



Joseph Teipel
Executive Director
Chaffee County Community Foundation
PO Box 492
Buena Vista, CO 81211

RE: GARNA proposal for CCCF funding for preliminary Chaffee County Waste Audit

Dear Mr. Teipel and CCCF Board of Directors,

According to the CO State Demographers Office, the population of Chaffee County has increased over 13 percent since 2010 and this trend is expected to continue. In fact, if projections are correct, then Chaffee County could see a population increase of 31 percent by 2030 and 52 percent by 2050¹. In addition to attracting new residents, our county has been incredibly successful at attracting an ever increasing number of tourists each year. The Sawatch Range experiences the highest fourteener use in the entire state, with an estimated 115,000 hiking user days in 2016 (Colorado Fourteener Initiative) and Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area State Park numbers are increasing by 17% per year. The Chaffee County Visitors Bureau Visitor also reported that overnight stays increased by 21 percent between 2015 and 2016.

Growth has brought vitality to the community and new economic opportunities to the county. However, not all of the impacts of growth are positive. For example, it puts pressure on the sensitive natural resources that draw so many people to our area. The local watershed is a resource that people must share with wildlife, as are forest and recreational lands. In addition, population growth brings additional waste from residents, businesses, developers, and tourists.

While Chaffee County wants to manage the increase in waste, the county does not have a current analysis of how much waste we generate and how much waste is brought in from other counties versus how much could be diverted from the landfill either through composting, recycling, or repurposing, and how much waste increases during the summer months due to tourism.

The proposed project, through the Greater Arkansas River Nature Association (GARNA), is to conduct a preliminary waste audit in Chaffee County using existing data. More specifically, we plan to obtain and assess the quantity and various types of waste entering the Chaffee County Landfill, and the amount of waste exported outside the county by Teller/Chaffee County Waste, Shamrock Disposal, Waste Management, and Angel of Shavano Recycling. In addition to landfill waste, many of these companies offer recycling services. We hope to also obtain recycling data (weight or volume), by product type, in order to calculate estimates of our current rate of diversion recyclable materials, as well as the number of residents and businesses that participate in recycling programs. Moreover, we will examine very preliminary composting data from Elements Mountain Compost and assess the capacity for expanding that service. All obtained information will inform GARNA Chaffee Green education and outreach efforts.

The outcome of this waste assessment will be a better understanding of the current annual waste generated and diverted in Chaffee County, with monthly estimates if possible. This information will be used as a baseline for setting future waste reduction goals in the Sustainability Plan expected to be approved for the revised Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan. Importantly, this information will be leveraged for a grant application that GARNA is submitting to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Recycling Resources Economic Opportunities (RREO). The proposal is backed by the City of Salida, Towns of Poncha Springs and Buena Vista, and Chaffee County, and aims to conduct a more complete study that includes multi-season waste audits throughout the county, in order to generate accurate estimates of the amount of waste that could be diverted from the landfill if recycling, composting, and repurposing efforts were more effective, as well as to expand GARNA messaging and educational programs.

1. Envision Chaffee County: Three busy summers foretell county's growth. (Oct. 27, 2017). Chaffee County Times.

Bio: Erica Wohldmann-Gift, Ph.D.

Dr. Erica Wohldmann-Gift earned a joint Ph.D. in cognitive psychology and cognitive science from the University of Colorado, Boulder in 2007, and has served as a Professor of Psychology at California State University, Northridge for the past 13 years and as the Interim Director for the Institute for Sustainability for the past two years. For the 40,000-person urban campus, she helped develop a 10-year Sustainability Plan, a Climate Action Plan, and more recently, a Zero-Waste Plan, as well as educational programming and collaborative research projects both on and off campus. Erica taught Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Sustainability, Best Practices in Sustainability, Environmental Psychology, and classes related to cognition. Her research has been funded by the National Institutes of Health, the Metropolitan Water District, CalFire, ReLeaf, the CSU Water Resources and Policy Initiatives, among others, and the results of her studies have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, Psychology Today, and on the National Wildlife Federation website.

The Greater Arkansas River Nature Association (GARNA) has a 24-year history of cooperating with and complementing local municipalities, Chaffee County, state and federal land management agencies. These agencies look to GARNA to lead large projects such as the Envision Recreation in Balance initiative and to complete large projects such as the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway designation. Completion of the initial waste audit, proposed here, is fully endorsed by Chaffee County and the contained municipalities. Dominique Naccarato, GARNA's Executive Director, has a Masters in Environmental Management degree from Western Colorado University, where she participated in waste audits through a project to move the university towards zero waste.

Erica will work with GARNA staff and collaborators to obtain data from Chaffee County Landfill, Waste Management, Teller/Chaffee County Waste, Shamrock Disposal, and Angel of Shavano Recycling. She will compile, sort, and analyze existing data, work with an assistant and GARNA staff to generate a final report. In addition, Erica will explore and apply for additional grant funding, including the CDPHE grant, with the budget for the larger project shown here.

We appreciate your consideration for this important effort. Please don't hesitate to contact the GARNA office with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dominique Naccarato". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dominique Naccarato
GARNA Executive Director