



ENERGY BUZZ

Harnessing solar energy in new ways.

Open space abounds in Colorado, and Carbondale's **Clean Energy Collective (CEC)** is turning unusable swaths of that land into alternative power sources. The three-year-old company already broke new ground in the energy sector by developing large-scale solar facilities collectively owned by opt-in utility customers.

The kicker: The arrays are placed on otherwise wasted pieces of land, such as idle runway tracts. This summer, CEC enters the Front Range with a solar garden near Windsor. ¶

The next major step could be landfills: CEC wants to top garbage heaps with solar panels. "It makes sense to look for compromised land that we can make productive again," says founder Paul Spencer. "Landfills are a natural fit." The company is only in the negotiation phase, but Colorado would be the first state to see this kind of community-owned solar repurposing—meaning your discarded wrappers could soon become more than just an eyesore.

—EUGENE BUCHANAN

BY THE NUMBERS

The number of Colorado waterways on the 2012 list of America's Most Endangered Rivers. The Crystal and Green rivers, in western and northwestern Colorado, respectively, were among the 10 identified by advocacy group American Rivers. americanrivers.org



River Banks

Fishing may be the next frontier for Colorado ranchers.

◆ SHANNON SKELTON IS NOT your average homebuilder. He doesn't assemble drywall or hammer nails or measure doorframes. But as founder and president of CFI Global Fisheries Management, he does create homes—they just happen to be for fish. Skelton and his team rehabilitate depleted rivers and streams into sustainable habitats for Colorado's

trout—and in doing so, put money in the pockets of landowners.

Ranchers and farmers have long viewed their on-property water sources as irrigation for crops, rations for their livestock, and private playgrounds, often running fly fishermen off their property. What many don't recognize is the economic potential of having a fishery as part of their landscape. Ranchers can charge for casting on their largely unfished land.

CFI can help those landowners who have come around. The Fort Collins-based company starts by identifying problem areas in a rancher's streams or ponds, such as livestock-trampled banks or the accumulation of nonnative vegetation, which can harm the fish's food sources. Then, incorporating the rancher's vision for his or her river, CFI creates a blueprint. The team spends months poring over computer models before firing up the bulldozers to mold the water source into the optimal home for native species. "It's about long-term sustainability," Skelton says. "We want to restore and perpetuate the legacy of these properties."

A landowner will notice life returning to the water source within the first day. And it's a win-win-win: The fish get a healthy home; fishermen can cast in a new, unexplored stretch; and the rancher improves the vitality of his land. Even Skelton gets something out of it: Periodically, he must return to check the area's progress (read: go fishing). He calls it "research." —LRM