Update On Our Work

Mobilized Reservists
In August 2004, we won our first contract using our General Services Administration (GSA) Management, Organizational and Business Improvement Services (MOBIS), Schedule #GS-10F-0017P by teaming up with Camp & Associates, LLC, (CALLC) a professional social science survey research and consulting firm in Bethesda, Maryland. We are working for the U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Secretary for Reserve Affairs to determine the economic impact to employers when employees that are members of the Guard or Reserve stop work to serve in the military. CALLC is managing this project with support from YWA. YWA conducted case studies of rural employers, co-facilitated a focus group of employers in the Washington, D.C. metro area, and will provide assistance with survey follow-up.

Stories for the Northern Forest
The National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region (NCFCNFR) partnered with Northern Woodlands Magazine in sponsoring an essay contest in Spring 2004. People were asked to write short essays (300 words or fewer) that describe what the Northern Forest will be like in 25 years. A winner has been chosen, J. D. “Digger” Hasson, whose essay is featured on the NCFCNFR website at www.ncfcnfr.net/notable.html. In addition, samples of the stories for the Northern Forest from our NCFCNFR Advisory Council can be heard at www.ncfcnfr.net.

In the Pinedale Orchestra, there are 14 violinists and 8 cellists. Of those orchestra members, 5 belong to the Fencing Club and half are in the Snake Lovers Association. Of the 14 orchestra members in the clubs, only 2 belong to both, neither of whom are cellists. If 6 violinists are in neither club and 3 cellists are in the snake group, how many violinists are fencers? And how many cellists belong to neither group?

Winter Puzzler
Update On Our Work

Home Town Competitiveness (HTC)

Yellow Wood Associates is teaming up with the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship to bring a promising new approach to rural community building to the Northeast.

HTC encourages communities to take action in four strategic areas:
1. Mobilize local leaders
2. Capture wealth transfer
3. Energize entrepreneurship
4. Attract young people

What differentiates HTC from many other development efforts is its primary focus on internal resources and assets. The goal is to assess where a community is, here and now, and to build on the current capacity of each of the four elements. HTC is not a cookie-cutter approach; rather, it is a dynamic framework within which communities engage to identify approaches and actions appropriate to their goals. YWA will deliver HTC to communities in the Northeast and share our experiences in transferring the model to Northeastern communities with the Center.

About Yellow Wood Associates & Yellow Wood Notes . . .

Yellow Wood Notes is a twice yearly publication of Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. Our purpose in publishing this newsletter is 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. We provide clients with research services including feasibility studies and Green Community Technologies; and training and facilitation services including You Get What You Measure® and Home Town Competitiveness. 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, Associate; and Mary Nieman, Office Manager.
Update On Our Work

Green Community Technologies: Phase 2 Begins

With the receipt of Phase 2 Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, Yellow Wood Associates (YWA) is off and running with Green Community Technologies (GCT). Since Phase 2 began, we have been meeting with communities in Vermont and New York, with outreach to Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. In addition, we have released a Request for Proposals to solicit proposals from communities throughout New England and beyond. As part of the RFP, we are offering a 50% cost-share for the communities chosen, including some money for a local coordinator. Word about the RFP has gone out on numerous listservs, networks and newsletters. Calls are coming in from New York, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and even Iowa. The first deadline for responses to the RFP was January 15, 2005, but applications will continue to be accepted as long as resources are available.

YWA staffmembers have made presentations about Green Community Technologies in Saratoga Springs, New York at the Environmental Business Association of New York meeting; in New York City at the New York Association of Towns annual meeting; at the Vermont Municipal Officers Management seminars throughout Vermont; and in Albany to New York state government officials. In January, YWA presented a session about Green Community Technologies at the Massachusetts Municipal Association annual meeting, as well as to the Environmental Protection Agency Region 1 office.

For more information about GCT or the RFP, visit www.yellowwood.org/gct.htm, or contact Melissa Levy or Shanna Ratner at YWA at (802) 524-6141 or melissa@yellowwood.org or shanna@yellowwood.org.

Answer to Puzzler

Two violinists are fencers (they are also in the snake club). Two cellists are in neither group.
Update On Our Work
Facilitation Services

Shanna Ratner was selected by the Vermont Environmental Consortium (VEC) to facilitate a strategic planning retreat for the Board of Directors. Using Yellow Wood’s trademarked You Get What You Measure® approach, board members were able to clarify goals, identify key leverage indicators, and design measures of progress that prioritize and bring considerable focus to the next eleven months of activity for their new Executive Director Daniel Hecht. The whole process was accomplished in two sessions of a little over eight hours total. After the second session, the Ron Miller, President of the Board, wrote, “Thanks again for all your work in facilitating our strategic planning process. I am really excited about the potential for VEC to make a real difference.”

Opportunities Credit Union (formerly Vermont Development Credit Union), invited Shanna Ratner to prepare and facilitate a brainstorming session on increasing deposits from Vermont individuals, businesses, foundations, and community institutions. Opportunities serves low-income people throughout Vermont with high touch banking services. Their slogan – “we don’t say ‘no,’ we say ‘when’ – is at the heart of their success in reaching previously “unbanked” and “unbankable” customers. Opportunities needs substantial additional deposits from high-income individuals to support loans and services to a growing statewide low-income clientele. Learn more about Opportunities Credit Union at http://www.vdcu.org/.
Update On Former Clients

Strategy for Wood Products Development in Northern New York

We received a call the other day from the Mayor of Harrisville, New York inquiring about our Green Community Technology Request for Proposals. He started the call by saying, “I know Yellow Wood. We used the Yellow Wood study to leverage $1.3 million dollars to build a dry kiln facility and wood products industrial park in Harrisville. The company that owns it now is in the midst of a $40 million expansion that will make it the largest softwood sawmill east of the Mississippi. We cannot thank YWA enough for that study.”

Wow! The study he refers to is the Wood Products Development Strategy for Northern New York, conducted by us for the Adirondack North Country Association and the North Coun-

try Regional Economic Development Council in the early 1990s. In that study, we concluded that the lack of dry kiln facilities in the six county region was resulting in a significant loss of value-adding opportunities for the regional wood products industry. While we are aware of other developments based on that study, this is the first we’d heard of Harrisville Dry Kilns! See photos below of the original dry kilns and the state-of-the-art plant under construction. It’s due to open in March 2005.

Left to right: Gary (Mayor of Harrisville), Jay (plant manager), and Bill (Village Trustee) in front of the steam dry kilns.

Mechanized batch sorter, so large, the building has to be built around it!

Hot water dry kilns, original development.
Update On Former Clients

Starksboro Town Forest

The Town of Starksboro generated over $12,000 from a fairly modest timber sale this fall (and about 500 bf of sawn maple for future projects). Most will be deposited to the general fund to reduce taxes. Approximately $3,000 will go toward various efforts relating to the maintenance of town-owned natural areas, natural resource education, and seed money for as-yet undetermined opportunities. They have begun a new project that will involve 6th graders in the planting and monitoring of a stand of black locust, with the intended use of these trees being the replacement for the playground structure 30 years from now.

YWA worked with Starksboro in developing See the Forest®, a community education program to heighten awareness of forests as environmental, economic, and social assets, and as a target community of the National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region.

Update On Our Work

Assisting Conservation Commissions

YWA is working with the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) to assist Conservation Commissions in evaluating the impact on farm visits and sales of the development of local agriculture directories in five Vermont towns: Starksboro, Newfane, Weathersfield, Greensboro, and Enosburg. Town Conservation Commissions are just getting started on the project that will last for a minimum of three years. Already, participants are coming up with creative ideas for measuring impacts, including issuing local product “dollars” for use at local farmstands, and collaborating with Cooperative Extension personnel to maintain grower confidentiality with respect to sales figures. The AVCC hopes to help towns increase local demand for locally produced products through advertising and promotion. With YWA’s assistance to participating Commissions, the AVCC expects to know whether or not it actually does.
In October, Shanna Ratner facilitated the second in a series of workshops on acquiring and managing town forests. The workshop, sponsored by the Mount Washington Valley Economic Council and held in Ossipee, New Hampshire, brought together community members actively engaged in managing town forests with interested members from communities with underutilized town forests.

Participants explored methods of acquiring town forests, challenges in town forest management and use, costs and revenues associated with town forests, and ways in which town forests can and should serve as community assets. In most communities that are actively managing their town forests, revenues outweigh costs and all the more so when compared to the costs of privately developing town forest parcels. Among the many interesting ideas that emerged from the workshop was using some of the land in town forests for town cemeteries, surrounded by walking trails for quiet reflection.

Redwood Coast Rural Action

Redwood Coast Rural Action (RCRA) was a semi-finalist in the Kellogg Foundation competition for an Entrepreneurship Development System for Rural America grant. There were over 180 applicants, so making it to the semi-finals was a significant achievement! RCRA invited YWA to join the project team as the internal evaluator. Had RCRA been selected as one of the grant recipients, YWA would have brought You Get What You Measure® to the West Coast. Though not one of the six Kellogg finalists, RCRA will persevere with its truly community-led, decentralized approach to rural development. We wish them all the best and look forward to the learning they will have to share!
Being An Effective Board Member: Giving an Elevator Speech

Many of us play roles as part of organizational boards of directors, whether as a member of a board or managing a board. But how can we ensure that board members are as effective as they can be in promoting the missions of the organizations they serve? One simple but powerful step is to ensure that all board members are able to give an elevator speech to a stranger about the organization they serve.

If you are a board manager or executive director, it is your responsibility to prepare your board members to be effective champions of your work by training them to be able to give such a speech with confidence.

To work with your board members on this skill:

1. Start by showing them the mission of the organization.

2. Then hide the mission and ask them to pair up with someone they do not know well. In each pair, each person describes the organization's mission in their own words to the other person. This allows each board member to practice giving an elevator speech and empowers them to "own" the work of the organization they are serving.

3. Deepen the practice by using skilled inquiry to have each person in the pair explore the mission in greater depth. This will improve board members' ability to promote the mission of the organization.
What’s up at YWA?

Becoming a Measurement Guide

YWA just presented a successful Becoming a Measurement Guide workshop in November 2004. This training enables professional facilitators to deliver a powerful planning and evaluation tool called You Get What You Measure® to their own clients. In development for over ten years, You Get What You Measure® recognizes the importance of values in group work, incorporates systems thinking, and creates a culture of group learning. You Get What You Measure® explores in detail the connections between goals, indicators, measures, and the assumptions about how or whether specific actions will affect progress toward the goal.

Our next workshop will be held Monday, February 14 - Wednesday, February 16, 2005 in St. Albans, Vermont. One or two of the available slots for this training will be available for smaller organizations at discounted rates (email or call us for more information). For more information, please visit our website at www.yellowwood.org/BMG.htm, call us (802-524-6141), or email us (yellowwood@yellowwood.org). To maximize the amount of personal engagement and hands-on learning, this training has been limited to five participants, so please register early!

Presentation at NNECAPA

Shanna Ratner was part of a panel addressing “Retaining Farm and Forest Land” at the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association meeting in Montpelier, Vermont in September 2004. The focus of the presentation was on steps that can be taken to assist communities in retaining farm and forest land in use. We were delighted to see Elizabeth Golden, a former YWA Associate, in the audience! Copies of the presentation are available from YWA on request.

Upcoming Speaking Engagements

Shanna Ratner will be speaking at the Community Forests: Possibilities, Experiences, and Lessons Learned conference in Missoula, Montana June 16-19, 2005. She will be part of a panel addressing community outreach strategies; she will speak about strategies that work in engaging communities, including participatory research. Shanna Ratner will also be presenting a shortened version of YWA’s planning and evaluation tool, You Get What You Measure® at the 3rd Annual Wisconsin Community Leadership Summit, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin April 13-14, 2005 and at the 2005 National Community Economic Development Conference in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, May 4-7, 2005.
Example of a Paradigm Shift

As I was driving to Boston to pick up my son, I heard an NPR story that struck a real chord. Many of you may have heard it. Here’s the gist, as I recollect it. When people download movies (or other very large files) over the internet, it takes a long time because the transaction typically is structured with one sender and multiple receivers (your basic top-down paradigm, no?). The limitation is the bandwidth through which the message is sent. The more receivers, the more crowded the bandwidth becomes, the longer it takes.

A young person (whose name I do not recall) invented a way to solve the problem that I think suggests a significant paradigm shift for work in many fields, including community development. The solution is this: divide the movie into segments according to the number of people requesting the download at any given time. (Segments travel faster than large files). Once the segment is received, turn the receiver into a sender. That way, everyone is receiving segments from everyone else, and existing bandwidth is being used much more effectively. The more people requesting the movie, the faster it travels. Software enables recipients to reorder the segments so they can watch the whole movie. Same basic infrastructure – vastly improved utilization. I particularly like the idea that every receiver becomes a sender. Can you imagine applications for our work? ~ Shanna

What We’re Reading

*Koba the Dread*, by Martin Amis, delves into the history of Stalin, in an effort to figure out why Amis’ own father, Kingsley Amis, was once a fan of Stalin. Throughout the book, Amis also compares Stalin with Lenin, Trotsky and Hitler, making for intriguing insights. ~ Melissa

*Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*, by Janine M. Benyus, delivers more than casual insights into a wide range of cutting edge technologies that have the potential to enable us to live well on the planet without destroying it. Learning a little about the people who recognize this potential is fun, too! ~ Shanna

*The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon*, by Richard Zimmer, is a rich portrait of the lives of Christians, New Christians, and Jews during the massacre of 1506. History, mystery, and culture rolled into one, with a reinterpretation of the sacrifice of Isaac thrown in for good measure. ~ Shanna
Yellow Wood Associates, Inc.
228 North Main Street
St. Albans, VT 05478