

# County involved in two-state economic effort

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*Editor, The Raton Range*

Colfax County is involved in a pair of regional economic development efforts — one that began last year to promote northeast New Mexico, and now the county is crossing the state line to be part of a similar effort with two Colorado counties.

The Raton Basin Regional Economic Development District (REDD) consists of Las Animas and Huerfano counties in Colorado and Colfax County, the New Mexico neighbor to Las Animas County. REDD is one of two Colorado-based entities that was recently selected to participate in a program called “Stronger Economies Together” (SET).

The SET program is the same pro-

gram being carried out in New Mexico and includes seven counties in the northeast part of the state: Colfax, Union, Harding, Mora, San Miguel, Quay and Guadalupe.

The program is designed to get local officials from various counties and municipalities in a given area working together to create a regional economic development strategy and plan. SET offers training and assistance that is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development, working in conjunction with the Western Rural Development Center, Extension Service offices in each state, and the respective state’s economic development agencies.

Colfax County is in a unique position geographically to work with both New

Mexico and Colorado neighbors. Being a border county, Colfax can “work both sides (of the state line),” said Colfax County Manager Don Day.

Day added, though, that the county’s main focus will be in New Mexico, working with the other six counties that are part of the state’s Northeast Regional Planning Organization. Day said Colfax County is a “cooperating” entity in the Colorado REDD effort and helped fill out the application that earned its selection for the SET program in that state, but the county will not spend any money as part of the REDD and is “taking a back seat.”

Colfax County will help as it can, though, Day said. He said it is worthwhile working together promoting

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attractions and events that can bring in tourists who will visit both the Raton and Trinidad areas. “It’s good for both sides,” he said.

SET is designed to help regional teams develop new approaches to strengthen and enhance regional economic development activities. The SET program is an opportunity for multi-county teams to receive the latest tools, training and technical assistance “to help their region move forward and take advantage of positive growth and quality of

life opportunities,” according to USDA Rural Development.

The northeast New Mexico SET that Colfax County is involved in has been underway for months, with representatives from the participating counties meeting regularly to receive training and organize ideas and plans. The meetings have included representatives from Colfax County government and municipalities within the county such as Raton, Cimarron, Springer, Maxwell and Angel Fire.

The county commission last month adopted a resolution endorsing the formation of a regional economic development organization

and promising to “provide resources” to assist in its formation and to also “encourage participation” in the new organization.

Some of the short-term goals discussed by the northeast New Mexico group are developing a regional marketing plan and tourism calendar and engaging in community asset mapping. Some long-term goals for the region that the group has suggested are development of alternative energy production, improving high-speed internet connectivity in the area, attracting light manufacturing, marketing the region as a tourism and outdoor recreation destination, and using the existing rail system to move