

# waterwise

The official publication of Colorado WaterWise

*The Voice of the  
Colorado Urban Water  
Conservation Community*

## Winter 2023

### In this issue...

**PAGE 6**

SB 23-178

**PAGE 8**

BP Guidebook Update

**PAGE 9**

Payment Assistance at  
Castle Rock Water

**PAGE 10**

Broomfield Passes  
Landscape Ordinance

**PAGE 12**

CWCB Turf Replacement  
Funding

**PAGE 15**

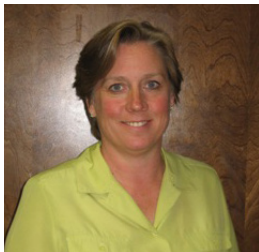
Dominion Water Manager  
Views on Drought, Bills

**PAGE 18**

LLYLI Toolkit Materials

colorado  
waterwise

# Letter from the Editor



Ruth Quade works for the City of Greeley. This is her fourth term on the Colorado WaterWise Board of Directors.

Greetings,

Reflecting on the year, the conservation community has seen great strides in shifting perceptions of what a landscape should or could look like. Priorities given to water savings, maintenance, weed management, soil and water health and quality and of course pollinators and other wildlife. This is an exciting time to be in the industry. In this issue, you will see how funding incentives, legislation, and education have worked hand in hand to propel the movement forward.

Colorado WaterWise held another great and inspirational Annual Symposium this year. Despite the excitement from the Nuggets and ESPN as well as several celebrities holding a celebration just outside of the venue, great topics were discussed and enjoyed by a diverse audience.

Looking forward to 2024, we expect more landscape initiatives and opportunities to reach some of our underserved customers. To that end, Colorado WaterWise will continue to expand opportunities to help us all reach our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) goals and publish ideas, tips and feature what other communities have done to reach specific audiences. We are offering more Spanish translation in both the Live Like You Love It and on our Lunch 'n Learns. Please plan to utilize all of the tools Colorado WaterWise provides along with the long-awaited BP Guidebook update and the Native and Low Water Grass Installation and Maintenance Guidebook for large property turf transformations.

Have a festive holiday season with family and friends, be safe and look forward to the New Year!

*Ruth Quade*

WaterWise is the official, quarterly publication of Colorado WaterWise.

Colorado WaterWise addresses the state's water challenges by improving water efficiency through diverse community connections, innovative solutions, and by providing valuable resources to our members.

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## Is this your first edition of Waterwise? Welcome!

You are reading the official quarterly publication of Colorado WaterWise, Colorado's hub for urban water conservation news and resources. Do you have a topic or case study that you think others in our community would be interested in? Submit your idea or an article to us at [admin@coloradowaterwise.org](mailto:admin@coloradowaterwise.org).

# FROM THE CHAIRPERSON'S DESK



*Alyssa Quinn, Co-chair of Colorado WaterWise*

Welcome Winter!

As the beautiful fall colors leave us, we welcome in winter. The state will be keeping their eye on El Niño this winter, hoping for some much-needed snow.

Colorado WaterWise held our Annual WaterWise Symposium in October, welcoming nearly 150 water professionals from across the region. Our amazing speakers talked about a range of topics from landscape transformation projects to water equity in mobile home communities. We also got to enjoy the music of the Chainsmokers right outside our window!

As 2023 comes to an end, we look back on another great year here at Colorado WaterWise. LLYLI created lots of new material for our members including turf replacement, artificial turf, and resources for HOAs. The BP Manual update gave us opportunities to reach out to our stakeholders for input with six stakeholder meetings. And finally, we hosted three fantastic webinars and two in-person events for our members.

2023 was a great year and we can't wait to see you all in 2024 for more resources, events, and fun! Here's to a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season!



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day to give.**

## MEETINGS

Colorado WaterWise Board Meetings are the second Thursday of each month, 10 a.m. to noon.

RSVP at [coloradowaterwise.org/events](https://coloradowaterwise.org/events)

# IN MEMORY OF BARBARA BIGGS



**A**s we reflect on Barbara Biggs's life, there isn't much she didn't accomplish. Barb lost her battle with cancer on October 5, 2023.

For more than 30 years, Barbara was actively involved in water, wastewater, and regulatory affairs. She chaired the Colorado Water Conservation Board's Metro Basin Roundtable and served on the National Association of Clean Water Agencies' Board. Barb also served on the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission, the Colorado Water Conservation Board (chairperson in 2005), the Water and Wastewater Facility Operator Certification Board, and the Colorado Water Trust Board of Directors and Advisory Council member for the One World One Water Center for Metropolitan State University in Denver.

In 2017, she began her career as General Manager of Roxborough Water and Sanitation District. She was proud and grateful for the opportunity to lead the Roxborough team.

Thank you, Barb, for all your years of dedication to the water and wastewater industry. We are lucky to have worked with you and honored to have known you.

## DON IRELAND NETS FOUR STATEWIDE WRITING AWARDS

**L**ongtime Colorado WaterWise Newsletter contributor Don Ireland won four statewide journalism awards during the Colorado Press Association's annual seminar in September.

Ireland swept first and second place for features he wrote for the Weekly Register-Call, the Gilpin County newspaper that is the oldest publication in the state (161 years). He also won a Best Investigative Series award and one for his occasional column, "Age of Drones," which discusses how this improved technology can be useful to people, businesses and corporations. Some of Ireland's drone photos have appeared in CWW Newsletter in recent years.

In 2015, Ireland received CWW's "Gardener Award" for his efforts in helping his Cherry Creek 3 homeowners' association reduce its annual consumption by 15 million gallons of water in a year. He joined CWW and began contributing stories about the people, organizations and products that help others conserve water in Colorado.



# THE COLORADO WATERWISE SYMPOSIUM RETURNS TO DENVER

*By Chelsea Benjamin, Western Resource Advocates*

On Tuesday, October 24th, the Colorado water conservation community gathered in Denver for the annual Colorado Waterwise Symposium held this year at Tivoli Turnhalle on the Metropolitan State University campus. The day began with a keynote address from Jennifer Gimble, Senior Water Policy Scholar at the Colorado Water Center, who gave an overview of issues related to Colorado's water supply and presented some of her ideas to solve them, which included a strong call for regionalization and collaboration. Next, a panel made up of experts from across the Colorado River Basin presented efforts they have undertaken to map areas of non-functional turf that could be replaced with drought-tolerant landscaping in the future. Interesting findings were shared from Southern Nevada Water Authority, which has led the West in replacing non-functional turf over decades.

Two additional panels covered efforts to fund water efficiency, with examples from communities on how they have funded water efficiency projects and resources presented by WaterNow Alliance on their ability to assist communities with grant fund applications. The final panel on how to advance water equity in disproportionately impacted communities detailed efforts that are taking place across the state to ensure clean water in mobile homes. Mini sessions were sprinkled throughout the day and covered what's new at the One World One Water Center, where students have been collaborating with partners in Italy on water

projects, an update to the Colorado Waterwise Best Management Practices guidebook featuring an entertaining skit about what a newcomer to Colorado could expect to learn from it, and Trends in Residential Water Use, shared by the team at Flume, which showed a big dip in outdoor water use across the west due to high precipitation this year. Additionally, the Gardener award was presented to Colorado Springs Utilities for their excellent work on expanding knowledge around native grass conversions through their Native Grass Guide effort.

There were ample opportunities for networking with fellow attendees and opportunities to learn more about offerings from event sponsors at their booths. The day was also peppered with music from a soundstage set up for an event next door that the organizers were not aware was scheduled for the same day. The day was cut short before the final



***The Colorado Springs Utilities team accepting the Gardener Award***

# SYMPOSIUM CONT.

panel on the benefits of dynamic landscapes beyond water savings to minimize the attendee's exposure to the loud music. That panel was rescheduled and offered for free as a webinar on November 29. Because of the early end to the day, many attendees were able to participate in a happy hour at Tivoli Brewery next door, enjoy each other's company and the excitement of the event as it kicked off next door.

The day was a wonderful opportunity for the Colorado water conservation community to come together and share ideas. We hope you will join us next year!



*Attendees enjoying the final panel **How to Advance Water Equity in Disproportionately Impacted Communities***

## SB 23-178: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

*By contributing writers*

In 2013, Colorado State Legislature banned Homeowners' Associations (HOAs) from outlawing Xeriscape, native plants or allowing turf to go dormant during times of drought. Yet many homeowners are unaware of this law and we still get questions on how to deal with their HOA. This spring the state legislature went a little farther and passed [Senate Bill 23-178](#), a new law reducing barriers for the million or so Colorado homeowners in HOAs who want to replace their grass lawn. We've received a lot of questions on this, specifically on the requirement that HOAs pre-approve drought-tolerant lawn alternatives for homeowners in the association to use. This article will explain the motivation behind the bill and guide HOAs on compliance.

**Why was this bill written?** Our ongoing problems

of water shortage and biodiversity loss are getting worse. Our readership will need no elaboration on the megadrought we're currently experiencing, so we'll skip that. We're simultaneously experiencing a period of rapid ecological decline mostly attributable to habitat loss. Bird, insect, and pollinator populations are crashing, with uncertain but likely calamitous consequences for the ecosystem.

Many homeowners would like to use their own land to contribute to collective conservation efforts of water and/or habitat. Ecologist Douglas Tallamy articulates the impact of collective small-scale conversions of lawns and backyards to natural spaces; in aggregate, this enormous amount of land has great potential for yard-sized islands of habitat that can go a long way toward sustaining animal populations

and stabilizing the ecosystem. Considering the shortcomings of corporations and governments on these issues, individual and collective behavior may be our best hope.

Many homeowners are deterred from even trying to change out their lawn by barriers embedded in the old system. Most lawn conversions require HOA approval; a process that can be opaque and intimidating at best, with no clear guidelines of what would be approved, or how long a review would take. HOAs have nearly unlimited power to tell homeowners what lawn alternatives they cannot plant, so it makes sense that HOAs also offer guidance on some lawn alternatives that are allowed.

**How to comply with the bill?** The bill requires HOAs to select three or more preplanned water-wise garden designs that will be preapproved for use in front yards. The idea being that HOAs do a little planning work up front, which will in turn make lawn conversions easy and routine for homeowners. This

does not require developing anything new — free lawn replacement design templates are increasingly freely available; all an HOA needs to do is choose a few they like and post them on their website.

Here are a few places to get started. Resource Central offers a user-friendly [“Garden-in-a-Box”](#) program including perennial plants and a professionally designed planting template. Likewise, online retailers like High Country Gardens have drought tolerant [pre-planned perennial gardens](#) restocked seasonally. [Plant Select](#) has a list of free designs available, as does [Denver Water](#), and more utilities and municipalities are moving this direction.

The aesthetic affinity for green grass lawns is still widespread - but native plant gardens (which in our subjective view are far more attractive) are more aligned with the public interest, and this process is designed to make it easier for homeowners to move this direction.

## COMPLYING WITH THE LAW IS FAIRLY STRAIGHTFORWARD.

**First, an HOA must ordinarily allow drought-tolerant plantings on at least 80% of the landscapeable area.**

**Second, the HOA must designate at least three pre-planned water-wise garden designs that are pre-approved for installation within our community that are “water-wise landscaping” under the definition of C.R.S. 37-60-135 (2)(1), which emphasizes drought-tolerant and native plants. Each such garden design may be selected from the CSU Extension “Plant Select” organization’s “Downloadable designs” list, available online, or from a municipality, utility, or other entity that creates such garden designs.**

**Third, an HOA cannot ordinarily prohibit food or pollinator gardens in the front or side yards.**

# BEST PRACTICE GUIDEBOOK UPDATE

By *Abbye Neel, Brendle Group*

The sixth and final work session for the update to the Colorado WaterWise best practice guidebook was hosted on December 4. Funded with support from the Colorado Water Conservation (CWCB) and the Colorado River District, the project, which kicked off earlier this year, aims to update the Best Practice Guidebook that was originally published in 2010. The update will streamline the original fourteen best practices into seven updated best practices that reflect how water conservation has evolved over the last 10+ years and the industry’s current landscape. Geared toward water conservation professionals, each best practice will include information on why the best practice is important, implementation considerations, water saving estimates and costs, as well as case studies, examples, and additional resources.

Specifically, the seven best practices that will be covered in the guidebook are:

Best Practice	Key & Topics Categories
<b>Planning and Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water Efficiency Plans</li><li>• Integration with Relevant Community Plans &amp; Services</li><li>• Dedicated Coordination of a Water Conservation Program</li></ul>
<b>Indoor Water Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Targeting</li><li>• Residential &amp; Multifamily Programming</li><li>• Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Programming</li><li>• Customer Leak Detection</li></ul>
<b>Measurement and Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Metering</li><li>• Water Loss Control</li><li>• Water Budgets</li><li>• Data and Data Management</li></ul>
<b>Outdoor Water Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Selection of Landscape Types</li><li>• Landscape Design, Installation &amp; Maintenance</li><li>• Irrigation Efficiency</li><li>• Landscape Transformation</li><li>• Elevating Landscaping Practice</li></ul>
<b>Rates and Charges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tap or Connections Fees</li><li>• Conservation-oriented Rates</li></ul>
<b>Codes and Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development Regulations</li><li>• Building Regulations</li><li>• Other Codes &amp; Ordinances</li></ul>
<b>Education and Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Education</li><li>• Public Information</li><li>• Communication with Decision Makers</li><li>• Drought vs. Non-drought Communications</li></ul>

During the past 12 months, over 300 different stakeholders have provided feedback on the format and content to shape the seven best practices listed above. The final guidebook will be produced in a graphically rich PDF format to download, as well as incorporated into a friendly online interface. The final guidebook is expected to be published in early spring of 2024.

If you would like more information on the effort or additional information, please email: [admin@coloradowaterwise.org](mailto:admin@coloradowaterwise.org).



# AFFORDABILITY AND PAYMENT ASSISTANCE AT CASTLE ROCK WATER

*By Sandra Sandman, Castle Rock Water*

For a strong and sustainable water future, Castle Rock Water began a long-term water plan to transition from groundwater to renewable water as the primary water supply. Paying for these new water supplies and the associated infrastructure was part of the plan. As the organization's funding relies solely on rates and fees, a goal was created to smooth needed rate increases, have tight control on financial planning and support customers in need.

Castle Rock Water conducts a rates and fees study annually in order to respond quickly to economic conditions. A financial management plan pairs with the annual study to ensure Castle Rock Water stays within established parameters. One of these parameters is benchmarking against other Front Range water providers and remaining mid-ranged in a rates and fees comparison. Another parameter is comparing against various national affordability indices. For instance, on the Affordability at the 20th Income Percentile Index, Castle Rock water and wastewater bills were found to be at 4.61%, well below the average 12.4% for large cities.

With rate affordability in mind, a goal of the rates and fees study is to increase rates no more than

3% overall each year. In addition, several financial assistance programs are in place. Customers falling behind with payments are offered a payment plan, and Castle Rock Water partners with the local income assistance organization, Help and Hope Center, to provide financial assistance for qualifying participants. Recently, the water provider became a part of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to provide federally funded assistance.

For commercial customers, Castle Rock Water also provides a payment plan and offers assistance programs to help in specific conditions. A program was created for businesses affected by the pandemic and also for restaurants that must conform to new grease interceptor regulations.

Having a guiding financial plan, working with community partners and paying attention to specific customer needs is proving a positive financial path for Castle Rock Water to ensure a sustainable water future.

*Photo provided by Castle Rock Water*



# BROOMFIELD PASSES NEW WATER EFFICIENT LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE!

SUPPORTED BY WATERNOW ALLIANCE AND WESTERN RESOURCE ADVOCATES

*By Victoria Arling and Becky Anderson, WaterNow Alliance*

**O**n August 22, 2023, the Broomfield City Council unanimously adopted [Ordinance No. 2215](#), amending the Broomfield Municipal Code to be one of the strongest waterwise landscaping ordinances in the state. This was done as part of WaterNow Alliance’s [Project Accelerator Program](#) with the goal of developing a new landscape ordinance that would reduce the amount of water-intensive cool-season turfgrass and promote water-efficient landscaping practices for new and redevelopment of residential and commercial properties.

Water conservation is one of the City and County of Broomfield’s top sustainability initiatives. In Broomfield, 60-70% of the water supply is dedicated to outdoor water use each year. Broomfield has already made considerable investments in the replacement of existing cool-season turfgrass with drought-resilient and climate-appropriate landscaping alternatives. As Broomfield grows, installing low-water plant alternatives with efficient irrigation systems in new development and redevelopment is one of the community’s biggest opportunities to improve water supply resilience in the face of a hotter and drier future.

WaterNow, in collaboration with partners at Western Resource Advocates, supported these efforts through the review of Broomfield’s draft landscape ordinance and corresponding landscape reference manual, two stakeholder engagement meetings to gather

and incorporate feedback from local landscape practitioners and the public, and development of communication and outreach materials.

The ordinance is supplemented by a [Landscape Reference Manual](#) which contains the necessary guidelines, criteria, maps, plant lists and other provisions. The primary intent of the new landscape regulations—which now applies to residential, commercial and industrial development—is to reduce outdoor water consumption and improve the visual quality of Broomfield. The new ordinance applies to landscape plans approved after January 1, 2024.



*Photos provided by the City and County of Broomfield*

# BROOMFIELD ORDINANCE CONT.

Notably, the updated landscape ordinance requires all new development and redevelopment (except for golf courses and multi-purpose fields) to limit turfgrass. Multi-family and single-family attached, manufactured home parks and non-residential districts are limited to 30% of the total landscaped area, with grass blends of no more than 20% cool-season grass species. Single-family detached and agricultural and estate districts are limited to a maximum of 30% of the total landscape, of visible side and front yards, with grass blends of no more than 20%. The new landscape requirements in the updated code apply to all new development and all redevelopment. The table below includes examples of when Broomfield’s updated landscape ordinance applies to sample property modifications.

<b>Sample modifications for code compliance</b>	<b>Code compliance required?</b>
No changes to a given property.	No
Property owner replaces all front and backyard landscaping.	No
HOA replaces common area landscaping.	No
Property owner adds an uncovered porch.	No
Property owner adds a small garage, expanding gross floor area by 20%.	No
Homeowner adds a second floor, expanding gross floor area by more than 65%.	Yes
Business owner adds an addition, expanding gross floor area by 65%.	Yes
The primary building on a property is completely demolished and rebuilt.	Yes
A new mixed-use neighborhood is built.	Yes
A business owner expands their existing 8-space parking lot adding 8 new spaces.	Yes

Broomfield’s updated landscape ordinance will be instrumental in meeting their goal of reducing total system water demand by 10% in 2040 outlined in their 2020 Water Efficiency Plan. In addition to saving water, the waterwise landscape ordinance will help lower water bills, support landscape investments and support local wildlife, pollinators and the environment while better reflecting the native Front Range landscape.

# HOW WATER PROVIDERS ARE USING THEIR CWCB TURF REPLACEMENT FUNDING – 2ND ROUND

*By Kim Edwards, City of Loveland*

In the Fall issue, we discussed how the Cities of Aurora, Greeley, Longmont and Loveland were using the funds received from the CWCB turf replacement program (TRP) that was implemented from House Bill 22-1151. We also highlighted how Resource Central provides this turf replacement service for 15 different TRP entities. They have developed a very successful program by providing the turf removal or Garden-in-a-Box or both. They help the residents through the application process and have verified they have many satisfied customers out there! Check out the [CWCB turf replacement website](#) for more information.

## **Erie**

The Town of Erie was awarded \$25,000 in CWCB funds to remove residential yards and to build a demonstration garden in front of the Lawrence A. Wurl Service Center for the public to enjoy. In 2022, the Town piloted its first landscape conversion program with the goal of replacing non-essential turf with low-water use plants and grasses. Erie was able to learn from other existing turf replacement programs from neighboring municipalities and utilities. Some of these plans seemed very cumbersome and Erie wanted to develop a program that would keep customer hurdles to a minimum.

One way to simplify the process is not providing the sod removal service and allowing homeowners to DIY their project. Some have used the smothering method to kill the grass or they have rented a sod cutter to remove it. Residents are allowed to submit self-drawn maps with a list of plants for their proposed design. Erie reviews the proposals internally and assists in the design of projects. Erie

provided a \$2 per sq ft rebate for up to 1,000 sq ft. The total maximum rebate for a participant was \$2,000.

The pilot program was much more successful than the original \$30,000 they had budgeted for the project. That funding ran out in late June and Erie secured another \$46,000 in funding to complete a total of 51,030 sq ft of turf removal. This additional money was to fund all the projects that were applied for. The ending number of rebates paid out was \$76,815. In Erie's second year of implementing the program in 2023 they achieved even better results with over 82,000 sq ft of turf replaced. Erie plans to keep improving the program over the next few years due to the high demand from the public. Check out their [turf replacement webpage](#).

## **Westminster**

The City of Westminster utilized Resource Central to run their single-family residential Turf Replacement Program and is officially using \$40,000 of CWCB grant funding plus additional operating funds to run this program. However, through an internal accounting swap, Westminster will use \$40,000 to pilot a new HOA large landscape transformation grant program. The opportunities for HOAs to save water through converting grass areas are endless! The City's goal is to work with four different HOAs in 2024 and provide a rebate of \$10,000 each. Westminster hopes to do projects involving turf removal in streetscapes, common areas, and stormwater detention basins. To learn more about how to best expand the program in the following years, go to [Westminster free Grass to Garden Program](#).

# TURF REPLACEMENT FUNDING CONT.

The land use and landscape choices in most neighborhoods within Westminster are governed by an Official Development Plan (ODP) which functions like an individual zoning code. The ODP is a regulatory document and is legally recorded with the County. Therefore, most changes to HOA landscaping require an official ODP amendment that must be reviewed by Westminster's



*Photo provided by Kim Edwards*

Community Development department for approval and rerecording with the County. This can be a confusing, time-consuming, and expensive process for an HOA to undertake, so in mid-2023 the Community Development department reassigned an FTE position to solely focus on the landscape review process. That staffer will provide concierge-like service to help HOAs move through the process of changing their landscape and will work with Public Works and Utilities in administering the new grant program.

## **Thornton**

The City of Thornton received \$25,000 in CWCB funding to help boost their residential water-wise landscape program. Thornton is matching the \$25K grant with \$25K of their own funding. The additional funds will be used to expand the [Water-Wise Landscape Rebate Program](#). The rebate incentivizes landscape transformations by providing up to \$2/sq ft for a low-water, mulched perennial plant beds. Thornton has an additional rebate for low water-turf zones that use 30% less water than bluegrass. The rebate is \$1/sq ft for low-water turf zones that can be established with seed mixes, plugs or sod. The maximum rebate allowed is \$2/sq ft for 1000 sq ft, or \$2,000 per participant. Thornton partners with

Resource Central on a discounted [Lawn Removal Service](#) and [Garden in a Box](#) program, to make it easier for residents to complete their projects.

In 2022, they had 45 participants that removed an average 800 sq ft per participant which equated to a total of 35,883 sq ft. The grant will allow them to double the number of sq ft transformed from water-thirsty lawns to more water-wise options. The following list shows how Thornton has already increased their program dramatically.

- 2022: 45 rebate participants, average 800 sq ft per participant, 35,883 sq ft rebated
- 2021: 12 rebate participants, average 875 sq ft per participant, 10,490 sq ft rebated.
- 2020: 26 rebate participants, average 649 sq ft per participant, 11,675 sq ft rebated.



## SPOTLIGHT ON **KIM EDWARDS** CITY OF LOVELAND

### **WW: How did you get started in the water business?**

I am originally from Kansas and always wanted to live in Colorado, so I came out for college and never left. I received a master's degree in Geology because I loved rocks. I started evaluating groundwater aquifers and realized they were declining, so I moved to surface water solutions and recognized that water supply is getting more and more limited. Then I realized the best step is conserving the water that we have and using it more wisely. It is exciting to see how far it can go. There have been a lot of changes to remove turf, and I think that is because the public wants it!

### **WW: Regarding water conservation, what do you feel are the biggest challenges facing Colorado?**

There still is a big part of the population that likes the look of green, healthy turf, and getting them to change their mind is difficult. In my neighborhood, the builder put half of my yard in rock, and I was shocked by this, but then I got used to having half a yard, and it was fine. All the open space areas have native grass, and I'm sure they aren't popular either. People just must get used to a new look, and then it can be a common part of development.

### **WW: What regulatory measures do you think will have the biggest impact on water conservation in Colorado?**

I think a huge step forward was the HOA waterwise landscaping bill that requires HOAs to allow residents to Xeriscape or put vegetable gardens in their front, side, or backyards. This has been one of the biggest hurdles for so long, and now it has been lifted. It will be interesting to see where this all goes. The first step is educating HOAs that this law is in place, and there are three preapproved designs for them to get familiar with. I love that part of the bill as it gives people a place to start.

### **WW: What has given you the most satisfaction during your career?**

Getting permission from Loveland to start a turf replacement program and see how wildly popular it was. I interviewed each resident, and they were glowing with pride when they showed me their project. Many people said they had been thinking about doing their project for a while but the incentive we provided them was enough for them to put their plan in motion. That has given me so much satisfaction to provide that for people.

### **WW: Beyond work, what other interests do you have? Passions, goals, missions?**

Of course, I love to garden and get addicted to buying more plants. This might be a problem with having so many beautiful low-water plants to choose from. I also like to eat good food and cook new recipes, and this eventually leads to drinking wine. I would love to go to wine country someday.

# DOMINION WATER MANAGER HAS A DIFFERENT VIEW ON DROUGHT, WATER BILLS

*By Don Ireland, contributing writer*

**A**ndrea Cole doesn't fit the same mold as many water company managers around the Front Range. Then again, maybe it's because she operates in a space where water conservation and efficiency were a forethought – rather than an afterthought - to construction and development.



***Andrea Cole, Dominion Water***

Cole is the general manager of Dominion Water and Sanitation District, which provides wholesale water, wastewater and stormwater services to northwest Douglas County. She has active memberships with the Design Build Institute of America, the American Water Works Association (AWWA), the Colorado Municipal League, the Special District Association,

the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Denver Partnership.

Most of the time, Cole is working with the Sterling Ranch, which has about 6,000 residents living in 2,000 homes on the sprawling, growing development south of Chatfield Reservoir in Denver's south metro suburbs. Another 1,000 homes are currently under construction in Sterling Ranch, which could take years to fully develop.

Dominion's service area includes about 33,000 square acres from near Chatfield to near Sedalia. It is working to build a water line to service residents of Louviers, a small, former company town along Highway 85 that has struggled with its local water system.

Sterling Ranch homes are required to be built with dual water meters, with one side measuring indoor consumption and the other keeping track of what's used outside. Rates are lower for water used inside and Domino's monthly water bills inform residents about where their water is being used.

"I think the biggest thing I see in the industry is that we use a lot of words," said Cole. "We talk a lot about redefining the value of water. They tell people to value their water differently but they don't explain how to do that. I think one of the challenges that most utilities have is that when there's a drought, it's an easy button for them to push and say we will limit your outside irrigation."

"By doing so, it's easy to cut water usage by 20 or 30% outside to get over the hurdle of the drought," continued Cole. "My thought is: we're allowing people to use a resource [water for lawns] that they shouldn't be doing so to begin with. We've intrinsically set the value of water as almost free

# DOMINION WATER CONT.

for some folks by allowing them to use it for some non-beneficial purpose, such as allowing huge lawns or outdoor landscaping. I think we need to do more landscaping replacement, although I know some of that is going on. Some communities give people a check when they pull out their grass and replace it with other things. However, are we asking people if they're pulling out their irrigation systems when they remove the lawn, so the next people who move in see it [the irrigation system] and decide to plant grass there again?"

To improve communication between water providers and customers, Cole suggests, "What I think water providers need to do is to transition to more of a dual water budget or establish a water budget for each resident. At the least, show them the difference

between outside and indoor use and the rates associated with that. I know that's difficult because at Sterling we have indoor and outdoor meters. Water providers should begin to better educate consumers that it's more expensive to use water outside. I don't always think they do a good job at communicating what the [water] tiers mean and why their bills jump. I don't think consumers are correlating the two. When they get their bills at Sterling Ranch, they see their indoor use and what that bill is, then read what their outdoor water usage is – at a higher rate. I think it could be as simple as changing how the water bills look and feel. Folks need to understand that the lower rate is what they're being charged for their indoor water use."

Cole said attractive, low-water landscapes can be



*Homes in Sterling Ranch have dual water meters.*



# DOMINION WATER CONT.

achieved if people use a knowledgeable landscaper and select plants that are appropriate for the local climate. People planning to build in Sterling Ranch are given a guidebook so they can select the plants for their yards. "I think that empowering the people to make the right decisions will move the needle the furthest. When we tell people what they have to do, they tend to revolt. When we empower people, they will use water more efficiently. I think that, at a minimum, communities should have standards for new developments. Building and plumbing

codes change. Why can't a city require a developer or homeowner to install a dual meter, or at least be willing to contribute toward that cost?"

As the result of spring and summer rains earlier this year, Dominion's income wasn't hit as hard as other water providers because people didn't use as much water outdoors for irrigation. "When you can dial in your water efficiency, you have less variability and less of a hit on your budget," commented Cole.



*Homes in Sterling Ranch have dual water meters.*

# STEP UP YOUR CONSERVATION OUTREACH WITH TURNKEY LLYLI TOOLKIT MATERIALS

By Jessica Ouwerkerk, *Evoque Communications*

**A**re you looking to enhance your water conservation outreach efforts, but finding yourself short on time and resources to create new materials? Don't reinvent the wheel – LLYLI has already done the work for you!

## What is the LLYLI Toolkit?

The Live Like You Love It® (LLYLI) Toolkit offers CWW members (at the \$500 membership level and above) a comprehensive set of ready-to-use water conservation and education outreach materials. The LLYLI Toolkit materials aim to enlighten customers about the value of water and encourage them to take

simple steps in using water wisely. These materials can be utilized to direct customers to your existing water conservation programs and your organization's website.

The robust LLYLI Toolkit includes over 70 fact sheets, infographics, bill inserts, social media content, graphics and icons, written content and more. All materials are available in both English and Spanish, along with ADA-accessible PDFs for posting on your organization's website. You can easily co-brand the materials with your logo and contact information, ensuring that customers recognize the source as your organization.

**COLORADO WATER LIVE LIKE YOU LOVE IT**

## TRANSFORM YOUR YARD TO A COLORADO LANDSCAPE

**Why should I replace part of my lawn?**

- LAWNS ARE WATER HOGS**  
Lawns use up to 50% of a household's daily water use. Replacing a portion of your lawn is one of the best things you can do to save water.
- THERE ARE BETTER ALTERNATIVES**  
Thirsty lawn species most commonly used in Colorado typically use six more water than native and water-wise landscape alternatives.
- LUSH LAWNS DON'T SUIT COLORADO**  
Most areas of your lawn are non-functional and simply aestivate. It's a bad look for a zero-net water like Colorado.
- PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT**  
Lawns use chemicals like fertilizers that are harmful to our environment - polluting local waterways and harming living organisms.
- WATER IS SCARCE**  
Our water supplies are becoming more and more constrained due to drought/climate change, population growth and other factors. It's time to start making changes to preserve our water resources.

**What should I replace it with?**

- WATER-WISE LANDSCAPES**  
Replace unused portions of your lawn with a water wise landscape. This includes native plants, Colorado-friendly plants, and permeable materials like rock and mulch.  
Native landscapes provide natural habitat for pollinators like hummingbirds, bees and butterflies.
- NATIVE GRASS ALTERNATIVES**  
If you love the look of lawns, consider replacing your thirsty turfgrasses with a water-wise alternative like Buffalograss or Blue Grammas.  
They give you that lush lawn look with just 1/3 of the water.

## HOW DO I GET STARTED?

**USE IT OR LOSE IT**  
Identify which portions of your lawn are actually being used.

- Areas frequented by pets, children, etc. are okay to keep.

**MAKE A PLAN**  
Plan your water-wise landscape in 3 easy steps:

- Set a budget.** Consider the costs of plants, soil, mulch, irrigation equipment, and any professional design or installation assistance you'll need.
- Pick your plants.** Visit [PlantSelect.org](http://PlantSelect.org) or [cwwpa.org](http://cwwpa.org) for native and Colorado-friendly plant recommendations and garden themes.
- Design your garden.** [PlantSelect.org](http://PlantSelect.org) has free designs you can download. Or find a Sustainable Landscape Management (SLM) certified contractor at [slm.com](http://slm.com). You can also access pre-planned gardens from High Country Gardens or Resource Central.

## HOW CAN I REMOVE MY LAWN?

**REMOVING UNUSED PORTIONS OF YOUR LAWN IS ONE OF THE BEST THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT.** You can hire a landscape contractor or DIY with one of these two methods:

**PHYSICAL REMOVAL:**  
Use a rototiller or a shovel to remove grass from the roots. This method is best for small areas without irrigation systems. It's quick and gets rid of your lawn immediately.

**SHEET MULCHING:**  
Cut your grass very short then put down two layers of cardboard or thick newspaper. Cover it with compost and 4-6 inches of organic mulch, then saturate it with water. Let it sit for several months, keeping it moist. Once the grass has died you can plant right into the new, rich soil (without removing the grass).

**NEED A LITTLE MORE HELP?**  
Visit your water provider's website for possible rebates and incentives to replace your lawn with a water-wise landscape. Local nonprofits like Colorado Native Plant Society ([cwwpa.org](http://cwwpa.org)) and Plant Select ([plantselect.org](http://plantselect.org)) are a great place to find free water-wise gardening resources.

[coloradowater.org](http://coloradowater.org) | [utilitywebsite.org](http://utilitywebsite.org) | [Logo Here](#)

*Examples of waterwise landscaping handouts.*

## What's new in the LLYLI toolkit in 2023?

Our members identified waterwise landscaping and irrigation, turf replacement and artificial turf as top priorities in 2023. As a result, the new materials we developed this year include:

- Waterwise landscape and irrigation stock photos and HOA toolkit, with targeted handouts for HOA Board members, property managers, landscapers and residents.
- Turf replacement fact sheet and social media posts.
- Artificial turf infographic, written content and social media posts.
- Additional social media posts focusing on winter tree care, spring landscape planning, indoor water conservation and more.

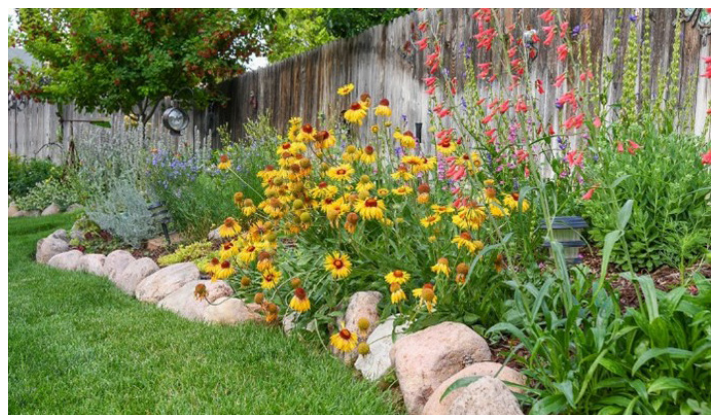
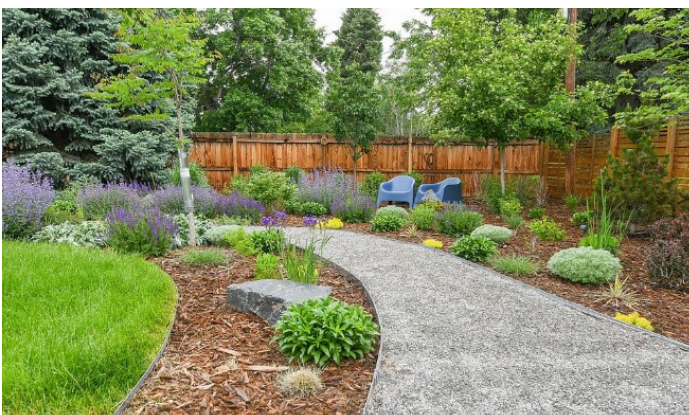
As ADA guidelines continue to evolve, the LLYLI Committee also recognized the need to create ADA accessible versions of our materials that can be

"read" by the visually impaired using screen reading software. As such, all 70+ materials in our toolkit are now also available as ADA accessible PDFs.

## What else is in the LLYLI Toolkit?

Each year, we create new materials based on the needs of our membership. We're proud to say our Toolkit includes materials on just about every water-related topic you can think of: drought, indoor and outdoor water conservation, waterwise landscaping, water efficient irrigation, water supply, water quality, water systems, value of water and much more. We also have some fun general water education materials, like a kid's restaurant activity placemat, sticker and folder templates, bus ads and t-shirt art.

Looking for something else that's not in the kit? Just ask us and we can add it to the list for 2024! Our goal is to make your job easier by providing materials on the topics you need most.



*Stock photos for Colorado WaterWise member use.*

## How can I access the Toolkit?

Are you ready to take your conservation outreach efforts to the next level? Follow these easy steps:

1. Sign the [LLYLI Membership Agreement](#) and send to: [admin@coloradowaterwise.org](mailto:admin@coloradowaterwise.org).
2. Access the LLYLI Toolkit materials in Dropbox.
3. Download the materials and co-brand them with your logo and website.

It's that easy! If you get stuck, our team is here to help. We can assist with everything from technical support accessing the files to graphic design expertise customizing the materials for your organization.

## Artificial turf Spanish infographic

**PASTO ARTIFICIAL: COSAS QUE SE DEBEN CONSIDERAR**

EL PASTO ARTIFICIAL PUEDE PASAR FRACTURA A NUESTRO MEDIO AMBIENTE - Y A SU BOLSILLO. EL PAISAJISMO CON USO EFICIENTE DEL AGUA BRINDA VENTAJAS SIMILARES DE AHORRO DE AGUA AL TIEMPO QUE MANTIENE LIMPIO NUESTRO MEDIO AMBIENTE.

- El costo promedio por pie cuadrado es de entre \$10 y \$14, por ende, el costo total de un proyecto puede superar **\$5,000**.
- El pasto artificial dura, en promedio, solo **6-10 AÑOS** antes de que su apariencia fresco y verdoso empiece a disminuir.
- El material de relleno del pasto artificial está hecho con llantas recicladas, que se ha descubierto que contienen **197 QUÍMICOS CANCERIGENOS** metales pesados, contaminantes orgánicos y sustancias químicas perfluorocarbonadas y polifluorocarbonadas (PFAS).
- Su densa base evita que el agua se filtre al suelo, lo cual deriva en un aumento en la **escurrentia**.
- Las sustancias químicas y microplásticos dañinos contenidos en el pasto artificial se filtran en la escurrentia, contaminando así nuestra salud y **PERJUDICANDO A LA VIDA ACUÁTICA**.
- El pasto artificial ya usado, permanece en vertederos durante cientos de años, lo que no se que miles de años, filtrando sustancias químicas y microplásticos peligrosos al suelo y **CONTAMINANDO ASÍ EL AGUA SUBTERRÁNEA**.
- Los jardines que incorporan plantas nativas y tolerantes a la sequía, variedades de pasto y materiales permeables (p. ej. rocas, mantillo) son **EXCELENTES ALTERNATIVAS AL PASTO ARTIFICIAL**.
- Los daños instalados en el suelo que resultan completamente si el pasto artificial se escurren en **TERMINA EN ALGUN VERTEDERO**.

lovecoloradowater.org utilitywebsite.org Logo Here

**LIVE LIKE YOU LOVE IT** is looking for new members to help craft messaging.

If you have time to serve on this committee or have ideas to submit for 2024 content, please contact Alyssa at [alquinn@plattecanyon.org](mailto:alquinn@plattecanyon.org).

**COLORADO WATER**  
**LIVE LIKE YOU LOVE IT**

