Your HOA & Your Yard

GUIDE FOR HOA RESIDENTS



Scan for Resources

A PROGRAM OF

EAGLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Beyond Lawn

- Waterwise Landscaping
- Biodiversity Enhancement
- Irrigation Efficiency
- Policy Guidance
- Firewise Landscaping
- Community Education

EAGLE RIVER VALLEY'S RESOURCE FOR SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT LANDSCAPING

Beyond Lawn is an Eagle County Conservation District program that helps homeowners and HOAs replace thirsty landscaping with waterwise, biodiverse, fire-smart alternatives. Through low-cost property evaluations, expert guidance, robust online resources, and financial support for upgrades, Beyond Lawn makes it easier to cut water use, lower maintenance, and build a landscape that actually fits our mountain climate — without giving up a yard you love.

SERVICES



Low Cost Landscape & Irrigation Evaluations



Financial Incentives for Upgrades



Resources & Educational Opportunities

OBJECTIVES



Establishing a Network of Qualified Landscape Professionals



Guiding resilient landscaping policy



Broadening community outreach

Visit beyondlawn.org/hoas or scan the QR code for the full HOA guide series: HOA Policy & Compliance Guide, HOA Waterwise Landscape Guide, and Your HOA & Your Yard.

beyondlawn.org **(970) 236-1165**

beyondlawn@eccdistrict.org

For information on other ECCD programs, visit eccdistrict.org

A PROGRAM OF THE EAGLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Start Here

This guide is for residents who want a waterwise yard or community, and want their HOA to come along. Most boards aren't against you. They're volunteers juggling budgets, rules, and neighbors, and a no usually means they're busy or unaware of the benefits or what the law allows.



Why it matters: outdoor irrigation accounts for an estimated 50–70% of a community's water use, and most of that water never returns to our streams and rivers. Waterwise landscapes use far less water, need less maintenance once established, hold up in drought, and support local ecosystems. Small changes across a neighborhood add up.



In this guide: your rights under Colorado law, how to make the case to your board, how to start small, and what to do if your HOA pushes back. Beyond Lawn is a voluntary program of the Eagle County Conservation District. We don't enforce HOA rules, and this guide is not legal advice.

Your Rights in an HOA

What Colorado law says about waterwise yards



If you live in an HOA, Colorado law protects your right to a waterwise yard. Your HOA can still have design guidelines, but it can't stand in the way of converting your lawn.

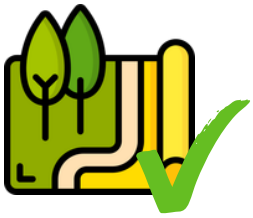
What Your HOA Must Allow



Every HOA owner: SB 13-183. Your HOA can't prohibit xeriscape or drought-tolerant plants on property you maintain. It can't require turf grass, and it can't fine you for under-watering as long as you follow local watering restrictions. This includes condos and attached homes.

Detached single-family HOAs: SB 23-178. Your HOA must:

- Offer at least three pre-approved waterwise front-yard designs
- Allow a design that's at least 80% drought-tolerant
- Not unreasonably require hardscape on more than 20% of your landscaped area
- Allow vegetable gardens in front, side, or back yards



None of these laws require you to remove an existing lawn.

Artificial turf: state law and local code differ. Detached single-family HOAs can't ban artificial turf in owner backyards, but county and town codes can. Unincorporated Eagle County prohibits new artificial turf, and towns have their own rules. Beyond Lawn recommends living landscapes, and artificial turf isn't eligible for our rebates.



What Your HOA Can Still Do

Design and aesthetic guidelines are still allowed.

Your HOA can set rules for the type, number, and placement of plants and hardscape. It can also ask you to submit a plan before you start. Check your CC&Rs (Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions) and design guidelines for the details.



Running into resistance? See "If Your HOA Says No." This page is for information only and is not legal advice.

Make Your Yard Fire-Ready



Simple steps, and what your HOA can't stop

A waterwise yard can also be a firewise yard. The most important space is the first 5 feet around your home, where embers land and catch.

Start Here



Three steps, in order of impact.

Clear the first 5 feet, then space out the next 25. Swap wood mulch and shrubs against the house for rock, gravel, or pavers. It needs no water, so it saves water too. Beyond that, keep plants low and watered, leave gaps between groups, and keep juniper and other woody shrubs away from the house.



Clean up gutters, needles, leaves, and dead plants every spring and fall.

Ask for a free home assessment. Eagle Valley Wildland (home@eagleriverfire.org), Vail Fire, or Eagle County's REALFire program can walk your property and show you where to start. In Vail, the Fire Free Five program reimburses part of the cost of a 5-foot noncombustible zone, and the town is moving toward requiring one around every building.

Your Rights



Know what your HOA can and can't require.

Your HOA can't ban fire-hardened building materials (HB 24-1091). That includes noncombustible fencing, roofing, and decking, though your HOA can still set reasonable rules for how fire-hardened fencing looks. Xeriscape is protected too (SB 13-183), so a rock border with drought-tolerant plants is allowed. If your guidelines require wood mulch or foundation shrubs, ask for an exception in writing and cite wildfire safety.



Want more detail? See the Beyond Lawn Fire-Resilient Landscaping Guide. Artificial turf isn't a firewise or waterwise substitute, and it isn't eligible for Beyond Lawn rebates. This page is for information only and is not legal advice.

Making the Case

Lead with what your community gains

Most boards respond to facts, not frustration. Make it easy for the board to say yes.

Talking Points That Work



Pick the one or two that matter most in your community.

- Water costs: outdoor irrigation is most of a community's water use, and every efficiency improvement lowers the bill.
- Maintenance: less mowing, fertilizing, and supporting struggling turf.
- Drought resilience: waterwise landscapes stay attractive during watering restrictions.
- Fire safety: the right plants and spacing reduce fire risk near homes.
- Curb appeal: a well-designed waterwise landscape can look better than tired turf.
- Ahead of the rules: state and local codes increasingly limit nonfunctional turf in common areas, so planning early means the board chooses the design.



Build support first. Talk with neighbors who feel the same way. A few voices carry more weight than one.

Join the conversation. Ask to join or start a landscape committee, and ask for time on a board meeting agenda instead of raising it in passing.

Suggest a next step. Ask a board member or community representative to sign up for Beyond Lawn HOA communications at bit.ly/bl-hoa-signup, or to get a professional landscape evaluation or water use audit.

What to Hand Your Board



Both guides are available at beyondlawn.org/hoas

HOA Policy & Compliance Guide: what local and state law requires.

HOA Waterwise Landscape Guide: tips and resources for saving water and landscaping sustainably in HOA common areas.



Start Small

Show, don't just tell

A visible success is the most persuasive argument. Start with your own yard or one small common area, then build from there.

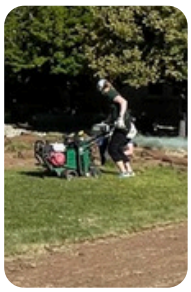




LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Convert your own yard first.

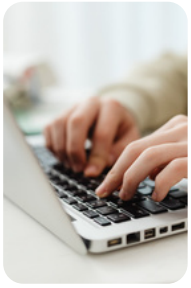
A beautiful, well-maintained waterwise yard is the best argument that can be made. Get a Beyond Lawn evaluation (bit.ly/beyondlawn-signup), follow your HOA's approval process, think about using a pre-approved design if one fits, execute, maintain, and invite neighbors to see and learn about the result.



PROPOSE A PILOT

Ask for one small common area.

An entry strip, median, or hard-to-water slope makes a good first project. It's low cost and easy to see, and a success makes the next project easier. Always make sure there is a maintenance plan in place. Many waterwise landscapes are low maintenance, but none of them are no-maintenance.



SAMPLE NOTE TO YOUR BOARD

Copy, adapt, and send.

"I'd like to convert part of my yard to a waterwise landscape. Could you share our pre-approved designs and the steps for submitting a plan? I'd also like to suggest moving to more waterwise landscaping for a future agenda. Beyond Lawn has guides and resources at beyondlawn.org/hoas."

Common Concerns

What you'll hear, and what to say



Most objections come from unfamiliarity, not opposition. Here are the concerns boards and neighbors raise most often, with short, friendly answers you can use.

"**It'll look messy or unfinished.**"
A good waterwise yard has a plan: defined edges, repeated plants, clean paths, and mulch. It looks intentional, not neglected.

"**It will hurt property values.**"
Curb appeal comes from a well-kept yard, not from grass. A healthy waterwise landscape looks better than stressed turf during watering restrictions.

"**Rock and gravel get too hot and look bare.**"
Waterwise doesn't mean all rock. Native plants, groundcovers, and mulched beds keep it green and cool. Rock works best near buildings and on paths.

"**Weeds will take over.**"
Weed control is part of any landscape. Mulch, dense planting, and early weeding in the first two seasons keep weeds down.

"**What about wildfire?**"
Waterwise and firewise go together. Keep the first 5 feet around buildings free of wood mulch and woody plants, and use rock or low, non-woody plants there.

"**Can I just put in artificial turf?**"
State and local rules differ. Unincorporated Eagle County prohibits new artificial turf, and towns set their own rules. Beyond Lawn recommends living landscapes, and artificial turf isn't eligible for our rebates.

If Your HOA Says No

What to do, in order

Start with your HOA's own process. If a request stalls or is denied, these steps keep you on solid ground. This page is for information only and is not legal advice.

1. READ YOUR DOCUMENTS

Find the landscaping section of your CC&Rs and design guidelines.

Note the approval process, who reviews requests, and how long they have to answer. Check whether your community is detached single-family (both state laws apply) or attached homes and condos (SB 13-183 applies).

2. START WITH THE PRE-APPROVED DESIGNS

Ask your board or management company for them.

Detached single-family HOAs must have at least three. If none exist yet, ask when they will.

3. PUT YOUR REQUEST IN WRITING

Keep copies of everything.

Include photos, a simple sketch, a plant list, materials, and any irrigation changes. Submit your plan, note the date, and save every reply. If you're denied, ask for the reason in writing.

4. IF A DENIAL CONFLICTS WITH STATE LAW

Send written notice naming the law, then allow 45 days.

If the HOA doesn't fix it in 45 days, you can sue to stop further violations and recover up to $500 or actual damages, whichever is greater. Try mediation first (coloradojudicial.gov/hoa-mediations) and talk to an attorney before you file. More help: dre.colorado.gov/hoa-center

HOA Mini-Grants

Funding for irrigation projects that save water

Beyond Lawn mini-grants help HOAs pay for irrigation projects that cut water use. Funding is competitive and limited, so talk with us early and plan your project before you apply.

AT A GLANCE

Up to $10,000 per HOA in any rolling five-year period.

Grants are reimbursement-based: your HOA pays up front and is reimbursed once the work is verified complete. Projects must be finished within one year of the award. Open to HOAs of any size within Eagle County Conservation District boundaries that have an existing irrigated landscape. Projects with shared community benefit score higher.

WHAT IT CAN FUND

Irrigation upgrades, audits, and planning.

Irrigation equipment, smart controllers, spray-to-drip conversions, irrigation audits, and labor by a certified irrigation contractor (QWEL, CIT, or CLIA). Large HOAs can also apply for community-scale planning with measurable water-saving outcomes, like a drought response plan. Not eligible: general landscape labor, unrelated design, new irrigation in unirrigated areas, or water features.

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Three steps, all required.

1. Call or email Beyond Lawn to talk through your project.
2. Get a Beyond Lawn HOA evaluation, or work with a certified irrigation professional.
3. Get a contractor estimate that separates materials, labor, and any audit or design costs.

HOW PROJECTS ARE SCORED

The strongest applications show real, lasting water savings.

Estimated water savings · efficiency of design · long-term conservation impact · project readiness · financial need

Current deadlines and the application are at beyondlawn.org/hoas. Questions?
beyondlawn@eccdistrict.org · (970) 236-1165

Beyond Lawn Resources

Everything we offer, in one place

Help yourself, or work with us. Our free online tools answer most landscape questions. When you're ready for a closer look at your property or community, our services can help.

SELF-SERVE RESOURCES

Free guides and tools, available anytime.

- Plant Explorer · beyondlawn.org/plant-explorer
- Design Guide · design.beyondlawn.org
- Fire-Resilient Landscaping Guide (in the Design Guide)
- Irrigation Guide · irrigation.beyondlawn.org
- DIY Guide · diy.beyondlawn.org
- Maintenance Guide · maintenance.beyondlawn.org
- HOA Guides · beyondlawn.org/hoas
- Professional Guides · beyondlawn.org/professionals
- Recursos en Español · beyondlawn.org/recursos-en-español
- Workshops & Events · beyondlawn.org/workshops-&-events
- FAQ · beyondlawn.org/faq

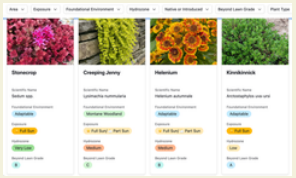
SERVICES

Hands-on help for homeowners and HOAs.

- Landscape & Irrigation Evaluations · beyondlawn.org/evaluations
- Beyond Lawn Rebates · beyondlawn.org/rebates
- HOA Evaluations (16 or fewer common-area zones) · bit.ly/bl-hoa-signup
- HOA Mini-Grants · beyondlawn.org/hoas
- Soil Tests & Native Seed Mixes (ECCD) · eccdistrict.org/seed
- Free Wildfire Assessments (Eagle County REALFire) · bit.ly/bl-realfire

Questions? beyondlawn@eccdistrict.org · (970) 236-1165
Newsletter: bit.ly/beyondlawn-signup · @beyond.lawn
We also offer presentations for HOA boards and community groups.

RESOURCES



Plant Explorer



Web-based & Downloadable Guides

SERVICES



Low Cost Landscape & Irrigation Evaluations



Financial Incentives for Upgrades



Resources & Educational Opportunities

Meet the Team

A PROGRAM OF THE EAGLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Eagle County Conservation District is dedicated to preserving and restoring our county's natural resources - soil, water, air, plants, animals, and people - through local projects, partnerships, research, and education. We work with the community to conserve our natural landscapes and to enhance individual conservation efforts, promoting ecological balance in our region for generations to come

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EAGLE RIVER COALITION

The Eagle River Coalition advocates for the health of the Upper Colorado and Eagle River watersheds through research, education and projects. We strive to protect and enhance the high-quality natural, scenic and economic values that our rivers and tributaries provide to the citizens, visitors and wildlife of the Eagle River and Colorado River watersheds located in Eagle County

COLORADO
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT
PROTECTING WESTERN COLORADO WATER SINCE 1937

EAGLE RIVER WATER & SANITATION DISTRICT

SINGLETREE

EDWARDS COLORADO

AVON COLORADO

Town of Gypsum EST. 1911

EAGLE COUNTY WILDFIRE COLLABORATIVE

Irrigation Analysis
Less Water ... More Green

waternow alliance

ET Irrigation

Beyond Lawn