

# Eagle County, CO



## Beyond Lawn Water Efficient Landscape Conversion Program

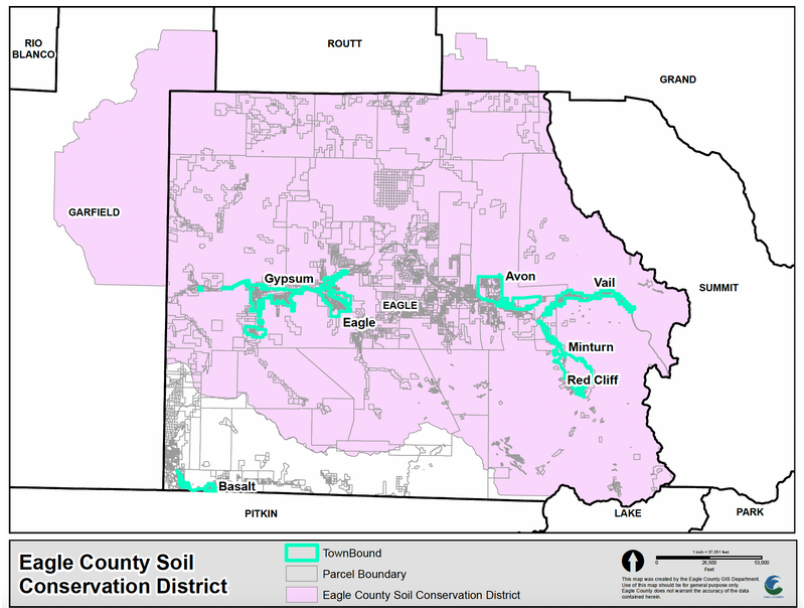


### Project at-a-Glance

#### Community Overview

- Utility/Community: Eagle County Conservation District & Eagle River Coalition
- Location: Eagle County, CO
- Population served: 56,000
- Service area: 1,692 square miles

#### Project Partners



#### Project Benefits

- Beyond Lawn is a comprehensive program that not only includes turf and irrigation rebates but also: property specific landscape irrigation evaluations; workshops and educational events; tools, resources, and educational materials; waterwise demonstration gardens; and step-by-step guidance for program participants from start to finish.
- The county-wide program is expansive and includes communities previously ineligible for turf and irrigation system rebates such as Eagle, Gypsum, Red Cliff, and Minturn, among others.
- The program aims to replace at least 90,000 square feet over two acres of high-water-use turfgrass with climate appropriate landscaping within the first three years and to deploy \$30,000 in irrigation rebates.
- The goal of this comprehensive program is to reduce average per capita water demand by 20% within 3 years.

#### Project Challenges



Equity and Affordability



Drought



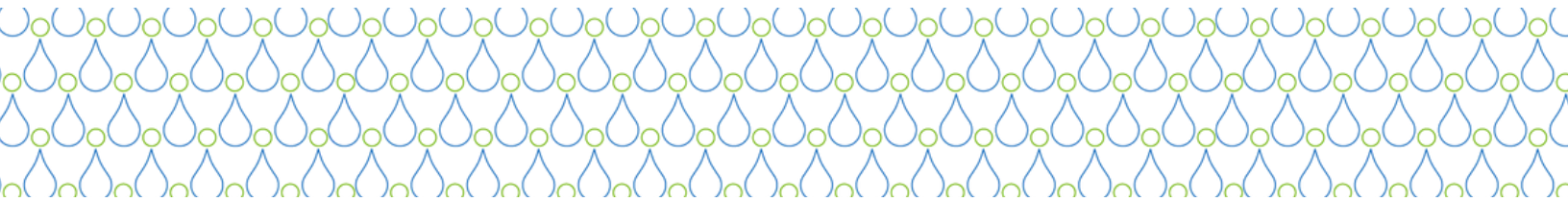
Changing Population



Lack of Reliable Water Supply

## Strategies for Success

WaterNow and Western Resource Advocates (WRA) partnered with the Eagle County Conservation District (ECCD) and Eagle River Coalition (ERO) to develop and launch the “Beyond Lawn” Water Efficient Landscape Conversion Program, which offers turf replacement and irrigation system upgrade rebates for Eagle County landowners and Homeowners Associations (HOAs). This program is designed to reduce landscape water use, save property owners money on their water bills, and have a long-lasting, positive impact on the natural environment by preserving return flows in streams.



## Project Spotlight

Eagle County is a river centric community, with a population of approximately 56,000, located on the West Slope of Colorado. Its tourism and recreation focused economy is reliant upon healthy and flowing streams for both summer and winter activities. Eagle County’s population is predicted to double by 2050, potentially doubling water demand and causing further strain on the community’s water resources. In the face of an increasingly variable water supply, the Eagle County Conservation District (ECCD) – a branch of the state government created under the Colorado Soil Conservation Act – and the Eagle River Coalition (ERO) – a local nonprofit that advocates for the health of the Upper Colorado and Eagle River watersheds through research, education, and projects – seek to reduce water demand in the community in order to maintain a sustainable supply in the future.



WaterNow Alliance (WaterNow), in partnership with Western Resource Advocates (WRA), also referred to as the “project team”, supported ECCD and ERO to develop and launch the Water Efficient Landscape Conversion Program, known as **Beyond Lawn**. The program offers turf replacement and irrigation system upgrade rebates in Eagle County.

Historically, turf and irrigation rebates throughout the county were only available to customers residing within the Eagle River Water & Sanitation District and the Upper Eagle River Water Authority boundary (e.g., Vail, Eagle-Vail, Avon, Arrowhead, Bachelor Gulch, Beaver Creek, Morningstar, Wildridge, Edwards, Cordillera, and Wolcott), rendering the remaining communities in the county (e.g., Eagle, Gypsum, Red Cliff, and Minturn, among others) ineligible. The Beyond Lawn program addresses this barrier and provides rebates to Eagle County landowners and HOAs that reside outside of the ERWSD and UERWA service area.

### **Turf Replacement Rebate**

- Incentives to replace lawns with low-water use landscapes
  - \$1.44 - \$2.44 per square foot



### **Efficient Irrigation System Rebates**

- Incentives to upgrade or replace irrigation systems with new, more efficient components and Smart Controllers
  - 50% match to upgrade irrigation systems (up to \$1,000) and
  - \$100 off Smart Controllers



The program's main goal is to remove and replace at least 90,000 square feet of high-water-use turfgrass with climate appropriate landscaping within three years. WaterNow and WRA supported the design and implementation of this program through a multi-phased approach:

**Phase 1 Background Research:** The project team reviewed Eagle County municipal water provider's water efficiency plans and current water conservation programming to gain an understanding of the communities' water conservation goals, priorities, and programs that may be synergistic with Beyond Lawn. Additionally, since ECCD and ERO had successfully procured grant funding to support this project from the Colorado River District and Colorado Water Conservation Board, the project team reviewed these grant applications to better understand the project's scope and commitments, and to inform the Beyond Lawn program development.

**Phase 2 Research on Colorado's Outdoor Efficiency Incentive Programs:** The project team researched and compiled a database of current residential and commercial turf replacement and irrigation system rebate programs in Colorado, including details about the programs' financial incentives, eligibility requirements, general application steps, project and material requirements, outreach tactics, sample application templates, and other supporting documents.

**Phase 3 Program Design:** The project team developed Beyond Lawn program materials including: an application intake form; a landscape and irrigation evaluation form; a post evaluation report template; email templates, and supplementary educational graphics.

**Phase 4 Program Implementation Guidance:** The project team compiled guidance and recommendations for the continuation and expansion of Beyond Lawn including strategies and metrics to measure program success, resources on additional funding opportunities to supplement and sustain the program budget, examples of graphics and resources to customize and share with program participants, and a Beyond Lawn client journey graphic to facilitate outreach efforts.

## Where To Begin?



### 1. Complete a Landscape & Irrigation Evaluation

Interested in saving water or converting your lawn? Start with a Landscape & Irrigation Evaluation for the best return of investment when choosing your water.



### 2. Planning & Design

We want to make sure that you convert your non-functional turf into a beautiful functional space. Here are some resources to help you accomplish your conservation goals.



### 3. Irrigation System Rebates

Based on your Irrigation Audit, you may need to consider upgrading your irrigation system before converting your lawn space. Click here for more details & rebates.



### 4. Turf Replacement Rebates

Ready to convert your thirsty bluegrass lawn into a beautiful, waterwise & climate adapted garden? Click here for available turf replacement rebates.

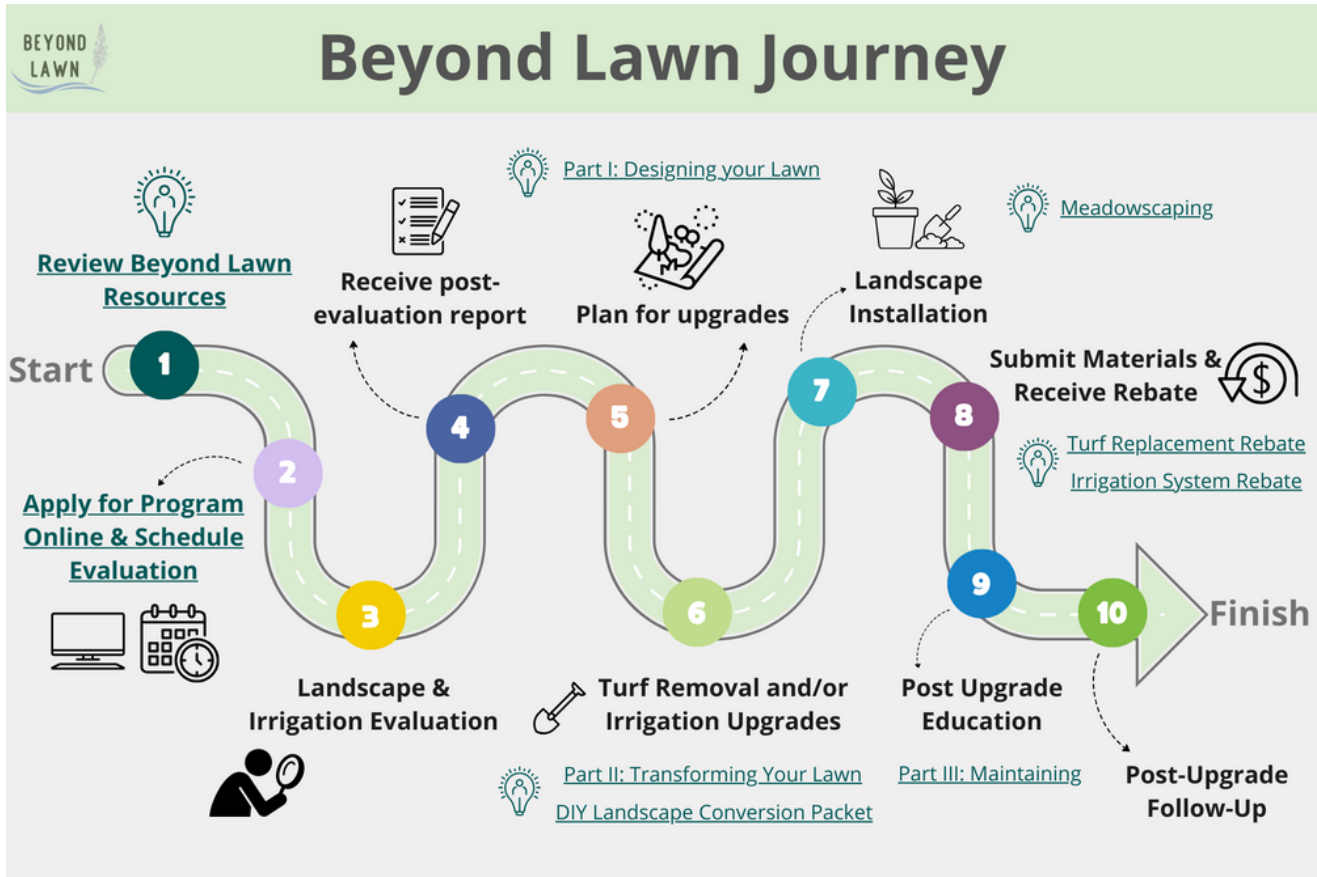
Beyond Lawn Website: <https://beyondlawn.org/>



## Project Impacts

Beyond Lawn takes a comprehensive approach to landscape transformation by not only providing turf replacement and irrigation system incentives, but also:

- Workshops and educational events,
- Tools, resources, and educational materials,
- Waterwise demonstration gardens, and,
- Step-by-step guidance for program participants from start to finish.



To be eligible for the landscape conversion rebates, all landowners must enroll and complete a landscape and irrigation evaluation at their property. These evaluations gather data on current landscape watering, flag potential irrigation inefficiencies, estimate potential water and cost savings, and make recommendations for projects and actions that can achieve the landowners' landscape design and water-conservation goals. These evaluations are a required first step in the Beyond Lawn program, cost \$100, and are completed by a team of certified professionals in 2 hours.

In fall 2023, the Beyond Lawn program performed the first round of landscape and irrigation evaluations. Twenty-five landowners had their landscapes evaluated, and more are expected to participate when evaluations resume in spring and summer 2024 and continuously throughout the life of the program.

Once the evaluations are complete, Beyond Lawn staff provide a detailed report and tailored recommendations for each participating landowner to help them determine the best course of action to upgrade their irrigation system and landscaping to improve water efficiency. Additionally, landowners are eligible after the evaluations to apply for and receive the turf replacement and irrigation system rebate incentives. Program participants are also encouraged to engage in Beyond Lawn's educational events and workshops and to refer to the library of resources and tools available on the program [website](#) as they complete their landscape retrofits.



## Lessons Learned

The project team identified several key takeaways for other communities looking to develop a turf replacement and irrigation system upgrade rebate program:

- Don't reinvent the wheel. Connect with other local turf and irrigation rebate programs to understand the best systems, workflows, and rebate procedures to use in designing a successful program. The conversations can also help to understand potential barriers and how to solve them.
- Engage with local stakeholders, "local champions", and the community more broadly when designing a turf and/or irrigation rebate program to ensure that it meets the community's unique needs and takes advantage of all possible resources and expertise in the area.
- Tailoring feedback to landowners through a required landscape and irrigation evaluation ensures participants are receiving personalized and actionable recommendations to reduce their outdoor water use.
- Use the pilot round of a new turf and/or irrigation rebate program to assess what is working and what is not and adjust accordingly. Doing so early on will set the program up for long-term success.
- Upgrading irrigation systems presents the potential for achieving great fiscal and water savings compared to turf replacement.
- Be sure to consider a range of funding and financing options to sustain a new turf and/or irrigation rebate program into the future. In the early phases of designing and piloting the program, compile a list of potential funding and financing opportunities to have ready when the program grows or additional funding is needed.

