

**Organizers of a large community-owned solar farm celebrate its grand opening**

The bright June sun was reflected in 3575 panels at the Garfield County Regional Airport during the ribbon cutting for the community owned solar array June 14, 2011. Organizers for Clean Energy Collective are calling the solar farm the largest of its kind in the nation - it allows members of Holy Cross Energy to purchase power from the panels and reap the benefits for their homes without placing solar panels directly on their homes.

Former Colorado Governor Bill Ritter gave the keynote address during a ribbon cutting ceremony at the site, saying that this project is laying down the template for the rest of the country in terms of building community solar energy farms. "We can look at the clean energy agenda and see how to use collectives to help people afford to be involved in clean energy," Ritter said. "It's a way for middle to lower income families to have affordable power and not to have up-front costs."

Ritter is now the director of the Center for New Energy Economy at Colorado State University and has helped set the bar for increasing the use of renewable energy by 30% before the year 2020.

The array covers five acres on a hillside formed by the recent renovation of the Garfield County Regional Airport runway structure. It will offset the equivalent of emissions from 140 homes at 100%, or over its lifetime will equal 131 million car miles or 178,000 trees.

Garfield County Public Information Officer Dale Hancock attended the opening on behalf of the county, and said that the county is pleased to be part of an initiative that could eventually transform the way homes are powered. "The concept we have created at the airport allows homeowners to take ownership of the power from solar arrays, but not have to retain ownership of the arrays themselves," said Hancock. "It allows unusable land to become a valuable part of our county's infrastructure. Everyone benefits; the county gets a discount on power use, the homeowner gets predictably priced green power, and we all benefit from less reliance on the grid."