

Unifying Watering Schedules Across Summit County

Background: Drought and warming temperatures across the Southwest are predicted to worsen while the population is predicted to grow. Along the Colorado River, this has culminated in the need to collectively participate in water conservation measures that are timely, equitable, actionable, and bold. [With some cities resistant to statewide water conservation standards, “regional approaches are needed.”](#) Following participation in the Growing Water Smart event, one solution identified for the Summit County community in fall of 2020 was to consider improved (unified) and/or mandatory watering schedules: **“time of day/week requirements are the low hanging fruit of water conservation and efficiency.”** In fall of 2022, HC3 worked with a graduate student to conduct extensive research and recommend a unified schedule paired with outreach for the Summit County community.

Project Goal: Work with local governments to adopt the unified watering schedules recommended below, which are based on a similar project in the Roaring Fork Valley and align with local feedback received during the research process.

Proposed Summit County Irrigation Schedule		
Last full number in address is even	Nights to water: Tue, Thu, Sat	Time to water: Overnight, 6pm – 9am
Last full number in address is odd	Nights to water: Wed, Fri, Sun	

Following adoption of unified schedules, High Country Conservation Center (HC3) will use existing grant funds to advertise the new schedules, coordinate communications with water districts, partner with landscapers to support implementation, and conduct community outreach to help residents understand the benefits of saving water. The project helps governments build resiliency and lead by example, and it aligns with the locally adopted, state approved Blue River Watershed Water Efficiency Plan.

Supporting Information: The research process included review of existing studies, interviews with Roaring Fork stakeholders (who are embarking on a similar project), and interviews with town staff, elected officials and water providers. Unified schedules, even if voluntary, set a baseline for future conservation measures. Additionally:

- A unified irrigation schedule reduces confusion. Water users across the county benefit from clear guidance, which correlates with increased compliance. Currently, HC3 cannot promote watering schedules because the few existing schedules in place are all different.
- Legislators and administrators responsible for resource conservation benefit from the establishment of a common system that may be adjusted in times of drought.
- Several landscapers contacted by HC3 support countywide consistency.
- A unified irrigation schedule exemplifies collaborative resource management. Unified schedules were identified by a consultant in 2022 as a top opportunity for communitywide collaboration.
- Unified schedules serve as a stepping stone for future measures such as separate landscape meters, minimum efficiency standards, and limiting turf.

Contact: Rachel Zerowin, rachel@highcountryconservation.org or 970-668-5703

Research available upon request