



# SASCO 2007 Annual Report

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**[www.sustainableSWcolorado.org](http://www.sustainableSWcolorado.org)**

## **I. Chair's Introduction**

This is an exciting time in Durango and across Southwest Colorado. There are an extraordinary number of sustainability-related initiatives going on in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors of our communities. The associated challenge is to connect the dots, so that the energy and money being invested moves us all toward a more sustainable way of living. Werner Heiber, Chair of SASCO's Education & Outreach Committee, has reminded us of a relevant comment from an old Pogo cartoon: "We are confronted with insurmountable opportunities."

I will cite just a few highlights, both from the larger community and from SASCO activities. Important planning exercises have been going on in Durango (the 2007 Comprehensive Plan) and in La Plata County (the "La Plata Compass" strategic planning process now under way). SASCO has had significant opportunities to participate in these efforts, and elected officials and their staff increasingly recognize our group as a sensible voice for advancing sustainability in the region. Adding to our credibility is the ongoing effort of the Food, Agriculture, and Farm-to-School Committee, led ably by Jim Dyer. Through collaboration with related groups and ongoing dialogue with school officials, this group is having a growing impact on renewing local agriculture and improving nutrition for children and adults alike.

A major addition to SASCO's presence in the community has been the semi-monthly e-newsletter assembled by Secretary Lisa Mastny. We hope you find this a useful (and un-intrusive) source of information. If you have events to share or ideas for improvement, please e-mail us at [info@sustainableSWcolorado.org](mailto:info@sustainableSWcolorado.org). The domain name in our e-mail address also points to our website, [www.sustainableSWcolorado.org](http://www.sustainableSWcolorado.org), launched in late 2006, which we aim to develop into an increasingly comprehensive resource for Southwest Colorado.

When we were organizing through 2004 and 2005 and choosing a name for our organization, we deliberately identified "Southwest Colorado" as our area of interest—not just La Plata County. We also articulated the hope that we might extend our range through the Four Corners region. Since SASCO formed, other sustainability groups have organized in San Juan County, New Mexico (Sustainable San Juan), Archuleta County (Southwest Organization for Sustainability [SOS]), and most recently Montezuma County (Montezuma Climate Action Network). Our relationships remain informal, but we have welcomed SOS Chair Denise Rue-Pastin to the SASCO Board in 2007, to ensure that we remember our broader mission.

One of our goals has been to play the role of coordinator for the many efforts already under way in our communities to foster environmental, social, and economic sustainability. SASCO's Ambassadors Committee, led by Rebecca Koeppen, has reached out to the faith community during 2007, and that effort converged with a successful "Green Umbrella" networking meeting on November 10, 2007, organized by our Education and Outreach Committee and attended by 50 representatives of community groups and other individuals. We

foresee following up on this effort by constructing a database of sustainability-related organizations and continuing to foster collaboration among organizations through semiannual networking events.

Another significant effort now under way is fostering a "Buy Local" campaign to support independent local businesses. Several community members, including Marcus Renner, Coordinator of the Fort Lewis College Environmental Center, initiated this effort. It is now continuing under the auspices of SASCO's Sustainable Local Economic Development (SLED) Committee, chaired by Julie Levy. It is very likely that SASCO/SLED will become the local affiliate of the nationwide Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE).

Finally, in a very exciting development, early next year the Southwest Colorado Renewable Energy Society (SWCRES) will merge with SASCO, becoming our new Smart Energy Committee. SWCRES has led local efforts for energy efficiency and renewable energy, particularly by strongly supporting passage of Amendment 37 and working with La Plata Electric Association to expand its smart energy efforts. SASCO collaborated with SWCRES on securing endorsement of the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement by the City of Durango and La Plata County. We are pleased at the prospect of continuing the group's important work as part of SASCO's mission to foster sustainability.

The greatest challenge we face in 2008 and beyond is marshaling individual and collective energy to engage the many opportunities coming our way. To do this, we will need volunteer effort from a wider membership and sufficient financial resources to have at least a small staff to manage the group and its activities. This will require significantly boosting our membership and developing larger funding streams. (Members can join SASCO online at [www.sustainableSWcolorado.org](http://www.sustainableSWcolorado.org); all donations are tax-deductible under our fiscal agency agreement with the Community Foundation Serving Southwest Colorado).

Also, please consider how you might be able to help build sustainability in our community. If every individual engaged his or her passion in a single piece of the larger effort, we could have an enormous impact on our neighbors, on the community at large, and on the futures of our children and grandchildren. *Please join us.*

*Dick White  
Chair, Sustainability Alliance of Southwest Colorado  
November 2007*

## **II. Mission and Functions**

### ***Mission***

SASCO's mission is to help the communities of Southwest Colorado incorporate the concept of sustainability into all local and regional activities. We work with policymakers, business leaders, community groups, and individuals and inform them about the complex linkages among critical areas including environmental quality, social health, and economic development.

### ***Vision***

A sustainable community is one that preserves and restores the integrity of its natural environment, nurtures healthy human and other living systems, and maintains a vital self-reliant economy, generation after generation. A sustainable community meets the basic needs of all people, which include but are not limited to needs for food, water, shelter, health, safety, autonomy, connectedness, and meaning.

### ***Functions***

To fulfill its mission, SASCO seeks to perform the following functions:

- offer coordination and synergistic connections for the diverse individuals and groups working to fulfill community needs;
- develop and maintain a comprehensive and freely available listing of community needs and resources;
- research best practices adopted elsewhere to foster sustainable communities;
- communicate with and educate the community about choices that affect sustainability;
- undertake or support specific projects that foster sustainability;
- instigate funding initiatives to support local sustainability efforts;
- educate the public about implications for sustainability of proposed public policy initiatives;
- as resources permit, coordinate sustainability efforts on a regional scale in Southwestern Colorado and on a bioregional scale in the Four Corners region.

### **III. History**

The Sustainability Alliance of Southwest Colorado (SASCO) incorporated as a Colorado non-profit in early 2006. Key dates in the organization's history follow. The complete [minutes](#) of SASCO's monthly Board meetings are available on our website.

**2002.** Community Summit leads to formation of Sustainable Economic Development Study Circle.

**2002–2004.** Sustainable Economic Development Study Circle meets and reports to community.

#### **2004–2005**

*May.* Breakout group at Community Summit planning workshop discusses formation of "Sustainability Policy Council."

*June.* Initial organization meeting.

*July–November.* Core organizing group holds informal meetings.

*November 2004–December 2005.* Full group meets approximately once a month, resulting in the following outcomes:

- Formation of Farm-to-School effort
- Acknowledgement that energy issues would be addressed by Southwest Colorado Renewable Energy Society ([SWCRES](#))
- Agreement on name (SASCO) and [mission statement](#)
- Presentation at October 2005 Green Business Roundtable
- Agreement to incorporate and nomination of founding Board of Directors

The complete [minutes](#) of these meetings also are available on the SASCO website.

#### **2006**

*January.* Board of Directors holds initial meetings, approves [Bylaws](#) and election of officers.

*August.* SASCO files Articles of Incorporation with Colorado Secretary of State.

*September.* SASCO signs fiscal-agency agreement with the Community Foundation Serving Southwest Colorado, an IRS 501(c)(3) organization, providing tax-exemption umbrella.

*September.* Board of Directors holds strategic planning retreat.

## **IV. Activities in 2006–2007**

### **Food, Agriculture, and Farm to School**

*Chair: Jim Dyer*

*Participants: Board member Katy Pepinsky; numerous other active participants*

Food and agriculture are a critical aspect of sustainability, presenting choices that make a profound impact on our communities and our personal health at least three times a day. The [Food, Agriculture, and Farm to School Committee](#) began in late 2004, growing out of the broad experience and leadership of Jim Dyer, as well as the acknowledgement that SASCO should begin acting toward sustainability even while the larger organization was still taking shape. The Committee has since accomplished a wide range of activities, including:

#### *Farm to School*

- Engaged actively in [comprehensive efforts](#) to bring healthy local food into our schools, establish school gardens, and help children learn about our local farms and ranches and the products they grow.

#### *Local Food System Assessment*

- Helped prepare a USDA-funded local [study](#) by Growing Partners of how our local food system works now and what opportunities exist to strengthen it to serve all in our community.

#### *Mesa Verde Country Guide to Local Sustainable Food & Fiber*

- Helped update a [directory](#) of local producers who are willing to sell directly to consumers, local food stores, and restaurants.

#### *Homegrown Conference*

- Helped prepare for and made presentations at the February 9–10, 2007 "[Homegrown](#)" Local Food Conference at Fort Lewis College.

#### *Education*

- Educated the community through articles and other writings. For example, in "[Rebuilding Our Local Food System in Southwest Colorado](#)," Jim Dyer elaborates on why and how to bring back a healthy food system, providing estimates of the local food market and a variety of tips on how to get involved.

#### *Policy & Planning*

- Provided input on the proposed County Land Use Code, planning and visioning initiatives, and other [local policies](#) affecting local farms and ranches, marketing opportunities, and food access for all in our community. At the same time, SASCO has recognized that

strengthening our local food system will require changes in policy at the [state and federal levels](#).

## **Sustainable Local Economic Development (SLED)**

*Chair: Julie Levy*

*Participants: Board member Tom Riesing; Tim Wheeler*

Economic vitality is an essential component of sustainability. SASCO's SLED Committee grew out of discussions at the Board of Directors strategic planning retreat in September 2006. Its goal is to leverage cooperation with other local organizations to develop a meaningful strategy for economic development by keeping dollars from flowing out of our community.

Principal efforts since September 2006 include the following.

### "Buy Local" Campaign

- Spearheaded an effort to educate the public on consumer spending habits in cooperation with the Fort Lewis College Environmental Center and local business owners. The campaign includes the establishment of an Independent Business Alliance and support for locally owned, independent businesses through the production of a coupon and resource book.

### Economic Multiplier Study

- Took steps to begin researching and developing a local economic multiplier study to measure the retention of dollars in the local economy.

### 4CORE

- Participated actively in the Organizing Committee for the proposed Four Corners Office of Resource Efficiency (4CORE), in particular to help begin a funding mechanism to provide local investments in energy efficiency and renewable power.

## **SASCO Ambassadors**

*Chair: Rebecca Koeppen*

*Participants: Board members Bliss Bruen and Roy Horvath*

One-on-one networking is important to build alliances for sustainability. SASCO's Ambassadors Committee was formed at the 2006 strategic planning retreat. Its goal has been to firmly establish relationships with groups in the sustainability community to leverage or coordinate efforts (without duplicating work already being done). In September 2007, the committee merged with

SASCO's Education and Outreach Committee because of the close alignment between their missions and goals.

Principal efforts since September 2006 include the following.

#### Internal Coordination

- Developed a uniform protocol to guide conversations with other groups and to gain consistent information about their efforts.

#### Outreach to Faith Groups

- Met with nine Durango congregation pastors, as well as other individuals, to discuss alignment of religion-based stewardship with our mission of sustainability.
- Created a Sustainability/Stewardship rack-card for distribution, particularly in meetings with church groups concerned about stewardship of the Earth. The card has examples on one side and definitions on the other

#### Outreach to Educational Groups

- Initiated a conversation with the Durango 9-R School District on what sustainability education might look like within the district curriculum, specifically on how it fits the "project based learning" model.
- Met with student representatives of the Future Farmers of America and Aerospace Teams at Durango High School to explore partnerships in education.

#### Networking

- Worked with the Education and Outreach Committee on a community "Green Umbrella" networking Meeting held November 10, 2007.

### **Education and Outreach**

*Chair: Werner Heiber*

*Participants: Board members Lisa Mastny, Sue Morris, and Dick White; Anne and Paul Sheldon*

The mission of the E&O team is to inform the larger community about the importance of sustainability in our daily lives and for future generations. Activities and achievements include:

#### Education

- Developed and launched the Web site, [www.sustainableSWcolorado.org](http://www.sustainableSWcolorado.org), with special assistance from Food/Ag/Farm-to-School Chair Jim Dyer and volunteer webmaster Robin Cole.

- Created *SASCO E-News*, a semi-monthly electronic newsletter, which has become the best local source for sustainability events, news, and articles. The distribution list now stands at 352 subscribers.
- Organized local presentation of the Northwest Earth Institute discussion course, "[Global Warming: Changing CO<sub>2</sub>urse](#)." The four-session course, led by Alan Rolston, was attended by eight community members who continue to meet and volunteer as needed.
- Created a PowerPoint presentation titled "Gathering Under the Green Umbrella" to be used to address different audiences in the region.
- Created three different rack-cards directed toward sustainability actions focusing on different audiences. The cards address Local Food, Energy, and Stewardship.

### Media Appearances

SASCO's work was featured in a variety of print, online, and broadcast media in 2007:

- February. The *Durango Herald* published a full-page spread on efforts by the Food, Agriculture, and Farm-to-School Committee and other groups to get local food into the region's schools. The *Durango Telegraph* also published an [article](#) on the "Homegrown" local foods conference.
- March. KDUR community radio's "Making Waves" program featured an interview with Board Chair Dick White on the topic of climate change as well as a discussion with Rebecca Koeppen and Lisa Mastny on SASCO's activities and the importance of fostering sustainability in our community.
- April. SASCO Board members Erick Aune and July Levy were interviewed for a City Span 10 "Talk of the Town" program about the Grassroots Vision Project.
- April. The *Durango Herald* published an [article](#) highlighting SASCO's efforts to make connections in the community and outlined current and planned activities.
- May. The *Durango Telegraph* published an [article](#) on the Durango "green purchasing" workshop with national expert Scot Case, co-sponsored by SASCO, featuring an interview with Board Member Lisa Mastny.
- May. Board Chair Dick White and Treasurer Tom Riesing were interviewed about "Sustainability" for the City Span 10 TV program "Talk of the Town," with Eco-Home Center owner Laurie Dickson and moderator Tami Graham.
- July. The *Durango Telegraph* featured an [article](#) on efforts by SASCO's Farm-to-School Committee and others to get local foods into the community. The article included SASCO's list of "[10 Steps to Going Local](#)." Board member Katy Pepinsky also contributed an [article](#) on local food and the county fair.
- October. Board Member Lisa Mastny was interviewed for the City Span 10 TV program "City Speak" with Assistant City Manager Greg Caton, which focused on the topic "Being Green."
- November. The *Durango Herald* published an [article](#) highlighting the November 10 "Green Umbrella" networking conference.

### Outreach Events

SASCO sponsored the following events and activities in 2007:

- April. SASCO co-sponsored three local events with nationally recognized green purchasing expert Scot Case. Scot facilitated a full-day workshop with purchasers from the City of Durango, La Plata County, 9-R School District, Fort Lewis College, LPEA, and local San Juan Public Lands offices, advising them on how to integrate environmentally friendly purchases into their procurement strategies. Scot also gave a lunchtime talk at the Green Business Roundtable and an evening talk at Fort Lewis College.
- April. Guest speaker Scott Huffman from Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives gave a presentation titled "'Systems Thinking Can Effect the Economic and Environmental Future of Durango,'" which discussed the concept of systems design and how it can be used to affect the economics and ecology of a region.
- June. Board member Katy Pepinsky and local food expert Shari Fitzgerald gave a presentation titled "What's Cooking in Your Local Food System?," where they highlighted the results of the La Plata County Food Assessment, provided an update on local foods activities in the area, and offered practical tips on how residents can help boost community food security.
- August. SASCO co-sponsored the first screening of the local film "Heart and Soil" by Mara LeGrand, describing the lives of 15 local families making their living by growing vegetables or raising animals. The screening attracted more than 500 people, and the film is now making the rounds of different film festivals.
- October. SASCO and Alpine Bank co-sponsored a presentation and two informal discussion sessions with environmental expert John Gitchell. The afternoon meetings gave participants from local government and the business community the opportunity to ask specific questions about environmental management and sustainability and to address issues of interest in more depth. The evening talk was of more general interest to the community.
- October. SASCO Chair Dick White gave a presentation titled "Climate Change and the Urgent Need for Action," summarizing the potential to meet most or all of the projected world energy demand through energy conservation and renewable energy and introducing Focus the Nation, a national campus-based initiative to place global warming on the political agenda for 2008. The event was part of the FLC Environmental Center's World Awareness Week.
- November. SASCO sponsored a community-wide networking event, "Opening the Green Umbrella," on November 10 for local nonprofits and individuals desiring greater collaboration and networking among sustainability advocates. The event was attended by 50 participants from a wide range of local groups and included presentations by SASCO Chair Dick White and Janna Six with the Alliance for Sustainable Colorado.

### Policy

SASCO contributed to several important local political processes in 2006 and 2007. It:

- Played an integral role in the creation of the City of Durango's [2007 Comprehensive Plan](#), a process that took two years to complete. SASCO ensured the inclusion of 10 sustainability-related action items and insisted that sustainability be one of six items of highest priority.
- Wrote a proposal to the City of Durango with the goal of "creating a systems approach and best practices research" to provide decision makers with the needed information how to make Durango more sustainable.
- Together with Southwest Colorado Renewable Energy Society (SWCRES), led a successful effort to have the City of Durango and La Plata County endorse the [U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement](#).
- Invited elected representatives from local government to attend SASCO monthly Board meetings and to share ideas about sustainability and regional policy. Attendees included: La Plata County Commissioners Kellie Hotter, Joelle Riddle, and Wally White and Durango City Councilors Scott Graham, Doug Lyons, Leigh Meigs, Renee Parsons, and Michael Rendon.

### Resources

- Created a database of organizations and individuals concerned with sustainability.

## **V. 2008 and Beyond**

Several priorities for 2008 are becoming clear already. Others will emerge as community events unfold. Plans include:

- Solidifying the merger with SWCRES in January 2008.
- Formation of a Policy Committee to assess the diverse community activities around sustainability and to advocate with a single voice for development of a sustainability action plan to be adopted by all local jurisdictions.
- Fundraising efforts to support SASCO activities and possibly enable hiring of a part-time Executive Director and/or clerical assistance.
- Significant expansion of the SASCO website and development of a SASCO "wiki" that will become a depository for information about the community.
- Planning of semi-annual sustainability networking events to follow the model of the November 10, 2007, "Green Umbrella" event.

These and specific committee priorities will form the agenda for a Board of Directors strategic planning retreat in January 2008.

## **VI. Staff and Board of Directors**

SASCO currently employs no paid staff. All of our activities are carried out by individual Board members and through the generous contributions of volunteer time.

### ***SASCO Board of Directors***

Erick Aune (2006–2007)  
Bliss Bruen (2006–2007)  
Jim Dyer (2006–2008)  
Ron Englander (2006)  
Roy Horvath (2006–2007)  
Werner Heiber (2006–2008)  
Rebecca Koeppen (2006–2007), *Vice Chair* (2006–)  
Julie Levy (2006, 2007–2009)  
Lisa Mastny (2007–2009), *Secretary* (2007–)  
Sue Morris (2007)  
Katy Pepinsky (2006, 2007–2009), *Secretary* (2006)  
Tom Riesing (2006–2008), *Treasurer* (2006–)  
Patricia Robertson (2006)  
Denise Rue-Pastin (2007)  
Tim Wheeler (2006)  
Dick White (2006–2008), *Chair* (2006–)

Board meetings normally occur on the second Thursday of each month. Board elections are held prior to the annual meeting, which in 2007 takes place on December 13. Members are invited to contribute nominations, including self-nominations. On November 8, 2007, the Board voted to change the standard length of Board service from 3 years to 2. The 2007 elections will fill four 2-year terms and two 1-year terms (to fill the vacancies created by the resignations of Bliss Bruen and Sue Morris effective at the end of 2007).

### ***SASCO Executive Committee***

*Chair:* Dick White  
*Vice-Chair:* Rebecca Koeppen  
*Secretary:* Lisa Mastny  
*Treasurer:* Tom Riesing

The four officers of the Board of Directors serve as the Executive Committee. They prepare the Board agendas, recommend procedural matters to the Board, and otherwise carry on organization business between Board meetings.

## **VII. Membership and Finances**

### ***Membership***

As of October 26, 2007, the SASCO membership comprised 48 dues-paying individuals who contributed a total of \$1,690. The distribution of 2006–2007 contributions was as follows.

- \$10–\$19: 24 members, for a total of \$240
- \$20–\$49: 14 members, for a total of \$350
- \$50–\$99: 8 members, for a total of \$450
- \$100–\$499: 1 member, for a total of \$150
- \$500: 1 member, for a total of \$500.

We offer special thanks to Lorrie and Rick Carlson for a challenge grant that jumpstarted our initial membership drive in 2006. We also extend our thanks to Tim Wheeler (Durango Coffee Company), Richard Grossman, Faye Schrater, Dick White, Tom Riesing, David Rich, Marye Jackson, Claire Bradshaw, and Alison Dance for their generous contributions.

### ***Finances***

As of October 15, 2007, the balance in the SASCO account at the Community Foundation stood at \$1,185. The only expenditure during the year greater than \$100 was the purchase of a color laser printer for use in education and outreach efforts.