HOA Waterwise Landscape Guide

FOR BOARDS, MANAGERS, & 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

Make Every Drop Count

Guide to HOA Water Conservation Priorities

Outdoor irrigation is where most of your community's water goes. Outdoor use makes up an estimated 50–70% of total water use, far more than any indoor fix, and within Eagle County, the majority of indoor use makes it back into our waterways. Outdoor water use is the highest-impact place to save. Work through the following four priorities, from quick wins to lasting transformation.

STEP 1: KNOW YOUR WATER BUDGET

Before thinking about a landscape transformation, make sure you're irrigating effectively!

Understand how much water your landscape actually needs based on plant type, area, and local climate. Calculate an ET-based water budget and compare it to your actual water use. This baseline tells you whether you have a scheduling problem, an efficiency problem, or both. Many HOAs overwater without ever realizing it!

STEP 2: ADJUST YOUR IRRIGATION SCHEDULE

Once you know your water budget, adjust your schedule to water appropriately.

Lowest lift, biggest impact. Once you know your budget, dial in your controller to water within the water budget. Spread run times across multiple start times on turf zones (called cycle-and-soak) to reduce runoff. Adjust monthly and seasonally — spring and fall need far less water than peak summer. This step costs nothing and can cut water use by 20–30% or more.

STEP 3: UPGRADE INEFFICIENT COMPONENTS

When the irrigation schedule fits within your water budget, improve the efficiency of system components.

Replace old spray heads with high-efficiency rotary nozzles. Upgrade to a smart ET-based controller. Check and correct pressure issues. Convert spray zones to drip irrigation in planting beds where possible.

STEP 4: TRANSFORM YOUR LANDSCAPE

When your irrigation schedule and system are efficient, further reduce water use by undertaking a landscape transformation to a lower overall water need.

Once irrigation is optimized, consider reducing or replacing turf with waterwise and native plants. Native and waterwise plants require minimal supplemental irrigation once established. Landscape transformation delivers the most significant long-term water savings and resilience. Start with high-water-use zones first, and transform your landscape section by section.

Choose Your Path

Start with the appropriate assessment for your HOA

Count your common-area irrigation zones first. Each zone is a group of sprinklers or drip lines on its own valve. Count the stations on the controllers that serve common areas, or ask your landscape contractor or manager.

16 OR FEWER ZONES: BEYOND LAWN HOA EVALUATION

A Beyond Lawn specialist walks your property with a board member, landscape or irrigation contractor, and the property manager to understand the needs and goals for water conservation and landscape use in the common areas.

We then review each zone for coverage and efficiency, calculate an ET-based water budget, and identify where landscape conversion makes sense with suggestions for more functional waterwise alternatives.

BEYOND LAWN EVALUATION WRITTEN REPORT

You get a prioritized action plan for your board.

The report prioritizes recommendations for water savings, irrigation upgrades, biodiversity, and fire resilience. The report serves as a roadmap not just for short-term improvements that can be made, but a vision for where other water-saving opportunities exist in the medium and long term.

MORE THAN 16 ZONES: START WITH AN AUDIT

Larger systems need detailed testing and a contractor who is familiar with the system.

A contractor who can learn the property and do the work is the right fit for larger HOAs. Start with a professional irrigation audit (next page) before you upgrade equipment or transform your landscape. Beyond Lawn provides HOA mini-grants for projects including the irrigation audit of an HOA.

NOT SURE WHICH PATH?

Fill out the interested HOA form at bit.ly/bl-hoa-signup or contact us and we'll point you to the right next step. beyondlawn.org · beyondlawn@eccdistrict.org · (970) 236-1165

Irrigation Audits

For HOAs with more than 16 common-area zones

On larger properties, the fastest savings come from working with the system you already have. An audit measures how much water each area gets, where the system wastes it, and what the landscape needs, so you establish a reasonable baseline for watering and understand the upgrades that the system needs.

WHAT A GOOD AUDIT INCLUDES



Ask for these in writing.

Pressure and flow checks; full inspection for leaks, broken or misaligned heads, and overspray; controller and schedule review; a water budget and schedule by zone; and a written report with cost estimates and priorities. A certified irrigation auditor (CIT, CLIA, or QWEL) will assess the system and come up with a plan for management of the irrigation schedule as well as the upgrades that would help reduce waste.

WHO TO HIRE



Look for CLIA, CIT, or QWEL certification.

CLIA (Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor) and CIT (Certified Irrigation Technician) are Irrigation Association certifications. QWEL (Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper) is a WaterSense-labeled program. QWEL-certified auditors are sufficient for small to medium HOAs, but large HOAs or HOAs with more complex systems should look to hire CLIA and CIT professionals with experience with like systems.

QUESTIONS TO ASK



Before you sign a contract:

Are you certified, and by whom? Will you assess every zone? What will your written report include? Will you separate audit findings from repair quotes? Will I receive a water budget and a plan for watering within that budget from this audit? Will I receive an irrigation schedule management plan from this audit? Are you able to perform the system upgrades you might recommend?

AFTER THE AUDIT



Fix the cheapest problems first.

Fix leaks and scheduling, then upgrade equipment, then plan landscape conversions, starting with your highest-water-need zones. Beyond Lawn can help you interpret results and set priorities. By the time your audit is complete, your auditor should be familiar with your system and its needs. Sometimes auditors are busy or unable to complete the work themselves. Make sure they are able to deliver a clear plan for what you will need going forward, whether that includes them or not.

Where to Start Converting

Once your irrigation is efficient, focus on turf that costs the most to water and does the least. Keep turf where it works, like play areas, gathering lawns, and pet areas. Functional turf is worth irrigating well.



Best first targets: medians and entry strips with no foot traffic; hell strips and street edges that are hard to irrigate without overspray; slopes, where runoff wastes water and erodes soil; narrow or odd-shaped areas sprinklers can't cover efficiently; and shaded or struggling turf that uses water without looking good.



Good replacements: native grasses and wildflower meadows for large or marginal areas; waterwise perennial beds on drip for entries; mulched tree and shrub beds for screening and shade; and permeable hardscape like gravel, crusher fines, or flagstone for paths and areas next to buildings. In unincorporated Eagle County, new and replacement common-area irrigation needs a smart controller, and planting beds need drip. Towns have their own rules.

Plan for Fire, Too

Waterwise and firewise work together

Many Eagle County communities sit where homes meet wildland. The choices that save water, like the right plants, good spacing, and less decorative turf, can also slow a fire near buildings. Plan both at the same time, working out from your buildings.



0–5 FEET: KEEP IT NONCOMBUSTIBLE

This is where embers land and catch.

Use rock, gravel, or pavers around buildings, with no wood mulch, shrubs, or new trees. When you convert turf next to a building, this is the strip to go rock, not shrubs. It needs no irrigation, so it saves water too.



5–100 FEET: SPACE IT OUT

Leave gaps so fire can't climb or spread.

From 5 to 30 feet, use low plants in groups with space between them, and choose plants that hold moisture, like many native perennials and groundcovers. Keep woody, resinous plants such as juniper away from structures. From 30 to 100 feet, thin trees, limb them up about 6 feet, and clear dead material.



IRRIGATION AND MAINTENANCE

Healthy, well-kept plants are harder to ignite.

Keep drip running in planting beds near buildings through dry spells. Cut native meadows and grasses near structures low in late summer or fall. Add a yearly cleanup of dead plants, needles, and leaves to your maintenance contract, and make sure your crew knows which areas are fire zones.



TAKE IT COMMUNITY-WIDE

Work with your fire district.

Eagle Valley Wildland and Eagle County's REALFire program offer free property assessments; ask your fire district about chipping days. In Vail, Fire Free Five reimburses HOAs for part of the cost of a 5-foot noncombustible zone. Firewise USA, a free national program, gives communities a framework for an annual action plan. See the Beyond Lawn Fire-Resilient Landscaping Guide for plant lists.

Making It Last

Maintenance, fire safety, and your residents

A converted landscape needs a plan to thrive. These four steps protect your investment and keep residents on board.

UPDATE YOUR MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

Waterwise care is different from turf care.

- □ Establishment watering for one to three years
- □ Waterwise and native plant care and weed control
- □ Seasonal irrigation checks
- □ A contractor with some native and waterwise plant experience

PLAN WATERWISE AND FIREWISE TOGETHER

Many Eagle County communities sit where homes meet wildland.

- □ Keep the first 5 feet around buildings free of woody plants and wood mulch; use gravel or rock
- □ Space trees away from buildings and each other
- □ Limb trees up 6 feet
- □ Choose low-growing, non-woody plants near structures

BRING RESIDENTS ALONG

Share plans early.

- □ Explain the water and cost savings
- □ Show examples and before-and-after photos
- □ Invite Beyond Lawn to present at a board meeting or talk to residents

FUNDING

Check on current funding opportunities at beyondlawn.org/hoas

- □ Current Beyond Lawn incentives at beyondlawn.org
- □ Note: artificial turf is not eligible for Beyond Lawn rebates

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

Eagle County Professional Landscapers

Click a logo to visit. For audits, ask for CLIA, CIT or QWEL.

Irrigation Only

ET Irrigation

Edelweiss Lawn & Garden

OASIS Irrigation Co.

FRIAR TECH SERVICES

Landscape & Irrigation

GORE RANGE LANDSCAPING

ROCKY MOUNTAIN Custom Landscapes™

Ceres LANDCARE

ETHOS LANDSCAPING

Mountain Roots EXPERT GARDEN CARE

tended earth LANDSCAPING

Backyard Irrigation & Landscapes "Your link to a beautiful yard."

MOUNTAIN RIDGE LANDSCAPE LAWN · LAND · SNOW

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

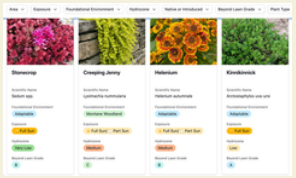
SERVICES

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