



January 6, 2010, Julie Wootton, Staff Writer, *Elko Daily Free Press*

County's population increased 1.5 percent

ELKO — Elko County's population increased about 1.5 percent while the state population may have declined.

The county gained 763 people between July 2008 and July 2009 for a total of 50,561 residents, the Associated Press recently reported.

Pam Borda, executive director of the Elko County Economic Diversification Authority, said she expects to see continued growth.

"We had a significant increase in additional businesses last year," Borda said.

Elko County Manager Rob Stokes also said the population increase isn't surprising.

"It's an indication that the economy is doing relatively well," he said.

State demographer Jeff Hardcastle told the Associated Press that Nevada's population dropped by 27,677 people, or about 1 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau, which uses different estimates, estimated that Nevada's population actually increased by 1 percent.

Lander County saw an increase of 112 people, while 73 more people were reported in Mineral County and nine more in Eureka County. Other counties saw population declines.

Borda said people from other areas of the state who are unemployed come to Elko looking for work since the county isn't being affected as much by the economic recession.

"There is no shortage of work in Elko," she said.

Sheri Eklund-Brown, chairwoman of the Elko County Commission, said she would attribute population growth mainly to new employees at mine sites, construction workers and others coming to the county to look for employment.

"The gold mine associated counties have been about the only counties in Nevada to see economic stability, commercial growth and population growth during these difficult times," Eklund-Brown said.

Borda said part of the population increase may just be normal growth. However, she said business recruitment efforts have also played a role.

"Some of why the population went up may have been due to our recruiting of the workforce," Borda said.



Despite a countywide population increase, student enrollment in the Elko County School District has declined over the past few years.

Weighted enrollment is estimated at 9,088 students, down about 229 from the 2009 fiscal year.

The decline can be attributed mainly to the opening of the Elko Institute for Academic Achievement this year. The school has nearly 200 students enrolled.

Jeff Zander, assistant superintendent for finance and facilities, said kindergarten students are counted as sixth-tenths of a student for enrollment and budgeting purposes.

Zander said enrollment in outlying parts of the county has declined a little, while enrollment has increased in Elko and West Wendover.

Enrollment at Carlin Combined Schools has remained relatively static, he said.