

Alliance for Sustainable Colorado
Southeastern Region Sustainability Roundtable Meeting
Pueblo
May 14, 2009

Report

Description of the Region

The Southeast region of Colorado includes Baca, Bent, Crowley, Huerfano, Kiowa, Las Animas, Otero, Prowers, and Pueblo counties, with urban centers such as Pueblo, Walsenberg, Trinidad, Las Junta, Las Animas, Lamar, and Holly. The population of the region is approximately 200,000.

”In the southeast corner of Colorado lies the ancestral grounds of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche, and Ute Indian tribes, and biologically diverse prairie and riparian ecosystems containing the greatest concentration of North American bird species to be found anywhere on the continent.” (SECHORT, <http://www.secoloradoheritage.com/>). This area’s history influenced events ranging from the harvesting of buffalo to dryland farming, from coal mining to steel processing, and from the Santa Fe Trail to interconnecting railroad lines. Population growth remains stable and the area is still richly agricultural.

Southeast Colorado offers excellent lakes for fishing and water sports, historic sites, miles of unspoiled hiking, a variety of wildlife, and many communities throughout this region hold events throughout the year with carnivals, rodeos, games and cultural celebrations.

Participants

The **Southeastern Region Sustainability Roundtable** was co-hosted by *Sustainable Pueblo* and facilitated by Alliance for Sustainable Colorado. The meeting was generously hosted by the Rawlings City-County Public Library in the InfoZone Theater in Pueblo and lunch was catered by [Wireworks Coffeehouse](#).

Twenty-nine local community leaders participated in a 3-hour workshop on May 14 and included representatives from business, government, nonprofit and academic sectors.

State and local government officials included representatives from the Governor’s Energy Office (GEO), Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), and Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE); Fort Carson, City of Pueblo, Otero County and the Town Administrator from Fowler.

Education representatives from Pueblo Community College, Colorado State University-Pueblo and Heaton Middle School were present.

Prominent local nonprofit organizations involved in promoting integrated healthcare; better quality of life in the Pueblo area; education and conservation programs; sustainable development; and historic preservation participated.

Businesses focused on bringing energy, recycling, and local foods solutions to their communities were well-represented.

Sustainability Discussion by Participants

Question 1: *What local sustainability efforts are in place and working?*

- **Energy and Resources**
 - (1) [*Town of Fowler Greening Initiative*](#): This town of 1200+ in southeastern Colorado is committed to a future of sustainability that includes a renewable energy infrastructure using wind, solar, geo-exchange and feedlot biomass; LED lighting and waterless solar-powered toilets in the park; recycling of residential waste, and conservation education programs.
 - (2) [*Pueblo County's Weatherization Program*](#): A range of energy efficient improvements are offered to income-qualified homes that includes a free home energy audit, appliance replacement, and insulation and air leakage work.
 - (3) *Energy Audits*: Being conducted for all departments in the City and County of Pueblo, Pueblo School District 70, and Pueblo Community College.
 - (4) [*Diesel School Bus Retrofit*](#): A settlement agreement from the Comanche 3 Power Plant provided retrofits for 200 Pueblo City school busses to reduce diesel emissions and energy usage.
 - (5) *Solar Array Installations*: Colorado State University-Pueblo partnered with BP Solar and Black Energy Hills Energy to install a [1.2megawatt solar array](#) that covers 4.3 acres and will provide more than 10% of the school's future power needs. Pueblo Community College's Technology Center has an array of 60 solar panels that were purchased from a nearby business prior to its demolition.
 - (6) *Radon Monitoring and Mercury Education and Reduction Program*: Distribution of radon home test kits to Pueblo residents for the last 4 years. A Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) grant encourages the replacement of thermostats and thermometers, fluorescent bulb recycling, and provides amalgam separators for dentists. Steel mill is voluntarily removing mercury switches from cars before crushing.
- **Green Building**. Levels of LEED certification or future plans for LEED retrofits will occur at:
 - (1) [Maple Leaf Orthopedics](#), January 2008

- (2) [Pueblo West Library](#), April 2009
- (3) New [Pueblo City-County Health Department offices](#), August 2009
- (4) [Pueblo Animal Welfare Society](#), PAWS for Life Animal Campus (seeking the first LEED Platinum for an animal shelter program in Colorado)
- (5) Installation of energy efficient equipment in proposed regional Development Center and County Judicial Complex
- **Open Space and Historic Preservation**
 - (1) *Fountain Creek Vision Taskforce*: FC Watershed and Flood Control Greenway District formed to make Fountain Creek an amenity for the community to enjoy, to provide economic development, and to preserve wetlands. Ten years ago the stakeholders in the effort didn't even speak to each other except through lawyers.
 - (2) *Town of Fowler*: [Project](#) to convert historic Park School to Town Hall, Library, and Courts. Standards do not include retrofitting to improve energy efficiencies as part of overall process to protect historic buildings. Team members however moved from typical design-bid-build preservation process to design-build that will ensure historic preservation compliance and performance, with life-cycle energy cost savings.
- **Business and Economic Development**
 - (1) [Southeast Colorado Businesses Retention, Attraction and Expansion](#): SEBREA is a 6-county regional economic development partnership designed to retain, expand and attract businesses to the Lower Arkansas Valley. This 3-year effort resulted from a loss of two major employers in the Arkansas Valley and ~ 450 skilled jobs, catalyzing an effort to rebuild and diversify the economy.
 - (2) [Canyons and Plains Southeast Colorado Regional Heritage Taskforce](#) (SECHORT): Provides education and training, research, marketing of historic sites, technical support to private landowners and entrepreneurs, youth and preservation programs, stewardship, the promotion of adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and the introduction of heritage tourism as a viable new economic sector.
 - (3) The Vestas Wind Blade Manufacturing Plant built on the south side of Pueblo brings over 500 new jobs to this area, not including contracting and consulting employment. [Education, training and staffing is managed](#) by the Economic and Workforce Development Division at Pueblo Community College, a unique partnership for the college and Vestas Wind Systems.
 - (4) *Solar Roast Coffee*: This local and unique business provides Eco-friendly coffee with their own [custom-built solar coffee roaster](#), and has a patent pending for their solar roasting process and multi-generational solar coffee roasters.
- **Recycling**
 - (1) [We Recycle](#): A privately owned recycling co-op located in Pueblo West that provides single-stream recycling, local business discounts and community education for a quarterly membership fee.

- (2) [*Happy Worm Herders*](#): A subsidiary program of Gaia Institute Wellness Center that offers composting, vermicomposting, materials recycling and re-use capabilities for the Pueblo area.
- (3) [*Pueblo City-County Health Department*](#) provides drop-off sites for recycling for glass (all colors), newspaper, and aluminum and tin cans.
- **Educational Institutions**
 - (1) *Heaton Middle School Greening*: [Received a StEPP Foundation Grant](#) to create an environmentally sustainable campus that integrates green technologies into both operations and curricula. Features include an on-site PV array and off-site wind-generator; a xeriscape demonstration garden; local food integration into school lunches; wetland creation for wastewater mitigation; and campus-wide recycling and composting programs.
 - (2) *Irving Elementary School*: The Pueblo 60 School District [invested in a geo-exchange system](#) as part of a district-wide effort to establish long-term energy efficient projects across school buildings in the district. This exchange system, based on the concept that the Earth maintains a stable temperature regardless of weather conditions, will provide heating and cooling for the entire school building.
 - (3) [*Colorado State University-Pueblo*](#): Recent campus projects have included a variety of green initiatives and energy performance measures in architectural and building system designs including movement sensitive light controls, water efficient fixtures, and more efficient cooling towers.
- **Local Food**
 - (1) The [*La Familia Community Garden*](#) is the result of a three-year effort by the Pueblo City-County Health Department and 23 local businesses and hosts fourteen plots of flowers and vegetables for local families.
 - (2) [*Farmer's Market at the Riverwalk*](#): Offered every Thursday from June to September, The Farmer's Market brings a variety of fresh produce from several local farmers.
- [**Fort Carson Sustainability and Environmental Management System**](#). This program strives to set an Army model of comprehensive sustainability management and community involvement for Fort Carson soldiers and their families. The program focuses on issues of energy and water, transportation, procurement, and zero waste in army operations.

Question 2: *Which opportunities are ripe for development? and What is needed to get them going?*

- **Comprehensive Recycling Program.** Collaboration among local stakeholders is needed to provide leadership, education, a broader and clear action plan. Need expressed for a transfer station for MRF (Materials Recycling Facility) that would include e-waste (electronics) for the Southeast region and possibly extending into New Mexico. Need business and political support.

- **Energy**
 - (1) *Performance Contracting*: Opportunities presented by performance contracting and an implementation of the Boulder type residential and commercial energy efficiency and renewable energy program. This would also stimulate job creation, workforce development, and green companies.
 - (2) *Solar energy development and PV manufacturing*: Take advantage of solar opportunities and manufacturing that includes promoting and marketing of this region's resources. **Recommendation**: Work with certified installer for all communities.
 - (3) *Wind energy development and product manufacturing*: Expanding existing interests and resources. **Recommendation**: Work with NREL and industry.
 - (4) *Black Hills Energy contract negotiation*: Utility contract is up for renewal in 2012 (who do we work with?). Goal is to require utility company's investment in renewable energy technologies instead of building new gas-fired plant.
 - (5) *Establish gap-financing program or tax credits or utility rebates*: Through Aquila Energy for customers to pay for energy efficiency and renewable energy retrofits.
- **Workforce Development**
 - (1) *Green jobs training*: Returning veterans need retraining, huge potential to get them into 2-year skill-based degrees and certifications for green job industries. Vestas plant provides jobs for trained workers.
 - (2) *Heritage tourism*: Train veterans to work on historic restoration projects.
- **Local and organic foods production**. Support and establish Community supported agriculture (CSA), community gardens, sustainable agricultural programs (=organic farming).
- **Sustainability principles**. Identify what sustainability looks like, develop a list of principles, have them adopted and endorsed by the community and elected officials.

Question 3: *What steps will you take to foster these sustainability opportunities? and How will you utilize your sustainability network?*

- **Comprehensive recycling program**. Some drop-off and co-op options are available, but a region-wide and cohesive system with large outreach is not available for citizens. We Recycle can host meeting to identify stakeholders, benefits for everyone, and to coordinate grant proposals (What grants are available, who can apply, how do you coordinate partnership with all interested groups?).
- Establish local government that buys in to sustainability policies and practices. Get commitments on sustainability issues before even elected, develop 'environmental report cards/grades' for public officials who attend sustainable meetings and forums. Four City Council seats are up for election this year, which first requires a commitment from citizenry to: recruit viable candidates, set up a candidate debate using sustainability as topic (hosted by

the political science department at CSU-Pueblo); meet with Democrats and Republican leadership about sustainability issues; and write letters to the editor and educate voters.

- Get community leaders, elected officials, businesses and citizenry to commit to and internalize sustainability principles. Institute a sustainability curriculum for grades K-12. **Note:** Department of Energy currently has a curriculum being used in Wray, CO.
- Develop a plan to inventory extraordinary opportunities and resources for renewable energy (solar and wind) manufacturing and production.
- Increase awareness of LEED concepts for building retrofits and new construction. Develop standards for incorporating green building codes into historic building preservation.