

# HB22-1151 Turf Replacement Program

Representatives Catlin & Roberts and Senators Bridges & Simpson

**HB22-1151 will help Coloradans make smart water use choices and benefit the state in four crucial ways:**

- Improving water conservation
- Saving Coloradans money on water bills
- Ensuring our water resources are used efficiently
- Supporting healthy ecosystems

**Promoting the efficient use of Colorado's water resources by decreasing areas of irrigated turf can take pressure off rivers and agriculture for new municipal supplies and increase community resiliency to drought and climate change.** This bill will help drive voluntary changes that will lead to increased water conservation, drought resilience, and smarter water use overall in Colorado by providing incentives for replacing irrigated turf grass with water efficient landscaping.

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## THE PROBLEM

Nearly 50% of water used within the municipal and industrial sector in Colorado is used outdoors and a lot of that irrigates non-native turf grasses. While there are important and appropriate places and uses for irrigated turf (e.g., parks, sports fields, playgrounds, portions of residential yards), much turf receives little, if any, use and *if replaced with water efficient landscapes* would save significant amounts of water.

Turf replacement programs exist today in some parts of the state, but rebate incentives are usually around \$1 per square foot<sup>1</sup> and program budgets are limited. Available funding is not sufficient to cover the costs of a project or adequately incentivize participation.

Currently 4.2 million Coloradans — approximately 75% of the state — live in communities that do not offer turf replacement incentives. Only 19 cities, towns, or water districts in Colorado provide financial incentives for turf replacement for customers.

There is additional demand in the state for this type of program. As of 2022, the annual budget for the 19 turf replacement programs in Colorado was approximately \$1.3 million. These programs serve only about 25% of Coloradans, and several programs run out of money each year. It is clear there is more demand for turf replacement funding in Colorado than is currently available.

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## THE SOLUTION

**HB22-1151 directs the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) to develop a voluntary statewide program to replace turf grass. The program will:**

- Match local turf replacement program funding;
- Provide a pathway for people who don't live in communities with turf replacement programs to access funding through a third-party contractor;
- Provide financial incentives for property owners to replace less-used areas of grass with water efficient and climate appropriate landscaping;
- Require waterwise replacement vegetation that provides benefits such as mitigating stormwater runoff, providing pollinator habitat, creating more drought-proof landscapes, lowering water bills and other ownership and maintenance costs, and improving community aesthetics.

**HB22-1151 also provides funding to make a turf replacement project an economically viable, and environmentally sustainable, choice for property owners. Funding will:**

- Incentivize commercial, industrial, institutional, HOA, and multi- and single-family residential property owners to replace turf with lower water use landscaping;
  - Allow the 19 existing local turf replacement programs to scale up through matching funds;
  - Enable existing providers to increase their own turf replacement budget contributions to make it economical for property owners to replace turf;
  - Incentivize communities without turf replacement programs to develop and implement new programs; and
  - Support the 75% of Coloradans statewide who are not served by a local program through a third-party contractor.
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## HOW TURF REPLACEMENT PROGRAM FUNDING WOULD WORK

While turf replacement programs vary, they are relatively straight forward. For this reason, and to streamline access to funding, HB22-1151 puts the CWCB in charge of establishing grant guidelines. Local communities that pursue matching funds are responsible for developing the details of their turf replacement programs to ensure they are best suited to local needs. This allows the CWCB and communities to modify program requirements over time without having to return to the legislature to change the statute.

### Program Funding Can Be Accessed in Two Ways:

**Matching Grant Funds** - Under HB22-1151, eligible entities can apply for matching funds for existing and new turf replacement programs. This will allow entities to scale up existing programs, provide additional incentives for participation, and may encourage communities without programs to develop one. If a

community has a turf replacement program but currently contracts with an outside organization to administer the program and work directly with property owners (e.g., the non-profit Resource Central), the contractor could apply for the matching funds; and

**Third-Party Contractor Programs** (via RFP) - For Coloradans who don't have access to a turf replacement program, the CWCB would issue a request for proposals (RFP) and select one or more third-party contractors (e.g., Resource Central or organizations with similar capacities) to develop and manage turf replacement programs around the state. These contractors would work directly with individual property owners to provide financial incentives for their turf replacement projects, opening up turf replacement funds to all Coloradans.

### HB22-1151 is Supported by:



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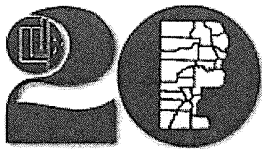
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<sup>1</sup> For example, Fort Collins Utilities offers up to \$1 per square foot for residential turf replacement projects and up to \$1.50 per square foot for commercial turf replacement projects. Greeley Water offers residential, commercial and HOA properties \$1 per square foot for converted turf.