

New solar garden benefits Rifle community

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RIFLE - Surrounded by the dirt and weeds of rural Garfield County, Paul Spencer has a smile on his face radiating from the large crowd gathered under a white tent for the unveiling of his company [CleanEnergy Collective's](#) new project.

"This is the grand opening of the Garfield County Solar Array," Spencer said.

With former Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter on hand along with Rifle Mayor Keith Lambert, the event had a extra punch of star [power](#). That seemed fitting given it was all about our biggest star of all: the sun. The sun's energy will now power the new 858-kilowatt community solar garden standing on 5 acres near the Garfield County Airport.

"We are very excited that we have had such a fantastic turn out," Spencer said.

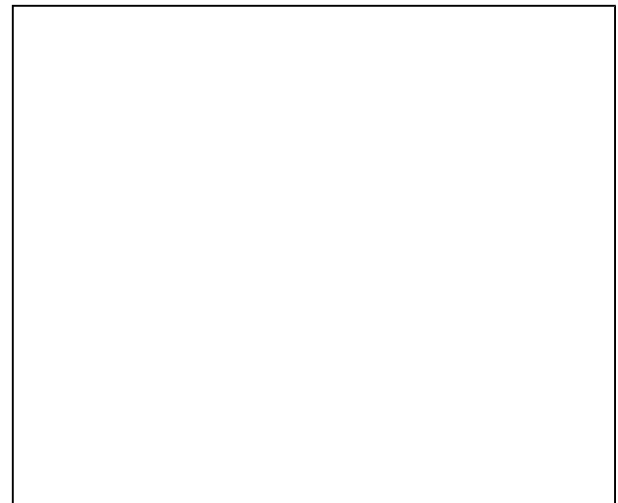
The excitement comes, in part, because of how big the array is. It stretches three football fields and it's made up of more than 3,000 panels. They harness the sun's power for some 140 homes and those homes don't need to put their own solar panels up.

"How this works is, essentially anyone with an electric bill or utility network can purchase solar panels in the community array and be credited for all the power they produce on their utility bill every month. So it really opens up solar ownership to anyone in Holy Cross's territory," Spencer said.

This is the second community garden for Clean Energy Collective and now the largest of its kind in the country.

"It's not that there aren't bigger solar arrays, it's that those bigger solar arrays aren't owned by community members that

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