

2011 Colorado Planning & Management Region Report

Region 11 – Garfield, Mesa, Moffat,
Rio Blanco and Routt Counties

Introduction

Region 11 is located in Northwest Colorado, and is comprised of Garfield, Mesa, Moffat, Rio Blanco and Routt Counties. Although the region is geographically significant, it's not a densely populated area. In 2010 the population was 223,573, up more than 24% from 2000. The region has grown steadily since 2000, with the growth of energy-related activities in the area and growth of tourism-related activities. Expected growth between 2010 and 2015 is slower due to the current recession and its impact on energy related activities, tourism and retirees.

County	2000	2010	% Change
Garfield	43,791	56,389	28.77%
Mesa	116,255	146,723	26.21%
Moffat	13,184	13,795	4.63%
Rio Blanco	5,986	6,666	11.36%
Routt	19,690	23,509	19.40%
Colorado	4,301,261	5,029,196	16.92%

Source: State Demography Office

Jobs & the Economy

The economic base of the region is very diverse. Traditional base sectors include strong agribusiness in Moffat and Rio Blanco counties, major mining activities and Federal and state government presence in all counties except Routt, and a significant manufacturing sector in Mesa. Mesa County also provides business and professional services to the wider region while a number of the counties provide construction services outside their boundaries. Tourism constitutes 42.5 percent of the base in Routt County and is significant in Garfield (16.5 percent), Rio Blanco (13.5 percent) and Mesa (7.6 percent) counties as well. Retirees constitute 13.2 percent of Mesa County's economic base and a significant percent of the overall region.

Each county within the region has also seen a drop in unemployment rates, with Garfield, Rio Blanco and Routt showing at least 1% change each.

Unemployment Rates by County

County	August '10	August '11	Change
Garfield	9.4%	7.9%	-1.5%
Mesa	10.0%	9.5%	-.5%
Moffat	8.6%	7.9%	-.7%
Rio Blanco	6.0%	5.0%	-1%
Routt	9.0%	7.4%	-1.6%
Colorado	8.7%	8.3%	-.4%

Source: Department of Labor & Employment

Agriculture

Agriculture is a significant industry in this region and varies from sheep, cattle and hay in Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties to orchards and vineyards in Mesa and Garfield Counties. Agriculture makes up 12-13% of the base industry jobs in Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties and is a smaller share (around 5%) in Routt, Garfield and Mesa Counties. Land in farms in Moffat County make up approximately 27% of the county land area.

Clean Energy

Clean Energy is a vibrant and important industry in this region, and many communities have been actively involved in reducing their carbon footprints. Routt County, for example, has established Vision 2030 which focuses on initiatives to attain clean renewable energy sources along with a diversified economy.

Region 11 residents are being encouraged to participate in the state's residential energy audit rebate program. This program, which aims to save energy, also creates more work for contractors, thus stimulating the economy. Multiple rebates are available to homeowners across the state, and can be viewed at www.rechargecolorado.com.

New Projects & Goals

As part of Governor Hickenlooper's "Bottom Up" Economic Development initiative, Region 11 counties have identified the following goals and strategies:

Garfield County

Create New Jobs

- Work with local and state government to streamline regulations
- Work with local learning institutions to identify potential business opportunities and needs

Diversify Economic Base

- Develop a county-wide Economic Council that will tie together different groups to accomplish core goals

Mesa County

Become Epicenter for Energy Innovation

- Promote R&D of new and emerging technologies
- Focus on science and technology to create a more agile, dynamic business environment

Support the Growth of Existing Business

- Create a community-owned and sustained program to identify barriers to growth and keep current with business needs
- Create innovation development programs in the schools

2011 Colorado Planning & Management Region Report

Region 11 – Garfield, Mesa, Moffat,
Rio Blanco and Routt Counties

Moffat County

Sustain or Increase Current Levels of Production in Core Industries

- Work towards a fair, accessible and predictable regulatory environment

Ensure Long-term Viability of Energy Sector Jobs

- Increase clean energy research within the county

Rio Blanco County

Streamline Regulatory and Permitting Processes

- Encourage cross-jurisdictional procedures so state agencies can work together
- Take a bottom-up approach to creating mandates

Routt County

Expand Educational Opportunities

- Support existing educational facilities and increase number of degrees awarded to county residents

Expand Tourism

- Better utilize existing resources to attract new visitors, and increase the number of days per year they spend in the area