Update On Our Work

Telling the USDA Rural Development Story

USDA Rural Development (USDA/RD) offers programs to improve the economy and quality of life in rural America. Over the past several years, USDA Rural Development has introduced changes to leverage resources, promote creative partnerships, build capacity, and support aggressive outreach to underserved populations. Last fall Shanna Ratner and Brook Martenis facilitated a series of virtual meetings for state directors to share their stories about the effects of these changes upon service delivery.

The variety of projects the directors described was impressive, ranging from a cooperative for papaya farmers in Hawaii to a Mississippi partnership involving USDA/RD, a college, "backyard" farmers, craftspeople, and local banks in renovating a historic building in Natchez to create a year round public market, restaurant, and craft outlet. Participants agreed that the opportunity to find out what other states are doing and to brag about successes was invaluable.

Following the online discussions, YWA compiled all the state stories with a forward describing the policy implications of the changes. USDA/RD will distribute this document to every state office and key congressional members.

Measuring Canadian Impacts in NY

The Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce, with the assistance of YWA, is beginning another comprehensive update of its unique assessment of the economic impact of crossborder commerce. In 1993, YWA developed a methodology to quantify the economic impact of Canada and crossborder activity on Clinton County, New York, including all sectors where significant impact is anticipated, including retail, tourism, industrial investment, exports, banking, real estate, professional services, energy, taxes, and health care. In 1998, total measured direct impact was $1.3 billion (U.S.).

Chenango County Update

We recently read in “Rural Futures”, the newsletter of the NY Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, that the Chenango County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board is creating a position to oversee the development and marketing of pineapple cheese. Pineapple cheese is a specialty product with historic significance for Chenango County. Decisions about developing and marketing the specialty cheese follow from YWA’s market analysis and feasibility study conducted for the Board in 1997-98.
Update On Our Work

Clean & Green

New Leaf Cooperative Enterprise Program seeks to create jobs for low-income residents of Chittenden County, to provide workers with opportunities to share in business equity, and to create businesses with ownership firmly rooted in the communities they serve. New Leaf hired YWA to conduct a pre-feasibility study for a cooperatively owned business offering non-toxic cleaning services to businesses in Chittenden County.

YWA defined the range of services an office cleaning business provides and compiled a list of non-toxic cleaning products and approaches. We surveyed established cleaning services about the business climate in Chittenden County, and potential customers about whether they would switch to a non-toxic cleaning service.

The preliminary expense sheet, which included such costs as paying employees a living wage and benefits, provided New Leaf with a road map for further developing the business. New Leaf Cooperative Enterprise Program plans to use the results of our work to approach both their own clients and the State of Vermont’s Clean Team Training program trainees about the possibility of starting a non-toxic cleaning service.

Consulting with Herb Growers in Vermont

Shanna Ratner spent a lovely fall Saturday meeting with Kathy Kinter of the Vermont Herb Growers Association as one of a group of advisors brought together to help the Association develop a strategic plan. There are roughly fifteen commercial herb growers in the state, and a host of non-commercial growers. Challenges include quality assurance, identifying and accessing markets appropriate to growing capacity and skill, technology transfer, and information networking between the many organizations in Vermont who provide counsel to beginning and established growers. These issues are not unique to herb growers - we can all learn from their experiences!
New YWA Initiative Offers Communities Technological Options

How do we help small rural communities take advantage of cost-saving, cost-avoiding, and environmentally beneficial alternatives to traditional technologies? YWA is taking steps toward establishing a service that would help rural municipalities evaluate the benefits of alternative technologies in a systems context. In September, we contracted with Jason Webster (see Page 10) to gather information about alternative technologies and their application to municipal services.

Our preliminary research suggests that alternative technologies can reduce resource consumption, stimulate economic development, increase social capital, provide public demonstration, and most importantly, save taxpayer dollars. We think rural communities fail to adopt alternative technologies because (1) officials are not aware of the full range of technology choices, (2) officials believe alternative technologies don’t work, and/or (3) the institutional and regulatory structures surrounding the technologies have discouraged anyone from using them.

We are currently evaluating the role that YWA may play as a consultant in assisting municipalities with alternative technology, energy efficiency, and information technology projects. We are not technologists. We have become versed in the language, but do not have the expertise to construct a new wastewater treatment system. We do, however, have the expertise to facilitate discussions of community needs and assist in adoption of the technologies available to satisfy them.

One next step will be to develop and distribute case studies of communities who have adopted alternative technologies. The studies will include a description of the technology, the municipal application, cost and funding, payback time, key regulatory issues, and local contacts. If you know of a good "case" let us know.

At the same time, we continue to assess the feasibility of this venture and to develop partnerships with those offering complementary services. Some of the questions we’re asking include: How many of the communities you work with have expressed some interest in sustainable development? What does this mean to them? To what extent has this translated into interest in alternative technologies? In your experience, how do federal, state and local ordinances make it difficult (or easy) to adopt alternative technologies? Who in a typical community is most involved in actually deciding what technologies to adopt and making sure they are correctly implemented? What are the greatest obstacles from your perspective?

In addition, we are considering applying for a Small Business Innovation Research grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to demonstrate the feasibility of a business enterprise offering assistance in the evaluation and adoption of alternative technologies to rural communities. We will be looking for one or more communities to partner with us in this pilot endeavor. If you know of communities who would be interested in this type of project, please put us in touch.
Measuring Missouri

In October, Debra Mason and Shanna Ratner headed out to Missouri to deliver the second in a series of trainings in You Get What You Measure. This time the setting was the 37th Annual Missouri Community Betterment Conference sponsored by the Missouri Department of Economic Development. Adults and young people from rural communities throughout the state turned out in force to practice their karaoke, receive awards, attend workshops, and learn from each other. We had the honor of training approximately 150 enthusiastic participants in the power of measurement. Participants who completed the evaluation survey gave us excellent marks for relevance, timeliness, and interest. We hope to be back in Missouri in 2001 to work with central and community-based staff of the Departments of Economic Development, Health, and Mental Health.

Measurement Process Applied to Navaho Hogan Project

Shanna Ratner traveled to the Navajo Reservation in Arizona to facilitate a two-day session of You Get What You Measure for Native- and non-Native Americans involved in the Navajo Hogan/Roundwood Manufacturing Project. The project hopes to use small diameter trees that are by-products of restoration in national forests to construct modern hogan-shaped affordable housing on the Navajo reservation. Challenges range from securing and transporting raw materials to arranging mortgage financing to using this project to strengthen the Navajo culture while creating a sustainable and profitable business venture. For more information contact Brett KenCairn at Indigenous Community Enterprises, P.O. Box 470, Cameron, AZ 86020.

You Get What You Measure
Now In 4 Convenient Packages!

You Get What You Measure, Yellow Wood’s innovative and effective approach to interactive strategic planning, is now available in four applications. For a “taste of measurement” we recommend the three hour overview, perfect as a conference workshop to expose a variety of people to key concepts and vocabulary. The day-long introductory session offers an intensive immersion experience suitable for extended conferences and/or in-house introductory training. Our two day session (deliverable in half-day segments or

longer), provides coworkers, boards of directors, community members, staff of an organization and/or stakeholder groups an opportunity to learn the measurement process while applying it to the issues they face. Finally, if you already have good facilitation skills and would like to become a trainer in the measurement process, Yellow Wood is pleased to be able to offer a train-the-trainer package. For more information on any of these packages, please contact us.

You Get What You Measure, Yellow Wood's innovative and effective approach to interactive strategic planning, is now available in four applications. For a “taste of measurement” we recommend the three hour overview, perfect as a conference workshop to expose a variety of people to key concepts and vocabulary. The day-long introductory session offers an intensive immersion experience suitable for extended conferences and/or in-house introductory training. Our two day session (deliverable in half-day segments or longer), provides coworkers, boards of directors, community members, staff of an organization and/or stakeholder groups an opportunity to learn the measurement process while applying it to the issues they face. Finally, if you already have good facilitation skills and would like to become a trainer in the measurement process, Yellow Wood is pleased to be able to offer a train-the-trainer package. For more information on any of these packages, please contact us.

You Get What You Measure, Yellow Wood’s innovative and effective approach to interactive strategic planning, is now available in four applications. For a “taste of measurement” we recommend the three hour overview, perfect as a conference workshop to expose a variety of people to key concepts and vocabulary. The day-long introductory session offers an intensive immersion experience suitable for extended conferences and/or in-house introductory training. Our two day session (deliverable in half-day segments or longer), provides coworkers, boards of directors, community members, staff of an organization and/or stakeholder groups an opportunity to learn the measurement process while applying it to the issues they face. Finally, if you already have good facilitation skills and would like to become a trainer in the measurement process, Yellow Wood is pleased to be able to offer a train-the-trainer package. For more information on any of these packages, please contact us.
It’s been almost a year since we received the news that YWA would host one of four regional branches of a new center to support community forestry and participatory research. The National Community Forestry Center, a project of the National Network of Forest Practitioners, is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is one of four centers designed to offer technical assistance to rural communities. The National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region serves communities in Maine, Vermont, New York, and New Hampshire. Our core purpose is to help rural people conduct and use research to inform decision-making about forest resources. We do this by adding value to the work of communities, organizations, and institutions in our region who share a vision of healthy communities and healthy forests. The articles on the next three pages provide an overview of our work on this project.

**Advisory Council Provides Link To Communities**

One of our first tasks in administering the new Center was to assemble a region-wide advisory council to ensure a strong and ongoing connection with the communities we serve. We solicited nominations for members with a passion for forest-related issues and community well-being and a willingness to work and learn together as part of a diverse group. Council members will guide Center research priorities and assist in designing research products useful to communities. The council will play a key role in selecting communities to partner with the Center in participatory, community-based research.

Council members are Don Cyr, Lille-sur-St. Jean, ME; Patrice Griffin, Freeport, ME; Tom Thomson, Orford, NH; Laura Tam, Concord, NH; Jim Hourdequin, Lebanon, NH; Spencer Laramie, Caanan, NH; Jim Allen, Paul Smiths, NY; Carl Golas, Saranac Lake, NY; Ann Ruzow Holland, Keeseville, NY; Irene Brown, Alpine, NY; William Sayre, Bristol, VT; Matteo Burani, Richmond, VT; Richard Carbonetti, Albany, VT; David Deen, Saxton’s River, VT; George Robson, Morrisville, VT; Nova Kim, Glover, VT; Amy Richardson, Woodstock, VT; and Robert Turner, Starksboro, VT.

Technical assistance to the Council will be provided by Jon Zeltsman, Zeltsman Associates, Inc.; Doug Lantagne, University of Vermont Extension; Spencer Phillips, The Wilderness Society; Yuri Bihun, Shelterwood Systems; and Wayne Fawbush, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund.

Advisory council members will serve one- to three-year terms which began at a retreat in the fall of 2000. Additional council members will be selected as terms expire over the next three years. Anyone wishing to participate on the advisory council or nominate others to do so should contact the Center c/o YWA.
Community-Based Participatory Research

The National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region has a commitment to provide targeted assistance in participatory research to up to three communities per year. A number of communities from throughout the region were nominated for the first round of targeted assistance. The Advisory Council selected the Town of Starksboro, Vermont and the Forestry Committee of the Mt. Washington Valley Economic Council representing 12 towns, (10 in New Hampshire and 2 in Maine), to receive targeted assistance over the next 12-15 months. Each town has met the criteria for selection which include organizational capacity to construct and carry out a year-long work plan; an issue/opportunity common to other communities in the region; a willingness to engage in participatory research; and a willingness to share the results of the research process with others.

Each community has signed a contract and prepared an initial work plan covering the first 2-3 months of investigations. Each will hire a local coordinator supported by a grant from the National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region.

The Town of Starksboro, led by the Conservation Commission, will be developing measures of forest conditions in the community including economic, social and environmental dimensions, based on public information from multiple sources. Their long-term goal is to determine which measures will be most helpful to the community in making decisions about the health of their forest resource.

The Forestry Committee of the Mt. Washington Valley Economic Council will be exploring with local public, private, and non-profit forest land owners the potential for a regional forest land owners’ cooperative or other type of association. Their research will include gathering information from other forest land owner groups in the region and holding a meeting of regional land owners who collectively control a minimum of approximately 18,000 acres of forest land in 12 towns.

We look forward to working closely with these two communities over the coming year and to creating opportunities for community members to share lessons learned throughout our region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Puzzler Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Blind Mice (See How They Run)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Digits in a Zip Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Wheels on a Unicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Days in February in Leap Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Wards in a Picture is Worth 7 Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Heinz Variety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Players on a Football Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Days in January in Leap Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Squares on a Chessboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Days and Nights of the Great Flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Sides on a Stop Sign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demonstration Forest Project

Demonstration, model, research and experimental forests contain valuable information, but often no one knows they’re there. The National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region has developed a database of demonstration, model, research and experimental forests located in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and Northern Massachusetts. Included in the database are forests that have 1) active and ongoing research on forest ecology and/or management techniques including timber, non-timber use, recreation and multiple use and 2) a willingness on the part of forest owners/managers to share their research and/or management techniques with others.

Publications

We surveyed over eighty non-profits, universities, businesses, and individuals that manage or oversee one or several forest sites meeting our criteria. The survey requests information regarding the focus and scope of research and/or demonstration. The information will be compiled and accessible on our website by spring of 2001. Users will search the database by geographic location or selected forest ecology and/or forest management topics. Forest owners/managers will have the opportunity to update information they have provided or add their forest site. Our hope is that the database will serve as a medium to connect communities and forest professionals throughout the region.

We inaugurated a series of publications with “What Is Community Forestry, and Why Does It Matter,” a collection of readings about the meaning and practice of community forestry over time and in different geographic locations. To date, we’ve mailed out over 700 copies. They’re free! Contact us if you’d like one.

Education is a key element of the core purpose of the National Community Forestry Center. In response to concerns raised by our advisory council about appropriate natural resource-related educational materials, we’ve compiled a list of forest-related curricula and programs offered by, or in cooperation with, elementary and secondary schools in the Northern Forest region. This first edition of the list, available for the asking, is not comprehensive. Our intent is to inspire readers to find out what forest-related educational opportunities their schools offer, to jump-start local discussion, and to share their findings and good ideas with others. (We’ve provided a postcard with the publication.) Our long-term plan is to place the list on our website where it can be continuously updated and enhanced.
Outreach

The Center now consists of 66 partners throughout the region ranging from timber industry associations to community volunteers to natural resource professionals to researchers. We maintain contact with our partners through special mailings and a listserv (www.topica.com/lists/nfrncfc) which is open to anyone interested. Our website, www.ncfcnfr.net, will be up and running by January 31. We issue at least one press release every month. Press releases are sent to partners, advisory council members, and a list of daily and weekly newspapers throughout the region. Our staff and advisory council members are happy to attend meetings, workshops, and conferences in the Northern Forest region to discuss the Center and its services.

To date, we have responded to over 100 inquiries from individuals and organizations looking for information about forest topics such as careers in the forest industry, economic assessment of natural resources, and town planning strategies for forest land. We’ve had so many inquiries about local planning for forests, that we’ve put out a call asking communities to submit forest-related language from their town plans. We’re offering fabulous prizes. Entries from throughout the country will be accepted until February 15.

Creating a Shared Vision, Literally

When our advisory council met for the first time, we divided them into small groups, gave them a big sheet of flip chart paper and an array of colored markers, and asked them to create an image or collection of images in answer to the question: What will the Northern Forest look like in 5 years if we’re successful in fulfilling our core purpose?

Group members were allowed to use words to discuss their ideas, but no words were allowed on the final group drawing. We gave them plenty of time. We debriefed by walking around the room to look at and discuss each group’s work. We considered similarities and differences. We talked about their experience of the process.

We found this a useful tool for helping a diverse group to share individual expectations, hopes, and concerns. At the same time, through the combination of discussion and imaging, a collective sense of direction and mission began to emerge. We plan to keep revisiting the question about how we’ll know if we’re succeeding. And we’ll use the images on the NCFC, Northern Forest Region website.


**We Recommend.....**

*Believing Cassandra: An Optimist Looks at A Pessimist’s World* by Alan AtKisson, Chelsea Green Publishing, 1999. The subtitle tells it all. AtKisson introduces frameworks and models necessary for anyone concerned with sustainable development. This book is on my shelf next to *Natural Capitalism, Gaviotas, and A Sand County Almanac.* ~Jason Webster

*Twelve Angry Men.* Cable TV movie available on video. This remake of a 1957 screenplay by Reginald Rose is a compelling study of how our personal experience and the attendant emotions continuously shape what we consider obvious fact. The protagonist in this story of a jury deliberation, artfully forces each of the other eleven jurors to examine their assumptions and expose the thought processes behind their surety about what the evidence proves. Anger surfaces as each juror, in turn, faces the subjectivity of his own deeply held truths. ~Debra Mason

*The Spell of the Sensuous* by David Abram, Random House, 1996. A fascinating exegesis of how we as a civilization have grown alienated from our senses. Includes tantalizing hints of what it might be like to reconnect and experience the past, present, and future as aspects of earth and our own minds as intermingled with a larger life force. Not a quick read. ~Shanna Ratner
Question: How do you know you’ve really made it in small town America?  
Answer: When you own your own building on Main Street.

Yellow Wood Associates will be moving to new quarters at 228 North Main Street in August, 2001. (Insert photo). Our new home, built in the late 1800s, used to be an inn with cabins out back. The cabins have been torn down, but the ambiance is still warm and friendly, with lots more room for visitors! If you or someone you know would like to share our space, we’ll have about 500 square feet to lease come August.

If you got the first question right, this one should be a cinch. How do you know you really exist in the information age? Answer: You have your own domain name. Well, now we do. Our new web address is: www.yellowwood.org and emails can be sent to yellowwood@yellowwood.org or personalized to each of us at “first name”.yellowwood.org — e.g. paige@yellowwood.org.

We’re moving because we’ve run out of space for filing cabinets, never mind staff. With the addition of Brook Martenis, Research Associate, and Paige Manning, Intern, and with regular visits from Jason Webster, Green Communities project consultant, we’re now up to five regulars and six on a busy day. And when Sam or Alyssa or Bunny (our kids) show up to do homework…You get the picture.

Puzzler

This quiz does not measure your intelligence, your fluency with words, or your mathematical ability. It may, however, give you a sense of your mental flexibility and creativity. Few can complete more than half of the equations on the first try. If you get stuck, try doing something else for a while and then returning to the remaining questions.

Instructions: Each equation below contains the initials of words that will complete it. You must determine what the missing words are. We found this one at www.geocities.com. For example, if the equation is 26 = L of the A; the answer is 26 = Letters of the Alphabet. Answers on Page 7.

1. 3 = BM (SHTR)  11 = P on a FT
2. 4 = Q in a G  1000 = W that a P is W
3. 24 = H in a D  9. 29 = D in F in LY
4. 1 = W on a U  10. 64 = S on a C
5. 5 = D in a ZC  11. 40 = D and N of the GF
6. 57 = HV  12. 8 = S on a SS
New electronic addresses
email: yellowwood@yellowwood.org
website: www.yellowwood.org