

# Institute blends ecology, profit



Steve Porter, Northern Colorado Business Report

**GREEN ACRES** — This 80-acre spread southwest of Loveland is the new home of the Institute of Ecconomics, which moved from its former home in Joplin, Mo., after the death of founder Dennis Weaver.

## Dennis Weaver group finds new Loveland home

By Steve Porter  
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LOVELAND — Television and movie actor Dennis Weaver had a long and illustrious career, but it wasn't until later in life that he got involved in causes that gave him the most satisfaction.

Co-star of the 1960s' TV show "Gunsmoke" and star of the 1970s' hit "McCloud," Weaver entertained

generations of fans. But the native of Joplin, Mo., took on another role in the 1990s when he began advocating for environmentally friendly home construction and lived in a house made of recycled earth-filled tires in Ridgeway, Colo.

Weaver also coined the term "ecolonomics" — a blending of ecology and economics — and founded the Institute of Ecconomics on the campus of Missouri Southern State University in Joplin in 1993.

After Weaver died of cancer in 2006, a change in leadership in the Institute led to a move from Missouri to Northern Colorado. An anonymous donor provided an 80-

acre estate southwest of Loveland to help carry on Weaver's vision of funding projects that benefit the environment yet can still turn a profit.

That's where Loveland residents Scott Fardulis and Wayne Dorband come into the picture. Fardulis, Institute chairman and CEO, met Weaver in the mid-1990s through business dealings and was impressed by his passion.

"It consumed every cell of his body," Fardulis recalled. "He was passionate about it. But he was not a tree-hugger. He was truly passionate for the economy as well. He wanted to make it so (ecology and

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**AQUAPONICS RESEARCH** – Institute President Wayne Dorband checks the status of some research in aquaponics going on at a field station near Carter Lake. The site will be used to study a variety of affordable, environmentally friendly projects under consideration for funding by the institute.

## ECOLONOMICS, from 1A

economy) were not two different hemispheres but two sides of the same coin, as he often said.”

### Green real estate

The Institute of Ecolonomics' new home will be the focal point of the nonprofit side of its mission.

On the for-profit side, Institute President Dorband is founder of Mountain Sky Group, a Northern Colorado-based, green real estate development company, as well as Cherokee Investment and International Risk Group, two of the largest redevelopers of environmentally contaminated real estate in the world.

IRG has helped clean up several sites around the nation, including Lowry Air Force Base near Denver which was closed in 1994 and is now under commercial and residential redevelopment.

“We're kind of unique in that we're a combination of for-profit and nonprofit ventures,” Dorband said, noting that Mountain Sky is serving as the management portion of the enterprise. “Our niche is in attracting technological innovations and businesses that are about cleaning up our natural resources, primarily air, water and soil.”

### Getting it done

Fardulis, who formerly served as president of Loveland-based Monarch Youth Homes, said the Institute is focused on helping launch projects that promote protection of the environment, recycling and that can also make money.

“As Dennis said many times, until we can show there's a profit in ecology, it won't get done,” he said.

Dorband, a former college professor, said the Institute already has received more than 40 project proposals and is studying about a dozen for possible funding. They've already received one especially promising proposal that involves a method of cleaning contaminated land sites at about one-fifth

## Home on the Web

For more information on the Institute of Ecolonomics, visit [www.ecolonomics.org](http://www.ecolonomics.org).

current costs.

“Our real goal is to bring good ideas, projects and technologies to market,” he said.

“We want to attract through the institute modern-day technologies that will be utilized to create a stronger economy,” Fardulis added.

### Volunteers, donors sought

Fardulis said the Institute is looking for volunteers to help get it off the ground. “It doesn't matter about their background — they just have to be willing to roll up their sleeves and get involved in our projects,” he said.

Also sought, he said, are donors and investors and people with good ideas. “We strongly encourage anyone who has a project that is economic to bring it to us,” he said.

The newly reborn Institute has been up and running about six months after moving to Colorado, where Weaver's wife of 60 years, Gerry, still lives in their “Earthship” home in Ridgeway.

Fardulis said he talks to Gerry Weaver regularly and is happy to be carrying on her late husband's vision.

“She was very concerned that his vision would carry on after his passing,” he said. “I think it's more impactful today than it ever was before his passing.”

Fardulis said he has nothing but admiration for the late star. “Dennis Weaver was one of the first people to put his money where his mouth is,” he said. “Dennis' greatest success in life was in getting people excited about ecolonomics.”



**FARDULIS**