



## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 3, 2019.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Loudoun County  
Program Title: My Backyard Program  
Program Category: Environmental

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Tim Hemstreet  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

# **My Backyard Program**

## **Loudoun County, Virginia**

### **Program Overview**

Encouraging stewardship and conservation of natural resources in a suburban county with many new homeowners is critically important to environmental quality.

Natural Resource Conservation Begins in My Backyard (***My Backyard***) is a Public Education and Outreach Program (PEOP) program to educate and guide property owners and managers on maintenance of healthy soil, lawns, trees, shrubs, perennial plants in support of the Loudoun County's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) goals.

***My Backyard*** introduces and promotes best management practices (BMP) to bring about positive changes in the environmental quality of yards, neighborhoods and surrounding waterways; the ultimate goal is conservation and preservation of Loudoun's natural resources specifically soil and water.

Implemented by Department of Extension Services; Extension Master Gardeners (EMG) in partnership with Loudoun County Department of General Services and Virginia Cooperative Extension, the program focuses residents on environmentally sound landscape management practices for homeowners, communities and corporations.

***My Backyard*** identifies ten self-directed principles called Yard Actions: Maintain Healthy Soil, Recycle Yard Waste, Be Wise When You Fertilize, Reduce Stormwater Runoff, Right Plant/Right Place, Mulch Matters, Grow Native, Remove Invasives, Manage Yard Pests, and Water Wisely. Every positive practice taken within these principles earns "inches" toward a yard-certification. By meeting requirements using BMPs and achieving 36 inches, a "yardstick", the property is eligible to become a Certified Watershed Partner. The certifier sends the data on the scorecard to be verified and approved. Included in this data is the acreage certified.

### **Problem/Challenge Faced**

Over-fertilization and erosion are major threats to Virginia waterways and wildlife. Carried with rainwater into lakes, rivers or the Chesapeake Bay, nitrogen from fertilizer feeds toxic algae to create dead zones, where nothing else can survive. Sediment from erosion clouds waterways, preventing the growth of aquatic grasses—the base of the food chain for many fish and waterfowl. Moreover

pesticides and herbicides, if overused, can create inadvertent consequences detrimental to Loudoun's ecosystem.

More than 60 percent of Loudoun residents live in a Homeowners Association-controlled community. How these communities manage their landscapes can have a profound effect on the health of our local ecosystems, wildlife, streams and drinking water sources. By framing environmental issues in the context of individual "backyards," residents are more likely to take steps within their own property lines to positively impact environmental quality.

### **How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria**

The public outreach conducted by Loudoun County's Department of Extension Services EMGs in coordination with the Department of General Services, assists the County Government meet the requirements of the county's Virginia General Permit for Discharges from MS4 sources. Several ***My Backyard*** BMPs are directly related to water conservation, stormwater management, nutrient management and reducing sedimentation.

Information received from certifications is useful for Urban Nutrient Management Plans, a state recognized BMP that can provide nutrient reduction credits as required by the MS4 Permit Chesapeake Bay TMDL Action Plan.

This innovative program can serve as a model for other counties that are experiencing suburban growth.

### **Program Execution**

The ***My Backyard*** program promotes natural resource conservation. Modeled after the Clemson Carolina Yards program, Loudoun's EMGs customized and expanded ***My Backyard*** with BMP education to assist the Loudoun County Government achieve its TMDL goals. The program reflects EMG literature reviews of information published by Virginia Tech, other land grant universities, and County of Loudoun publications to craft the program's criteria and scorecard. The initiative was expanded from the original launch in 2018 to include tree information for stormwater management and pond assessment materials. The website and corresponding scorecard were created based on the research and is updated with new BMPs as necessary.

### **Program Results**

Initially launched in March 2018 as a pilot program, ***My Backyard's*** education outreach included promotion at all Extension environmental stewardship using flyers and brochures to effect initial

outreach. To date, 23 residents have certified their yards for a total of just over 105 acres. Ongoing efforts include working with Home Owner Associations (HOA) managing common areas, Town of Leesburg areas and site visit performed by the EMG Water Stewards for pond health, soil erosion and riparian buffer education.

### **Executive Summary**

***My Backyard*** is a multi-departmental Public Education and Outreach Program (PEOP) program to educate and guide property owners and managers on maintenance of healthy soil, lawns, trees, shrubs, perennial plants in support of the Loudoun County's municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) goals. This partner initiative coordinated by the Loudoun County Departments of Extension Services and General Services focuses on low maintenance, low cost actions that individuals can take to make positive changes in the environmental quality of their yards, neighborhoods, and surrounding waterways leading to the Chesapeake Bay.

Based on 10 principles, ***My Backyard*** details healthy yard actions that earn 'inches' toward certification of yards. By meeting the requirements of BMPs and achieving a minimum of 36 inches – a yardstick – Watershed Partnership certification is the reward.

The 10 principles include: Maintain Healthy Soil, Recycle Yard Waste, Be Wise When You Fertilize, Reduce Stormwater Runoff, Right Plant/Right Place, Mulch Matters, Grow Native, Remove Invasives, Manage Yard Pests, and Water Wisely. Extensive resources are listed for each of the 10 listed to help guide with BMPs for lawns and gardens.

By framing environmental issues in the context of individual "backyards," suburban residents are more likely to take steps within their own property lines to positively impact environmental quality.