

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact:

Lara Whitley

lara@aspencore.org, 970.309.8908



**CORE ANNOUNCES PROGRAM CHANGES FOR 2021
New Chapter for Renewable Energy Mitigation Program Focuses
100% of CORE Rebates and Grants in Pitkin County**

Aspen, CO (October 8, 2020) — The Community Office for Resource Efficiency (CORE) is announcing a change to its service territory that will ensure the pioneering nonprofit’s continued leadership in climate protection in the Roaring Fork Valley, but will have ramifications for some homeowners, businesses and developers in the lower valley.

Due to declining funds in the Renewable Energy Mitigation Program (REMP), a carbon-fee program of Pitkin County and the City of Aspen whose funds CORE manages, the nonprofit will focus all of its grants and rebates in Pitkin County, effective January 1, 2021. This program change means CORE incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency will no longer be available in the Roaring Fork Valley portions of Garfield and Gunnison counties, and may have effects in Eagle County. For projects completed, rebate applications submitted, and grants approved by December 31, 2020, regardless of project location within the Roaring Fork Valley, funding will still be awarded. CORE will continue to collaborate with partners and stakeholders on regional climate action, such as the EV Sales Event led by Garfield Clean Energy, building code trainings, and Imagine Climate, CORE’s monthlong exploration of climate culture.

“We are extremely proud of the achievements we have created together with all of the communities and more than 6,000 residents of the Roaring Fork Valley since we began our climate regeneration work in 1994,” said Mona Newton, CORE Executive Director. “When the new REMF reality hit this year, it was very sad to realize that responsible use of the funds would mean reducing our service area. The silver lining is knowing that it’s because more people are installing renewable energy systems at home and work.”

“This is a new chapter for REMP and for CORE,” said George Newman, Pitkin County Board member and CORE board chair. “We remain as committed as ever to the CORE mission: leading the upper Roaring Fork Valley to a carbon-free, net-zero energy future. While we are reducing our territory, we are not reducing the scope of our work, nor our dedication to restoring the climate, which we have been championing for more than 25 years.”

Timing

In 2016, Pitkin County initiated a lengthy reexamination of its building codes, and a subsequent review of REMP, with an eye toward meeting the local governments’ climate goals. This survey resulted in the strengthening of the code to higher energy standards, including adoption of the 2015 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) and requiring a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Index, which were approved by the County on April 22, 2020. Previously, builders could mitigate high energy use and attendant carbon emissions of a project by installing on-site renewable energy or paying a mitigation fee into the REMP fund. The stricter requirements adopted this year incentivized on-site renewable energy over in-lieu payments into REMP. This shift coincided with falling prices of solar energy systems, a market trend which pushed developers further toward on-site mitigation. As a consequence, fewer people were making mitigation payments and REMP funds declined dramatically, to less than half of what they were the year prior.

The economic reality of the shrinking funds prompted the question among elected officials and CORE board members: “How do we keep moving the needle on climate change with fewer funds?” The answer, Pitkin Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and City of Aspen Council concluded, was to focus funding on Pitkin County.

“We have a responsibility to meet the needs of the direct community where funds are collected,” said Ward Hauenstein, City of Aspen Councilman and CORE board member “This will allow us to redouble our efforts and provide greater service in Aspen and Pitkin County. There is money for Pitkin County residents who want to do the vital work of lowering their carbon footprint.”

Eagle County

One challenge for the organization is how this decision would affect Eagle County. Forty percent of Basalt town residents are located in Pitkin County, while the other 60% fall within Eagle County boundaries. There are also residents of Roaring Fork Valley towns like El Jebel whose homes are situated in Eagle County. In total, 18% of Eagle County residents reside on the Roaring Fork Valley side of the county. Cutting them out of the equation would strand these community members who, unlike Garfield County residents who are served by Garfield Clean

Energy and CLEER, have no comparable energy nonprofits within the watershed. As a result, CORE is currently in conversations with Eagle County and the Town of Basalt to provide funding — potentially matching the local REMP contributions — to CORE for continued service (including rebates and grants) to Eagle County residents who live in the Roaring Fork Valley. The negotiations are ongoing.

REMP Background

REMP is a groundbreaking carbon fee program— the first of its kind in the world — designed in Aspen and Pitkin County, Colorado, in 1999 to mitigate the environmental impacts and greenhouse gases produced by snowmelt systems, pools and spas. The long-term goals of the REMP program are to fund energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, while speeding the Roaring Fork Valley’s progress toward a sustainable energy future.

REMP is part of Aspen and Pitkin County’s Energy Code that applies to new construction, remodels and additions. Under REMP, homeowners and commercial property owners who choose to install energy using systems such as snowmelt, outdoor pools, spas, or — in Pitkin County — large square footage, have the option of installing a renewable energy system on site or choosing a mitigation payment option instead. Installing solar photovoltaics (PV), solar water heating, or geothermal heat pump systems are examples of renewable energy projects that can earn on-site renewable credits toward REMP. REMP monies are collected by the County and City’s Community Development Departments when building permits are issued. The money is held by their respective Finance Departments until the Board of County Commissioners and City Council approve a REMP spending proposal. These proposals are developed and administered by CORE, whose board is made up of municipal, utility and citizen members. CORE uses the monies to fund grants and rebates in Pitkin County for energy efficiency and renewable energy, with oversight from the City and County.

CORE invites community members with questions to reach out to Executive Director Mona Newton at mona@aspencore.org. More at www.aspencore.org and 970-925-9775.

###

Since 1994, CORE has been helping Roaring Fork Valley residents save energy and cut carbon emissions to mitigate climate change. The nonprofit organization was created by a group of visionary citizens, local governments and utilities that came together a quarter of a century ago to conserve natural resources. From the outset, CORE established itself as an innovative leader, breaking ground with the nation’s first carbon mitigation fee (REMP), Colorado’s first wind energy and one of the earliest solar rebate programs in the US. CORE’s mission is to lead the upper Roaring Fork Valley to a carbon-free, net-zero energy future. More at www.aspencore.org and 970.925.9775.