

## Small 2-Cycle Engine Regional Ban Considered

Together We Build, July 12, 2023

By Thomas Beck, AIA, NCARB

At the end of May we wrote about the incredible polluting properties of small 2-cycle engines. (<https://www.eprail.com/2023/05/31/together-we-build-small-2-cycle-engines-have-large-climate-impact>) Today we follow up on that in response to reading the Colorado Sun article by Michael Booth dated July 11, 2023, "Front Range inches closer to banning gas-powered mowers and blowers in fight against ozone pollution." This is a follow-up article to an earlier one by Booth, dated April 26, 2023, in the Colorado Sun.

"State air pollution officials are likely to vote by the end of the year on a 2025 ban on the sale of push or hand-held, gasoline-powered lawn equipment in nine Front Range counties with ozone problems." The Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) also includes in its policy recommendation that institutions be banned from using existing fossil fuel equipment in the summer starting in 2025. The summer ban would be extended to commercial landscapers beginning 2026.

We had not seen the earlier article. The article includes a link to <https://www.mowdownpollution.org/> where consumers can get vouchers to use at participating retailers, including our very own Ace Hardware in Estes Park. There are programs for commercial and institutional entities as well. In the "Why It's Important" section the website illustrates that one hour of lawn mower use is equivalent to driving a car 300 miles, and one hour of leaf blower use equals 1100 miles of driving a car. The Larimer County website's Climate and Sustainability page also has a link to the Mow Down Pollution page: <https://www.larimer.gov/climate-and-sustainability>.

In fact, Larimer County's website says they have partnered with the RAQC's Mow Down Pollution program by providing funding and outreach. On the Air Quality page Larimer County provides a drop down list of the actions the county has taken to improve Air quality. Their pilot Mow Down program is characterized as a success and led to the county allocating more funds and outreach, including grants for commercial landscapers. The commercial program provides grants to replace gasoline-powered equipment. Approximately \$60,000 was available as of 6/22/23. Eligible entities are all small businesses using outdoor power equipment within the Denver Metro/North Front Range 9-county ozone non-attainment area and in good standing with the Colorado Secretary of State. The recipients of the grants will be required to contribute a 50% match for the total purchase and must recycle the gas-powered equipment.

The Mow Down Pollution website page for the Public Entity Lawn and Garden Grant includes a map of the Denver Metro/North Front Range (DMNFR) 9-county Ozone Nonattainment Area, and the map does appear to include Estes Park. Eligible entities are public agencies within that area, encompassing local governments, public schools and universities, state agencies, special districts, and private contractors verified to have been contracted to provide services for those entities. New applicants in the current round of grants can apply for \$100,000. Previous applicants can apply for an additional \$50,000.

The information rich Larimer County Climate and Sustainability/Air Quality page explains what Ozone is: "Ground level ozone or "bad" ozone is not emitted directly into the air but is created by a reaction that occurs between two different pollutants, oxides of nitrogen, or "NOx", and volatile organic compounds, or "VOCs", in the presence of sunlight." Further it quotes ROQC saying "unlike the good, protective ozone layer in the stratosphere, ground-level ozone is a harmful air pollutant that affects all of us. It's formed when emissions from everyday items combine with other pollutants and "cook" in the heat and sunlight." A graph, originating at ROQC (<https://raqc.org/localgov/pollutants/>) shows the regional sources of Ground-Level Ozone. These include lawn and garden VOCs of 8% and NOx of 3% in our region.

It is abundantly clear from our previous writing that transitioning to electric equipment, especially by businesses whose livelihood depends on using said equipment, is a win for those businesses. The facts outlined in the YouTube program we quoted in the previous article clearly point to the excellent ROI commercial landscapers can expect from the change. Don't let the fossil fuel lobbyists hijack your bottom line. Battery and electric powered equipment has far less maintenance, equal and better power, much quieter operation, and close to zero training for the transition, since the equipment is very similar to the fossil fuel predecessors. Take advantage of the grants and rebates available to make this transition now!

*Thomas Beck, AIA, NCARB, is an architect based in Estes Park, Colorado, who has been deeply involved in sustainable building practices since he was a student at CU Boulder in the 1970's. [www.twbeckarchitects.com](http://www.twbeckarchitects.com)*

Beck, Thomas W. "Small 2-Cycle Engine Regional Ban Considered" *Estes Park Trail Gazette*, Friday July 12, 2023, <https://www.eptrail.com/2023/07/12/together-we-build-small-2-cycle-engine-regional-ban-considered/>