

Shape the future of energy: AGNC survey calls for community voices in Northwest Colorado

BY JEN SCHUMANN / SEPTEMBER 13, 2024 / LOCAL ROCKY MOUNTAIN VOICE



By Jen Schumann | Contributor, Rocky Mountain Voice

As Colorado's coal plants close and the state pivots to new energy solutions, the future of Northwest Colorado's economy hangs in the balance.

The Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC) is leading an effort to ensure rural communities play a central role in shaping this transition.

At the heart of this initiative [is a public survey](#), open through September 16, 2024, giving residents the chance to voice their preferences on energy sources and help guide the region's future. With coal once providing stable jobs and affordable energy, the challenge now is to identify new paths that protect both livelihoods and local economies.

Building on strong foundations

The Northwest Colorado Energy Initiative (NCEI), operating under the direction of AGNC, leads community-driven efforts through fact-based discussions to guide the region's energy transition.

Earlier this year, the NCEI's first survey revealed that 88.5% of Northwest Colorado respondents supported nuclear energy as a viable replacement for coal. Support increased further after learning more about nuclear power.

These survey results are part of the AGNC's broader effort to build a regional energy hub – a comprehensive strategy blending traditional and renewable energy sources. The goal is to keep skilled jobs and affordable energy, making Western Colorado a leader in the energy transition.

"With Colorado's transition from coal, we can't let our communities fall into economic crisis," Solomon stressed. "We need to expand our economic base, and whether it's nuclear, carbon capture or solar, we have to consider all our options. This survey is essential to that process."

Why your input matters

As Northwest Colorado transitions from its historical dependence on coal, local communities are in a unique position to influence the policies that will guide the region's energy future. Cody Davis, Mesa County Commissioner and AGNC Chairman, said, "With coal shutdowns hurting rural communities, the survey ensures their concerns shape future energy policies that support both families and economic stability."

Davis added, "This survey will give rural families affected by coal job losses a voice, helping AGNC advocate for policies that protect livelihoods while fostering new opportunities through a balanced energy approach. By blending traditional and

renewable sources, AGNC aims to create a regional energy hub that strengthens rural economies.”

What’s next: From data to action

The current survey is just one step in a larger process aimed at identifying actionable solutions for Northwest Colorado’s energy transition. Matt Solomon, project manager for the Northwest Colorado Energy Initiative (NCEI), explained that after the survey closes and the data is analyzed, the next phase will be to focus on developing a detailed report that compiles input from community members, energy experts, policymakers and other stakeholders.

“By fall 2025, we’ll share a report with the collected data and input, combining ideas from various energy sectors and our collaboration with NREL,” Solomon said. “There’s excitement around finding solutions and laying the foundation for a balanced energy roadmap. Input from the community is key to driving the region’s energy future.”

Participate before Sept. 16

Residents of Routt, Rio Blanco, Garfield, Mesa and Moffat counties are invited to share their input on the region’s energy future by completing the 10-minute survey [here](#).

Solomon added, “We’re on the verge of something significant for our communities. The challenge is not knowing exactly what it will be, but with data, community input and a shared vision for a balanced energy approach, we can plan for the best possible outcomes. Local governments in Northwest Colorado have brought me on to see this through.”

Now is the time for Coloradans to take part in this critical moment. With the AGNC’s focus on creating a balanced energy approach, input is vital to ensuring that the energy transition benefits all.

Make sure your voice is heard. [Complete the survey](#) by Sept. 16, 2024, and help shape the future of Northwest Colorado.