



# Advancing Landscape Transformation in Colorado

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Water Resources & Agriculture Review Committee  
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*Photo Courtesy of Resource Central*





# Reducing Municipal Outdoor Water Demand

- Nearly **50%** of our municipal water supplies are used outdoors, primarily irrigating cool season, high water use turfgrass
- Outdoor water use is mostly **consumptive**
- Replacing or limiting **non-functional turfgrass** is one our most impactful demand reduction opportunities



# Definitions

## Non-Functional Turf

- Cool season turf where the only person walking on it is the person maintaining it
- Examples: medians, planting strip, office parks, sloped areas, some front yards

## Functional Turf

- Cool season turf that is actively used.
- Examples: soccer fields, picnic areas

## Water Wise Landscaping or Coloradoscape

- Drought-tolerant plants and grasses
- Multi-benefit: pollinator-friendly, reduced fertilizer use, decreased emissions, improved stormwater infiltration, and beautiful







## **4 Key Components for Landscape Transformation**

- 1. Turf Replacement Incentives**
- 2. Water Wise Landscape Regulations**
- 3. Water Rates & Tap Fees**
- 4. Green Industry Transition**



HB 22-1151  
allocates \$2M to  
CWCB to create a  
Turf Replacement  
Program

Municipalities – led  
by Aurora and  
Castle Rock – adopt  
code to reduce non-  
functional turf

Colorado Springs  
leads Native Grasses  
Manual working  
group

38 turf replacement  
programs available in  
Summer 2023  
(increased from 22  
programs in 2022)

2022

2023

MOU signed by 32 CO  
River Basin Water  
Providers committing  
to reduce non-  
functional turf by 30%

CWCB rolls out Colorado  
Water Plan, Turf  
Replacement Program, and  
Governor Polis tasks CWCB  
to lead Urban Landscape  
Taskforce Meeting

CWCB expends all Turf  
Replacement Funds &  
CWCB Board approves  
additional \$1.5M grant for  
turf replacement





# Status Update: Turf Replacement Programs

- CWCB funding ~50 programs and projects
  - Most capped at \$25,000 each
  - 50% match required
- Analysis from 25 program applicants:
  - Median water savings = 12.5 gal/sq ft (~70%)
  - Median rebate = \$1.62
  - Median incentive cost per AF = \$45,600

*(Per 10/27 Landscape Taskforce Meeting)*





# Status Update: Non-Functional Turf Limits

- Of Colorado's **38** turf replacement programs, **17** of the communities covered by these programs limit turf in their landscaping code (45%)
- **9** additional communities are planning to – or are in the process of – adding turf limits
- Recently adopted turf limits: Aurora, Castle Rock, Broomfield, Glenwood Springs, Colorado Springs



# Policy Opportunities: Where do we go from here?

## State Turf Replacement Funding

- \$4M recurring appropriation to expand the state's turf replacement program
- Ensure adequate CWCB resources to administer including Outdoor Water Conservation Coordinator Role

## Prohibiting Landscaping Practices for Water Conservation

- Limiting certain areas of non-functional turf would be feasible and highly impactful
- Artificial turf poses numerous health and environmental concerns
- We face an opportunity cost of not acting





# Thank You!

The logo for Western Resources Advocates (wra) is a teal circle containing the lowercase letters 'wra' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

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# Turf Policy across the CO River Basin

## Nevada

- AB 356, prohibits irrigating non-functional turf with Colorado River water delivered by the Southern Nevada Water Authority effective Jan. 1, 2027
- Excludes single-family properties

## Utah

- SB1181 establishes state turf replacement program with \$5 million initial appropriation & \$3 million ongoing annual appropriation for turf replacement
- Only Utahns living in communities that have adopted non-functional turf limits can access rebate funds (no tree lawn, <50% turf in front and side yards, <20% turf in CII)

## California

- AB 1572 prohibits irrigating non-functional turf on non-residential properties starting in 2027

