

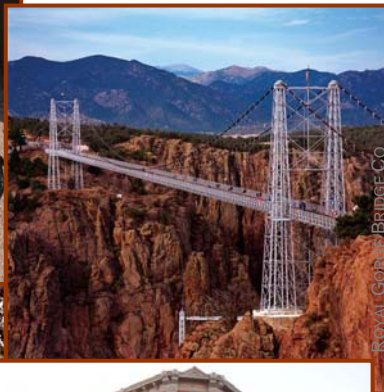
Sangre de Cristo Resource Conservation & Development Council

FIVE-COUNTY CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

Five Counties Cooperate to Increase Heritage Tourism in Southern Colorado



Representatives from chambers of commerce, tourism boards, and other organizations from five counties in south-central Colorado are working together to develop heritage tourism as an expanded economic sector. Located between two state heritage tourism regions and at the intersection of major highways, the five-county group is working to develop a regional identity while recognizing the distinctiveness of each community.



The group engaged Judy Walden of the Walden Mills Group to conduct an initial assessment of the area's heritage resources, challenges, and opportunities. The assessment identified "an extraordinary inventory of historic, cultural, and scenic assets; centers of excellence in the performing and visual arts; and ethnic histories second to none in the state". The assessment was funded by local tourism groups, Colorado State University, and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

Based on the results of the assessment, the RC&D Council applied for and was awarded a grant from the Colorado Council on the Arts to develop a regional marketing map highlighting heritage tourism and the arts. The Council sponsored

the grant on behalf of the five-county heritage tourism group. Funding from local tourism groups, Colorado State University, and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs round out funding for the project. This unique approach to uniting tourism and the arts garnered the group an invitation to speak on the project at the Governor's Tourism Conference held in Pueblo, Colorado, in October 2009.

The RC&D Council has now received several grants to help the group develop a Strategic Plan and Step-by-Step Action Plan that includes regional branding and marketing strategies and tourism product development.

