Fall 2013

Launch of Updated Yellow Wood Website
Green Community Technologies
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Green Community Technologies®

Biomass Resources
We are excited to share three resources for folks who want to learn more about woody biomass.

1) Guide to Public Outreach for Biomass Projects: This guide is a tool developed through the U.S. Forest Service contract to provide education and tools for biomass education at the community level.

http://www.yellowwood.org/biomasspublicoutreachguide.pdf

2) Community Roadmap to Renewable Woody Biomass Energy: A Step-by-Step Decision-Making Tool for New Hampshire Communities: Yellow Wood developed a decision-making tool with the Biomass Energy Resource Center (BERC) for the New Hampshire Resource Conservation and Development Area Council (RC&D). This tool looks at the role of biomass in meeting community energy goals and provides tools for a very preliminary assessment of a facility or district to see if biomass makes sense.

http://www.nhrcd.net/pages/communityroadmap.html

3) Biomass Pre-feasibility Reports: Online access is available for pre-feasibility reports Yellow Wood completed for the U.S. Forest Service, which analyze the replacement of fossil fuel heating with sustainably harvested biomass.

The reports represent a range of facilities including schools and municipal buildings and can give an idea of the kinds of systems that may be worth looking into, but are only applicable to the specific facility examined.

http://www.yellowwood.org/biomassreports.pdf

North Country Clean Energy Conference
Samantha Dunn and Jeff Forward presented Biomass in the North Country, at the North Country Clean Energy Conference. The presentation highlighted findings from the application process and 17 biomass feasibility studies completed in the five northern counties of New York through the U.S. Forest Service Wood Energy Utilization Support Project.

Samantha and Jeff identified the characteristics of good candidates for woody biomass in the region and potential costs and savings for a range of facility types and sizes. With median annual fuel savings of $85,000 and a median return on investment of 7%, this analysis shows that heating buildings in this region with sustainably harvested biomass makes good economic sense and can play an important role in the region’s forest products industry and goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
Yellow Wood's New Website Look

Yellow Wood is excited to announce the launch of our redesigned and updated website at: www.yellowwood.org.

The website will include searchable and sortable listings of projects, clients, publications, and other resources. The site will provide our clients and colleagues with easier access to information about our work. We encourage you to browse our updated site and let us know what you think.

About Yellow Wood Associates & Yellow Wood Notes

Yellow Wood Notes is a twice yearly publication of Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. We publish this newsletter to maintain contact and share ideas with friends, colleagues, and clients. We appreciate your feedback and suggestions.

Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. is a private, for-profit firm specializing in rural economic research and training for community capacity building since 1985. We provide clients with research services including feasibility studies and Green Community Technologies®, and training and facilitation services including See the Forest® and You Get What You Measure®. Our clients include small towns, nonprofit organizations, federal, state, and county governments, foundations, and the private sector. Yellow Wood Associates are Shanna Ratner, Principal; Melissa Levy, Senior Associate; Samantha Dunn, Associate; Jackie LeBlanc, Project Assistant; and Ginger Weil, Office Manager.
WealthWorks Presentations by Senior Associate, Melissa Levy
Melissa Levy was invited to present on February 8, 2013 at the 12th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth conference, Building Safe, Healthy, Equitable, and Prosperous Communities in Kansas City, Missouri. The presentation, in partnership with Euneika Rogers-Sipp of Sustainable Rural Regenerative Enterprises for Families (SURREF), showcased the WealthWorks approach as well as the work of SURREF around community-based tourism in the Alabama Black Belt.

Melissa has conducted a variety of WealthWorks presentations and webinars over the past several months, listed below:

- Presentation at Vermont Nonprofit Conference in Fairlee, Vt. on March 21, 2013
- Presentation at Slow Living Summit. in Brattleboro, Vt. on June 6, 2013
- Webinar on June 20, 2013 for the National Alliance for Rural Policy Network about Connecting Community Assets with Market Demand for Lasting Livelihoods.
Citizen-Led Sustainable Change
Shanna Ratner and Melissa Levy had the opportunity to attend and participate in Citizen-Led Sustainable Change: Innovations in North American Community Development, June 23-25 in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Two grantees of the Ford Foundation’s Wealth Creation in Rural Communities: Building Sustainable Livelihoods initiative were featured in case studies and invited to present their projects at the event; these were Rural Action in Appalachian Ohio and the Deep South Wealth Creation Network, doing work in Alabama and Mississippi. The event, hosted by the Coady International Institute and St. Francis Xavier University, marked the beginning of an engaging and mutually beneficial relationship between these institutions and the WealthWorks Collaborative, of which Yellow Wood Associates is a part.

National Rural Assembly
Jackie LeBlanc attended the 2013 National Rural Assembly, held in Bethesda, MD in June. Jackie was able to speak to representatives from the White House Rural Council about WealthWorks regarding the important work that has been happening on the ground, as well as the need for value chain coordinators to help support the ongoing work of building value chains in rural communities.

Inhabiting Change: Science, Imagination, and Creativity
Shanna Ratner participated with Liz Lerman, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, and Urban Bush Women in a conversation about wealth and poverty called Inhabiting Change: Science, Imagination, and Creativity at the Manhattan Jewish Community Center in January 2013. Liz and Jawole are working to incorporate wealth creation concepts into their piece Blood, Muscle, Bone: A Story of Wealth and Poverty. We also began to explore the role of wealth creation value chains and value chain coordinators in the arts.

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
Shanna Ratner participated in a panel at the January 2013 annual meeting of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), a trade association of 900+ rural electric coops. Panelists discussed the challenges facing Rural America today and the role rural cooperatives may play in helping to overcome them and to build and sustain prospering communities. Fellow panelists were Bob Engle, CEO of CoBank, and Dallas Tonsager, Undersecretary for Rural Development at USDA. A clip of the presentation can be viewed at http://vimeo.com/nrecaeducation/review/71247801/548c4e0862
You Get What You Measure® in Use

Farm to Institution New England (FINE) is a six state collaboration working to strengthen the regional food system by increasing the demand for and use of New England food by New England institutions.

FINE chose Yellow Wood to assist in engaging stakeholders to clarify external goals, create a shared language, identify leverage points, and reach agreement on how the network must function to enable it to best contribute to shared external goals. FINE undertook this work as a precursor to a complete strategic plan.

With assistance from Becoming a Measurement Guide graduate, Molly Anderson, Yellow Wood facilitated a two day You Get What You Measure in Use workshop with 30 participants at the AMC Crawford Center in New Hampshire. The workshop revealed several critical assumptions regarding the impact of FINE’s work that can be tested to improve collective understanding of regional food systems and the role of institutional demand in areas like community well-being, human health, and farmer prosperity.

For more information about FINE, go to www.farmtoinstitution.org/

“It was really great to see a process where systems analysis is used to help an organization prioritize. This is such complex work, and it really showed a way to work through it systematically. I liked all of the various perspectives and knowledge in the room and ability to get into great discussions.”
- FINE member

Measurement Presentations


Melissa Levy traveled to Chicago October 16-18, to give a presentation on measurement in the WealthWorks approach at the Community Indicators Consortium annual meeting. During the trip, she also co-facilitated a You Get What You Measure® In Use workshop for local farmers market managers with Karen Lehman, of Fresh Taste, a trained Measurement Guide.

Melissa Levy and Samantha Dunn presented an introductory You Get What You Measure® workshop at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Upcoming BMG Training

The next Becoming a Measurement Guide sessions will be April 2, 3 & 4, 2014 in our St. Albans, Vt. offices. For information, contact Melissa Levy at melissa@yellowwood.org or 802-524-6141.
Updates on our work

Nourishing Networks – Improving the Food Environment Project

As part of the Wallace Center’s Nourishing Networks project, Yellow Wood is working with nine food hubs across the country. Food hubs are an emerging model for local food aggregation and distribution and can play a role in increasing access to healthy food. This project aims to engage a selected group of food hubs as “study hubs” for extensive research and technical assistance. Working intensively with these study hubs, the Wallace Center hopes, will support the success of food hubs nationwide.

Seven of the food hubs participating in the project (with a mix of non-profit and for-profit models) participated in on-site, You Get What You Measure workshops that produced goals and key leverage indicators with input from staff and key stakeholders for each hub.

Workshops with ALBA, Cherry Capital Foods, Firsthand Foods, Grasshoppers Distribution, Idaho’s Bounty, Jack and Jake’s and Local Food Hub focused on unique goals of each food hub but the indicator analyses produced some common areas of interest such as marketing, consumer education, internal operations and aggregation and distribution infrastructure.

Measures of progress have been developed and the food hubs are now in the process of collecting their baseline data; data will be collected again to re-measure in 2014.

In addition to working with the selected food hubs to develop their own measures, Yellow Wood is working with the Wallace Center to develop a set of “common measures” that will help food hubs across the country measure impact in four key areas:

1. Greater food access to underserved communities.
2. Increased investment by public and private sources into food hub development.
3. Increased economic activity and market access for small- and mid-sized producers.
4. Increased articulation and understanding of the impact of food hubs in achieving health-related outcomes.

New England Beef to Institution

Yellow Wood Associates, with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, is supporting the New England Beef to Institution (NEBI) Steering Committee. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to cultivate a Community of Practice that enables participants to discuss challenges and brainstorm solutions together, in order to support the institutional market for a New England beef product.
Updates on our work

Evaluation Metrics for Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund
Yellow Wood administered a survey on evaluation metrics for the Farm to Plate Network Technical Assistance for Producers and Processors Working Group, which is facilitated by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund. The need for improved program evaluation of technical assistance programs was identified as part of Goal 21 of the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan: that business planning and technical assistance services are highly coordinated, strategic, and accessible to food system businesses. The survey results provided valuable information regarding what data is currently being collected by technical assistance providers and how it is used, identified what data would be useful to collect, and identified the potential for a network-based approach of collecting and sharing data to better understand and improve impacts across the network.

Nature-Based Tourism: Lower Mississippi River Region & Verde Valley
Through her work with the Walton Family Foundation, Melissa Levy has been working with grantees along the Lower Mississippi River states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Arkansas, as well as a grantee in the Verde Valley of Arizona. Lower Mississippi River grantees are focused on paddling, cultural and historical tourism, and both passive and active forms of wildlife related recreation. The most recent outcome of this work is a demand report for Nature Based Tourism in the Lower Mississippi River Region. This work is continuing with further efforts to help Lower Mississippi River regional grantees be responsive to demand for nature-based tourism in this region.

Arts Tourism and Arts Education Value Chain
Melissa Levy continues to work with Black Belt Treasures to explore an arts tourism and arts education value chain. Over the past several months, Melissa has helped to plan and facilitate a number of stakeholder meetings with groups of artists, regional arts organizations, education providers, and tourism representatives. The next steps for the project include formulating strategies to use in building out this value chain.

Blueberry Juice Processing
Following on our work with the Blueberry East Food Ventures and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust on a pre-feasibility study for wild blueberry processing, blueberry juice is being processed by Dell and Marie Emerson at Wild Wescogus Berries in Addison, Maine.
Mansfield, CT Agriculture Strategy
Mansfield Tomorrow, funded through a HUD Sustainable Communities Grant, is a Town-wide project designed to provide the vision, strategies and tools for Mansfield, Connecticut to become the 21st century community it wants to be. Participating on a project team led by Goody Clancy and Associates, Yellow Wood was responsible for developing an agriculture strategy for the Town that focused on maintaining rural character, protecting working land, strengthening agricultural enterprises, and helping producers generate value from their land.

Development of the agriculture strategy included intensive community engagement, goal clarification, best practices research, and interviews with stakeholders. The project culminated in a set of agricultural goals, strategies and actions that take into account the state of agriculture in Mansfield today, as well as in the region, and are designed to achieve a shared vision for agriculture in Mansfield over the next 20 years.

Johnson, Vermont Opens Grocery Store
A few years after our grocery store feasibility work with the Town of Johnson, Johnson’s Sterling Market is now open. Pomerleau Real Estate and Vermont Entrepreneur Mike Comeau have signed a lease to solidify the installation of Johnson’s first grocery store since flooding destroyed the local Grand Union in May 2011. An estimated 40 jobs will be created, 15 of them full-time. Funding for the $1.2 million start-up costs came from multiple sources, including the Community Development Block Grant, the Vermont Economic Development Agency, the Village of Johnson’s revolving loan fund, the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation, People’s United Bank and the Associated Grocers of New England.

Suri Paco and Alpaca Fiber Value Chain
We are excited to report that a former Yellow Wood client has played an integral role in getting the Saco River Dyehouse up and running in Biddeford, Maine. This will fill an important role in a successful value chain and is the only organically certified yarn dyeing operation in the U.S. Saco River Dyehouse recently completed a successful, crowdfunded, kickstarter campaign, raising over $40,000 to purchase package dyeing equipment (more efficient and environmentally friendly than the original equipment) and design and produce their own line of organic yarn.
The Wealth Creation Impact Assessment tool allows users to better understand how a project may impact multiple forms of wealth, both positively and negatively. People are asked to think about their organizational activities, and then choose one major activity or project that is integral to the organization’s mission. Often, we ask people to think about the impact the organization is having internally (within the organization) as well as externally (outside the organization on the world).

Discussion with diverse stakeholders often yields new insights into what is actually occurring versus what has been assumed. The rating system allows organizations to consider actions they or their partners might take, or new partners they might engage, which would lead to improved impacts. Questions to consider include: What can we do to increase the low ratings assigned to particular forms of wealth? What other groups could be included to bring more resources to bear or reduce costs? How can we use the wealths that we are having the greatest positive influence on to build the ones where our influence is weakest?

“We are doing some great things but measured against our potential, there is room for improvement.” – Alternatives Federal Credit Union

We have developed scales for each of the seven forms of wealth (Individual, Social, Intellectual, Natural, Built, Political, Financial).

Here, for example, is the scale for Individual Capital (the stock of skills and physical and mental healthiness of individual people):

-3 A significant and lasting negative impact on individual capital (exploitation)
-2 Creates significant new barriers to positive and equitable impacts on individual capital
-1 A slightly negative impact on individual capital
0 No discernible impact – neither creates nor removes barriers or opportunities
+1 A slightly positive impact with no new barriers, but no alleviation of existing barriers
+2 Builds the stock of individual health and skills in parts of an existing organization or community and/or removes existing barriers.
+3 Intentionally creates new opportunities for individual wealth creation on a systemic institutionalized basis.

In 2012, we used this assessment tool with the National Cooperative Business Association and a small group of cooperatives in diverse sectors including electric utilities, financial services, agriculture, and retail around the country. This tool helped groups to see how their work could better impact certain outcomes and provided a language to use in touting the work they were already doing.

“We are going to refine how we choose which products and services to develop based on this discussion [impact assessment].” – UMass5 College Federal Credit Union
Community Development Journal
Shanna Ratner and Katy Allen, of Rural Support Partners, co-authored a forthcoming Community Development Journal article that describes how the Central Appalachian Network has used an outcome-based measurement process to define and measure progress toward shared goals for seven forms of community wealth. The wealth creation approach to measurement leads to measures of outcome, not outputs, that have meaning within the context of the work of individual organizations and the network overall. Measurement applied consistently across a network of independent organizations seeking to build wealth creation value chains creates shared language and understanding, and improves capacity to target resources where they can have the greatest impact to create constructive change in their region and communities.

Yellow Wood Gains North Carolina Staff Presence
Jackie LeBlanc, Project Assistant at Yellow Wood, relocated to Wilmington, North Carolina in October 2013. Jackie continues to work remotely for Yellow Wood on a number of evaluation and research projects. Yellow Wood is excited to expand their presence in the southern United States and is planning a regional You Get What You Measure® workshop in the spring of 2014.

Shanna Ratner traveled to Nepal in September of 2013 as part of a workshop on Gender Sensitive Access to Market and Value Chains. The objectives were to: a) develop a shared understanding on access to market and value chains, b) start developing a gender sensitive framework for access to market & value chain and c) develop next steps for application and reflection on the framework.

Reading
In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler’s Berlin
by Erik Larson
Erik Larson has an amazing ability to make nonfiction read like fiction. This account portrays Berlin during the early years of Hitler’s reign, through the stories of William E. Dodd, who in 1933 became America’s first ambassador to Hitler’s regime, and his daughter. It was intriguing and terrifying to learn more about how Hitler’s campaign against the Jews and others got started.

~ Melissa