



 Basalt, CO

# **UNIFIED OUTDOOR WATERING SCHEDULE IMPROVES WATER EFFICIENCY EFFORTS IN THE ROARING FORK WATERSHED**





# OUR APPROACH

WaterNow Alliance and Western Resource Advocates partnered with the Ruedi Water and Power Authority—a consortium of local governments in the Roaring Fork Watershed—to develop and implement unified outdoor watering standards across the watershed to create a consistent message, help alleviate confusion, and improve water efficiency practices across the region. The team conducted extensive research and stakeholder engagement to tailor the standards to the needs and desires of the water providers – Aspen, Basalt, Carbondale, Glenwood Springs, Snowmass Village, and Mid-Valley Metropolitan District. Afterward, the team created an implementation roadmap and identified effective messaging and communication strategies for the Authority to consider for successful implementation.



# IMPACT

The unified outdoor watering standards, unanimously supported by the Authority board in November 2022, will protect water resources for environmental, recreational, agricultural, and other uses throughout the watershed. By limiting outdoor watering to the coolest parts of the day (e.g., 6pm - 9am) on specific days of the week (depending on property address), utilities in the watershed can better address emergencies, like drought and wildfire, while managing peak water demands. Residential and commercial water users will have a consistent, easy-to-follow outdoor watering schedule. Additionally, Authority board members agreed to support their jurisdictions during the council adoption and approval processes.










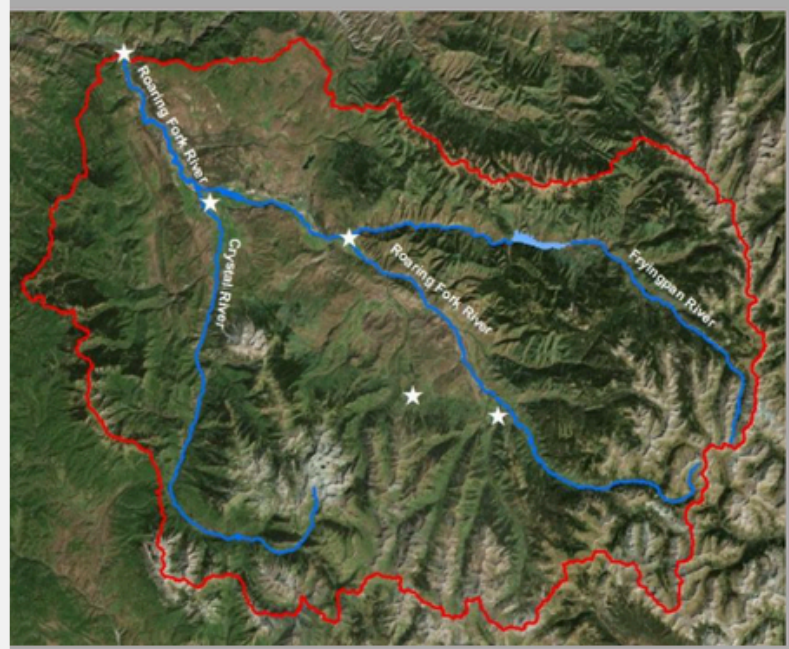
# KEY DRIVERS


Facing decades of drought, limited upstream water storage, and a drier future, municipalities in the Roaring Fork Watershed are exploring ways to reduce water usage. To secure an adequate water supply for future generations and enhance the watershed's unique environmental, recreational, and agricultural values, all six water providers had independently established their own outdoor watering schedules. However, these schedules created confusion and compliance challenges for residents, landscape professionals, property managers, and others who live and work in various jurisdictions within the watershed that followed different schedules.



# HOW IT WORKS

To develop unified outdoor watering standards, the team first analyzed water use patterns, challenges, and conservation approaches within the Roaring Fork Watershed. This included reviewing local water efficiency plans, restrictions, and landscaping patterns, and comparing them to those of similar communities. The team also interviewed water utilities with established outdoor watering schedules to evaluate their programs' effectiveness and gather insights from their design and implementation.





## Regional Water Efficiency Plan

### Roaring Fork Watershed, Colorado

ELEMENT Water Consulting & WaterDM

August 12, 2015



## HOW IT WORKS (CONTINUED)

Next, the team conducted nine informational interviews with jurisdictions and relevant local stakeholders to share research findings, discuss current watering restrictions, gauge preferences for the timing and days for watering schedules, and assess interest in aligning standards across the watershed. Using this information, the team drafted outdoor watering standards and identified necessary changes to coordinate schedules across the valley. The standards were further refined through engagement with the Authority board and previously consulted stakeholders, culminating in the final proposed recommendations.

# Weekly Schedule





## HOW IT WORKS (CONTINUED)

Additionally, the team developed an implementation plan and identified communication tactics for RWAPA to consider when implementing the standards. This included enhancing current conservation programs for customers, landscape professionals, property managers, and others regarding outdoor landscaping best practices, such as plant selection, water requirements, irrigation controller programming, and challenges related to the Roaring Fork Watershed and Colorado River system.





**IF WE CAN MAKE THIS CHANGE, THE IDEA THAT (WATERING RESTRICTIONS) CHANGE FROM YEAR TO YEAR TO YEAR WILL GO AWAY...IT'S GOING TO BE MUCH EASIER AND LESS EXPENSIVE THAN HAVING TO TELL PEOPLE EVERY YEAR WHAT THE RULES ARE THIS SUMMER.**

– Rachel Richards, Aspen City Council and Water and Power Authority board member



# THE PATH FORWARD

By collectively shaping the unified baseline watering standards throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed, the Authority simplified participation in outdoor water conservation measures for those who live and work in the valley. With this shared experience, Roaring Fork's water providers can explore other water conservation measures identified in its efficiency plans, such as landscape certification programs and water efficiency awards for businesses and homeowners' associations, that can further improve water efficiency across the Watershed.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- (1) Leverage the experiences and insights of similar municipal water providers to identify effective education, outreach, and enforcement mechanisms, as their best practices and challenges can inform successful watering standards.
- (2) Gathering input from watershed stakeholders and the Authority board helped tailor the standards to the watershed's unique needs and values. For instance, because the Roaring Fork Valley is a popular skiing destination, exceptions were made in the outdoor watering standards for snowmaking operations.
- (3) For maximum effectiveness, watering standards should be accompanied by an education and outreach campaign that offers resources in all community languages and provides communication materials for both customers and landscape professionals.



# SOURCES

ELEMENT Water Consulting & WaterDM, *Regional Water Efficiency Plan, Roaring fork Watershed, Colorado* (2015), [http://www.roaringfork.org/media/1567/wep\\_rfregional\\_plan\\_20150812.pdf](http://www.roaringfork.org/media/1567/wep_rfregional_plan_20150812.pdf).

Heather Sackett, *Agency Unveils Valley-Wide Outdoor Watering Standards*, Aspen Journalism (Nov. 19, 2022), <https://www.aspentimes.com/news/agency-unveils-valley-wide-outdoor-watering-standards/>.

Roaring Fork Conservancy, *Roaring Fork Watershed Facts*, <https://www.roaringfork.org/your-watershed/watershed-facts/>.

WaterNow Alliance, *RWAPA, CO Proposed Outdoor Watering Standards* (2023), <https://waternow.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/RWAPA-CO-Outdoor-Watering-Standard.pdf>.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

## ROARING FORK CONSERVANCY

Local organization dedicated to regional watershed planning, water resource policy initiatives, and other efforts within the Roaring Fork Valley Watershed



# RELATED PROJECTS



## BROOMFIELD, CO

Creating a new landscape code to reduce outdoor water demands



## SUMMIT COUNTY, CO

Development of a regional outdoor water efficiency program



## ERIE, CO

Water efficient landscape ordinance development



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