

2012 Colorado Planning & Management Region Report

Region 10 – Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel Counties

INTRODUCTION

Region 10 is located in West-Central Colorado and includes the counties of Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel. The region's population grew from 86,348 in 2000 to 99,511 in 2011, a 15.24% increase. Montrose was the fastest-growing county within the region at 22.71%. Gunnison, Ouray and San Miguel counties also posted double-digit gains. Growth rates for the region's population are expected to increase slowly after 2010, with an average annual percentage increase of between 1 – 3% from 2010 to 2040.

Delta and Ouray Counties have some of the highest median ages in the State. In Delta, about 20% of the County's population is aged 65 or over, whereas in Ouray the high median age is more the result of an absence of young children rather than the presence of the elderly. By contrast, Gunnison has one of the lowest median ages of Colorado counties despite an unusually low proportion of children, due principally to the large relative population of post-secondary students in the county.

County	Census 2000	July 2011	% Change
Delta	27,834	30,412	9.26%
Gunnison	13,956	15,402	10.36%
Hinsdale	790	821	3.92%
Montrose	33,432	41,025	22.71%
Ouray	3,742	4,355	16.38%
San Miguel	6,594	7,496	13.68%
Colorado	4,301,261	5,118,526	19.00%

Source: State Demography Office

JOBS & THE ECONOMY

Agribusiness, Tourism, and Retiree related expenditures are the largest drivers of the regional economy. The majority of job losses have occurred in the construction and real estate industry. A number of real estate offices have closed and all have reduced staff. Many construction workers have left the area or have taken temporary service jobs waiting for the housing market to recover. As time moves on, more of these individuals are leaving the area, a trend that is expected to continue. Second Home development is at a virtual standstill, with some sales in the very high end of the market. Most counties in our region, other than Delta and Ouray, experienced a slight increase in unemployment over the past year.

County Unemployment	August 2011	August 2012	% Change
Delta	8.2%	8.0%	-0.2%
Gunnison	5.8%	5.9%	0.1%
Hinsdale	2.8%	3.3%	0.5%
Montrose	9.8%	10.1%	0.3%
Ouray	6.4%	6.1%	-0.3%
San Miguel	6.3%	6.5%	0.2%
Colorado	8.1%	7.8%	-0.3%

Source: Labor Market Information

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HOUSING

Home sales have finally stabilized after steady declines in every quarter since 2008. Despite fewer sales, prices have remained remarkably stable, though increasing numbers of foreclosures did erode prices.

Due to the scenic beauty of this region, many of the counties have a high proportion of their housing units dedicated to seasonal use. A 2007 study of homeowners in Hinsdale, Gunnison, San Miguel, and Ouray Counties had 44% of respondents indicate that their property was a second home for occasional or rental use. The highest rate was in Hinsdale County with 66%.

AGRICULTURE

Agribusiness is an important industry within the Region. In both Delta and Montrose County greater than 10% of all basic jobs were within Agribusiness. Recently, the development of sweet corn and wine production has had a positive impact within Montrose County. According to the Census of Agriculture the number of farms producing sweet corn in Montrose County increased approximately 30% between 2002 and 2007 and the number of grape harvesting farms increased nearly 50% during the same time period. Another growing market segment is so-called boutique agriculture and ranching, producing organic and natural products for local and statewide consumption.

CLEAN ENERGY

The clean/green energy segment is still at the fledgling stage, with many small solar hot water and photovoltaic installers. Manufacturing of photovoltaic systems in Montrose will soon move from research/design/prototype development to production, with job growth potential of 150 jobs.

GOALS FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

Community leaders across Region 10 are focused on a range of goals intended to:

- Retain and support local sustainable businesses and industries including agriculture
- Retain and create jobs that add value to the counties
- Diversify our economic base
- Increase/expand tourism activity
- Promote understanding and stewardship of our natural landscape
- Improve transportation options for residents and visitors, including public and air transportation