Weld County Profile

Weld County[22] is the third largest county in the state of Colorado, covering approximately 4,000 square miles, or twice the size of Delaware. Weld County is also the most agriculturally productive county in Colorado, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.[23]

The county population grew 39.7 percent between 2000 and 2010, and was the fastest growing county in the United States between 2000 and 2004. Weld County has the ninth largest population of the state's 64 counties, and outpaced the state's overall growth, climbing 40 percent between 2000 and 2015, while the state population overall increased by 26 percent. The county has outpaced the state's average growth every year since 2000, and local officials expect the county to experience a 3.75 percent compounded growth rate each year from 2015 to 2035, more than double the expected annual compounded growth rate for Colorado overall.

The number of county residents employed in oil and gas jumped 160 percent between 2009 and 2016, from 1,870 to 4,870 workers, according to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

Death Statistics

In order to better understand what impacts, if any, oil and gas development may be having in the D-J Basin, Energy In Depth analyzed death statistics from 2002 through 2015 in counties located within the basin. This led to a focus on the county where the greatest intensity of production has occurred: Weld County.

Here is a chart compiling the publicly available data from CDPHE[24] and COGCC.[25]

Weld County, Colo. Health Indicators	2002	2015	Percent Change
Total population	198,975	284,876	+43.2 %
Population 65+	17,492	32,557	+86.1 %
Percentage of population	8.8%	11.4%	+29.5%
Rates of death for all causes	616.7	614	-0.4 %
Rates of death for:			
All cancers	131.7	129.2	-1.9 %
All heart diseases	143.7	113	-21.4 %
All chronic lower respiratory diseases	45.2	41.1	-9.1 %
Oil and gas wells	12,481 (COGCC)	27,063 (COGCC)	+116.8%

The total population of Weld County grew by more than 43 percent, or nearly 86,000 residents, from 2002 to 2015. The number of residents 65 years of age or older nearly doubled in the same time period, a 29.5 percent increase in the percentage this age group represents in the total population, as it grew from 8.8 percent to 11.4 percent of the total county population. This is especially notable given the fact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists heart disease, cancer, and lower respiratory disease as the leading causes of death for persons age 65 and over.[26]

22 "The Weld County Population & Development Report," Weld County, September 26, 2016.
23 Ibid.
24 "Colorado Health and Environmental Data," CDPHE.
25 "GIS Online," COGCC.
26 "Older Persons' Health," National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.