

## From the Director's Desk: What if it isn't going away?

Crisis management by counties, municipalities, NPOs, businesses and citizens collaborating in response to the health crisis has been exemplary these past months. The length of this state of emergency stretches the concept of short-term, yet the manner and mindset of reactions remains just that. We have many people and teams to be proud of in the high country. In many ways, Counties in the NWCCOG region have paved the way and literally written the Road Maps ([Pitkin County](#), and [Summit County](#)) or Trail Map ([Eagle County](#)) for a staged recovery based on public health metrics now being used by others. That work required a mid-term strategic mindset.



Those same crisis response teams are already allowing hand-offs to other teams who focused on steering communities along the next phases of those pathways to recovery. The gradual re-opening with distancing is a tactical challenge that many accept as a necessary half-step to a full re-opening.

Like on any long road trip, what if leadership is too exhausted to be focused beyond the next fast food meal or bathroom break? And what if the idea that the road leads back to a pre-COVID state is mistaken?

Expressing something no one WANTS to think about, a Washington Post article asks, "[Coronavirus may never go away, even with a vaccine: Embracing that reality is crucial to the next phase of America's pandemic response, experts say.](#)" Perhaps we should step back, look beyond quick fixes of an extended crisis-response mindset to a strategy that re-evaluates the policy structures that exacerbated this cultural stress test. The next article quotes the Chair of the Federal Reserve who was uncharacteristically outspoken in May about inequality. His comments may have implications for our resort economy.

How different would local recovery strategies look if next winter's tourist season looks more like June 2020 than last winter? What if versions of a gradual "re-opening" and retrenchment are a pattern for many years?

On a recent call with Summit County leaders, Alan Henceroth, CEO of A-Basin, the [first ski-resort permitted to re-open](#) through a reservation system with 600 visitor slots reserved per day made it clear that this business model will not work

financially next winter. What if it had to?

Unlike the farmers and snail-mailing leaders of our past, we seem incapable of collective long-term strategizing. If Coronavirus becomes endemic, as the [Washington Post](#) article suggests, on the continuum of responses scaled from a Tweet to The Marshal Plan or The New Deal, we will need more leaders driving us toward the latter type of big-picture strategies that are more meaningful than throwing money at problems.

If it doesn't come from the federal level, or even from the State of Colorado, can there be a high-country version of that?

*Jon Stavney*  
Executive Director  
[jstavney@nwccog.org](mailto:jstavney@nwccog.org)

## Will COVID-19 exacerbate structural mountain issues?

### Fed warns more cash is needed as U.S. figures reveal widening inequality

What do the recently prolific pronouncements by The Fed mean to the high country?" More than most of us think. We tend to think of income inequality as a problem for other parts of the country. Given the preponderance of lower-income sectors in our rural resort economy, we're likely to be hit harder than other areas with more diverse economies. Federal Reserve chairman, Jerome Powell says the pace of downturn is 'without modern precedent' with lowest-paid Americans hit hardest by coronavirus pandemic.

It's not bad enough that an estimated [14.7% of all Americans](#) are unemployed. That is roughly 39 million people without jobs -most are minorities and those who were already working low-wage jobs. The same group of people who were having a hard time making ends meet even before the pandemic hit are now faced with the double whammy of having few (if any) savings and low (if any) income.

Powell, [released a statement mid-May](#) indicating a staggering 40% of households earning less than \$40,000 includes at least one earner who has lost their job since February. Without significant and swift action on the part of the US policymakers, he predicts a future "significantly worse than any recession since the second world war. "

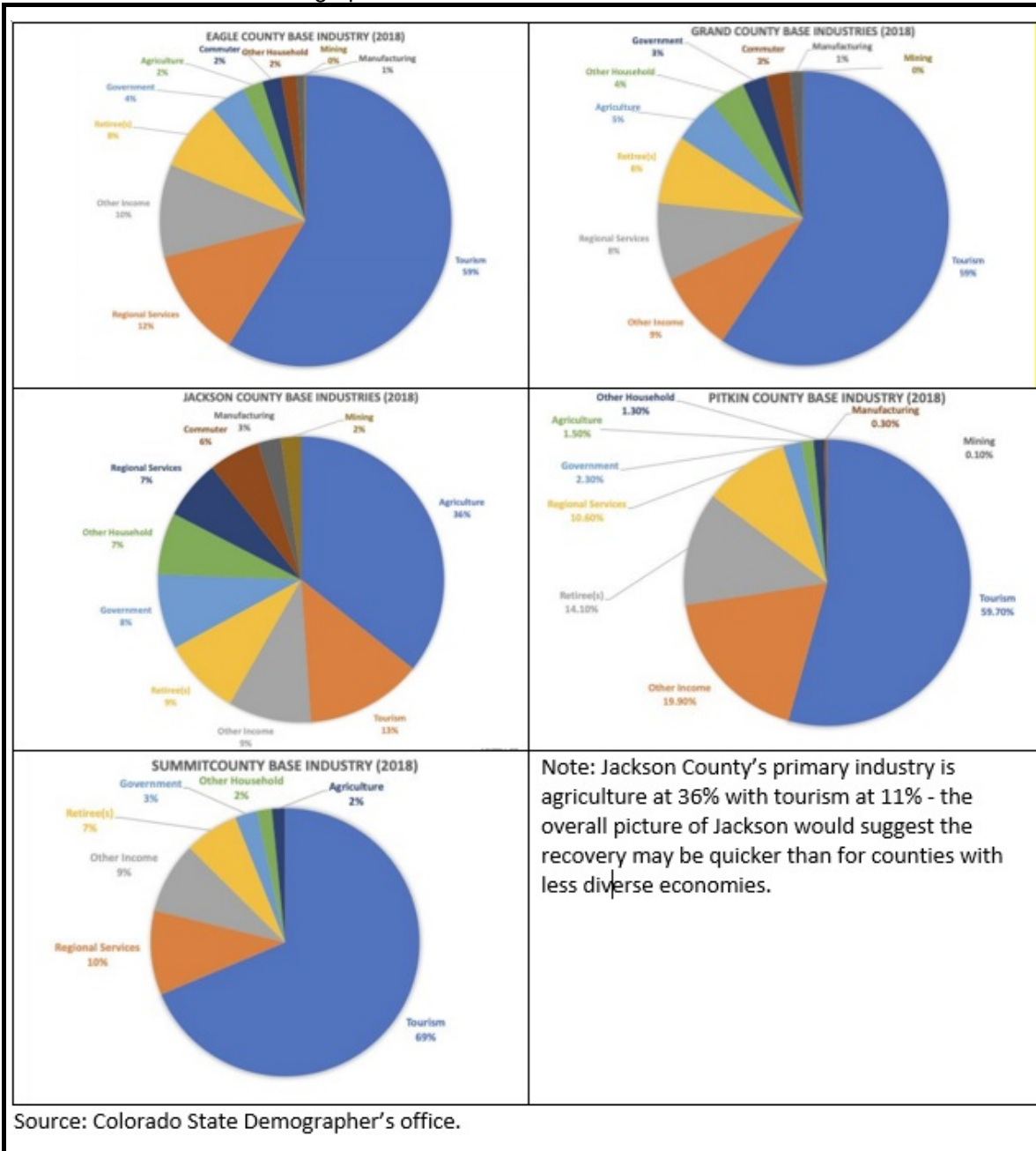
In [prepared remarks](#) in his address to the Senate Banking Committee on May 19, regarding the disbursement of hundreds of billions of dollars in coronavirus relief aid, Powell described the pandemic as having caused "a level of pain that is hard to capture in words."

In our Region we are acutely aware that the same sector the Fed shows as been hardest hit by the downturn is hospitality and retail. With many of our counties showing as much as 70% of their economy coming from tourism (Summit followed closely by Eagle and Pitkin at 60%) - it is difficult not to see the devastating impacts to our hospitality industry. The importance of economic diversity cannot be understated.



The adage of not putting all of your eggs in one basket that bears repeating - not only on the farm but in communities as well. [A study](#) on the importance of a diversified economy, shows that the more diverse an economy is, the better able it is to weather a storm - or pandemic. In a diverse economy, if one sector fails, the effect of the overall recovery will be minimized. But when a community's economic health is tied to a single industry or market sector (more than 30%+/- of economic activity is generated by that single industry), the economic health of the community will suffer from the impacts of the sector failure long after other more economically diverse communities begin to recover. Diversity helps protect the economic viability of other industries and prevents massive layoffs and sharp declines in property values. Over time, communities with diversity can absorb the impact and continue moving forward towards the future.

The charts below show the diversity of the economy in each of the 5 Counties in NWCCOG. Source: Colorado State Demographer's office.



Jessica Valand - Colorado Director of the Northwest Workforce area, in a presentation on the SBDC weekly [call May 1](#), suggested that in addition to extra help from local, state, and federal governments, communities should consider the following when contemplating economic recovery:

- How much does your local economy depend upon tourism (>30% signifies lack of diversity and increased risk/prolonged time to recover)
- What opportunities exist to increase revenue through economic drivers that do NOT depend on travel, crowds, or large gatherings?
- What important public services receive most of their funding from taxes on tourism-dependent activity?

- Federal stop-gaps largely end in June/July--what is the local plan for managing the end of Federal aid, while recovery is still a long way off?
- Don't just think about summer impacts--start planning now for reduced winter tourism!

As Fed Chairman Powell underscored in his remarks, "Nearly 40 million people have lost their jobs, reversing nearly 10 years of job gains. This precipitous drop in economic activity has caused a level of pain that is hard to capture in words, as lives are upended. It is worth remembering that the measures taken to contain the virus represent an investment in our individual and collective health. As a society, we should do everything we can to provide relief to those who are suffering for the public good."

Though many consider income inequality a squishy issue, worker attraction and retention issues are very real and will be a major impediment to our recovery. Will it be slower than the metro areas as it was after 2008 again? Will our leaders find strategies to change that dynamic?

## Never let a serious crisis go to waste....

Erin Fisher, Director of the Alpine Area Agency on Aging, her team, and a long list of providers working on the front lines, have quickly adapted to serve older adults at home.



When asked what some of the biggest changes are, Fisher said. "The traditional delivery method of many of our aging services changed dramatically in March, starting with Eagle County being the first to close their three congregate meal sites and begin offering grab-and-go lunches in addition to home delivered meals. Many of our other providers quickly followed suit and within weeks, most congregate meals sites across the state were shuttered. Nutrition services were not the only

ones impacted; transportation to medical rides ceased for all but the most serious needs and regular in-person programming was either canceled or moved to a virtual platform. We are anticipating a slower reopening for many of our sites due to the extra precautions for those 65 and older, but each community is working with their local public health department to create the most appropriate plan for their residents."

She went on to underscore the work of the providers, "The pivot to serving older adults in their homes has only been possible because of our amazing providers."

Some of the services AAAA has been able to accomplish with their partners are:

- paying for school districts to provide lunches to older adults
- purchasing non-perishable food items that are delivered by volunteers and staff to home-bound older adults
- paying for local chefs and caterers to assist with the preparation of hot and frozen meals
- working with local restaurants to purchase gift cards that older adults can use to order grab and go meals
- working with local restaurants for a meal that can be delivered hot to their door or a grab and go option

- paying for more drop shipment of frozen meals that are delivered via a parcel delivery service to their front door
- working with transportation providers for grocery, food bank, and prescription delivery
- working with providers for "reassurance calls" to check in with older adults to both assess needs and help combat social isolation and loneliness
- purchase of birthday balloons and flowers for older adults in Minturn
- purchasing robotic pets for isolated older adults to help relieve loneliness
- offering new, weekly online support groups for older adults and caregivers
- offering Humanizing Hoarding training via zoom, instead of two in-person trainings. "a level of pain that is hard to capture in words." Recorded presentation may be found here: [Humanizing Hoarding Training](#)
- offering annual Caregiver Conference via zoom instead of in-person - [Here](#).



When Fisher was asked what new processes have been so successful, they are likely to be carried over to the future, she replied. "One of the silver linings to the pandemic has been partnerships with organizations that we haven't worked with before. We're currently working with a couple school districts to pay for school lunches that older adults receive. We're working with five restaurants in Jackson County who are preparing 50 or more lunches each week for older adults and we had been trying to get a restaurant voucher program off the ground for a while before COVID. Thanks to our awesome providers, we've been able to provide telephone

reassurance calls to our older adults to check in on them and even deliver birthday balloons to help with the isolation and loneliness. We've been forced to move much of our programming to a virtual platform, but I think some of that may continue, even after COVID, because we've been able to reach more people than we have before."

Finally, when asked about advantages to thinking differently in this new environment, Fisher thought a moment and responded, "There's a Rahm Emanuel quote that's reemerged lately that states: "You never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that is it's an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before." As we serve older adults, one of the populations most at risk during the pandemic, we have had to completely reevaluate our entire service model, as have all of our providers. The creativity and responsiveness I've seen not only within our office but with our providers has been so encouraging and inspiring. The words "innovative" and "collaborative" are thrown



around all the time, but honestly, within government, we aren't known for responsiveness, creativity, and innovation. But, thanks in part to flexibility at the state and federal level, along with really amazing staff at all levels who are dedicated and imaginative, we've pivoted and introduced new service delivery methods, created new programs, and served more people. Now that we know that we can do it (and that it's possible for government to work quickly with more flexibility), I hope that we'll take this

knowledge and resourcefulness into the future, post-COVID."

We're all lucky to have a group like the AAAA and the many partnerships and provider organizations who focus on providing services to the aging adults in our communities. If you'd like more information about any of the services mentioned in the article - please contact Erin Fisher at [Efisher@nwccog.org](mailto:Efisher@nwccog.org).

Note: The Alpine Area Agency on Aging also offers facilitated, weekly group discussions to connect with folks to share this "stay at home" experience with others. They also have information and tips to help manage during this unique time. Call Ceci Peterson at 970-531-4087, or email her at [cpetersone@nwccog.org](mailto:cpetersone@nwccog.org)



## Caregiving Strategies in Times of Change

June 5 & 12

1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

### June 5

#### Change and Uncertainty - That's LIFE!

Change has always been part of the lived experience. However, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, we are experiencing change fatigue - one change after another. Nothing seems normal! Change disrupts our daily routines, life expectations, and our sense of certainty. Change dramatically changes the journey of caregiving as well. Change reminds us that we are not in control! So instead of resisting change, how can we engage it? First, understand the process of change, loss, transition, grief, and mourning. Second, decide to move through the process and embrace a new way of being. And finally, develop a mindset that serves to move us through the transition.

Alpine Area Agency on Aging is pleased to bring Jane Barton to the region for valuable caregiver information, tools and resources.



### June 12

#### Navigating the Journey of Caregiving

Navigating the constantly changing conditions of caregiving requires not only your time, attention, and energy but also knowledge and a competent caregiving crew. By taking time to adequately prepare for the journey, you increase the likelihood that your dreams of "smooth sailing," will become your reality. Learn about beneficial caregiving resources & tools to "map out" your caregiving journey: CareMaps, Lotsa Helping Hands, Caring Bridge, and Care-FULL Conversations.

Jane Barton is the Author of *Caregiving for the GENIUS*, a Passionate National Speaker, Writer, Listener, and Caregiving Ambassador for AARP Colorado

#### Register at

June 5 - <https://june5caregivingstrategies.eventbrite.com>

June 12 - <https://june12cargivingstrategies.eventbrite.com>



Questions?  
[arensmoon@nwccog.org](mailto:arensmoon@nwccog.org) / 970-315-1325

## [See NWCCOG Coronavirus Resource Guide here](#)

NWCCOG strives to not duplicate resources compiled elsewhere. For municipal actions taken, [CML](#) has the best resource. For current public health orders, those should be sought from your county website. There are numerous resources for businesses or individuals kept up to date regularly. If you would like guidance on what is the best resource for your needs, contact Jon and I will guide you there.

## [Coronavirus Anxiety Workbook](#)

### THANK YOU

*So many of our Members are doing tremendous front-line public service through this difficult time; if you are one of them, Thank you, you are appreciated more than ever for your public service. I've been privileged to be on daily update calls with both Eagle County and Summit County EOC, and it is assuring to listen in to collaboration going on in real-time.*

NWCCOG offices are closed to the public and most staff are working remotely so please contact them by phone or email. AAAA is in full-tilt mode adapting to meet the needs of Older Americans across the region. Energy Program Employees are working with strict safety protocols for themselves and their clients. The Elevator Inspection Program has suspended mosts field inspections and are catching up on a back-log of remote work. More than half of our programs and nearly 50 employees regularly work remotely. For more detailed and current status, please call your usual contact at NWCCOG.

*If you know someone who would enjoy our newsletter,  
please forward them to this link.*

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

## Next NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING

**Thursday, July 9, 2020**

**Full Council Meeting**

**Location: TBD**

**Time: 10:00 a.m. - TBD**

**Primary Agenda Items: Approval of 2021 dues; discussion re: Annual Planning Meeting Agenda**

**Northwest Colorado Council of Governments**

**[www.nwccog.org](http://www.nwccog.org)**

970.468.0295

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN NWCCOG!**

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)