

Mesa County Program Drivers

2009 Strategic Planning

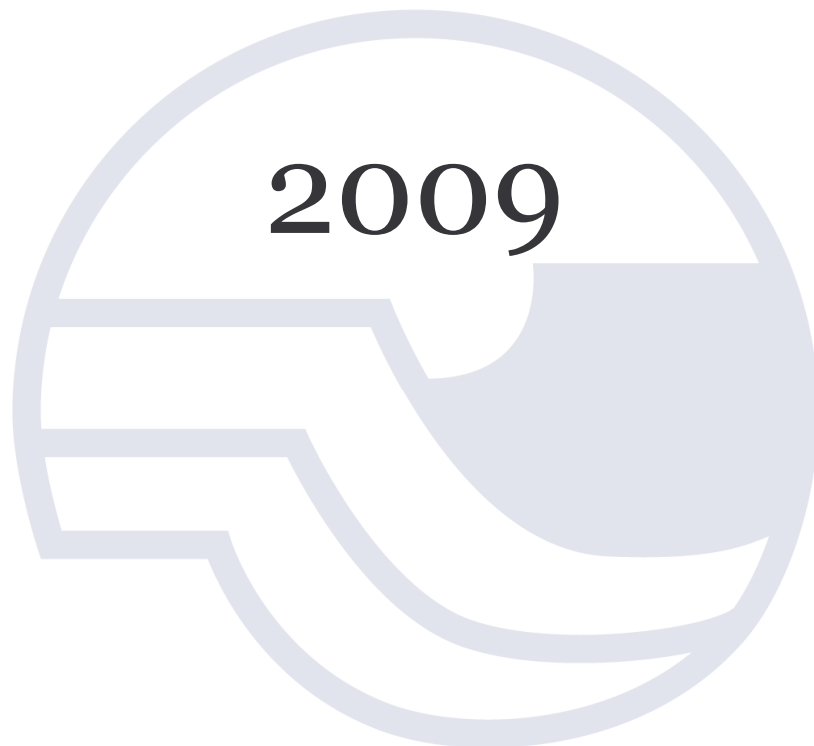


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Mesa County Program Drivers

2009 Strategic Planning

PROGRAM DRIVER DEVELOPMENT

Mesa County program drivers are derived from a strategic analysis of external and internal factors that affect how a department conducts business in pursuit of its mission and vision. The ability to forecast change and predict the consequences of change depends on each department's ability to understand the past, current, and future trends within the community. Many of these factors will shape the way in which each department provides service to the citizens of Mesa County.

Program drivers relate to factors that affect the department, but which the agency has little, if any, direct control. Examples include political, legislative, economic, demographic or technological influences impacting the department. Program drivers frequently relate to state and federal law, but may also relate to customer demographics and satisfaction, executive management expectation and direction, best practices and budgetary considerations. Knowledge of the department's program drivers enables the realistic development of department goals and objectives.

ADMINISTRATION

Growth and Revenue Restrictions

As a nation we are facing one of the worst economic crises in our nation's history. Mesa County is experiencing unemployment rates higher than it has seen in six years, prior to the expansion of the energy industry. As a result, Mesa County has experienced sharply lower sales tax and use tax receipts. Revenue projections are being adjusted with first quarter 2009 sales tax revenue down 8.8% as compared to first quarter 2008. Other revenue such as severance tax is also expected to fall drastically in 2009-2010.

Employee Recruitment and Retention

Mesa County's unemployment rate is 8.2%, during the same period Mesa County government's turnover rate has dropped to 4.2% (down from 12.4% the previous year). Recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce is key to Mesa County's ability to provide quality services in an efficient manner to Mesa County citizens.

Energy Development

The energy industry has been a major driving force for the local economy for several years. Duration of the national recession has a direct impact on the demand for natural gas and other petroleum products. There have been significant rig reductions in Mesa, Garfield, and Rio Blanco counties, resulting in even further decline in oilfield support services. Many companies have implemented hiring freezes and some have begun initial layoffs.

Term Limits

Term limits create a more fluid and dynamic organizational environment as elected officials' turnover on a regular basis. As an organization Mesa County must continue to adopt processes and create a culture that is agile and adaptable to new leadership styles, goals and priorities.

Technological Change

Mesa County is the repository of valuable information. Technology continues to transform our ability to share information and conduct transactions over broad electronic networks. As more citizens become computer literate and gain access to the internet, they will expect the availability of information and transactions 24 hours a day seven days a week.

Shifting of Programmatic Costs to local governments

State and Federal Governments are shifting costs to local governments by two means: creating unfunded mandates and cutting funds for essential services. The state is also cutting funds for programs that many communities do not consider optional requiring local government to fund these programs.

ANIMAL SERVICES

Increased Demand for Care of Abandoned or Displaced Pets

Based on the increase in home foreclosures, job losses and a downturn in the overall economy, we anticipate a continued increase in abandoned animals and relinquishments by owners. In addition to Mesa County, this increase is being experienced across the country at local animal shelters.

Decreasing Support from Non-Profit Groups

Mesa County collaborates with the animal welfare community to maximize the services available to our citizens. For example, in 2008 Mesa County Animal Services (MCAS) received \$85,000 for equipment and other services from the Animal Assistance Foundation. In addition, animals housed at Mesa County Animal Services received approximately \$38,000 of supplies and services provided by Grand Rivers Humane.

Donations to non-profit agencies have decreased significantly in recent months. Any decrease in availability of funding, resources or volunteer assistance could limit our ability to offer Mesa County citizens and displaced pets this expected level of animal care.

Decrease in Redemptions

In difficult economic times, animal welfare agencies report seeing a decline in the number of animals reclaimed from shelters. These owners understand that there is a cost to reclaim their dog and often a citation for allowing their dog to run at large. Any reduction in reclaims by owners increases operational cost and also decreases revenue from violations and fees.

Increase in Welfare Enforcement

Mesa County citizens have varied expectations of acceptable animal care. This has resulted in an increase in calls for welfare checks on domesticated pets. As disposable income decreases due to the economic climate, we expect that some pet owners will have limited resources to provide for their pet's care. This may result in a continued increase in welfare calls. These calls are high priority, can be high profile and often require detailed investigation and collaboration with local veterinarians to determine the level of enforcement. This has and will continue to increase the demands on staff. It could result in higher operational expenditures based on the level of veterinary care necessary for these impounded animals.

ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Growth

Growth as it pertains to the Assessor's Office falls into the following categories:

Population

The Assessor's office is the repository of all land and ownership in Mesa County. Increased population growth means increased demand of the vital information. The month of May is devoted to the protest/appeal process when staff meets with several thousand tax payers to individually go over their real property. Additional staff time is required when taxpayers petition for abatement.

Land Parcels

New land parcels are being added at an approximate rate of 2000 per year. Each parcel is mapped and parcel numbers assigned. Increased parcel count generally means new buildings being added to those parcels. Existing parcels are being remodeled with additions built, demolition, and mobile homes being moved. Growing inventory of properties increase the overall work load of the office. The Assessor's office is required to discover, list, and value (appraise) all property in Mesa County.

Personal Property

The Mesa County Assessor's Office processes and values approximately 5000 business accounts annually. Natural resources parcels continue to increase for this year and the workload remains high. The slowdown in new permits and drilling for 2009 will allow staff to do much needed research of market value for equipment and field reviews for changes on older wells.

Senior and Veterans Exemptions

Mesa County has over 6,000 approved senior exemptions and 70 Veterans Exemptions. Each year we are required to mail an exemption application form to every Mesa county tax payer and process all inquiries and applications received.

New Legislation

The Assessor's office is a state statute and constitution driven office. New legislation that will have an impact on our office includes change in appraisal license requirements. This has raised the bar for education and more dollars will be needed to educate appraisal staff. This will have an effect on recruitment and retention of competent staff. Currently pending legislation is working its way through the legislature and if passed will have an impact on the office, extent unknown at this time.

Technology

Hardware and daily use software have been changing at a rapid pace for the overall betterment of government service. Mesa County has taken a positive step to purchase and implement a new computer assisted mass appraisal (CAMA) and Administrative Assessor software system in the Assessor's office.

CLERK AND RECORDER

The Clerk & Recorder is a constitutional and statutory officer under Colorado law. This office is statutorily mandated to maintain the function of Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners; the Recording of Land Title and other documents for public notice; the conduct of all Federal and State Elections; and act as a statutory agent for the Department of Revenue – Motor Vehicle Division.

Legislative demands

Every year, "election reform" is considered by the Federal and Colorado Legislatures. As long as election requirements continue to change, the cost will most likely continue to increase. It is also an ongoing process to plan for the changing requirements of each election and find the most cost effective way to conduct them.

Fee Increase

Significant fee increases to Motor Vehicle transactions are being debated in the Colorado Legislature – it appears imminent that the front line staff of the Motor Vehicle Division will be required to collect more and more tax dollars from the citizens of Mesa County. The burdens and stresses on this staff continue to increase with each new license plate, weight regulation, fee increase, confidentiality requirement, etc.

SMM legislation is being enacted to ensure that SMM compliance issues are being applied uniformly across the state. Members of our team have been encouraged to participate in the rule making and implementation plan for the legislation.

Clerk & Recorder fees for providing copies of documents were decreased significantly in the 2008 legislative session, however during this session there was much debate regarding the significant increase of Recording and other documentary fees.

The Clerk and Recorders Office participates on legislative committees to attempt to work toward solutions that do not have an adversarial affect on the Clerk and Recorder's departments. The Clerk and Recorder participates on a Statute Review Committee that

keeps abreast of statutes that affect all areas of the Clerk and Recorder's Office; the Elections Director is involved in the Elections Statute Review Committee; the Assistant Chief Deputy contributes to the Motor Vehicle Statute Review Committee with the Compliance Office; the Assistant Chief Deputy also shares in the Recording Statute Review Committee with the Recording Manager.

Facility needs

In 2008, the Elections Division had to secure a warehouse for the storage of voting equipment and records. The department was denied a facility, and was absorbed into a maintenance shop, plus a small conference room in the basement of the courthouse to store sensitive materials and equipment. As our population grows, our need for space also grows.

Beginning in 2003 the Clerk & Recorder has advocated for the build/purchase of a facility that would be capable of housing the main Motor Vehicle office, Elections Division, those offices' warehouse needs and includes training facilities. These training facilities would enable onsite training for Clerk and Recorder's personnel, election judge training, community training needs (for example Manufactured Home training has been offered to county offices Mesa County and other regional county offices), real estate professionals and individuals in the mortgage industry. This acquisition would enable to County to do away with costly leases and be more fiscally responsible to the citizens.

Clerk to the Board / BOE Coordinator

The Colorado Constitution and state law mandates this position, with oversight by the County Clerk. (Colorado Revised Statutes, 30-10-319, 30-10-402, 39-8-101 thru 39-8-109, 39-5-122, & 39-3-206)

Service to the Citizens

- With the down turn of the economy, real estate values have decreased; however, 2009 is a re-appraisal year, which uses the previous 18 months as the data gathering period and values were high, this in all likelihood will create a large numbers of BOE appeals and abatements. This office records the audio and written proceedings of the Commissioners, preserving all documents acted upon by the Board.
- There is a significant need for this position to have a full back up that can handle all aspects of the position.

Motor Vehicle Division

Colorado law and the Colorado Department of Revenue policies and procedures dictate the requirements of this Division. As the County continues to grow (Environmental Scan), motor vehicles registrations will also increase, placing further demands on DMV staff. (Colorado Revised Statutes, Titles 38, 39, 42)

Service to the Citizens

Recent Manufactured Home legislation has required ongoing education of individuals in the mortgage industry, real estate professionals and county personnel. Fair and equitable fee

collection continues to be addressed through SMM compliance. This project is currently underway and needs to continue to ensure equitability. This arena also provides a great deal of revenue.

Human Resources

As we have continued to grow in Mesa County, legislative challenges affect our population's economic situations. The frustration from this additional economic strain results in employee stress, frustration and potentially attrition.

These same legislative impacts affect the perception of the general public on equality of application of laws. These have political and economic impacts when enforcement is not administered by this division.

This division continues to assist and support the Elections Division during an election cycle. It is an additional demand of the Motor Vehicle personnel when they are yet in their peak season (August) when this additional component is added.

As the Department of Revenue continues to make changes in the policies and procedures it is imperative that we have the resources available to have the opportunity to provide and/or attend ongoing training on-site and regionally. This is essential to the fair and equitable functions of having 5 different branch office locations-each with their own social, economic and business challenges.

Technology

While the Motor Vehicle Division is limited by the technology of the Department of Revenue we attempt to take advantage of all available resources. We have taken advantage of online renewals, county lock box services (piloted by the Treasurer's office) and electronic check deposits. We would like to implement electronic check deposit functions at the Clifton and Orchard Mesa branch offices.

Elections Division

Federal and state laws, together with Secretary of State Rules mandate the conduct of elections. (Colorado Constitution; Colorado Revised Statutes, Titles 1, 24, 31, 32.)

Voter Service

The trend of voting methods (vote-by-mail, early voting, or Election Day) is changing. More voters are choosing to vote by mail, so this may change the way we look at allocating resources for early voting locations; vote centers; voting machines; staff; and supporting services -- all the while our population continues to grow. It is an ongoing process to plan for the demographics of each election and the most cost effective way to conduct them.

Internal Goals

The elections division has a young staff. With team building activities, education and cooperation, it is the goal of the Elections Director to foster an environment that results in the most knowledgeable, efficient team possible.

Increased Population and Participation

During partisan election years (even-numbered years), it is vital that this Division be allotted at least two contract positions to handle the volume of voters we serve. Not only is the volume of voters we serve increasing each year but the complexity changes with every legislative and rule making cycle. The security, technology, and service demands are too much for a staff of five (including the Director) to handle in partisan election years.

Recording Division

State law mandates timelines for recording/publishing of documents, together with other requirements for recording public records. The growth of the county, as well as the economy and interest rates will dictate the increase or decrease of recordings; thus the demands of the Recording staff. (Colorado Revised Statutes, Titles 14, 30)

Customer Service

The increase in demands from the oil and gas industry has required availability of additional electronic index data. This includes documents prior to 1977 being indexed and includes over 1.4 million documents. As a result of the increased research demands, our bound volumes have needed additional repair and maintenance.

Human Resources

This division continues to assist and support the Elections Division during an election cycle.

CORONER

Facilities

The autopsy facility and office space for the Coroner and Coroner's Office personnel are based at Community Hospital. The relationship between Community Hospital and the Coroner's Office is outstanding and is a huge benefit for Mesa County. Without Community Hospital's support, the County would have to supply an autopsy facility and office space along with many other benefits that the County currently does not have to provide. Approximately 2-3 years ago, Community Hospital was set to beginning a new hospital but that has been suspended for the time being. However, the hospital continues to maintain that they hope to build a new facility within the near future (possibly in the next 4 to 5 years). It is important that the County continue the relationship with the hospital and provide support for the autopsy facility at the new hospital.

Population growth

Mesa County has experienced significant population growth and as a result, the Coroner's office case load has increased. This is simply based on the fact that with a larger population, there will be more deaths that will require investigations from our office. An increased population also typically results in increased numbers of violent deaths that will be required to be investigated.

Term limits

The Coroner is an elected position and can seek re-election once after the initial term. In order to maintain the high level of death investigation that we currently enjoy in Mesa

County, it is important that the Coroner position be held by a board certified forensic pathologist. Most of the progressive states in the US operate under a medical examiner system, where the head of the system is appointed and is a forensic pathologist. Colorado operates under the relatively archaic Coroner's system, where each county elects a coroner, which basically can be anyone so long as they are registered to vote. Because of this system, many of the counties in Colorado suffer from suboptimal death investigation. There are a few counties in Colorado that do have forensic pathologists as their Coroner (e.g. Denver, Arapahoe, Larimer and Mesa) and these are the counties that have high quality death investigation. However, because of term limits here in Mesa County, there is a possibility that at some point a forensic pathologist may not be able to be the Coroner. The challenge is to attempt to achieve the ability for the Coroner to be elected for more than two terms or to have term limits dropped for this office all together.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Colorado's Economic Forecast

Projections indicate the State of Colorado is facing serious budget short falls in the next few years. One of the State's major annual expenses is for housing inmates in the correctional system. While the projected growth in the inmate population is somewhat less than anticipated, recent projections indicate there will be a continual demand for community based or community corrections services over the next several years. The current cost for a prison bed is approximately \$75.00 per day. The cost to the State for a community corrections bed is approximately \$37.80 per day and \$5.10 per day for non-residential services. One significant cost to the correctional system is associated with recidivism rates, each year hundreds of inmates are returned to prison. The Colorado Department of Corrections, (CDOC) estimates for every one half a percent improvement in the recidivism rate, Colorado could save five million dollars in housing inmates. The State can realize a tremendous financial savings by reducing recidivism if they place appropriate offenders in community corrections programs which provide them with quality educational classes and appropriate therapy.

Mesa County Economy

Mesa County is also experiencing an economic slow-down and it will be imperative that all financial resources are managed prudently assuring funding is allocated wisely to provide the most value to our citizens. Mesa County faces increasing demand for detention beds which drives the need to provide cost effective community based programs as an alternative to a detention facility sentence. Expanded use of existing community based programs and services such as pretrial supervision, day reporting, and global position system monitoring can significantly reduce the utilization of detention beds and limit the need for costly operational and capital expenditures for high security detention beds. Criminal Justice Services' community based programs rely on client fees to off-set operational costs. In considering the affects of our local economic slow-down, it is likely that our client fee collection rate will be reduced resulting in generation of less revenue and increased costs to Mesa County. These costs may be offset through increased revenue generated by increasing the number of State clients in community based programs.

Evidence Based Practices/Offender Education and Treatment

Quality community corrections programs offer offender education and treatment programs based upon “Best Practices” curriculums, which are proven to be effective in reducing recidivism rates which will dramatically reduce correctional costs for the State and our local Mesa County government. The State will seek out community corrections providers that offer a variety of quality educational and treatment programs that are proven to reduce recidivism rates. CJSJ is currently providing educational classes and both inpatient and outpatient substance abuse therapy programs based upon “Best Practices” curriculums. CJSJ will continue to provide these services focusing on adherence to evidence based practices, cost effective operations, and community safety.

Demands for Community Based Programs

The State’s budget short falls described above coupled with escalating correctional costs will naturally lead to the growth of community based programs which are a viable cost effective option compared to prison or detention facility bed. CJSJ is anticipating an increase in funding for residential community corrections clients. The increased residential placements will also result in the expansion of non-residential supervision as a client progresses to a less restrictive level of supervision. The revenue earned from these community based programs can be used to subsidize operation of our local programs such as pretrial, day reporting, and the Summit View Treatment facility for substance abuse.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Maximum Utilization of Limited Judicial Resources

The court system for the 21st Judicial District operated between 1991 and 2006 with four District Court judges and two County Court judges. This same judicial staff handled the criminal caseload despite the fact that the number of felony filings more than quadrupled over those years, with a comparable increase in the number of misdemeanor and traffic cases. In 2006, a third County Court judge was added, and in July, 2007, a fifth District Court judge will be added. Despite these additions, the District Attorney’s Office is tasked with handling ever-increasing caseloads with less court time, less judge time, and proportionately, fewer court clerks. Strategic planning must consider the District Attorney’s rising numbers of cases and the impact on a court system which is not keeping pace with those cases.

Limited Correctional Resources and the Impact on Justice

Presently, the Mesa County Detention Facility, Work Release Program, Community Corrections, and other correctional programs, including probation, are handling greater numbers of corrections clients with proportionately less staff, and less physical resources. This results in jail overcrowding, work release overcrowding, and overall, less effective correctional programs. The District Attorney’s office is burdened with both efficiently running criminal defendants through the court system, and reconciling that objective with corrections programs that are ill-equipped to manage the increasing numbers of criminals. Ultimately, the lack of corrections resources negatively impacts the District Attorney’s office’s ability to seek justice. The District Attorney’s office must work closer than ever

with our criminal justice partners to insure the most efficient and effective criminal justice results.

Training of Senior Level Prosecutors

The ability of the District Attorney's Office to most effectively prosecute the cases of highest priority (violent crime, sexual predators, drug dealers) has been hampered by salary structure restrictions leading to a loss of highly trained prosecutors to a competitive market. Maintaining a level of job satisfaction by promoting from within the office has led to less experienced prosecutors handling our most important cases. The District Attorney's Office strategic planning must include an effort to encourage every available training effort to our less experienced prosecutors to assure that cases are handled by qualified staff.

Employee incentive programs

Increased coordination and involvement in joint law enforcement and criminal justice related programs has forced reallocation of office resources causing an increase in stress levels and burdens on prosecutors and staff handling the bulk of the felony caseload. Turnover rates caused by this added stress and inability to compensate the prosecutors at a competitive level have caused the Office to decrease efficiency due to caseload transition, increasing supervision of less experienced prosecutors, and a higher percentage of cases requiring multiple prosecutors to be involved to assure expected performance levels are met. Employee incentives and other programmatic responses which increase job satisfaction and compensate for competitive salary deficiencies will assist in decreasing turn over, and returning experience levels to that which is necessary to keep the community safe.

Increasing Mandates to Provide Services to Victims

Victim rights legislation continues to expand the role of district attorney's offices across the State of Colorado. In the 1990s, Colorado passed the Victim's Rights Amendment to the Colorado Constitution, as well as enabling legislation. As late as 2006, additional legislation was passed in the area of victim rights. This ever expanding field of victim notification, consultation, and input, continues to impact local prosecutors' offices. Prosecutors are required to spend more time, energy, and resources to comply with the various components of victim's rights. More is required of prosecutors on this front, with absolutely little or no financial support from the State.

Technological advances and accompanying issues

Over the past two years the District Attorney's Office has made a concerted effort to move onto the cutting edge of courtroom technology. This has involved working with the County IT department to install network connections in all courtrooms and to equip all attorneys with laptop computers that can easily be taken into court. It has also involved encouraging attorneys and paralegals to become as proficient as possible at using technology in the courtroom to more effectively convey information and arguments to judges and juries. These advances have led to complications however. For example, no one in the Office is adequately proficient at editing DVD's to manage what information is and is not presented in court. We need to continue to stay ahead of the curve and proficient at using technology

as effectively as possible. Similarly, paperless filing is coming soon and the Office needs to be able to handle that technologically. There are new case management systems available that will facilitate handling entire criminal prosecution digitally rather than with paper; these systems need to be researched and ultimately acquired. In the end all of these technological issues allow the District Attorney's Office to prosecute more cases more effectively and efficiently, thereby making much better use of taxpayer resources.

Methamphetamine related issues

Mesa County's continuing methamphetamine epidemic poses huge difficulties for the District Attorney's Office and the entire community. Felony cases filed continue to climb and this is driven far more by methamphetamine than by population growth (although growth is certainly a significant contributor).

Methamphetamine's impact goes well beyond just drug possession and/ or distribution cases. Many property crimes such as burglary, theft, Robbery and check fraud are actually driven by the offender's addiction to methamphetamine. Additionally many violent and sexual crimes are committed largely because the offender is under the influence of methamphetamine. The District Attorney's Office believes that the only way to effectively fight methamphetamine is through a three pronged approach involving aggressive prosecution of dealers, innovative treatment for addicts and early intervention with children for prevention.

HUMAN SERVICES

At a high level, DHS services are always heavily influenced by: changes in the economy; population growth; and population demographics.

In the case of the economy, which heavily influences our work and workload, the prediction is for continued bad economic situation for the next two years. Attached is our most recent "Dashboard" report which tracks some of these upward trends. To cite a few markers here, unemployment in March 2008 was 3.9% -- lower than the state's overall rate; by March 2009, it had risen to 8.2% in Mesa County, exceeding the state. People seeking services monthly at the Workforce Center have doubled in a year. Food Assistance applications are up 72% over a year ago; and other forms of assistance see striking increases over a year ago as well.

We predict the upward trajectories in applications will continue into the next two years, driving many more clients through our doors and increasing our workload dramatically over 2006-2007 time period. Increase in applications will drive ongoing caseloads up as well.

As a response to the economic downturn, the Federal stimulus programs are widening the eligibility for Medicaid benefits, and this will bring newly eligible groups of Mesa County residents through our doors to apply, further stressing our ability to perform our work to meet community demand and state and federal timeliness requirements.

Population growth also increases our workload, as, according to the general estimates (2000), between 11% and 12% of the population in Mesa County lives below the Federal Poverty Level, and perhaps 20%-25% of households live below the Family Economic Self Sufficiency Standard. Families, households, and individuals in either of these categories are more likely to apply for Self Sufficiency Assistance programs at DHS, so as general population grows, so will the numbers or residents in these categories. Economic downturn, noted above, will just increase these percentages for a period of time.

Population demographics also play a role. As we continue to be a retirement destination, the percentage of the population over 65 will drive the need for services both in the community and from our Adult Services Division.

We are watching Child Welfare and Child Protection numbers in the context of the worsening economy to see if there are any impacts. At present, numbers of referrals have crept up over time, but we do not see dramatic increases, thankfully, that we see in other services.

Adult Services

Increasing senior population, the loss of predicted retirement income (due to the economy), plus the shortage of medical and other supportive services, are predicted to continue to put pressure on our Adult Services Division. According to DHS data adult protection referrals show incidents of financial exploitation of the elderly are on the rise.

Population Growth

Seniors between the ages, 65-80 is the fastest growing population. By the year 2030 seniors within this age group will be one in five. (National Association of Area Agencies on Aging-estimates). Colorado has the seventh fastest growing aging population in the U.S. In the year 2010, there will be more than 770,000 seniors age 60 and over in Colorado. From the years 2000 - 2010, the numbers of these seniors will increase 39%. (Retrieved from 4/7/09, http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/aas/commissiononaging_index.htm). As a retirement destination, we can expect that this population will continue to grow in Mesa County, driving the need for Adult Services. Increasing elder population, and with more seniors living longer and needing long term care services, our caseload will continue to grow steadily.

Behavioral Facility Shortage

Resources to provide safe living environments for elderly and mentally ill remain limited (due to poor Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement rates). Therefore when DHS receives referrals for long term care services that require significant oversight and protection it makes it difficult to meet the needs of these clients. This puts additional pressure on our Adult Protective Services to meet the needs of this “at risk” population. As the elderly population grows, this sub-group will continue to grow apace.

Physician Shortage and barrier to accessing services

There continues to be a shortage of physicians in the area, which impacts adults’ ability to access services. Referrals for long term care services that do not have a physician are

unable to qualify for Home and Community Based Services programs and consequently remain unsafe in their homes and become potential Adult Protective Services clients, putting yet more pressure on our Adult Services team.

Medicare Part D prescription barriers for clients

Medicare part D program access is continually changing and difficult to manage. This process changes annually and clients have difficulty managing the changes. Thus we have to train staff to become knowledgeable in assessing Medicare part D options and provide another layer of assistance to our clients that is not covered under our current State contract.

Depleting resources causes need for Medicaid long term care assistance

As a direct result of the economic crisis some seniors with retirement funds are losing money fast. This will bring a new population of previously-ineligible seniors into our system to apply for and access Medicaid services.

Volunteer needs increasing

As our senior population continues to increase, cost of service needs will continue to rise and the need for volunteers to meet the needs of seniors will be necessary to augment scarce or limited fee-for-service or Medicaid services mentioned above. We have a small volunteer service now, but the population growth without commensurate increase in the service network will require us to grow this component considerably.

Need for creative alternatives need future assistance

As all of the above described changes have been evolving DHS and community partners have come together to develop a community initiated program that is not Medicaid or government driven. It is called Home Connections. Home Connections is an interagency collaboration, and provides minimal services to seniors and disabled adults to help them to remain independent and in their homes for as long as possible. The goal of this program is to prolong or stop the need for formal and costly long term care services. In an effort to save money this program has survived off of grants that limit the expansion efforts. To assist more adults and expand this program there is a need for more formal funding for the future of Home Connections.

Self-Sufficiency

In this area, DHS services are influenced dramatically and immediately by changes in the economy (on top of general population growth, the effects of which are noted above). Eligibility services, through which all applications for the many Self Sufficiency Assistance programs flow, is the first to feel the pressure, with ongoing case management of an increasing number of qualified recipients following by several months. In the area of the front line Eligibility Determination services, DHS is still at 2006 staffing levels, and while we have employed a number of creative internal solutions to manage this increasing workload with existing resources, we will need to request or seek additional resources if demand continues to increase as predicted (through 2010 at least, based on economic and other factors) and outpaces our ability to solve through internal means. State and federal assistance programs administered by the Mesa County Department of Human Services all

have time deadlines for eligibility determinations, so inability to process workload pushes Mesa County further out of compliance, while denying needed services to Mesa County residents struggling to stay economically afloat.

Meeting Basic Physiological and Personal Needs

The need for safe and nutritious food

- ✓ While *ongoing caseloads* have been slowly increasing, *applications* for assistance in many programs including Food Assistance, Family Medicaid, and Colorado Works are easily 1.5 to 2 times a year ago. The economic downturn in Mesa County is predicted to last another 18-24 months, and this will continue to drive these numbers higher and higher month after month.
- ✓ Colorado emphasis on increasing Food Assistance participation. In November 2008, USDA/FNS released a report on Food Assistance Program Participation. Nationally, 67% of those eligible for Food Assistance are participating in the program. Colorado lags behind that average, with only 54% participating, ranking 47th among the 50 State for percentage of eligible individuals accessing the program. The State of Colorado is placing new and heavy emphasis on outreach and additional enrollment, and this will further increase the monthly application rate beyond the increases based on the economic climate alone.
- ✓ Hunger/Food Insecurity is increasing in Mesa County. In addition to the factors cited above, evidence from the school district is that more and more families qualify for free/reduced cost lunches, which is calculated on the Federal Poverty Level. Food banks and pantries are experiencing higher and higher use monthly.

The need for adequate shelter

The need for adequate shelter continues to be a problem in Mesa County. While it has been a community problem for several years, the economic downturn has exacerbated it. Homeward Bound- Shelter census is well over capacity. Wait lists for Grand Junction housing authority vouchers and assistance are months or years long.

The need to access a basic level of subsistence

- ✓ Applications for assistance have continued to increase, and historically, 47% are ultimately found eligible for assistance, thereby increasing our ongoing case management burden. If this percentage increases on top of increase in applications, the stress on our *ongoing* (as opposed to *intake*) case management resources will also need to be addressed. (Source: CBMS reporting tool, COGNOS)
- ✓ Child Support caseloads remain relatively stable. However, major layoffs will result in more non-custodial parents seeking redeterminations of their child support payments. We are already seeing a spike in redetermination requests, which requests involve the same amount of work as new applications.

- ✓ Local economy has slowed, following a nation-wide trend. Adding to the local impact is the significant reduction in employment opportunities in the energy and mining industries.
- ✓ Unemployment Rate on an uphill climb.

Family Economic Self-Sufficiency

- ✓ This document is updated by Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute only once every three years, so the 2008 data is most current. This information shows that 20%-25% of Mesa County households fell below the Family Economic Self Sufficiency Standard. Since that data was developed, the economic downturn will have pushed many more households below the self sufficiency level, meaning demand for support programs offered by the Department of Human Services will grow dramatically.
- ✓ Federal Stimulus program expansions 2009 monthly 100% FPL income: HH of 2= \$1214, HH of 3= \$1526, HH of 4= \$1838, HH of 5= \$2149.

Security and Protection

Security of health (access to basic health care)

- ✓ Applications for Family and Children's Medicaid continues to increase significantly (Source: CBMS reporting tool, COGNOS)
- ✓ Ongoing Medicaid caseloads are showing slight growth
- ✓ Shortage of doctors and medical care providers has created limited access to health care in our local community.
- ✓ Aging population is increasing need for health care services.
- ✓ The increase in unemployment has led to a decrease in the number of individuals covered by private insurances, which in turn leads to increases in the number of applications for Medicaid.
- ✓ Colorado plans to expand eligibility for Medicaid to new categories of potential participants beginning in 2010 and continuing to add categories through 2011.

Child Welfare

Security and Protection

Protection from Abuse and Neglect

Referrals for child protection are increasing. We anticipate the economic down turn will create additional family stress which will very likely result in a sustained increase in referrals.

Impacts of substance abuse in the community continue to impact families, children and youth. Recommendations generated from the "Governor's Child Welfare Action

Committee,” as well as new legislative mandates will increase workload and service demands.

The Department is in the first year of a multi-year Child Welfare review and re-orienting project which will change the way we do business across the entire Child Welfare system.

Workforce Center

What are noted below are primarily the drivers for the employment related services at the Workforce Center. Many of the drivers noted in the Self Sufficiency Division are also a part of our program drivers at the Workforce Center. Yet to be determined for this year will be the activities of the Recovery Act training/employment activities and their impact on the economic condition of the citizens of Mesa County. Once the performance indicators are known, a separate tracking process will be established to determine the effectiveness of these efforts.

Economic Indicators

The Unemployment Rate for the last year has increased from 3.9%, February, '08 to 8.2% in March of '09. This has been a dramatic increase for the last four months; it is anticipated that this rate will continue to increase, perhaps topping out at 10%. (Colorado Dept. of Labor, Labor Market Information)

The number of new Unemployment Insurance claim filings has increased from 127, March, '08 to 1012, March '09. This increase is indicative of the overall downturn in the economy and provides perhaps the most revealing snapshot of the unemployment picture. (JobLink system, Colorado Department of Labor)

Total number of registrants; percent that are disabled; average wage at placement; age, ethnic, education, and sex will be tracked to determine the demographic make-up of our workforce. (JobLink report, Colorado Dept. of Labor)

Of the 14,939 registrants at the Workforce Center on 4/7/'09, 7,537 are recipients of unemployment insurance payments – this 50% reflects the impact of the recent layoffs from major employers in the community, primarily energy and energy related companies.

A new indicator that we will be tracking this coming year is the average length of stay on Unemployment Insurance. Prior to this recent downturn the average length of stay on UI was 14 weeks in Mesa County compared to 19 weeks for the state. (Colorado Department of Labor, Labor Standards Division)

An additional indicator that we will be monitoring this coming year will be the average wages for all industries compared to industries that are in a lay off situation to determine what effect the loss of that industries income has to the overall wage picture for the county fiscal base. For example, the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages report for Labor Market Information for the 3rd Qtr.'08 shows that the average wages for Mesa County was

\$1447/wk for mining/energy sector compared to \$848/wk for healthcare compared to any other sector. This measure will allow us to access the fiscal impact to lost wages and industries.

We will also monitor the loss or growth in the labor force for the county. Tracking it monthly to determine whether we are losing our workforce base.(Colorado Department of Labor, Labor Market Information)

Another major indicator is the total number of jobs listed with the Workforce Center on any given day compared to the same day a year ago. On 4/7/09 there were 109 jobs listed with the WFC compared to 1769 the same day a year ago.(Job Link system, Department of Labor) This allows us to monitor the fiscal health of the employer base and whether they are filling existing jobs or creating new jobs.

Of special note is the tracking of the older worker population as it relates to their return to the workforce due to the increasing need to supplement diminishing retirement accounts as well as secure a stable source of health care insurance. Their percent of the overall workforce will be tracked. (Labor Market Information, Dept. of Labor)

Training Opportunities

The total number of individuals involved in training related activities is captured on a monthly basis; both those that are involved in re-training as well as those that are enrolled in first time training. Training is provided in high demand occupational fields that are determined by sector analysis of the industry base in the area. Currently the highest demand trainings are in the health care areas as well as training for maintenance. Availability of training is dependent upon fiscal allocations and course availability.(WIA activity report, JobLink system, Dept. of Labor)

Number of OJTs, Work Experiences, and Internships will be monitored as opportunities for participants to learn skills on the job and then secure full time permanent employment. The number of these training opportunities that lead to permanent employment will be noted; and emphasis will be placed on increasing the average wage at placement for those involved in training. (WIA activity report, JobLink System, Dept. of Labor)

Support Services

Caseloads in Child Care have remained fairly steady this last year, however applications for assistance have increased rapidly driven by the increased need for families to have two incomes due to the loss of higher paying jobs. (CBMS reporting tool, COGNOS)

Number of emergency housing requests will be monitored as an indicator of the condition of our recipient's fiscal situations.

Other Factors

As the economic downturn continues, the stresses on DHS services and resources are already noted. But, DHS services are only part of the continuum of care, and an increasing number of residents needing assistance or help indicate they do not know what help is

available nor where they might seek it. 211 calls are increasing dramatically over a year ago, and this increase is expected to increase consistently into the future as more help is needed, and the 211 resource becomes more well known as the single point of entry.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Citizen Preparedness

As a vital community to Western Colorado, citizen complacency continues even as hazards present themselves. A declining economy, changes in direction from the Federal government, and decreased budgets only allow for minimal education opportunities.

Continuing and changing hazards

The oil and gas industry continues to operate in Mesa County. This presents several challenges to public safety including changing response areas and the continued potential for hazardous materials responses. With the fluctuation of activity, difficulties rise in capability planning. The possibility of oil shale exploration and development is an additional hazard requiring planning, mitigation, response, and recovery from events.

Uncertainty in Homeland Security Funding filtered through the State

Issues of funding and stability regarding Emergency Management continue at the Federal level. Costs to local programs continue to increase, including the transition to 800 MHz radio communications, yet funding for emergency management programs provided by Federal and State agencies is uncertain in the current economy and new political agendas. It is unclear what new mandatory, unfunded initiatives will be required by Homeland Security

Emergency Medical Services

Fire and EMS agencies continue to respond to increasing demands for staffing and increasing levels of service to the public. Continued growth in Mesa County and continued annexations affect many departments ability to provide service.

The number of special events requiring EMS standby services are increasing countywide. Many of these events are held in areas that rely solely on volunteers to provide the service. Currently no "County" standards exist that determines which events require standby services and at what level.

Medical Director services are mandated by the State for all practicing EMT's. The costs to provide this service continue to increase annually.

FACILITIES AND PARKS

Population Growth and Urbanization of Mesa County

This is an important factor for Facilities, Parks and Fairgrounds. The expectation of parks, open space, convenient facilities for public business and multi-purpose Fairgrounds are all impacted by population growth and urbanization.

Increased Demand For Open Space & Recreational Opportunities

As growth in the Valley continues and existing open space is developed, demands by the public for “easy to access” recreational opportunities will also increase. This impact on the County may be financial resources, partnerships and/or other. This could include (but is not limited to) existing/new park development, public sites, trails, open space and/or recreational centers. The County’s role in accomplishing this (incorporated as well as unincorporated areas) needs to be clarified. The use and “reuse” of the Mesa County Fairgrounds property is also an important factor in this discussion as a prime piece of property in the unincorporated yet, “urbanized” area.

Master Plan Implementation

With completion of the Facility Master Plan, new buildings, program consolidations, sale of county property and potential partnerships are all important strategies that need to be incorporated in the Updated County Strategic Plan. Locating services that are convenient to the public, with reasonable drive times is also critical **as is** recognition/acceptance of new ways for Mesa County employees to conduct business on behalf of their respective departments that minimizes **more** office construction to house additional employees or programs.

FINANCE

The Finance Department’s budget and accounting goals are to account for and control allocations authorized by the Board of County Commissioner’s values. A variance in the economic growth of the County requires program effectiveness/efficiency evaluations, budget analysis, and service delivery adjustments. The following are examples of factors driving the Finance Departments workload.

Budget Development

Mesa County continues to experience boom and bust cycles related to natural resources exploration. One indicator of this cycle is sales tax which reflected double digit increases from 2005 through 2007. 2008 ended with a marginal 1.93%. In addition, there was a 40% decline in the number of building permits from 2007 to 2008. These rapid swings in key indicators challenge the Finance department to analyze revenues and expenditures, anticipate changing economic conditions by gathering various sources of data, and report these findings to Administration for program adjustments

Performance Management

In order to achieve performance management, the Finance Department is meeting with each individual department in an attempt to develop good performance measures. With the implementation of Budgeting for Outcomes, which addresses the question “Are we doing the right thing”, the next logical question is “Are we doing it well”. The development of performance measures will tell us if the resources we are dedicating to each program/offer make a difference in achieving the results desired.

Tabor

The Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR) continues to demand resources from the Finance Department. TABOR restricts the growth of property tax, mill levy, overall revenue collection, and debt issuance. Each year calculations for each restriction must be made, if applicable. If there is an over-collection or revenues, mill levy certifications are adjusted in the year following determination. Because the amendment is ambiguous and subject to interpretation, research and opinions are often sought from our outside experts. Any further attempts to persuade County voters to appeal the amendment require additional staff time.

Government Accounting Standards

The County adheres to the accounting standards issued by the Government Accounting Standards Board thereby allowing comparison of financial position to other counties and bond ratings that enable the County to issue debt. Any changes issued by the Government Accounting Standards Board require research and compliance. Day-to-day recording of financial information requires accuracy and review.

Fair Labor Standards Act

The Finance Department is responsible for the accurate calculation of payroll and the resulting payment to County employees, federal and state agencies, and numerous vendors. All payments must comply with strict standards and county policies.

Policy Development

Environmental changes may lead to changes in operating policies. Factors such as IRS guidelines, economic conditions, and County leadership drive policy changes. The finance department is involved in developing compliance policies and operational policies.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Legislation

With a new president and passage of various stimulus packages, new HR laws and regulations are coming into affect that greatly impact HR. Training and education for HR will be essential to stay on top of new legislation. Depending on the administrative requirements of the laws, maintaining HR’s current level of service may be jeopardized as current FTEs will need to be redirected to address these new needs.

Environment

The economy plays a significant role in HR's ability to recruit and retain quality talent. The current economic situation requires a more conservative approach to these strategies while being poised to proactively react when the situation improves. Balancing compensation and benefit strategies will be of utmost importance during this difficult economic period.

This is the first time, three generations are working together. Each generation brings their set of strengths and philosophies to the workforce. Their priorities are different and HR has to balance meeting those varied needs with creating and maintaining a productive work environment that fits for everyone.

Affordable housing continues to be a challenge for Mesa County.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

I.T. is a service organization within the County, providing technology resources and functionality to county departments as these departments conduct business in pursuit of their mission and vision.

Mobile computing

County departments are working on the go. The demand for services across the county, such as law enforcement and child protection increase the demand for mobile computing service that is fast, available, reliable and secure. This demand drives the need for advanced technology in the County data centers, as well as wireless communications strategies and technologies to adequately support the mobile computing needs of County personnel.

Digital imaging, retention, and storage

Moving from physical data storage, such as paper or microfilm, to digital image and retrieval drives increased needs for data storage, backup, archival and retrieval capabilities. Offsite data retention and disaster recovery abilities become more acute as the physical media disappears and the reliance on digital information increases. Expanded, secure and timely access to electronic data becomes more critical as well, driving the need for increased access and availability of networking services, both inside and outside of county facilities. As the digital environment evolves the users of this technology must also evolve utilizing it to its full extent by reducing the reproduction of electronic documents and reducing duplicate of storing physical copies.

New automation initiatives

Technology and automation tools change frequently. Departments and County agencies are driven to increase efficiency, provide additional or new functionality, or they may be working with antiquated and unsustainable tools. Requests for new tools, such as new application software or hardware tools, usually drive numerous changes in the I.T. infrastructure and equipment. New servers, additional storage space, specialized hardware,

support personnel, and physical environment needs (heating/cooling, power, floor space, etc.) may all be affected by new automation initiatives.

Expanded usage of technology tools and functionality

As automation and tools available to staff are used more effectively and fully, this typically drives the need for more data processing power (both on the desktop and in the data center), additional data storage, backup, archival and retrieval capabilities, and increased availability of systems and functions outside of the traditional workday schedule and outside of traditional work venues while maintaining data security and integrity.

Legal issues

Laws and regulations concerning data retention, open access, e-discovery, and acceptable use continue to change and evolve. Regulations and requirements dictate longer data retention periods, easy access for open records and e-discovery, and greater policing of acceptable use; driving the need for more and more electronic storage space, processing power, and management systems to accommodate these demands.

Outside influences, dictates and mandates

The County works with many external agencies and groups. In addition, County departments and agencies are subject to state and federal laws, rules and regulations. Any of these connections to outside agencies and groups may generate at any time new technology requirements or demands. New connectivity paths, mandated applications, new or changed business processes, electronic security measures, hardware and software requirements are all drivers that affect I.T. operations. Sometimes these needs and/or changes are known in advance and may be worked into the existing plans and workloads; often times these needs and/or changes are unexpected, unanticipated, and/or not communicated to I.T. by the affected department or agency.

Geographic Information System

Our geographic information system integrates hardware, software, people and data capturing, managing, analyzing, and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information. GIS allows us to view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize data in ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends in the form of maps, reports, and charts. GIS answer questions and solve problems by looking at data in ways that are quickly viewed, understood and easily shared. Geography plays a role in nearly every decision we make. Choosing sites, targeting programs, planning development, determining valuations, responding to emergencies, or redrawing country boundaries—all of these problems involve questions of geography.

GIS was most often associated with a map. A map, however, is only one way you can work with geographic data in a GIS. GIS in our County has become the foundation for distributing information and data for both internally and external decision makers with online mapping tools.

WEB and WEB Applications

Why does the County have a WEB site and utilize WEB applications? In the world today for an organization to be credible they must have a WEB site and utilize the latest interactive

technologies. The County is no different. The WEB has also become the vehicle for delivering, disseminating and collecting information and data to both internal and external customers for all departments within the County. It is used for enrollment, recruitment, notification, enforcement training, and informing a mass population of our local and extended community. Our WEB is used as the marketing, and information pipeline to everyone everywhere. Today every application and vender has WEB presence as a requirement for their product functionality. The WEB has made 24/7 County accessibility not only available, but an expectation and requirement of our citizens. Moving forward our WEB accessibility and applications will not only continue to grow there will be an increasing requirement to grow with the ever expanding mobile computing environment.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Community Growth – Development Applications

The community is growing at a steady rate of 2 - 2-1/2 % per year. Although approximately 1700 development applications have been submitted annually for several years, because of the recent economic down turn we are seeing a decline in development applications and building permits. State statute and local regulations require extensive review of each application. Key aspects of maintaining a high level of review are continual evaluation and updating of the Land Development Code, development standards, review processes, and forms. Utilizing techniques such as exit surveys to discover communication issues that may exist for the parties involved will allow improvements to be made wherever required. Administration of the Transportation Impact Fee program and Road Access Policy has been transferred to the Department from RTPO.

Community Growth – Implementation of the Mesa County Master Plan

As the population increases and the need to provide adequate housing, employment, health, community facilities, and commercial goods continues to grow, it is essential to implement the vision for growth in the community. This vision is provided through the County's Master Plan. State statutes require the Planning Commission to adopt the Plan. Recent legislation clarifies the intent of County Master Plans as advisory documents that can provide more detailed guidance through adoption in regulatory documents. Implementation of recently adopted plans is a high priority of the Board of County Commissioners (Whitewater, Clifton/Fruitvale, Loma and Gateway). Among the highest priorities are: implementing the redevelopment plan for "Old Town Clifton", initiation of neighborhood cleanup assistance, annexation issues, Code enforcement, creation of infrastructure, implementation of the Whitewater Community design guidelines, mixed use zoning district standards, model business park standards, and coordinated capital improvements projects. Other means of implementing the Master Plan include Land Development Code amendments, transportation improvements, sewer service plans,

purchase and transfer of development rights, and a host of other programs coordinated with municipal and private partners.

The Grand Junction/Mesa County Comprehensive Plan is anticipated to be adopted in late 2009. The Plan will drive implementation items for the urban area for the next few years (e.g....Persigo Agreement, Land Development Code amendments, Community Separator design guidelines, etc.)

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement has been specifically identified in Mesa County's community survey as an area of significant interest. The capacity for Code Enforcement has not significantly increased over the last two years. The number of complaints about land use continues to increase with the current complaints being up by 20% over a comparable 2008 timeframe. The Code Enforcement program is limited by workloads which far exceed available staff and a cumbersome, time intensive enforcement process. Code enforcement plays an important role in neighborhood revitalization and economic vitality and is an essential part of the implementation of the Clifton/Fruitvale Community Plan. Highly visible corridors and entryways are a priority.

Coordination & Implementation-Intergovernmental Agreements

Intergovernmental coordination is essential to good planning and avoiding duplication of efforts and costs. The County has entered into a number of such agreements with Grand Junction, Fruita, Palisade, federal agencies, and local utility providers - including the Persigo Agreement, Transfer of Development Rights program, and the Buffer/Community Separators. Joint planning efforts with the various partners include participation in the Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan process; working with each municipality on implementation of the Urban Residential Reserve zone district; assistance with a DeBeque Comprehensive Plan (under discussion) and review and update of the 1984 IGA with Palisade. The necessity exists to pursue annexation agreements with Fruita, Palisade, Collbran and DeBeque. The County is a cooperating agency on the Grand Junction BLM Resource Management Plan.

Energy

Mesa County contains significant natural resources used in the development of energy for Colorado and the United States. These resources include natural gas, oil, oil shale, uranium, coal and a variety of renewable energy resources such as wind, solar, geothermal and ethanol. Development of these resources significantly impacts the community in terms of the economy, environment, housing, traffic, noise, scenic views, watersheds and wildlife. Growth of the energy industry..... particularly natural gas, has been significant over the past several years. Although the industry is in a current downturn, it is anticipated to re-emerge as a significant growth factor. Short and long-term impacts to the community need to be

addressed as a major part of the community's strategic and comprehensive planning process. The first phases of the Energy Master Plan should be completed in early 2009. Policies need to be developed and adopted by the Board of Commissioners to implement the Plan's recommendations. Subsequent phases of the Energy Master Plan will address renewable forms of energy. New Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission rules could impact the Department and may require Memoranda of Understanding and evaluation of application processes.

Economy

Mesa County is expected to continue to grow. The success of the community is directly tied to its economic growth. A strong, thriving economy allows the community to continue to grow, providing a diversity of jobs with a living wage, health benefits, and an opportunity for our children to remain within Mesa County if they choose. Although the private sector leads the way in the provision of a diversity of well paying jobs, the role of government is to provide a framework for that effort through a vision of community growth. Such a vision needs to provide sufficient amount of appropriately located areas for industrial, commercial and residential development, timely provision of infrastructure, a well run governmental entity, and a regulatory environment which facilitates growth while providing for a safe well planned and developed community. Mesa County needs to continue to support the Grand Junction Economic Partnership, the Business Incubator, the Enterprise Zone, and when appropriate, participate in the extension of infrastructure. The County's access to Community Development Block Grant funding also provides an essential tool for economic development within the community.

Assistance to the Public

Customer service in the form of data requests, addressing, and information expectations is extensive. Continued growth within the community will increase the demand to provide accurate, timely and friendly assistance to the public and other organizations.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The Public Health Act of 2008

This historic legislation, signed into law in 2008, directs the state board of health to ensure the development and implementation of a comprehensive, statewide public health improvement plan; establish a set of core public health services to be provided statewide; establish standards for public health services and qualifications for local public health directors and medical officers; and determine the basis for the allocation of state moneys to local public health agencies.

In 2010, Mesa County Health Department is mandated to assess the health needs of Mesa County and develop a local public health improvement plan that is in alignment with the state plan; provide or arrange for the provision of core public health services; and meet the

established standards and qualifications for services and personnel. In the long term, this quality improvement effort will improve public health services but in the short term will require a tremendous effort.

At the same time, Mesa County Health Department has begun to pursue public health accreditation, a 3-4 year quality improvement process, which will dovetail with improvement mandated by the Public Health Act of 2008.

Air Quality

Air quality in the Grand Valley continues to decline. The ambient quality monitoring system (AQMS) in Mesa County has recorded exceedances of the 24-hour PM10 national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) of 150 µg/m³ during high-wind dust events in 2005, 2006, 2007 and very nearly in 2008 (value of 149 was recorded). The State of Colorado Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) and US EPA have indicated that they are concerned with these exceedances and that there is a potential for the Grand Valley Air shed to be designated a non-attainment area for PM10 if these high values persist. A non-attainment designation for the Air shed would mean more involvement of the federal and state government in our air program, more stringent and enforceable dust control programs for the Cities, County and industrial sources, and a negative stigma for our community as these designations are made very public.

Cascading Effects of Downturn in Economy

The MCHD federal, state, county funding sources, as well as private foundation sources, are subjected to selective funding prioritization as policy makers struggle to balance their budgets in the current economy. While healthcare and public health remains a national priority, the MCHD is challenged to maintain quality services at existing FTE levels as funding to some programs continue to expand and others are reduced. This is an opportunity for MCHD focus on core services; closely examine our workflow processes to assure that the public health mission is fulfilled during this downturn in the economy. Nationally, stimulus funding has been allocated to public health although the specific opportunities to Mesa County have not yet been released.

- The unknown effect of TABOR on future budgets as the economy recovers complicates our ability to forecast what our budget will be for developing performance measures as part of the Mesa County budgeting for outcomes.
- Federally supported program funding is shifting:
 - Family Planning and WIC services continue to receive expansion funding to serve the low-income population.
 - Public health Emergency Preparedness funding has decreased
 - Commodity Supplemental Foods and The Emergency Food Assistance Program will receiving additional food for distribution but NOT associated administrative budget increases.
- An increase in unemployment is already leading to an higher use of MCHD services that target low-income and uninsured populations:

- The Commodity Supplemental Foods Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program has experienced an increase, not seen for many years in qualifying clients that want to participate in the program.
- Statewide WIC has experienced a 9% increase in clients. Mesa County is currently up 4% but is anticipated to increase to the state level in the coming months.

Population growth and changing demographics of Mesa County

Population growth and the aging population in Mesa County continue to impact all services of MCHD. Grant funding for major programs such as WIC and family planning may or may not increase proportionately to the increased service requirement. Examples include:

- Staff involvement in responding to public health problems such investigation of sexually transmitted disease.
- Data collection and analysis related to monitoring environmental conditions, such as air quality.
- Increases in the number of restaurants and special events create an increased need for environmental health inspectors.
- An increase in population combined with appropriate disease surveillance results in more disease investigation and control measures by epidemiologists and nursing staff.
- As the number of clients and patients grows, the workload of the support staff grows in proportion. We see an increase in demand for vital statistics, billing, and other reporting requirements.
- Increased need for nurses to provide clinical services and home visits.

Rising healthcare costs impact on public health services

We live in a time when medical knowledge and technology are being used in amazing ways to help us live longer and better lives. However, the cost of health care continues to rise at an alarming rate. An aging population, the growing number of uninsured, inflation, advancements in medical technology, costly medications, government regulations and other factors contribute to the escalating cost of health care. Mesa County Health Department clinical costs, as part of the health care in Mesa County are also impacted: the rising cost of vaccine and other pharmaceuticals used in the public health clinics outpace our ability to recover costs by the fees we charge. It remains a challenge to balance county's ability to pay employees and the need for salaries to be competitive with the healthcare industry.

Zoonotic diseases

Diseases transmitted to man from animals, are endemic to Western Colorado wildlife and for a variety of reasons will be a major concern. Diseases such as West Nile virus, plague, hantavirus, tularemia, and rabies are exacerbated by urban encroachment into the habitats of animals that carry these diseases.

Regional Opportunities/Responsibilities

As a major hub between Denver and Salt Lake City, Mesa County is seen as a leader in Western Colorado. Also, disease and air quality don't stop at the county lines making it essential that we collaborate with neighboring counties. MCHD has accepted the role as a regional leader.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Economic environment

When the economy is doing poorly, advertising is one of the first things companies cut. This has led to some significant challenges for both of Mesa County's newspapers, which in turn affects the county government in its outreach efforts. The decrease in the newspapers' advertising revenues has led to a number of changes in how they publish their papers; including limiting the amount of space they give to community news and events. One newspaper has reduced the number of days it publishes each week from five to three. The other paper has stopped publishing things like its "day planner" and school lunch schedules. The television and radio stations are adversely affected as well, and are less likely to give away free or "earned media" spots (public service announcements, community advisories/calendars, etc). This can present challenges to county departments that don't have significant advertising budgets, and are accustomed to publicizing their programs, services, events or opportunities to residents for free (or at a significantly reduced non-profit or government rate).

Yellow Journalism

As the media outlets survive the battle for advertising dollars, there will be a temptation to sensationalize news stories to snag readers'/viewers'/listeners' attention. The county may see an increase in negative news coverage, and is already receiving many requests under the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA).

Media Environment

The local media environment is changing in other ways that affect county departments and their PR efforts. Mesa County has a lot of media outlets for a relatively small community. Residents no longer get all their news from the one local daily newspaper. Outreach efforts need to include a large number of publications and broadcasters. Many citizens now get their news and information via the Internet—there is a huge number of websites that they can choose from, which makes it even more difficult to reach a large number of people at one time through any one avenue. Outreach efforts need to be broader and more comprehensive than before. This does, however, make the Mesa County website (www.mesacounty.us) an even more important tool for disseminating information. County residents expect to be able to access many services and a wide variety of information at the

touch of a button. Mesa County’s government access cable channel still reaches close to half of the people in the county (which is quite good considering the proliferation of media outlets), but as dish and satellite service becomes more popular, this may no longer be the case.

Skepticism/distrust of government

As residents watch the national economic troubles, and feel the local effects, many may blame the government. Whether it is the federal, state, or local government that they perceive as the culprit, they may eye any government entity with disdain or mistrust. In this environment, we will need to work harder to be open, transparent, efficient and effective—and to showcase for residents what we’re doing to help, and that we’re not hiding anything. This may also result in increase CORA requests.

Increased pace

County departments and elected leaders are doing more than ever, which requires more time and attention from the PR Director and Public Information Officers.

Employee turnover

This may be less of an issue now with the economy (as many employees may prefer to stay in their jobs nowadays)—but in recent years, the county had many new employees, creating challenges for internal communication. We used to take for granted that all employees were aware of certain pieces of information (or knew where to find them—e.g. Mesawave), and that may no longer be true. Stronger efforts may be needed to make sure employees know what’s going on within the organization, and have the information they need to do their jobs well (and to be helpful to citizens).

Population growth

New people moving here need to be “introduced” to Mesa County and its programs and services. While the county generally has a good reputation with residents, new folks are a blank slate, which requires a different communication strategy. You have to make more of an effort with people who are not already familiar with the organization, and you have to start from the beginning. With more people to reach than ever, we don’t want the growth to negatively impact our ability to get information out to residents (both old and new).

PUBLIC WORKS

Building

Current & Future Economic Conditions

With the current downturn of the national and local economy and the uncertainty of future economic conditions, added demands are placed on county divisions to balance operating costs with available revenues, without significant decreases in service levels. This has increased the demands for efficiency measures such as job sharing and cross training of current employees. In addition, Federal and State legislation continues to burden local regulatory agencies with added program responsibilities, without the funding to off-set the associated program costs, an added factor in budget considerations.

Fleet

Grand Valley Transit System

Since Mesa County Fleet provides maintenance for the Grand Valley Transit System (GVT), changes to the GVT will have impacts to future decisions for fleet maintenance operations and support functions.

Equipment Repair

Current and future economic conditions (locally and nationally) and revised purchasing policies may have a possible long term effect on Mesa County Fleet. This could decrease or modify service levels, vehicle and equipment replacement timing and possibly reduced availability.

Alternative Fuels

Mesa County is looking into the possible joint venture with the City of Grand Junction and other Local Entities in looking at the feasibility of converting solid waste (from Persigo Waste Water Facility) into compressed natural gas as an alternative vehicle fuel source.

Engineering

Capital Improvement Program

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is funded solely by the County sales tax, transportation impact fees, and grant programs. Implementation of the CIP will be dependent on the revenues generated by these three sources. Revenue from the sales tax for the first part of 2009 has been short of projections, transportation impact fees are dependent upon building permits and issuance of building permits is also lagging projections, and lastly the grant programs are seeing less available funds to distribute and more competition for the limited funds. Overall this shortfall of revenues, if the present conditions continue to prevail, will result in implementation of less CIP projects than currently anticipated.

Utilities

Mesa County currently manages three wastewater districts. The areas where these districts are located continue to see growth. Demand for more services in these areas will require Mesa County to identify sources of funding to meet the upgrades that will be required. Additionally, State regulatory requirements may drive future upgrades.

Landfill

Transfer Stations

Population growth in outlying areas of Mesa County continues to stress the County's system of solid waste transfer stations beyond their design capacities. Each of the four sites is in serious need of either capital upgrades or changes in policy governing their operation.

Increasing Public Demand for Environmental "Green" Programs

Mesa County has transitioned from a rural community to an urban community. This evolution has resulted in a community that is placing more and more emphasis on governmental involvement in new environmental/green programs. Fifteen years ago the

County was only in the landfill business. The public would like for the County to become directly involved in the recycling of commodities such as glass, cardboard, plastic and paper.

Growth in Whitewater Area

As Mesa County continues to grow, growth is projected to occur in Whitewater per the Master Plan. Since the landfill is located in this area, close attention will need to be paid to the potential conflicts that may arise between running a landfill and new growth.

Traffic

Signing Level of Service

The function of roadway signs is to provide regulation, warning and guidance information to the roadway users. Mesa County has approximately 12,000 traffic signs. Approximately 10% of the signs will need to be replaced each year because of age (10 year life expectancy), vandalism, and or knockdowns.

Striping Level of Service

Stripings on highways have an important function in providing guidance and information to the road user. Markings are used in conjunction with signs to convey to the roadway user regulations guidance and warning. Mesa County has approximately 400 centerline strip miles that need to be refurbished each year.

Signals

Traffic signals provide for the intersection control for vehicles, emergency vehicles, and pedestrians. As a complicated electronic device, the signals need constant minor maintenance and an annual major maintenance and signal timing evaluation.

Road and Bridge

Road Maintenance

The cost of Road and Bridge maintenance activities continues to increase beyond the growth in revenue from the Highway Users Tax Fund. Mesa County Road and Bridge will need to prioritize and become more efficient to continue to maintain the counties road and bridge assets. Mesa County will need to explore additional sources of revenue.

PURCHASING AND RISK

Purchasing

Continue to take advantage of technological improvements to expand the electronic distribution of bid/proposal related documents without compromising quality and/or value of goods and services acquired. Meet the challenges of potential conflicts associated with expanding internet purchasing with companies outside of Mesa County while maintaining a high percentage of the purchases of goods and services locally. Increase the dissemination information to vendors, contractors and all County departments via a purchasing web site, while maintaining some level of control.

Risk Management

Self Insured in General Liability, Property, Auto and Errors/Omissions with Self Retention of first \$250,000 in Losses for Any Claim.

The County migrated to self-insurance for these claims in January 2002. During the 7 year period from 2002 through the end of 2008 the actual costs incurred by the County for these claims paid, litigation, excess insurance and third party administration expenses was \$4,766,353. The proposed costs of purchasing low deductible “1st dollar” insurance policies would have been \$7,905,857 for this same 7 year period. This successful Risk Management Strategy has allowed the County to avoid \$3,139,504 in expenditures over this 7 year period. In future years, the slow erosion of government immunity provisions could have an adverse affect on sustaining these savings and controlling costs. The current climate of uncertainty with insurance companies and financial markets will likely result in a significant increase in insurance premiums from the County’s Excess Insurance carriers.

Self-Insured for Workers Compensation

The County obtained Certification from the State of Colorado to be Fully Self Insured for Workers Compensation starting on January 1, 2004. During the 5 year period ending in 2008, the costs of Worker’s Compensation Claims paid, lost time payments, excess insurance premiums and third party administration expenses has totaled \$2,635,457. The proposed costs for acquiring 1st dollar full coverage Workers Compensation Insurance policies for this same 5 year period would have been \$5,260,637. This successful Risk Management Strategy has allowed the County to avoid \$2,625,180 during this 5 year period. In future years, lifting and/or redefining statutory limitations on Worker’s Compensation Liability to employers could adversely impact the County. Preliminary congressional discussions concerning implementing a “minimum” basic level of national workers compensation rules in all 50 states could the impact of ***significantly*** increasing the costs of workers compensation claims for Mesa County.

T.V. Translator

In the next 5 years, the County will continue to operate the TV translator system in a manner to comply with FCC regulations concerning analog versus digital signals. Continue the on-going cooperation between the Grand Junction 911/Comm. Center and the County in co-locating radio repeaters at existing TV Translator sites to avoid costs associated with new towers and shelter buildings.

Cable Television Agreement

Active administration of this agreement and encourage the local cable company to invest in the infra-structure of the cable system to maximize value to their customers and the Mesa County region. The Cable company is in a position (with its “products/services” offered such as broadband internet access) to provide reasons for a commercial entity to re-locate to the Valley or expand their operations that are already located in Mesa County. Services offered such as Broadband Internet and local phone service (etc) are areas where the Cable company can assist the County’s development.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AND PLANNING

Regional Transportation Planning

Funding – The level of planning that the RTPO is able to perform and the sophistication that is able to be derived from the planning is a direct result of the funding available to complete these tasks. Both Federal Reauthorization and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) are going to have the most significant effect on transportation planning for 2009 and into 2010 based on potential funding and mandates.

Population Growth – Continuing growth in both the rural and urbanized areas are causing increased congestion. The needs for expanded road capacity or alternative transportation modes, increases in all facets of traffic control services having a direct correlation to the level of population growth being experienced in the county.

Federal Mandates – The Metropolitan Planning Process prescribed by the Federal Government for census driven MPO like the Grand Valley Urban Area drives many of the planning processes that the RTPO performs.

Rescissions from the state and federal will have a direct effect on the services provided by the Regional Transportation Planning Office (RTPO) as a result of these mandates.

Transit

Funding – The trend over the past several years has been to continue existing bus service and look for a potential alternative funding source when possible to support and expand service other than general funds from the four different entities including but not limited to the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA).

Population Growth – Congestion is spurring the demand for longer hours and half hour increments for GVT services in the Grand Valley.

Political Environment – Consensus is needed on an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to 2013. Currently the City of Grand Junction is questioning the level of service which could impact the continuation of the IGA. This could change the potential to increase the current service or even maintain it.

Federal Mandates – Reauthorization could have either a positive or negative impact on GVT dependent upon funding allocations and future grant opportunities.

Due to current economic conditions, i.e., recession, ridership has continued to increase. This is causing a demand for increase in service levels regarding longer hours of operation and more frequent services.

SHERIFF

Critical Infrastructure and Equipment Needs

Mesa County remains the last significant population base in Colorado that has not made the transition to the Statewide digital trunked radio system for voice communications. The conversion requires significant communications infrastructure and hardware needs for each agency and officer in the county. All options to secure the financial resources necessary for this project will be researched and attempted. But it is a widely held belief that Mesa County general fund dollars will be needed to support hardware requirements for the Sheriff's Office vehicles and hand-held radios.

For the first time in this county's history with regard to computerized databases and records management systems, all of the county's law enforcement and 911 dispatch have the opportunity to share one common vendor for this IT product. With the current effort of identifying that vendor comes the opportunity to standardize many dissimilar IT systems and create efficiency and effectiveness between law enforcement agencies in the county. This project, like voice communications, will rely heavily on the search for grant dollars and other public funding, but will also require general fund support and should be planned.

Service Delivery and Collaborative Planning

Economic conditions predict that public safety demands will increase while the criminal justice system, regardless of environmental factors, will need to increase their of governmental resources. These expectations come at a time of shrinking government funds and strict prioritization efforts. The Mesa County Sheriff's Office must continue to be a learning organization and seek professional best practices and evidence-based programs to deliver the most efficient and effective public safety to Mesa County, all the while remaining at a strength, capability, and flexibility consistent with our citizen's demands. With a possible annexation by Grand Junction of a significant portion of this county's urban area there will be much planning and coordination required between the respective governing bodies. This will include collaborative planning and service delivery through a predicted multi-year period between the Mesa County Sheriff's Office and the Grand Junction Police Department. This complex endeavor will require extensive support to provide uninterrupted delivery of quality service to Mesa County citizens.

Jail Overpopulation Mitigation Efforts

The extensive efforts in the last five years have flattened the population growth of the jail. While the population has mostly remained a constant, it is a constant over-population. The creation of alternatives to jail and expansion of existing programs has provided the system with more options for offender management. These efforts have also changed the demographics of the jail population and increased the complexity of housing offenders. Existing plans to mitigate bottle-necks and areas of liability within the facility must be further investigated and pursued. At the same time, further collaboration by criminal justice system components must continue to implement strategies to maximize efficiency of offender management space with a goal of reducing recidivism and ensuring public safety.

Staff Competency and Excellence in Service Delivery

Recent efforts to competitively place MCSO staff in salary ranges consistent with a state-wide market analysis coupled with economic conditions have positively affected vacancy and turnover rates. The desired staffing numbers do not address, however, the skill level and experience seen in the Sheriff's Office. A youthful, somewhat inexperienced work force will require resources for continued development to ensure skillful, legally-defensible, and excellent delivery of public safety services for which the Sheriff's Office is known.

TRI-RIVER EXTENSION

Colorado Noxious Weed Act (CRS 35-5.5): The Act addresses control of noxious weeds on all lands (public and private) in Colorado, identifies the problems associated with noxious weeds, and provides local governments with the ability to compel control of noxious weeds on private property, and cooperate with other agencies on management issues.

Colorado Pest Districts Act (CRS 35-5): The Act outlines the operation of pest control districts. The Upper Grand Valley Pest Control District, formed under the Act in 1963, is structured by this Act.

- ✓ Insufficient knowledge by the public of the issues surrounding noxious weeds and fruit pest management.
- ✓ New landowners: The influx of landowners new to the arid West or to Colorado do not understand the challenges of landscaping and land stewardship in our environment.
- ✓ Chemical sensitive or averse citizens living in rural areas do not want pesticides to be used on roads for weed control. More people call us every year to ask to be on our "no spray" list. If we do not treat the right-of-way then the landowner is responsible for controlling noxious weeds therein. Division does not have the personnel to monitor whether these people are in fact taking care of the weeds on the roadside.
- ✓ Development of rural Mesa County: As rural land in Mesa County is developed, we have an influx of landowners without sufficient knowledge to care for large parcels of land, most of which was once productive agricultural land.
- ✓ Low income: Many landowners with weed problems cannot afford the cost of control or replanting with competitive species. Few programs exist to assist these landowners with control of noxious weeds.
- ✓ The Old West Mentality: Private property rights reign over all other considerations in the minds of some of our long time residents. As the County becomes more

cosmopolitan, the beliefs of these people are challenged. Conflicts between newcomers and long time residents on land use issues are becoming more common.

- ✓ Lack of sufficient citizen interest in controlling noxious weeds: Landowners are not aware of the effect of noxious weeds on their property values and do not have the time/money/interest to control noxious weeds. Real estate agents and property developers do not understand the noxious weed issues.
- ✓ Wariness of government agencies and agents: Private landowners do not want government agents entering their property even if it will benefit them. Offering weed management services (e.g. identification and mapping, cost-share programs) suffer because of this attitude.
- ✓ Increased disturbance of land due to development of many kinds: Companies are not “on board” with weed control other than where they are required by state law; state does not have the people to inspect and enforce state laws yet problems are realized at the county level.
- ✓ Nurseries selling fruit trees to private landowners: This practice exacerbates the pest outbreak problems associated with fruit trees. Backyard “growers” of fruit.

TREASURER

Continuing accelerated population growth and commercial subdivision development will result in a substantial increase of workloads regarding the collection of real and personal property and use tax for construction material.

The Senior Exemption process re-implemented for the 2006 tax collection may expire in 2010 for the 2009 tax collections. It is expected to create a significant increase in complaints filed with the Treasurer’s Office from Senior Citizens and Disabled Veterans who will have to pay full property tax in addition to higher tax valuation.

With the potential passage of 2009 legislation, it is expected to have a significant impact on the Treasurer’s Office.

The current uncertainty of the world situation and State economy continues to make any forecasts regarding investment yields all but impossible at this time.

This office is currently implementing a new and updated software system, which will be more integrated, streamlined and user friendly and is continuing to explore new technology such as internet services as expected and demanded by the Mesa County citizens. This will necessitate different training methods for staff and an “outside the box” approach to continue the service level the public is accustomed to.

TRI-RIVER EXTENSION (CSU)

Colorado State University is Colorado's Land-Grant University. Through the Smith Lever Act of 1914 Colorado State University Extension was developed to provide outreach and education to the residents of Colorado by providing experts in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer science, 4-H youth development, and community development. These experts live in the counties or areas they serve and are referred to agents.

Mesa County has a memorandum of understanding with CSU Extension and the other three counties (Delta, Montrose, and Ouray) within the Tri River Area. This MOU outlines the agreement between the counties and CSU Extension- essentially which entity is going to provide what. CSU Extension is dependent on county-partner support.

Higher education in Colorado, which includes CSU Extension, is experiencing significant budget cuts from the state legislature. As budgets continue to dwindle on the state level, staffing levels decrease as well. Hence, services provided by CSU Extension to the residents in the counties decrease as well.

Extension agents in the Tri River Area cover a large geographic area with a very diverse population. Therefore agents are forced to divide their time between counties and programming areas based on the expressed needs of the area.

As the population in the Tri River Area Continues to grow there is a polarization between the new folks moving into the area and the agricultural heritage that exists. Agriculture is seen by many as a barrier to expansion and growth. However with the Tri River Area agriculture is multimillion dollar industry that relies heavily upon the expertise and assistance of CSU Extension.