

Water Conservation Toolkit for HOAs & Property Management



Water in the Yampa Valley is changing. Summers are getting hotter and drier resulting in less water availability. A critical step to adapt to these impacts is to conserve water. The [2020 Water Conservation Plan](#) for Steamboat Springs is leading the community toward a more water-conscious future. Check out the plan for information on steps that the two municipalities are undertaking to conserve water along with water use data for the community.

This toolkit was created to help your HOA enact and expand its water conservation efforts. In the toolkit, you will find information on why water conservation is critical and a step-by-step guide to water conservation for HOAs.

Water Conservation Benefits

USE THESE TO TALK TO YOUR
HOA BOARD!



COST SAVINGS

Research has shown that increasing irrigation efficiency by 20% can result in water savings of on average 137,000 gallons per acre per year and monetary savings of around \$800 per acre per year with our current water rates.



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Did you know that as much as 50% of water applied outdoors can be lost due to inefficient watering methods?

The Yampa Valley is experiencing a drier and warmer climate resulting in less water availability. Lessening urban water use in landscaping and non-functional areas like medians is an easy and logical way to conserve water in our community. By using less water, more water can flow to our rivers and streams, benefiting native fish, recreation, and the environment of the Yampa Valley as a whole.

Additionally, using less tap water for outdoor watering lessens the amount of demand for treated water and decreases the energy used to treat this water.



LOWER MAINTENANCE

In some instances, water-wise landscapes are lower maintenance than their Kentucky bluegrass counterparts. These landscapes require fewer inputs, like pesticides and herbicides, little to no mowing, no aeration and more, thus adding to your savings over time.

7 Tips to Save Water on your Property



= LONG-TERM



= HIGH INVESTMENT



= SHORT-TERM



= LOW INVESTMENT

01



CUT DOWN ON WATERING

In the City of Steamboat Springs, we have a mandated [watering schedule](#) that only allows outdoor irrigation from 6 p.m. to 10 a.m. on specified days, as shown below. This reduces evaporation and allows the water being applied to better saturate the soil.

EVEN ADDRESSES
water Sun, Tues, Fri

ODD ADDRESSES
water Mon, Thurs, Sat

Sun

M

T



Th

F

Sat

Circle Your Days Above
(no watering on Wednesdays)

Additionally, landscaped plants and turf grass can have different water needs, and this can vary depending on the time of year. For example, during spring and early summer, your grass may be fine with watering only two times per week with water needs increasing as the summer progresses. Ask your landscaper to adjust irrigation zones based on plant needs and weather conditions. If you see runoff, too much water is being applied at a time, and you might need your landscaper to adjust.

02



CHECK YOUR IRRIGATION SYSTEM

It's easy for sprinkler heads to be knocked out of alignment or for leaks to spring up without anyone noticing, but with routine checks, these breaks can be fixed, saving significant water and money.

Sprinkler heads should be straight and unobstructed by grass. If asphalt or pavement is being watered, adjustments need to be made. You also want to ensure that you have head-to-head sprinkler coverage and proper pressure.



AESTHETICS

Low water-use landscapes do not have to resemble the barren, rock-laden landscapes that come to mind for many when we picture xeriscape landscaping. With the right landscaper, Kentucky bluegrass lawns can be transformed into community spaces full of visual interest and pollinators by bringing in the native species that we find along our trails and mountains to the areas around our homes and shared spaces.



COLORADO LAW

Colorado recently adopted a new law (SB23-178) focused on water-wise landscaping in homeowners association communities that removes barriers to water-wise landscaping. This new law went into effect on 8/7/2023, and it requires HOAs with single-family detached homes to adopt rules that incorporate water-conscious landscaping. Associations now have to adopt at least three pre-approved garden designs from a local municipality or Colorado State University's plant select website and cannot prohibit owners from using water-wise landscaping.



CASE STUDY

In 2010, an HOA located on the Front Range embarked on a transformational landscape journey that over time would lead to over 15 million gallons of water saved per year. [Cherry Creek 3](#) started simply by converting the beds in front of their units to water-wise landscaping (pictured below) after approving an HOA-wide Landscape Improvement Plan. Since then, Cherry Creek 3 has overhauled their irrigation infrastructure, made efforts to lessen the amount of non-functional turf, and built a community garden, winning awards and saving money in the process.



Resources

Yampascaping Guidebook

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2ff9b9db5aa74641a6acdb54443bfff59?header>

Yampascaping Professionals Guide

<https://ypsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Yampascaping-Professionals-Guide-Final-Updated-10.4.22.pdf>

City of Steamboat Springs Website

<https://steamboatsprings.net/251/Water-Conservation>

Mount Werner Water & Sanitation District Website

<https://www.mwwater.com/>



03

INSTALL NEW IRRIGATION EQUIPMENT

If your HOA is ready to update an outdated system, consider incorporating water-saving irrigation technologies. Many new controllers can make watering adjustments based on soil type, plant water requirements, and current weather conditions. Oftentimes these adjustments can be made via mobile apps, allowing for landscapers or property managers to make updates without the need to visit the property.

In addition, consider installing drip irrigation in plant beds. These systems allow for even greater control of water depending on individual plant needs, while significantly reducing water loss and weeds and improving plant health. Check with your water provider (City of Steamboat Springs or Mt Werner Water District) about rebates available for installing efficient irrigation equipment.



04

HAVE AN IRRIGATION AUDIT PERFORMED

An irrigation audit analyzes your landscape, irrigation system, and current water usage to identify opportunities for water savings. Your auditor will analyze the site's unique water needs and inspect your irrigation system and performance. This will allow the auditor to identify potential water and cost savings and make recommendations for irrigation schedules, system updates, and landscaping changes.



05

FOCUS ON SOIL HEALTH

It can take a lot of time, money, and resources to make big upgrades to landscaping. Until your HOA is ready to do that, there are some quick fixes that you can make now to improve the soil health of your landscape. Healthy soil is better able to infiltrate and hold onto water. Mulching garden beds can reduce water loss by as much as 30%, while also adding organic matter to soil over time. In your turf grass, make sure to aerate in the spring and fall. This reduces compaction and makes better use of water and fertilizer applications.



06

REDUCE TURF & INSTALL NEW WATER-WISE LANDSCAPING

Non-functional turf is defined as turf grass that is solely ornamental and not used for human recreational purposes. Non-functional turf is commonly found across the HOA landscape, resulting in huge cost and maintenance requirements for an area that goes virtually unused. By replacing some of this turf with water-wise and native plants (including native grasses), your HOA can save considerable amounts of water while also creating visually appealing landscapes that improve curb appeal, resident experience, and habitat for wildlife and pollinators.



07

HIRE A PRO

Let's face it, some of this work is just better left to the professionals, but not all landscape contractors are experts in water efficiency. When you are ready to make big changes, consider hiring landscapers and landscape designers who are practiced in water conservation work. When interviewing contractors, ask for water-saving data and case studies of similar projects and make sure that they have a good understanding of landscape design for water efficiency as well as knowledge of water-wise and native plants. Check out YVSC's list of [Yampascaping Professionals](#) for recommendations.