [Cooley Godward Kronish LLP](#), [PricewaterhouseCoopers](#), and other private foundations. Its growing list of partners includes the [San Francisco Public Utilities Commission](#), the [National Water Research Institute](#), [Babson College](#), the [Stanford University Conservation Program](#), and others.

*For more information, please visit [www.imagineh2o.org](http://www.imagineh2o.org).*

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