

Western Colorado could meet east in CNG efforts

John Stroud

Post Independent Staff

GLENWOOD SPRINGS — Garfield County may join with other energy producing counties, including Weld County in northeast Colorado, in a possible "east-meets-west" effort to accelerate the use of compressed natural gas vehicles throughout the state.

Currently, Garfield County is involved in promoting the use of compressed natural gas (CNG) through its regional partnership with Garfield Clean Energy.

That group has been working to encourage energy independence through the Western Slope CNG Forum, a group of natural gas producers, auto dealers, fuel providers and fleet operators focused on expanding the use of CNG in vehicles.

Meanwhile, what's known as "Weld Smart Energy," a program led by elected officials in Weld County, has been collaborating with local producers in that region to generate demand among consumers and eventually create six CNG fueling stations.

"Our suggestion is that you consider

whether the county commission would be interested in taking our local effort and raising it to a multi-county effort," Mike Ogburn, representing Garfield Clean Energy, said in a presentation to the Garfield Board of County Commissioners Monday.

In doing so, Garfield County would be asked to develop a plan for the Western Slope similar to Weld's, and begin to build a cross-state CNG infrastructure.

"We feel that by joining together, having similar goals and taking a collaborative approach to funding and policy, we will be more likely to succeed in the implementation of the CNG plans," Ogburn indicated in his written proposal to the commissioners.

The city of Grand Junction and Mesa County have also expressed interest in a more regional effort. Others, such as Rio Blanco and Moffat counties, may be asked to participate as well.

"I'm very interested in this," Garfield County Commissioner Mike Samson said. "Natural gas is a cleaner burning fuel, it's plentiful in Garfield County, it's cheaper, it provides jobs, and it's a local product.

"And, we can set an example in what we

do, by taking advantage of what's available here for us to use," he said.

Samson also suggested that Garfield Clean Energy present its ideas at the next meeting of the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado, which includes Rio Blanco and Moffat county officials.

Ogburn said the effort would require a greater commitment from Garfield County in terms of staff time to help facilitate the efforts.

"If it goes outside of Garfield County, keep in mind that it's also outside the scope of Garfield Clean Energy," he said. For that reason, additional funding may also be necessary.

By collaborating with other counties, additional industry and government funding sources may also be identified, Ogburn said.

"By working together as multiple governments we can attract more attention, and be able to steer more funds," he said.

In other business at the Monday BOCC meeting, the board:

- Heard a report from representatives of Williams Energy and its new spinoff company, WPX Energy. According to company spokespersons Susan Alvillar and

Donna Gray, Williams will now be solely focused on the natural gas process and transmission aspects of the business, while WPX will handle drilling operations.

- Agreed to a five-year lease of 48 acres of agriculture land at the southeast corner of the Garfield County Regional Airport property outside Rifle to Michele Monger. The lease limits the use of the property to the keeping of livestock and related operations.

- Approved a contract with Clean Energy Economy for the Region (CLEER) to administer the remaining \$219,655 of a Better Buildings Program grant. The original grant, awarded to Garfield County as a pass-through from Boulder and Denver counties, was for \$543,000. Commissioners approved the contract on a 2-1 vote, with Commissioner Martin opposed on the grounds that it involved federal stimulus money.

- Approved on a 3-0 vote a service agreement with Eastern Research Group as part of the county's ongoing air quality monitoring program.

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Cause of Rifle Creek mobile home fire still undetermined

Fund, donation drive started to help victim

John Colson

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RIFLE — Local fire officials are still investigating a fire that destroyed a mobile home near the Rifle Creek Golf Course last Friday.

In the meantime, friends of one man made homeless by the fire, Rifle Creek golf pro Kyle Daniell, are collecting donations to help him make it through the

winter.

"It's pretty much a total loss," said Rifle Fire Chief Mike Morgan of the mobile home, located at 3063 State Highway 325 north of Rifle.

The fire was reported at 3:17 p.m., and no injuries were reported as a result of the blaze, according to the Garfield County Sheriff's Office.

Daniell was sharing the rented mobile home with a roommate, Wes Cherry. No one was at home at the time of the fire, according to Fire Marshall Kevin Whelan, who is investigating the incident.

"The cause is still undeter-

mined," Whelan said of the fire on Monday.

Daniell, who is 26 and originally from Idaho, has lived in the area approximately one year, according to a friend, Mark Fergen.

Fergen, who owns the Mountain Air Mechanical business in Rifle, said Daniell lived in Fergen's home for eight months after moving to Rifle, and moved into the trailer relatively recently.

Fergen said he is spearheading an effort to collect gear and funds for Daniell, explaining, "We are trying to do everything we can to get this boy taken care of."

Fergen, who lives near the

trailer site, said it was sheer luck that Daniell was not at home when the fire started.

"He'd just gone out to get a haircut," said Fergen, who was target shooting in the area and witnessed the fire as it gained strength.

"I don't know where Wes was, but he wasn't home, either," Fergen added.

A special account has been set up at Alpine Bank in Rifle to collect donations, Fergen said. Anyone interested in donating can contact Joy Wentzel or Karrie Fletcher at the bank.

In addition, Fergen said, he is collecting whatever else people

can donate on Daniell's behalf.

"He has nothing. No dishes, no silverware, no clothes, nothing. He lost everything in the fire," Fergen said. "I don't want to minimize Wes' situation, but at least Wes has people nearby he can rely on to help him out. But imagine being that young and so far from anyone, family or someone else who might help you out."

He said anyone wishing to donate goods can drop them off at Mountain Air Mechanical, 601 W. Second St., Rifle, 625-4352.

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

'Catholicism'

As seen on PBS, this 10-part video series offers an overview of the Catholic faith. The series seeks to explore, through a global journey, the living culture of the Catholic Church. From the lands of the Bible, to the great shrines of Europe, to the shores and heartland of America, to the mysteries of Asia, to the rich landscapes of Latin America, to the beating heart of Africa — and beyond, come out and enjoy this visually stunning and educational series. Refreshment will be served, and all are welcome. For more information, go to www.wordonfire.org. The series starts Thursday, Jan. 12, at 7 p.m. at St. Stephen's School, 414 Hyland Park Drive, Glenwood Springs.

Suicide Prevention presenters sought

Suicide prevention is a community responsibility. Help educate and take a stand with those who are experiencing depression, suicide ideation or currently in a crisis. Are you willing to present this education in your place of business to help protect those who maybe suffering? By learning about the myths and facts that surround depression and suicide ideation, as a community we can stop the most preventable kind of death. People don't want to die by their own hand, they want to stop the pain that has completely engulfed their everyday ability to function. By bringing the topic of suicide into the open, we as a community can cleave together and make a difference for a healthy way of life for one another in Garfield County. To schedule your presentation, call Donnalynne LaGiglia, chair/suicide prevention education at 970-948-6108.

Red Cross seeks volunteers

The Red Cross is looking for volunteers in Glenwood Springs area. If you are interested or would like to know more call Charlotte Ralff 970-987-1362.

Teen Grief & Loss Support Group

The death of a loved one can be an overwhelming experience for anyone. For a teen with family members overcome with their own experience of grief, it can be isolating, confusing, life-altering and devastating. This new peer-based support group will allow teens, ages 12-18, to connect with other teens who have lost a loved one to death and learn healthy coping mechanisms for dealing with grief. This free group, sponsored by Pathfinders, will meet Thursdays from 4-5:30 p.m. Jan. 12 through March 1 at Coal Ridge High School. Limited to 10 teens. Registration is required. Please call Lindsay Patterson, MA with questions or to register, 970-456-8924.

Travel and learn with Colorado Mountain College

Spend time in Ireland and Costa Rica earning college credit through Colorado Mountain College's International Programs study abroad courses:

International business and literature in Dublin, May 16 through June 16, 2012. Application deadline March 16. Contact Jeffrey Runyon, 719-486-4240, jrunyon@coloradomtn.edu.

Spanish immersion and home stay in Alajuela, Costa Rica, June 30-July 28, 2012. Application deadline April 1. Contact Lauren DeAre, 319-5817, ldare@coloradomtn.edu

SEARCH FROM A1

Following an extensive search, Gorgey, a former assistant county attorney for El Paso County in Colorado Springs, was hired by Garfield County last May. Gorgey was also appointed interim county manager after Green's contract was ended last week.

On Monday, the BOCC and Gorgey met behind closed doors with search consultant Phil McKenney to discuss the process.

"We wanted to give him the opportunity to ask us questions about the type of person we're looking for," BOCC Chairman John Martin said after the meeting.

From that, McKenney will develop a profile of the county, its leadership and the board's philosophy to be used in advertising the position.

"We just want to make sure the person who is doing the selection has the parameters we're looking for," Martin said.

The manager's position is to be broadly advertised starting in about two weeks. Green's salary was \$133,000 per year.

McKenney will be charged with receiving and screening the applications and identifying a group of finalists to be considered by the BOCC.

At some point, county department heads are expected to be able to ask questions of the finalists and

offer their input, Martin said.

"We had hoped to have someone selected by March, but realistically it's probably going to be April before we can make any decisions," he said.

Peckham & McKenney (www.peckhamandmckenney.com) provides consulting services to local government agencies throughout the western United States.

Green, who was in his 13th year as Garfield County's top administrator, was let go "without cause" by the BOCC in a 3-0 vote on Jan. 3.

Commissioners Martin and Tom Jankovsky indicated the decision was part of their ongoing efforts to reorganize the county government and take a more hands-on role in county operations.

Green had just re-negotiated his annual contract with the commissioners in November, and said the move came as a complete surprise.

In accordance with his contract agreement, Green, 62, was placed on paid administrative leave for 30 days, although the termination took effect immediately. He is also to receive an additional six months severance pay, plus continued health insurance coverage for that same period, according to the termination clause in his contract.

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