



Energy Program: A Decade of Growth and Innovation

Ten years ago, NWCCOG's Energy Program was a small team with a \$1 million budget, focused solely on the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). The program served about 100 families annually across 13 counties and 24,000 square miles—an area larger than West Virginia—with only 8% of the statewide weatherization budget. The work was meaningful but difficult, and the team was stretched thin.

Today, the Energy Program looks very different. With a nearly \$7 million budget projected for 2026, three office locations, and 33 employees, the program now serves approximately 450 families annually. Beyond weatherization, the team partners with counties, utility companies, and Energy Smart Colorado to offer fee-for-service programs, electrification projects, and innovative energy efficiency solutions.



A turning point came when the program prioritized employee wellness and workplace culture. Leadership began creating open dialogue, listening to staff needs, and building trust. This shift not only improved morale but also created opportunities for advancement—from technicians to energy auditors, program managers, and beyond. A profit-sharing program now reinvests fee-for-service revenue into both reserves and employee rewards, reinforcing that success is shared.

Recognizing the risk of relying on a single funding stream, the Energy Program actively pursued new partnerships. Fee-for-service work now makes up nearly half of the program's portfolio. These projects, performed at competitive rates to support rather than undercut local contractors, have built financial stability and created an Energy Program reserve fund. This has allowed the program to take on more projects, manage cash flow, and give back to employees.

One standout partnership has been with Eagle County, where the Energy Program contributes directly to the county's Climate Action Plan. By electrifying homes, improving efficiency, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the program plays a key role in helping Eagle County meet its 2030 climate goals.

The program is also investing in workforce development. A new training center in Gypsum provides advancement opportunities for staff and certifications for regional partners. The team even built a training "tiny home" to give employees hands-on experience in every aspect of energy-efficient construction. The training center has been certified as a Building Performance Institute (BPI) testing location.

NWCCOG's Energy Program has been recognized on both Colorado Public Radio and NPR, celebrated as "not your Grandpa's" weatherization program." What started as a team of eight has grown into a nationally regarded leader in energy efficiency and electrification.

At its core, the success of the Energy Program comes down to its people: a dedicated staff, a supportive board, and strong community partnerships. Their teamwork and commitment have transformed the program into a vital regional resource—one that continues to help families, save energy, and build a more sustainable future for Northwest Colorado.

Doug Jones

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Weatherization Workforce Development Professionals Tour NREL



Emily Hoskins and Darcy Owens visited the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) with the Colorado Energy Office and other statewide Workforce Development professionals. Weatherization workforce development representatives from Energy Outreach Colorado ([EOC](#)), Interstate Renewable Energy Council ([IREC](#)), Energy Resource Center ([ERC](#)), and Housing Resources of Western Colorado ([HRWC](#)) attended.

NREL has been developing resources for Weatherization Assistance Programs for decades including:

[Standard Work Specifications](#) work quality standards, [Weatherization Installer Job Aids, Job Task Analysis](#) for Crew Leaders, Energy Auditors, and Quality Control Inspectors, and [Retrofit Installer Badges Toolkit](#).

Resources like these and the IREC [Green Workforce Connect](#) help support building trades and building workforce for energy efficiency and weatherization work.

Speeding Mussels

What is the Hottest Trend in the Mountain Region? Answer: Regional Transportation Authorities. The [Summit Daily reports](#) confirm what those who attend RTCC meetings already know- an idea discussed internally for a number of years is "getting some real legs" (or wheels) is likely to go to voters in November 2026 to form a Regional Transportation Authority. [Voters in the Yampa Valley](#) may get a chance to vote this November on an RTA that would create an RTA but not establish a tax. If both pass, this will mean that all of NWCCOG's member region except for Grand and Jackson Counties will have transit funded and managed at a regional level.



NWCCOG's Mobility Director is coordinating with the Town of Kremmling alongside Summit Stage representatives to discuss adding a route from Kremmling in neighboring Grand County into Summit which could be a first step toward Western Grand having a vote on the subject. That is especially interesting because Grand County transit has slowly expanded from Winter Park, north. Summit's effort has prompted similar discussions with Lake County where voters recently turned down a similar ballot measure in 2022 that would have added them to the Eagle River Valley's RTA which is now named CORE Transit. That measure passed in every community in Eagle County except Gypsum, making the Kremmling question especially interesting – do they relate to Summit's economic zone more than Eastern Grand County's zone that has incrementally added servicers?

Attendees at a recent RTCC meeting noted that RFTA has been a mentor to both communities as it was to representatives from ECO Transit when they sought to become an RTA. RFTA was officially created in 1983 when the Roaring Fork Transit Agency merged with Aspen's bus system, making it the first rural regional transit authority in Colorado and a model for other mountain towns. "There is a lot of expertise in the region and proof of concept," says Mobility Director Dana Wood.

By Jon Stavney.

Colorado Boaters now Suspect in Other States

The first risk of an invasion like this is to infrastructure—dams, pipelines, and even the metal fittings on

boats can all be corroded and damaged—but downstream environmental risks can be just as devastating. Idaho Fish and Game has already fought this battle, [attempting multiple times to wipe out invasive mussels in a stretch of the Snake River](#), only to decimate the fishery in the process. Poisoning a river to eliminate an unwanted species is not without precedent in Colorado either. In 1962, the Green River was deliberately poisoned in an effort championed by Stewart Udall's Department of the Interior. The goal then was to clear out what are now protected native species in order to stock rainbow trout, just prior to construction of Flaming Gorge Dam. Anders Halverson recounts this episode—tellingly titled “A Full-Scale Military Operation”—in his book *An Entirely Synthetic Fish*. Just three weeks after the poisons had been dumped, *Silent Spring* was published.

Fast forward to today: [news spread faster](#) than a custom Malibu water ski boat when it was discovered that a private lake in Dotsero was the source of zebra mussels infecting the adjacent Colorado River, as first reported by the Vail Daily. For those in the water world, this is big news—serious enough for coverage by [Colorado Public Radio](#) and the [Colorado Sun](#), and potentially big enough to reach the President's desk if Colorado lawmakers have their way, according to the [Summit Daily](#).

I can attest from recent travels into Idaho and Oregon this summer that the ripple effect of Colorado's outbreak is already being felt. Boat inspection stations along the highways were more vigilant than ever, with far more questions than in past years. This is just a taste of what to expect in summers to come.

The story has progressed quickly since Colorado Parks and Wildlife collected 427 water samples along the Colorado River, six of which contained veligers (infant) zebra mussels in April, to the CPW treating the infested ski lake at Dotsero with a molluscicide in August, and as of mid-September, with more intense scrutiny on the river, the [Colorado Sun](#) reports that “adult” zebra mussels have been found in the Clifton to Utah Border reaches of the Colorado River. The invasive species is known to multiply rapidly, damaging the biological balance in a waterbody as well as ruining infrastructure like the Shoshone Power Plant just downstream.

By Jon Stavney.

Colorado Tries to Stay Ahead of Speeders

Artificial Intelligence is impacting those in a hurry. It is called AVIS, short for Automated Vehicle Identification System, and unlike radar, it cannot be detected. Cameras watch and computers do the math, the system issues a ticket. CPR reports [CDOT is expanding use of automated speeding tickets](#) CDOT is experimenting with AVIS on highway 119 between Boulder and Longmont. [For now, CDOT is being transparent](#), pledging to notify of [new locations 30 days before a new location](#) is added. Like a toll, fines go to the registered owner (and not insignificantly for mountain communities to the owner's physical address, not their PO Box). AVIS does not identify the driver—yet, as some stationary cameras at intersections in urban areas do. The point is compliance, not revenue generation, right? The agency contends the innovation is necessary at locations near schools and especially construction zones where CBS reports [60% of Colorado drivers](#) exceed the limits by 10 mph or more.

Vail is also tired of speeders on the Frontage Road in Vail, where the future of [automated tickets](#) is now.

Concurrently, judges in California are [reconsidering “The 85th percentile rule,” the rule that judges don't want you to know about](#) (*Clickbait headline*) whereby if you can prove that you are within the actual speeds of a 85% of drivers in a zone then you cannot be ticketed based on the posted speed. Evidently, post-COVID's empty highways, drivers continue to drive as if living in a “video game.” [California State Patrol](#) now has a fleet of [“stealth” vehicles](#) to address such behavior. [Florida, like many states is passing steeper penalties for super speeders](#), including immediate jail time.

By Jon Stavney.

Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month With Vintage



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Rapid Broadband Deployment Aids Derby Fire Command Post



When the Derby Fire broke out in Eagle County, the Town of Eagle's Public Works team was quick to lend a hand in setting up a water solution for the Incident Command Post (ICP). In the process, they learned that the ICP also lacked the reliable, high-speed internet connectivity needed for coordinating the emergency response.

Recognizing the urgency, the Public Works Director reached out to the Town's IT Department, which also oversees the Town's broadband program. Within hours, a deployment plan was in motion.

Thanks to a creative, on-the-fly solution from Public Works, a large pole was mounted at the off-grid ICP site, providing line of sight to the Town's broadband tower. IT staff installed two Tarana radios connected to separate base nodes, ensuring redundancy. The result: internet speeds more than triple what the ICP had been working with previously.

This fast, coordinated response between the Town of Eagle

Public Works and IT/Broadband teams allowed critical communication and data systems to function seamlessly for the firefighters, law enforcement, and emergency managers on the front lines.

This effort highlights not only the resilience of Eagle's broadband network, but also the dedication of local staff who step up in creative ways during times of crisis.

COG Quirks: Who Needs a Car When You Can Run 100km?

We'd like to give a big congratulations to Kevin Vermillion for completing his first 100km race this summer! While it wasn't his first Ultra, this was by far his longest and most challenging yet—the Never Summer 100km in State Forest State Park, Northern Colorado. The course covers 65.7 miles with a staggering 14,500 feet of elevation gain.

Kevin trained all year to prepare, from winter runs in the snow to summer miles on the trails. Moving from a 50km to a 100km is no small leap; it's not just about doubling the distance. Runners must carefully manage nutrition, hydration, and the body's limits—factors that can be difficult to replicate in training.

"There were a few moments where I wanted to quit, but grit kept me going as the day turned to night and the miles kept piling up," Kevin said. Crossing that finish line was a hard-earned triumph and a milestone worth celebrating.



Upcoming Board Meetings

Thursday, October 23, 2025 – Silverthorne Conference Room NWCCOG Office

Full Council & EDD Board Meeting AND Executive Committee Meeting

Primary Agenda Items: Review of draft 2026 budget, approve 2026 meeting schedule, approve Q3 Financials; EDD Board meeting.

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