



Alliance for Sustainable Colorado
Regional Sustainability Roundtable
Rifle, CO
April 26, 2010, Wednesday

INTRODUCTION

The Alliance for Sustainable Colorado is hosting a series of eight regional Sustainability Roundtable meetings across Colorado between March and November, 2010. The purpose of the Roundtables is to bring together leaders from nonprofit, business, government and education sectors to determine key regional issues and challenges, as well as best practices and immediate opportunities related to sustainability for each region. The Roundtables are just one of a variety of collaborative activities hosted by the Alliance that enable people in multiple sectors to make contacts and build relationships to foster a statewide sustainability network.

The third regional meeting was facilitated by the Alliance in Rifle, Colorado on April 26, 2010 and included representatives from Mesa, Garfield, Eagle and Pitkin counties. Fifty-five individuals representing businesses, government, nonprofit groups and education institutions participated.

This 4-hour meeting initiated discussions about local food and water conservation, transportation, and green job development issues on the Western Slope, and produced action items for issues of local food/water and transportation. A follow-up conference call was convened on June 6 to identify owners for the priority items discussed at the Roundtable. Participants also concluded that forming a Regional Leadership Council would be a good way to stay connected on sustainability issues affecting several counties in the region. The Alliance will initiate and facilitate the first Council call in mid-July 2010 and will continue to be a resource and a liaison to the region and other groups.

MEETING CONCLUSIONS

Pre-Meeting Survey

A pre-meeting survey was provided to all invitees to gather information about sustainability issues specific to the region. Information from respondents on which three social, environmental, or economic issues was in most need of long-term attention in their community/region was categorized and ranked, as indicated below, and used to focus discussions for the Roundtable. While energy ranked as a high priority for the region, it was not chosen as a focus topic for roundtable discussions. Alliance facilitators felt that the region had many governmental and organizational efforts currently addressing this issue, as seen through the efforts of Clean Energy for the Economy and Rifle's Clean Energy Village Plan and Main Streets Initiative.



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- **Transportation (16)**
- **Food Independence/Local Agriculture (12)**
- **Water Conservation/Quality (12)**
- **Economy & Jobs (10)**
- Energy: Conservation and Renewable Sources (15)
- Education (7)
- Land Use/Preservation of Wild lands (7)
- Retrofit/greening of existing buildings (5)
- Affordable Housing (3)
- Recycling (2)
- Oil/Gas Health Concerns (2)

Priority Topics: Participant Dialogues

Participants were given three 35 minute sessions to address the following questions for each of the topics of transportation, local food/water, and green jobs identified in the pre-meeting survey: (1) How is your work related to the sustainability priority identified in the survey?; (2) What are the key barriers and potential solutions for the selected issue(s)?; (3) Can you identify next steps and a possible owner for action? Each table then provided 1-2 priority action items from their discussion to the group as a whole and the compiled results were displayed immediately onto a screen visible to the entire room.

Transportation

1. **Table 1-2:** Fund a study of transit flows within multi-jurisdictional areas for communities to work together to do regional planning for transportation, both at the federal and state level and within the guise of land use and transportation. Rocky Mountain Rail Authority did a high-speed rail feasibility study for the I70 and I25 corridors, <http://rockymountainrail.org/>.
2. **Table 3:** Change the mindset of employees and the community and get them out of cars by using education, programming, PSAs, and organizing events in the work place to get people to walk or ride bike. The City of Rifle is looking to start a *Safe Route to School Program*, <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>, but needs a grant to support it. They are also looking into transit options that include Rifle Circulator route (see Rifle Energy Village Plan for more details, <http://www.rifleco.org/documents/Planning/Long%20Range/Energy%20Village%20Plan%204-12-10.pdf>).
3. **Table 4:** Pass policy at state and local level for incentives to get people to take public transportation. Provide income tax rebate or exemption. Keep track of how many people use busses and provide awards.
4. **Table 5:** Change this area's culture of big trucks by getting people to understand they are part of the community and therefore need to be part of the solution of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
5. **Table 6:** Get better communications of bus schedule to community.
6. **Table 7:** Allow employees to work one day a week from home.



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7. **Table 8:** Look at bus rapid transit within and between regions and expand broadband so people can telecommute more.
8. **Table 10:** Work to improve Roaring Fork Transportation Authority, which is already increasing schedules. Promote bus transit and provide incentives, increase vehicle emission standards for people who have to drive. When designate new rights of way, provide more than 1 mode.
9. **Table 11:** Raise mileage standards and end oil subsidies to reflect the real price of gas. Transportation for America, <http://t4america.org/> is good example of a coalition of members working to align national, state and local transportation policies.
10. **Table 12:** Open Canal Trail Network in the Grand Junction area – this series of canals would create a network for transport in the valley. Continue momentum for compressed natural gas fueling stations as alternative fuel. Get public station open.
11. **Additional comments:** Increase of use of biofuels through *Western Colorado Carbon Neutral Biofuels Consortium* (WCCNBC) with Colorado Mountain College, CSU, and Flux Farms to test the viability of grasses-based ethanol in the area.
<http://www.fluxfarm.com/current-research.html>

Local Food and Water

1. **Table 2:** Send proper market signals for both food and water, which currently indicates that both are “cheap”. If we charged true costs of water, including infrastructure, storage, process, delivery, etc., people are less likely to waste it. Align policy for grey water and rainwater run-off. For food, facilitate procurement of food so that consumers have greater access and sellers greater exposure. Make it easier to sell and buy local through access to information – cooperation with food retailers.
2. **Table 3:** Create regional coordinators in the agricultural department that address small food production and cost issues, just as GEO has regional coordinators.
3. **Table 4:** Ensure watershed protection by considering where governor and local government candidates stand on issue.
4. **Table 5:** Encourage clubs and restaurants to purchase locally and widen the producers market. Get away from a culture of eating out of season, whatever we want at any time. Somehow raise cost of fuel to discourage transportation across distance. For water, change policy for water harvesting, encourage xeriscaping, design net-zero greenhouses (there are already some designs on the market for netzero heating), and use hydroponics to grow vertically to allow for several layers of growth. A great model for a local greenhouse and school-community garden is being implemented at Roaring Fork High School in Carbondale. <http://www.aspenpost.net/2009/08/11/a-fresh-start/>.
5. **Table 6:** Use greenhouses to extend growing season and help farmers be more competitive, particularly when considering the cost of producing and delivering food locally. The cost of greenhouses however are currently also prohibitive, so we need to support regional or coop style greenhouses and have a local champion to manage effort and seek grant resources. GEO is looking at use of geothermal for greenhouses.
6. **Table 7:** Ban bottled water to serve as step to changing the privatization of water. “The rich buy the water and determine what the price of it is. Shouldn’t consider water a commodity”. Build community “Lawn to Food programs“, <http://www.lawntofood.org/>.



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7. **Table 10:** Create an education program about backyard gardening and community gardens, specifically on water conservation and appropriate food to grow for this area.
8. **Table 11:** Increase product identification for locally produced and organic foods within 100 mile radius. Press supermarkets to sell a percentage of local foods and identify what local farms they are coming from. Protect watershed from oil and gas pollution.
9. **Table 12:** Create database for information on where to start community gardening, lease agreements, rate structure, resources, etc. For water, some statewide effort to get handle on usage and monitoring across state.
10. **Additional comments:** *Northwest Colorado Community Gardening Consortium* encompasses members from community gardens in Aspen, Basalt, Carbondale, Silt, Rifle, Eagle, Steamboat Springs and Marble to share local gardening challenges and successes.

Green Jobs Pipeline for Women

The GJPW is a project of the Alliance for Sustainable Colorado under contract by the Department of Labor Women's Bureau and is designed to promote the education, training and placement of women throughout Colorado into the Green Jobs market. Participants were asked to provide examples of existing barriers and current training or work programs.

1. **Solar Energy International** trains women-only on PV solar installation and offers a non-threatening environment for learning. SEI has 23 employees that are mostly women, as well as the instructors, and provides a textbook in Spanish.
2. **Colorado Mountain College** offers a Green Building Academy specializing in auditor and solar certifications, and which uses the curriculum from the National Homebuilders Association,
3. **Colorado State University Extension** has a Clean Energy Strategic Initiative for team leaders to teach the basics about renewables and engages 4h kids in renewable energy programs. CSU now offers degrees in Global Environmental Sustainability.
4. Frostbusters & Coolth, an energy consulting company out of Grand Junction, stated that the economy affects how many green jobs they can provide. Mesa and Garfield counties have many buildings whose energy efficiency could be improved, and there is a huge potential to employ easily-trained, out-of-work oil field and construction workers.
5. There is a need for the education sector to come up with new terms for "green" and "sustainable", which are over-used and meaningless.

Participant Announcements

Participants were encouraged to stand up and provide general announcements about organizational efforts or initiatives.

1. Natural Capitalism Solutions has partnered with Colorado State to develop a Sustainable Executive Education (SEE) program that will enable SEE program participants to gain a comprehensive perspective on sustainability.
2. Carbondale has a transportation group event involving "Moonlight Crews", where 100-200 bikers take over streets for a couple of hours once a month to educate the community about the economic and healthful benefits of bike-riding.



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3. An effort was created last year in Grand Junction by a local woman called **Grow Another Row** that encourages people to expand their garden by one or more rows. This effort resulted in a collection of 10 tons of vegetables and fruits that was donated to the local food bank. http://www.livewell.org/local_happenings.html
4. The creation of a Google Group would be a beneficial tool for follow-up, continued collaboration, and discussions of statewide sustainability amongst Roundtable participants.



PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS

Alpine Bank
Barker Real Estate
City of Glenwood Springs
City of Grand Junction
City of Rifle
Clean Energy Collective
Clean Energy Economy for the Region
Colorado Department of Transportation
Colorado Housing & Finance Authority
Colorado Mountain College
Colorado Mountain CollegeColorado State University Extension
Colorado State University Extension
Community Gardens of Glenwood Springs
Curbside Recycling Indefinitely Inc.
Department of Local Affairs
Eagle County
Energy du Soleil
Flux Farm Foundation
Fontus Air Water Solar
Frostbusters & Coolth Co
Garfield County Public Health
Garfield County Public Library District
Grand Junction Daily Sentinel
Housing Resources of Western Colorado
KAFM Community Radio
Land + Shelter
Mesa County
Mesa County Public Library District
Movin' Forward Consulting
Natural Capital Solutions
Osage Gardens
Pitkin County
Simplicity Solar
Solar Energy International
Sonoran Institute, Colorado Rockies Office
Sopris Realty
Town of Carbondale
Town of New Castle
Town of Silt
Valley View Hospital
Waste Management
Western Colorado Congress