



ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS OF NORTHWEST COLORADO

January 27, 2015

Colorado Division of Fire Prevention & Control
Center of Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting
Attn: Interim Director Melissa Lineberger
690 Kipling Street, Suite 2000
Lakewood, CO 80215

Dear Ms. Lineberger:

Please accept this letter as a hearty endorsement of locating the Center of Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting in Rifle, Colorado. Rifle has many unique qualities that make it an ideal location for siting the Center of Excellence.

The proposed site in Rifle for the Center of Excellence is located in the main building at the Rifle Garfield County airport. The site is available for near immediate occupancy and is situated such that it can provide opportunities for rapid expansion. Not to mention it is within 1 hour of three other commercial airports.

Rifle is centrally located among landscapes ranging from high mountain desert to subalpine mountain tops at more than 14,000 feet in altitude. This topography will provide excellent training opportunities as well as partnership opportunities with varied federal agencies like the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service (USFWS) and Bureau of Reclamation.

Rifle is well situated to take advantage of education and research programs being conducted at Western Colorado institutions of higher learning; namely Colorado Mesa University (CMU), Colorado Mountain College (CMC), Colorado Northwestern Community College (CNCC) and Western Colorado Community College (WCCC). These education institutions offer educational opportunities ranging from pilot training to aviation maintenance and technology to fire science technology and fire academy to wild land fire management not to mention wilderness EMS, mechanical engineering (in

cooperation with Colorado University (CU) in Boulder. Colorado's land grant education institution, Colorado State University (CSU), also boasts numerous extension offices throughout Western Colorado where many research projects having to do with flora, fauna and environmental concerns are conducted.

Rifle has worked diligently with private providers to deliver affordable, abundant and redundant broadband service to the proposed location. The provider has significant capacity available to deliver increased bandwidth as needs arise in an affordable manner.

Facility lease costs for this site are not likely to be beaten in any other proposal and expansion can be easily accommodated. With the close proximity to I-70 and the lack of traffic congestion, this makes Rifle an ideal place for rapid response and unfettered research. Rifle is centrally located in the area of Colorado where the majority of wildfires occur and, as such, is already well connected to the existing state and federal aerial firefighting base operation.

There are few locations that can offer the unique qualities available in Rifle for the location of the Center of Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting. Resources, manpower, education, quality of life are all readily available in this location and, in our view, Rifle is the premiere location for siting the Center of Excellence.

Thank you for considering our comments. If you have questions regarding our very strong support regarding the location of the Center of Excellence, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



Mike Samson
Chairman, AGNC
Garfield County



Jeff Eskelson
Vice Chairman, AGNC
Rio Blanco County