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Colorado River Valley Economic Development Strategy

Data Driven Analysis Makes the Case for Expanding Economic Opportunity

November 17, 2025, Western Garfield County, CO – The Colorado River Valley Economic Development Partnership (CRVEDP) is proud to unveil its Economic Development Strategy Report, which identifies clear paths to creating jobs closer to home. A comprehensive data library describing Western Garfield County forms the foundation of the strategy. The study was funded by a grant from the Colorado Energy Office and was completed in collaboration with Alvarium Economics LLC, Triple Point Strategic Consulting and SMG Consulting.

To interpret the data in a meaningful way, researchers created a model of the region's economy. The model analyzes jobs, wages, water use, economic output, commuting patterns, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for each community and sector. It also forecasts population and housing growth. Growing more jobs closer to home remains a core CRVEDP objective. As Director Alicia Gresley explains, "the toll commuting takes on the economic, social and physical well-being of workers, businesses, and communities on both sides of the valley is a serious challenge." While economic growth increases local emissions, model results show those increases can be significantly offset by reduced tailpipe emissions when more residents work closer to home.

Oil and gas remain the dominant economic drivers in Western Garfield County, though at a smaller scale than 20 years ago. The industry is a defining feature of the region and distinguishes it from eastern Garfield County. Dr. Nathan Perry, lead author of the report and an expert on western Colorado's energy economy, notes, "Without a crystal ball, we don't know the future of oil and gas, so we modeled alternative scenarios." The analysis makes a clear case for greater economic diversification to strengthen long-term resilience.

Surveys conducted for the study highlight the importance of understanding and communicating Western Garfield County's identity. Findings point to the opportunity to elevate the region's lifestyle advantages, workforce strengths, and strong sense of place to support business recruitment and retention. This strategy does not seek to change the character of the region. Instead, it emphasizes knowing who the region is today and using that knowledge to shape future opportunities. The data shows the local workforce already exists, and the region's population is younger than state and national trends. Western Garfield County's demographic profile positions it for long-term growth.

"The priority is bringing more high-quality, better paying jobs closer to home so residents do not feel forced to commute. When we present our region clearly and confidently, we have a stronger voice in shaping which

industries and opportunities come here, instead of having those decisions made for us,” said Alicia Gresley.

Conceived in 2022 by local town and city managers and established in 2023, the Colorado River Valley Economic Development Partnership (CRVEDP) is a regional collaboration representing the communities of New Castle, Silt, Rifle, and Parachute/Battlement Mesa, often referred to collectively as Western Garfield County. CRVEDP serves as an economic hub by providing trusted regional data, supporting workforce growth, fostering innovation, and championing projects that strengthen the region’s economic foundation.

For more information and to download the full report, visit www.crvedp.org.

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