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**Headwater Economics Report Show Colorado's Economy is
Growing and Outperforming Broader U.S. Economy**

*Outdoor Quality of Life Driving "Amenity Migration" of
People, Investment, Businesses, and Jobs into the State*

Denver, CO – May 30, 2012 – It's no secret that Colorado is an attractive place, but does this translate into an economic competitive advantage? The answer – according to a new analysis by Headwaters Economics (Bozeman, Mont.) released May 30 – is a resounding yes. The Headwaters Economics study, *West is Best: Colorado's Economy and Attracting New Business Economic Report*, shows Colorado outperforming the nation in population, employment and personal income growth.

At a roundtable discussion today with business and economic development leaders and policy makers, Headwaters Economics Executive Director and chief economist Dr. Ray Rasker reviewed which sectors grew the most during the decade and why. The report details the link between Colorado's public lands and outdoor quality of life and the addition of businesses and new jobs. Colorado is attracting people and investment, while creating businesses faster than the U.S. overall. According to the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Colorado ranks No.5 in terms of entrepreneurial activity.

Among the key findings, from 2000 to 2010:

- Colorado employment grew 8 percent, compared to 5 percent for the United States during the same period.
- The state's population increased 17 percent, compared to 10 percent for the United States during the same period.
- Real personal income grew by 15 percent, compared to 14 percent for the United States.
- Colorado added 228,893 new jobs, with the great majority of them from service related industries. Fastest-growing sectors included health care, professional and technical services such as engineers and architects, finance and insurance, and government.

"Colorado also reflects an economic trend seen in other Western States," said Rasker. "Western non-metro counties with more than 30 percent of federally protected public lands increased jobs by 345 percent from 1970-2010. These jobs extend far beyond tourism and include higher-paying service sectors as well such as engineers, accountants, or software developers."

In comparison, the West is Best report noted that non-metro counties with no protected outdoor spaces increased employment by 83 percent over the same time period.

“More and more frequently, the research shows that Colorado enjoys an amenity migration that gives it an advantage compared to other states,” continued Rasker. “This report quantifies this phenomenon: People create economic opportunities and people are drawn to beautiful natural settings and highly livable communities. Firms which could locate anywhere are choosing Colorado and its non-metro counties specifically to find this quality environment.”

A recent, related poll, conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, found nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of Colorado small business owners agree, with 43 percent strongly agreeing, that access to parks, public lands and other outdoor opportunities is a large part of the reason they live and do business in Colorado.

Fishpond Inc., which manufactures angling and outdoor travel products, recently relocated its distribution center from Kansas City to an 18,000-square-foot facility in Denver. Said John Land Le Coq, the company’s co-founder, “Colorado was the ideal place for several reasons, including finding the right employees to make my business thrive.”

Le Coq joined David White, executive vice president - marketing, Colorado Springs Regional Economic Development Corporation (CSREDC), on a panel sharing their experiences on the connection between business success and the lifestyle amenities afforded by Colorado’s outdoor offerings. In addition, White gave attendees a preview of CSREDC’s new marketing campaign that highlights Colorado Springs and El Paso County’s quality of life enticements for businesses seeking to relocate or start-up.

The meeting, held at the newly opened History Colorado Center, ended with comments and discussion from other audience members on additional ways Colorado can further leverage the connection between business success and the lifestyle and amenities afforded by Colorado’s public lands and outdoor lifestyle.

For additional charts and graphs, and full report, click on this link:

http://headwaterseconomics.org/wphw/wp-content/uploads/Colorado_WestisBest.pdf

About Headwaters Economics

Headwaters Economics is an independent, nonprofit research group that assists the public and elected officials in making informed choices about land management and community development decisions in the West, <http://headwaterseconomics.org>.