

Healthy Lawn, Happy Summer Toolkit

The Project Team: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), Action Research, UMass Donahue Institute

MassDEP is pleased to introduce a new tool for changing outdoor water use behavior. The ready-to-use toolkit will provide water suppliers with educational materials customized to individual households and communities. This toolkit is founded on Massachusetts-specific research, including a multi-year pilot project that tested the effectiveness of the approach and materials developed to reduce outdoor water use. Based on the success of the pilot, this toolkit was developed to help water suppliers implement the Healthy Lawn, Happy Summer program with minimal or no assistance.

Background

The water systems of Concord, West Springfield, and Hingham (Aquarion Water Company) volunteered to be part of a 2018 pilot campaign. The campaign used proven strategies to change outdoor watering behavior by providing customers targeted education and feedback to motivate changes in outdoor water use. The campaign was repeated in these same systems in 2019 with the water systems of Westford, Hanover, and Easton also joining.

Pilot Project Design

Households were selected for inclusion in the pilot based on a comparison of their winter water use to their summer use, as a sizeable summer increase likely indicates lawn watering.

Project Materials and Timeline

The selected households received the following materials: **a program announcement postcard** in the early spring and an **outreach packet** (delivered in late May, and again in early August) comprised of: 1) **a cover letter from the water supplier**, 2) **an educational flyer**, and 3) **a chart comparing the household's water use to its neighbors**.

The educational flyer provided options and tips on how to keep a lawn healthy with minimal or no watering. In the water use comparison chart, each household's summer use was compared to efficient and average neighbors in their town, based on the prior summer's use. The sheet displayed whether they used more, less, or the same as their neighbors.

Results

Water savings were significant. On average, **households that received the program used 39 gallons per day less in the summer than those that did not receive the program**, with participating households using up to 128 gallons per day less in one of the three pilot communities.

HEALTHY LAWN HAPPY SUMMER!

Each of us makes a big impact in West Springfield.

Reduce Lawn Watering
Eliminating or reducing summer lawn watering makes a big difference. West Springfield households that water their lawns in the summer use an average of 1,900 gallons a week. That's like running your shower for 12 hours!

The fact is, a West Springfield lawn doesn't need much water to stay healthy. Overwatering your lawn can cause shallow roots and make it susceptible to pests, disease, and drought.

LAWN WATERING = **SHOWERING**
1,900 Gallons = 12 Hours!

Water Only With Rain OR **Water Wisely**

In most years, we get enough rain to maintain a healthy summer lawn. **Healthy grass can go dormant (turn golden) during dry periods but it is not dead** and will green up with the return of rain. Going dormant creates more drought resistance and deeper roots, making a healthier, less sensitive lawn.

Dormant Grass
HEALTHY GRASS
DEEPER ROOTS

Half of West Springfield homes already let their lawn go dormant each summer. *Join them by letting your lawn be healthy and natural while saving water, money, and time.*

Water Wisely
A healthy established lawn will likely not need irrigation. However, if you do water your lawn, follow the tips below to water wisely.

- 1 Water before 9 am or after 5 pm to avoid evaporation.
- 2 Water infrequently and deeply to encourage deep roots.
- 3 Keep grass long to stay healthy (at least 2.5 to 3 inches).
- 4 Leave grass clippings on your lawn to keep soil moist.
- 5 Use a WaterSense-labeled controller on automatic irrigation systems.
- 6 Tell your lawn care crew to follow these guidelines.

Save water for your community and the Environment by watering your lawn wisely or not at all.
Please visit this website for more information:
www.epa.gov/watersense/outdoors

MassDEP logo and seal.

Download the full report:

<https://www.mass.gov/waterconservationpilot>

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Toolkit

The *Healthy Lawn, Happy Summer* toolkit is freely available from MassDEP. The toolkit was designed with input from the participating towns and was developed to be user friendly and implementable by communities and water utilities with no or minimal external assistance.

Who Is This For?

The toolkit should be used by water suppliers who seek to reduce their customers' outdoor summer water use. It is particularly helpful for water suppliers with residents and neighborhoods that have large summertime water use increases. Water suppliers must have collected **water use data at least quarterly in the previous year** to successfully create the comparison charts for each household.

Water Management Act Permit Requirements

Implementation of the Healthy Lawn, Happy Summer program can help meet **Water Management Act Permit** requirements for a Minimization Plan or compliance plan for those not meeting the residential gallons per capita day performance standard.



Join our Informational Webinars

- #1 - MassDEP will be hosting an introductory Webinar on Wednesday, November 6, 2019 from 11 am to Noon to provide additional information and answer questions.
- #2- A second Webinar will be held on Wednesday, January 8, 2020 from 10 am—Noon to address questions in advance of the Request for Interest (RFI) technical support deadline.

Webinars details available at: <https://www.mass.gov/waterconservationpilot>

Technical Support

Technical support may be available for a limited number of PWSs interested in implementing the toolkit in 2020. For those interested in support, a RFI will be published on Commbuys and the MassDEP website from November 4 – January 15, 2020. **Get the RFI at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/water-management-act-grant-programs-for-public-water-suppliers>**

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