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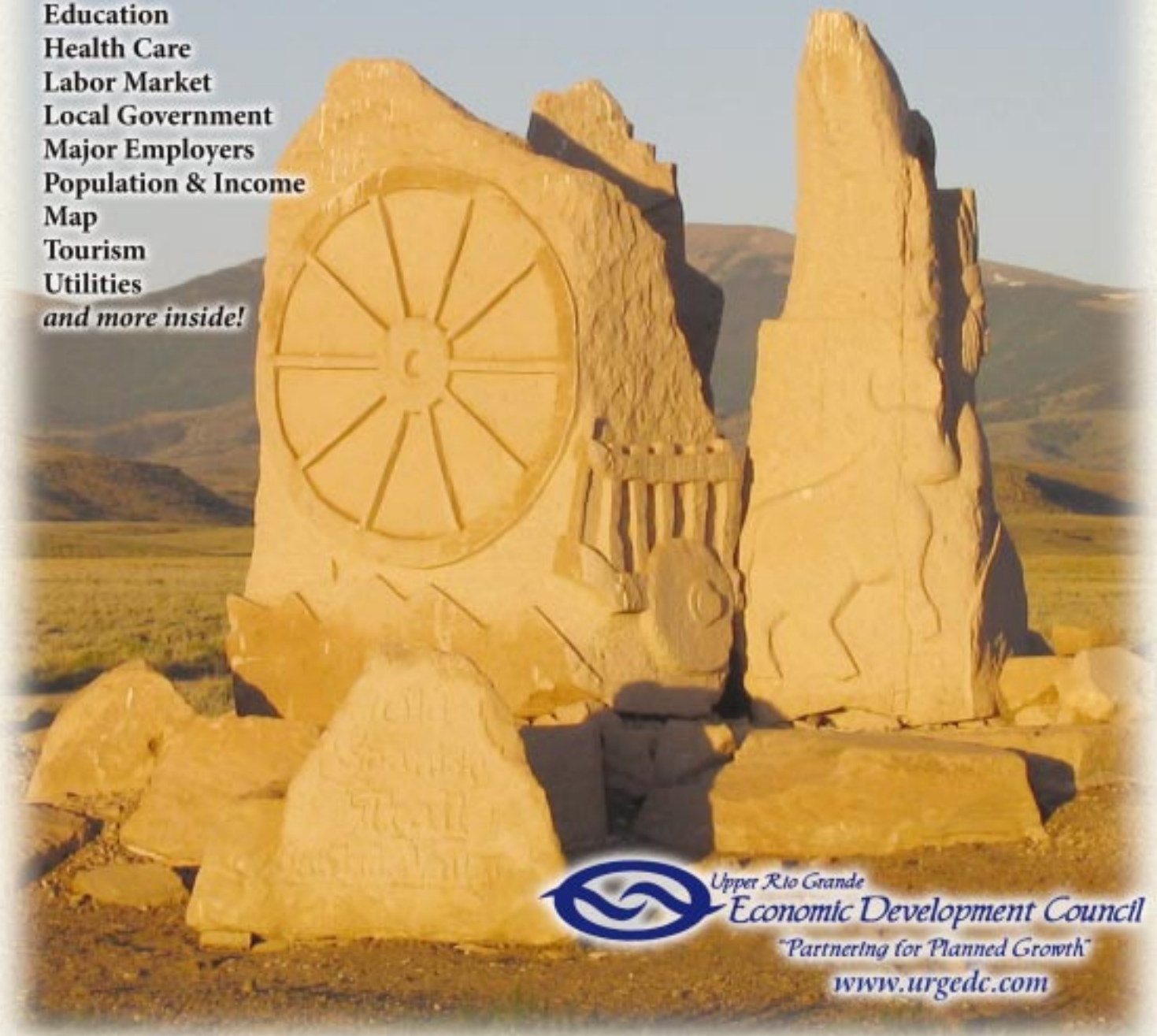


 **Upper Rio Grande
Economic Development Council**
"Partnering for Planned Growth"
www.urgdc.com

San Luis Valley COLORADO

Community Profile

- Business & Industry
- Climate
- Education
- Health Care
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- Local Government
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- Population & Income
- Map
- Tourism
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- and more inside!*



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Welcome to Our Community!

A message from the Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council

Inside this booklet, you will find a wealth of information about the six counties and largest communities in the San Luis Valley. The data provided was gathered by members and representatives of the Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council and from the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group.

We collected, collated and summarized this information to help you discover the majestic beauty of our area; the wealth of resources the Upper Rio Grande offers; and, the wide range of services available in South Central Colorado.

We hope the information in these pages will help you make an informed decision about relocating yourself, your family or your business to the San Luis Valley.

You can find information about contacting us and our members along with information on how to join URGEDC at our web site (www.urgedc.com). We encourage you to e-mail or call if we can answer any questions you have about our area. We hope you come to visit and let us know if we can assist you in planning a trip to our area. Our partnership of businesses and professionals, working together, can help you find the best people to talk to and the best places to visit to make your stay worthwhile. Give us a call!

Business Assistance

A substantial portion of the data contained in this booklet was provided by San Luis Valley Development Resources Group in Alamosa (<http://www.slvdr.org>). This organization promotes and facilitates economic and community development programs that create jobs, improve income and maintain the quality of life for residents of the San Luis Valley.

The San Luis Valley Small Business Development Center (<http://www.coloradosbdc.org/>) serves the six counties of the Valley. The SBDC offers free and confidential counseling.

Overview of the San Luis Valley

With a land area of close to 8,200 square miles, the San Luis Valley is larger than the land mass of Rhode Island, Delaware and Connecticut combined. This high elevation Valley boasts claim to the title of largest alpine valley in North America.

The Valley provides a home to the tallest dunes in North America at Great Sand Dunes National Park. It lies in the shadows of the towering Sangre de Cristo Mountains and Mt. Blanca, the fourth tallest peak in Colorado. Within the Valley's watershed, high in the San Juan Mountains, snow melt and rain give birth to the mighty Rio Grande, second longest river in our nation.

The Valley floor sits at an average elevation of 7,500 feet. The flat terrain, rich soil, moderate summer tempera-

tures and abundant sunshine provide the foundation for the Valley's agriculturally-based economy. These same factors, coupled with a lower cost of living than in many other parts of Colorado, have attracted many retirees to the area.

Additionally, enjoying spectacular scenery is easy — just look up. Tall mountain peaks surround the Valley. The Sangre de Cristos, among the tallest mountain ranges in Colorado, border the east side of the Valley. The more gently rolling La Garita Mountains border the north and northwest sides. To the west, the San Juan Mountains provide the backdrop for spectacular sunsets. Together, these mountain ranges create a basin that stretches almost 125 miles from north to south and 75 miles from east to west.

In spite of its size, the Valley never feels crowded. With a population density of about six people per square mile, there is plenty of open space. However, living in the Valley doesn't require one to give up all the amenities of big city life. Alamosa, the Valley's largest city, serves as the Valley's regional hub. There you will find the area's largest hospital, a regional airport, Adams State College, shopping opportunities and more.

South Fork is 15 minutes west of Del Norte, about 30 minutes west of Monte Vista, and an hour drive from Alamosa. If you must explore a larger town, Alamosa is within a four hour drive of both Denver and Albuquerque.

The San Luis Valley offers plenty of opportunities for recreation including travel on historic rail lines. Hop aboard the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Narrow Gauge Railroad for a glimpse of a bygone era. The Cumbres & Toltec, which began transporting tourists between Antonito and Chama, New Mexico, in 1971, was originally constructed in 1880. It was the last railroad in the United States to use steam locomotives in general freight service with operations continuing until 1969.

More recently, the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad also began offering both steam and diesel powered train trips in the Valley. Steam locomotives travel to La Veta, Colorado over La Veta Pass and to Antonito, where travelers can connect with the Cumbres and Toltec train to Osier or Chama.

The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad also offers diesel locomotive trips within the Valley to Monte Vista. Soon, visitors will be able to ride the train to Fort Garland and Blanca too. Train spokespersons indicate that the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad hopes to expand their operations to include even more Valley destinations including trips to the west side of the Valley.

Of course, with plenty of nearby National Forest, Bureau of Land Management lands and Colorado State Parks, there are plenty of opportunities for a wealth of outdoor recreation. The Valley really is a great place. We hope you come to visit to experience the beauty of our high valley and cool sunshine!

Chambers & Information Centers

Alamosa Chamber of Commerce	719-589-3681
Alamosa Visitor Center	719-589-4840
Antonito Chamber of Commerce	719-376-2277
Center Chamber of Commerce	719-754-3137
Creede and Mineral County Chamber of Commerce	719-658-2374
Conejos County Tourist Information	719-376-2049
Del Norte Chamber of Commerce	719-657-2845
Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce	719-852-2731
San Luis Valley Information Center	719-852-0660
South Fork Visitor Center	719-873-5512

Hospitals

San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center, Alamosa	719-589-2511
Conejos County Hospital, La Jara	719-274-5121
Rio Grande Hospital, Del Norte	719-657-2510

Clinics and Public Health Departments

Valley-Wide Health Systems, Alamosa	719-589-3658
San Luis Valley Comprehensive Mental Health Center	719-589-3671
Guadalupe Health Center, Antonito	719-376-5426
Valley-Wide Health Systems, Monte Vista	719-852-2512
San Luis Health Center, San Luis	719-672-3352
Mineral County Health Center, Creede	719-658-2416
Rio Grande County Nurse	719-657-3352
Saguache Public Health Dept., Saguache	719-655-2533
Saguache Public Health Dept., Center	719-754-2773
Saguache County Public Health Clinic, Saguache	719-655-2533
First Care, Center	719-754-2778
Valleywide Health Systems, Center	719-754-3584

Telephone & Internet Service Providers

	Telephone	Internet	Phone Number
Amigo.net		X	719-589-6100
Blanca Telephone	X	X	719-589-2964
Bresnan Communications		X	719-589-3221
Brite Star Satellites		X	719-657-3600
CenturyTel	X	X	800-201-4099
Columbine Telephone	X	X	719-378-2231
Qwest	X	X	800-244-1111
Rocky Mtn. Internet		X	719-589-5152
Satellites Etc.		X	719-852-2020

Power Companies

Utility Notification Center of CO (Call Before You Dig)	811
Xcel Energy Builder's Call Line	800-628-2121
SLV Rural Electric Cooperative	800-332-7634 or 719-852-3538

Radio & TV Stations

KENY TV	Alamosa & Monte Vista	UHF 39 & Bresnan Cable 20
KGINW/KALQ	Alamosa	1450/93.5 FM
KRZA (National Public Radio)	Alamosa	88.7/100.9/105.9 FM
KASF (Adams State College)	Alamosa	90.0 FM
KSLV	Monte Vista	1240/95.3 FM
KSPK	Walsenburg	100.3/103.5 FM
KZBR	Alamosa	97.1 FM

Newspapers

Valley Courier	Alamosa	719-589-2553
		http://www.alamosanews.com/
Valley Publishing	Five Local Valley Papers	719-852-3531
Monte Vista Journal	Monte Vista	719-852-3531
		http://www.montevistajournal.com

Community Development Organizations

Group or Organization	Contact
Action 22	www.action22.org
Alamosa Uptown & River Association	719-587-3626 x103
Costilla County Economic Development (CCED)	P.O. Box 9, San Luis, CO 81152
Conejos - Community, Economic & Environment Progressing Together (CON-CEPTS)	Conejos
SLV GIS/GPS Authority (GIS)	http://slvgis.info
Monte Vista Urban Renewal Authority (URA)	720 First Ave., Monte Vista, CO 81144
SLV Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D)	www.slv-rcd.org
Saguache County Sustainable Environment and Economic Development (ScSEED)	www.sceed.org
Small Business Development Center (SBDC)	719-587-5151
Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council	www.urgedc.com

Internet Sites of Interest

County Web Sites

Alamosa	www.alamosacounty.org
Costilla	www.costilla-county.com
Rio Grande	www.riograndecounty.org

Chambers & Information Centers

Alamosa Chamber	www.alamosa.org
Creede and Mineral County	www.creede.com
Monte Vista Chamber	www.monte-vista.org
San Luis Valley Information Center	http://shell.amigo.net/~slvic
South Fork Interpretive Center	www.southfork.org

General Information & Community Information

Wealth of area information	www.slvguide.com or www.sangres.com
Community information and news	www.slvdweller.com
Classified ads	http://slvjunction.com

Natural Resource Agencies & Their Partners

BLM, SLV Public Lands Center	www.co.blm.gov/slv/index.htm
Bureau of Rec., SLV Project	www.usbr.gov/dataweb/html/sanluis.html
Colorado State Forest Service	http://csfs.colostate.edu
Great Sand Dunes National Park	www.nps.gov/grsa
Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust	www.riograndelandtrust.org
Rio Grande National Forest	www.fs.fed.us/r2/riogrande
San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges	www.fws.gov/alamosa
Friends of the San Luis Valley Wildlife Refuges	www.slvrefuges.org
SLV Ecosystem Council	www.slvvec.org
SLV RC&D	www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/rcd/sanluisrcd.htm

Other Sites of Interest

Nature Conservancy	www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/colorado/preserves/art535.html
Scenic & Historic Byways	http://coloradobyways.org/main.cfm
Museums of the San Luis Valley	www.museumtrail.org
Adams State College	www.adams.edu
Trinidad State Junior College	www.trinidadstate.edu

City & County Government Offices

Alamosa County Government

402 Edison Avenue, Alamosa, CO 81101

Assessor	719-589-6365
Board of Commissioners	719-589-3841
Clerk and Recorder	719-589-6681
County Administrator	719-589-4848
Land Use Office	719-589-3812
Switchboard	719-589-5887
Treasurer	719-589-3626

Alamosa County Municipal Governments

Alamosa	719-589-2593
Hooper	719-378-2204

Conejos County Government

Courthouse, Conejos, CO 81129

Assessor	719-376-5585
Clerk	719-376-5422
County Commissioners	719-376-5654
Planning and Zoning	719-376-2014
Treasurer	719-376-5919

Conejos County Municipal Governments

Antonito	719-376-2355
La Jara	719-274-5363
Manassa	719-843-5207
Romeo	719-843-5785
Sanford	719-274-4024

Costilla County Offices

352 Main St., San Luis, CO 81134

Assessor	719-672-3642
Clerk and Recorder	719-672-3301
County Commissioners	719-672-3372
Economic Development	719-672-3100
Treasurer	719-672-3342

Costilla County Municipal Offices

San Luis	719-672-3321
Blanca	719-379-3461

Mineral County Government

144 Creede, Creede, CO 81130

Assessor	719-658-2669
Board of Commissioners	719-658-2331
Clerk	719-658-2440
Land Use Office	719-658-2360
Treasurer	719-658-2325

Mineral County Municipal Governments

Creede	719-658-2276
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Rio Grande County Government

925 6th Street, Room 207, Del Norte, CO 81132

Assessor	719-657-3326
Clerk and Recorder	719-657-3334
Commissioners	719-657-2744

Rio Grande County Government, continued

Land Use Administration	719-657-4003
Treasurer	719-657-2747

Rio Grande County Municipal Governments

Monte Vista	719-852-2692
Del Norte	719-657-2708
South Fork	719-873-0152

Saguache County Government

501 4th Street, Saguache, CO 81149

Administration	719-655-2231
Assessor	719-655-2521
Clerk (Center)	719-754-2755
Clerk (Saguache)	719-655-2512
Land Use Administration	719-655-2321
Treasurer	719-655-2656

Saguache County Municipal Governments

Center	719-754-3497
Crestone	719-256-4313
Saguache	719-655-2232

Regional Building Departments

City	
Alamosa	719-589-6631
Del Norte	719-657-2708
Monte Vista	719-852-2692
South Fork	719-873-0152

County

Alamosa County	719-589-3812
Conejos County	719-376-2014
Mineral County	719-658-2360
Rio Grande County	719-657-9472
Saguache County	719-544-2321

Area Colleges

Adams State College	719-587-7011
Trinidad State Junior College	719-589-7000

Schools & School District Offices

Alamosa School District	719-587-1600
Sangre De Cristo Schools, Elementary, Hooper	719-378-2386
Sangre De Cristo Schools, High School, Mosca	719-378-2398
North Conejos School District, La Jara	719-274-5174
South Conejos School District, Antonito	719-376-5512
Centennial School District, San Luis	719-672-3322
Sierra Grande School District, Blanca	719-379-3255
Creede Consolidated Schools	719-658-2220
South Fork Emmanuel Chapel & Christian Academy	719-873-5411
Del Norte	719-657-3080
Monte Vista	719-852-3586
Sargent School District	719-852-4023
Center Schools	719-754-3442
Saguache Mountain Valley Schools	719-655-0268
Moffat Schools	719-256-4710
Crestone Charter School	719-256-4906 or 256-4907

Commuting Distances in the Valley

One-Way Miles from Alamosa

Antonito	30	Manassa	24
Blanca	21	Moffat	37
Center	32	Monte Vista	17
Creede	70	Romeo	21
Crestone	50	Saguache	57
Del Norte	35	Sanford	19
Ft. Garland	26	San Luis	49
Hooper	20	South Fork	48
La Jara	14		

Climate

The San Luis Valley's climate is characterized by dry air, sunny days, clear nights and large daily temperature extremes. Temperatures may vary as much as 35 to 40 degrees between morning and afternoon.

Winters can be very cold; but, because of all the sunshine and dry air, it doesn't feel as cold as it might otherwise. Valley residents boast of 330 days of sunshine per year and have given the Valley the nickname, "Land of cool sunshine." Summer temperatures are moderate with highs generally in the 70s and 80s.

The Valley rarely experiences severe weather events such as tornadoes, floods, deep snow or damaging hail. However, high winds can occur any time of year with the heaviest surface winds occurring in spring in March and June. Gusts may reach 30 m.p.h. or more.

The Valley receives an average of 7 to 10 inches of precipitation a year. The mountains surrounding the Valley often receive significant snowfall. The Wolf Creek Ski Area typically has some of the best quantity and quality of snow in the state (www.wolfcreekski.com).

City, County	Ave. Max. Temp. (°F)		Ave. Min. Temp. (°F)		Ave. Annual (in.)	
	Jan.	July	Jan.	July	Precip.	Snow
Alamosa, Alamosa	34.3	81.9	-2.1	47.4	7.1	32.7
Conejos, Conejos	36.7	81.4	4.7	46.7	8.1	22.3
San Luis, Costilla	35.2	80.1	1.7	45.2	9.8	21.0
Creede, Mineral	37.8	76.9	7.1	43.0	13.4	55.7
Monte Vista, Rio Grande	34.3	79.9	0.6	46.3	7.6	22.1
Saguache, Saguache	35.4	80.9	4.0	47.2	8.4	26.6

Major Employers

Organizations Employing More than 100	
Adams State College	Alamosa County
Alamosa School District	Center Consolidated School District
City of Alamosa	Colorado Dept. of Transportation
Conejos County	Conejos County Hospital
Costilla County	Del Norte Consolidated School District
Monte Vista Public Schools	North Conejos School District
Rakhra Mushroom Farm Corp.	Rio Grande County
Saguache County	SLV Board of Cooperative Services
SLV Comprehensive Mental Health	SLV Regional Medical Center
Smokin' Spuds	Valley Wide Health Services
Wal-Mart Supercenter	Wolf Creek Ski Corp.

Employment by Sector

Number of Individuals Employed by Sector	1991	2000	% change
Agriculture	4,726	5,547	17.4
Mining & Extractive Industries	358	208	-41.0
Construction	473	1,212	156.2
Manufacturing	587	599	2.0
Transportation, Communication & Utilities	532	708	33.1
Wholesale & Retail Trade	3,746	4,374	16.8
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	742	1,120	50.9
Services	4,264	5,515	29.3
Government	4,023	4,801	19.3
Total	19,522	24,155	23.7

Agricultural Information

County	Total Land Area (sq. miles)	Total Land Area (acres)	Land in Farms and Ranches (acres)	Total Cropland (acres)	Market Value of Ag. Products Sold (\$1,000)	Total Farm Production Expenses (\$1,000)	Net Cash Return from Ag. Sales (\$1,000)
Alamosa	723	462,854	204,640	111,194	94,451	62,157	33,426
Conejos	1,290	825,741	267,708	138,281	22,852	20,185	4,882
Costilla	1,229	786,801	354,067	69,789	26,245	17,846	10,119
Mineral	878	562,021	4,436	322	166	288	90
Rio Grande	913	584,382	170,999	110,868	74,483	53,789	25,647
Saguache	3,168	2,027,724	477,003	173,446	81,852	60,308	24,040

Source: Colorado Agricultural Statistics, 2006, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Colorado Field Office

Retail Sales Trends

Total Annual Retail Sales by County	2002 (\$1,000)	2003 (\$1,000)	2004 (\$1,000)	2005 (\$1,000)	Avg. Annual Change 2000 - 2005
Alamosa	354,763	349,396	369,699	370,818	3.3%
Conejos	40,514	42,394	45,638	47,872	3.5%
Costilla	14,553	17,328	15,392	17,819	7.7%
Mineral	21,276	20,665	23,521	21,375	3.9%
Rio Grande	217,062	211,120	214,135	232,728	2.9%
Saguache	42,295	44,872	47,137	50,171	5.7%
San Luis Valley	690,364	682,775	715,522	740,783	3.5%

Population Density

County	Population in 2004	Persons per Sq. Mile in 2004	Est. % Population Change 1950 - 2000	Est. % Population Change 2000 - 2004	Population Forecast 2004-2010 % growth
Alamosa	15,648	21.6	42.1	4.6	7.8
Conejos	8,495	6.6	-17.4	1.1	5.3
Costilla	3,738	3.0	-39.6	2.0	2.5
Mineral	952	1.1	19.1	14.6	7.8
Rio Grande	13,181	14.4	-3.3	6.2	4.0
Saguache	6,517	2.1	4.5	10.1	8.6
San Luis Valley	48,256	5.9	0.5	5.0	6.0

Great Sand Dunes National Park

- ☞ 83,958 acres.
- ☞ A permanent workforce of about 25 and a seasonal workforce of 17.
- ☞ Tallest dunes in North America.
- ☞ Economic impact in excess of \$23 million in total sales and \$2.5 million in tax revenue (1997).
- ☞ Economic impacts are projected to increase by as much as \$2.4 million with the recent transition in status from National Monument to National Park.

Rio Grande National Forest

- ☞ 1,831,207 acres or 2,861 square miles.
- ☞ Workforce varies between 100 and 150.
- ☞ Facilities include 36 campgrounds, 12 picnic areas, 9 interpretive sites and 8 boat ramps.
- ☞ 1,250+ miles of trail with 60 outfitters/guides.
- ☞ 524,292 acres of Roadless and 439,600 acres of Wilderness.



Conejos County.
Upper left photo:
Conejos County.
Other photos:
Ruth Carapella.



Other attractions include Zapata Falls, San Luis Lakes State Park, the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge and Cattails Golf Course.

The City of Alamosa, with a population of 8,419, is the commercial hub of the Valley, attracting shoppers from a 100-mile radius. Alamosa has two college facilities: Adams State College and Trinidad State Junior College. It has a regional hospital and extensive health care facilities. The San Luis Valley Regional Airport is located south of town and United and Frontier Airlines offer service.

Traditionally an agricultural based economy, Alamosa County has expanded its horizons and now provides major wholesale, retail and service sectors to the San Luis Valley. In recent years tourism has become more important, with travelers coming to the Sand Dunes, riding the two historic scenic railroads, visiting the natural wonders and wildlife refuges, swimming in natural hot spring pools and attending the local museums and events.

Alamosa County offers pristine Colorado at its finest, provides amenities without hassle or hustle and represents small town living as preserved through its roots.

Conejos County

Conejos County, created in 1861, was previously known as Guadalupe County. Conejos County is the southernmost county in the San Luis Valley, with its southern border being the New Mexico state line. This county is very scenic with expansive mountain views. It is steeped in history; being home to Colorado's oldest church, a classic narrow-gauge railway and having been home to the "Manassa Mauler" Jack Dempsey. The County has an abundance of state and federally-owned public lands which provide year round outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, rock climbing and much more.

Conejos County is home to three main municipalities as well as many



Alamosa County.

Saguache County.



Rio Grande County, continued

booming housing market, world-class 18-hole golf course and the distinction of being the "Gateway to the Silver Thread" scenic byway.

Rio Grande County really is the epitome of Colorado, which makes it an ideal place to live, work and play for those who are interested in a Colorado lifestyle.

Saguache County

The name Saguache is from the Ute word "water of the blue earth." Saguache County is located in the Northern portion of the San Luis Valley. Pronounced Sa-watch, it sits at an elevation of 7,800 feet, surrounded by the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range on the east and the San Juan Range on the west. Many of the peaks are 14,000 feet and provide a challenge to many seasoned climbers.

The largest county of the San Luis Valley, Saguache County is home to the towns of Saguache, Center, La Garita, Bonanza, Crestone, Villa Grove, Moffat and Sargent. It was settled in 1867 by Otto Mears who started his fortune with the first toll road above Poncha Pass. Otto invested in railroads, mining and the Mack Truck Co. and is credited with the famous "Million Dollar Highway."

Ranching is the main occupation in this part of the Valley. Both cattle and sheep are raised, cattle being predominant. Some logging is done on Forest Service land. More farming is done as you move south down the Valley. Crops include alfalfa, potatoes, lettuce and barley.

In addition to a rich history in ranching and agriculture in this diverse community, you can also find a wealth of spiritual and educational groups in the Crestone/Baca area. The Manitou Foundation's generous land grants have helped many groups from around the world to

establish retreat centers in the Crestone/Baca area. Artists and craft people are numerous in the county. Potters, authors, photographers, weavers, basket makers and painters live in the county and you can often find their wares in local galleries and coffee shops.

The Saguache County Museum provides historic displays depicting the lifestyle of the area. The museum is open from Memorial Day through September. A tour of the museum is historic, nostalgic and educational.

Festivals take place in the County in both summer and winter months, including: the Crestone Music Festival in August, the Center Harvest festival in September and the Winterfest in Crestone through the Thanksgiving weekend.

A Great Place to Live!

Although each county has its own unique characteristics, the Valley shares many common features. All in all, it's a great place to live, work and play.

No matter which county you visit, you will find spectacular opportunities for outdoor recreation. The Valley offers everything from:

- 14,000 peaks to climb
- wildlife refuges to explore
- National Forest and National Park trails to hike
- pristine areas to hunt and fish
- to off-road challenges for 4-wheelers and all-terrain-vehicles to navigate.

There's a sense of community you just can't find in larger metropolitan areas. People work together to achieve common goals. You'll find farmer's markets, youth groups, civic organizations and many volunteer groups dedicated to making the Valley a better place to live.

Some say the Valley is behind the times; we think we are ahead of the curve. The Valley is planning proactively for our future. There are still many business opportunities for niche products and services that have already been developed in larger markets. If you want to raise a family here, you'll find that there are fewer "big-city" concerns.

Every town has unique characteristics; you won't find carbon-copy mini malls in the San Luis Valley! The Valley has not experienced the uncontrolled sprawl of the front range of Colorado. If you want a little elbow room, you'll find it here.

If you are considering the possibility of relocating yourself, your family or your business to a corner of Colorado, we encourage you to give the San Luis Valley a close look!

Mineral County, continued

mining areas faltered after the Silver Crash of the 1890s, Creede and Mineral County continued production due to the rich assay and types of minerals found in the Creede deposits. While some gold was mined in Mineral County, silver was the foundation of the local economy until 1985 when the last mine closed.

Everyone predicted Creede would become a ghost town, but the "little town that would not die," proved its mettle, redesigned its image and became known as "one of the best 100 small arts towns in America." The same geologic wonders that had produced veins filled with precious metals stirred the creative minds of artists and writers. Studios and galleries filled the Victorian-era main street buildings that once housed mining camp saloons. In the mid-1960s, a group of enthusiastic drama students from Kansas University, aided by the Creede JayCees, initiated a summer repertory theater program that has developed into the nationally recognized Creede Repertory Theatre, a major attraction that brings tourists to Creede from throughout the U.S.

The transformation from hardrock mining to tourism was not that difficult. Mineral County's guest ranches and resorts have a long tradition of enticing people to the Upper Rio Grande Valley to fish, hunt, ride horses or just enjoy the scenery. The La Garita Caldera, one of the largest in the world, created a scenic paradise when it blew its top about 36 million years ago. When the younger Creede Caldera emerged 10 million years later to fill part of the gap, mountains and ridges, cliffs and canyons and a moat became the landscape. In time, the moat drained, leaving behind lush, broad meadowlands that attracted herds of deer and elk. The mighty Rio Grande, noted today for its Gold Medal waters,

has been attracting fisherman and their families to the Creede area since the 1870s. Before Nicholas Creede shouted his "Holy Moses," Western tourism writers passing through the area via the



Mineral County.

Rio Grande County.



Barlow and Sander-son stage, extolled the beauty of the Upper Rio Grande Valley, the river and the San Juan Mountains.

Rio Grande County

The gateway to the San Juan Mountains, Rio Grande County is one of the highlights of the San Luis Valley. The county covers 913 square miles ranging from around 7,000 feet on the valley floor to numerous 13,000-foot peaks. The scenic landscape and close community make Rio Grande County a great place to vacation, work and live. There are three municipalities within the county — Monte Vista, Del Norte and South Fork — and all have been historically developed along the rail line that follows the Rio Grande River.

Monte Vista, the county's largest community, is situated on the valley floor. "Monte" as most people call it, is the center of the agricultural aspect of the county. Numerous festivals, events and club meetings take place in and around Monte Vista. The Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge is a stop for migratory Sandhill Cranes every year.

Del Norte is a quaint town with a focus on its historic past. It is the county seat, home to the Rio Grande County Museum and maintains a historic facade in its main street.

Home to many small shops and boutiques, it is a beautiful place to shop and also provides recreational activity with climbing, hiking and fishing close by.

The newest town in Rio Grande County is South Fork. South Fork is surrounded by the Rio Grande National Forest and other public lands and has easy access to Wolf Creek Ski Area. Developed as a logging center, it has become a gem of the Valley with a

Costilla County.



Toltec Scenic Railway which runs tours between Antonito and Chama, New Mexico.

Conejos County values and maintains its rich religious and cultural heritage. Many of its roots come from the settling of different religious groups in the area. Community and faith have continued to be centerpieces of the area.

Costilla County

Costilla County, "Where Colorado Began," was the first area of the state of Colorado to be colonized, and has a recorded history dating back to 1540 — the year Coronado explored the Southwest.

Historically, Costilla County has been agricultural. There are three towns in the County: Blanca, Fort Garland and San Luis. These towns are some of the oldest communities in the State of Colorado and all have a rich cultural heritage that continues to thrive today.

San Luis is home to a world renowned Shrine of the Stations of the Cross which sits on top of a mesa in the center of town. Thousands of visitors come each year to pray and marvel at the Shrine's beauty. San Luis is also home to many other historic places like the Sangre de Cristo Parish Hall



Conejos County, continued

other small communities. La Jara is home to the county's hospital and also is the agricultural center of the county. Manassa is home to a yearly Pioneer Days festival and was the home of arguably one of the best boxers of all time. Antonito is a small, charming town that is home to the Cumbres &

ing the historic past of the entire area; and, on Memorial Day weekend Fort Garland is host to a 3-day festival of reenactments, stories, songs and dances depicting the cultures and occupations indigenous to Costilla County.

Blanca is named for Blanca Peak, which stands to the north at 14,345 feet tall. This small community is home to many small craft stores. Historically, Blanca was created with the western expansion and the railroad, with its primary industries being farming and ranching

Costilla County is a well preserved and beautiful community with deep-seated traditions and a culture that preserves its history while progressing into the new century.

Mineral County

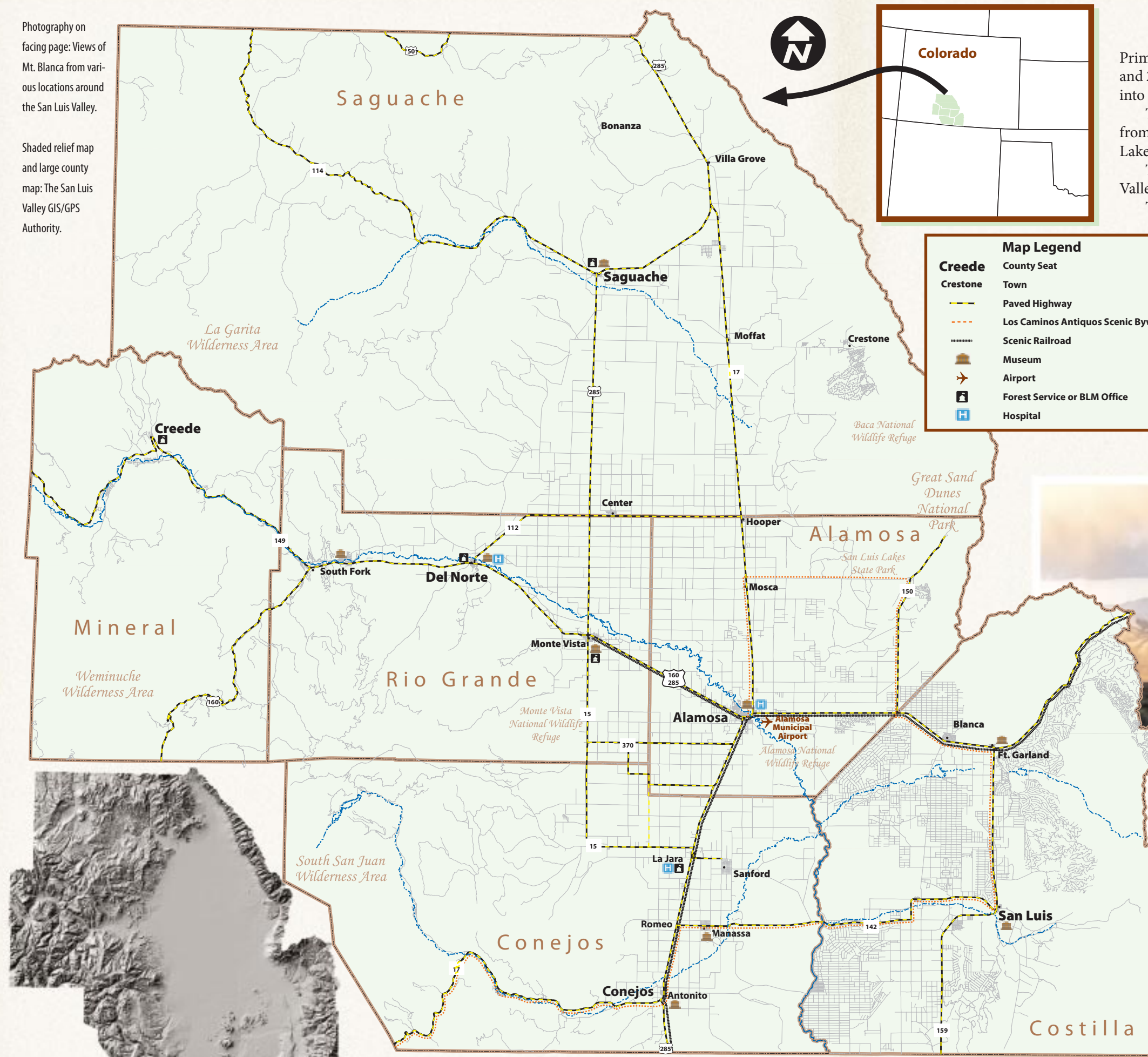
Mineral County, which straddles the Continental Divide and includes some of Colorado's most spectacular scenery, is well-named. For a century, mining camps at the headwaters of the Rio Grande and its tributaries pumped millions of dollars into Colorado's economy. Sitting in the heart of the county is Creede, the county seat and the only town. Mineral County is listed as Colorado's third smallest county now; but, in the mining heyday, thousands of miners, their families and camp followers filed into the canyons and valleys that held the valuable ores of the Creede Mineral District. When other



Mineral County.

Photography on facing page: Views of Mt. Blanca from various locations around the San Luis Valley.

Shaded relief map and large county map: The San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority.



Map Legend

- Creede** County Seat
- Crestone** Town
- Paved Highway
- Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway
- Scenic Railroad
- Museum
- Airport
- Forest Service or BLM Office
- Hospital

Getting to the Valley

Primary road access to the Valley is provided by U.S. Highways 160 and 285. Colorado Highways 17, 149, 114 and 159 also provide access into the San Luis Valley.

The Alamosa Regional Airport provides air service to the Valley from Denver via commuter flights. The flights are operated by Great Lakes Aviation under United Airlines and Frontier Airlines.

TNM&O coaches provides bus access to and from the Valley from Albuquerque and Denver.

The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad offers passage from LaVeta, Colorado to Alamosa and other Valley destinations. The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Narrow Gauge Railroad, in conjunction with the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad, offers passage to Valley destinations from Chama, New Mexico.

One-Way Miles from Alamosa

Albuquerque	214	Pueblo	121
Colorado Springs	163	Santa Fe	141
Denver	239	Salida	83
Durango	150	Taos	90
Grand Junction	248	Walsenburg	73
Gunnison	122		

