YELLOW WOOD NOTES

An Occasional Publication
for the Benefit of
Our Clients, Colleagues, and Friends

Winter 2006

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We Welcome Your Comments

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Update On Our Work

Sustaining Traditional Land Uses

Yellow Wood recently worked with the Dragon Run Steering Committee, through the Middle Peninsula Planning and Development Commission (of Virginia), to identify and explore economic development activities and opportunities that sustain traditional land uses while enhancing the natural resource base. To that end, Yellow Wood reviewed background information pertaining to the Dragon Run Watershed and its natural resource-based economy, and prepared a customized set of opportunity maps describing potential natural resource-based activities that could promote sustainability. Two Yellow Wood staff conducted an intensive site assessment over a one-week period. The opportunity maps were used as a discussion tool in over 30 personal and telephone interviews with Dragon Run residents, service providers, and government officials. Information obtained through the site visit and interviews was collated and the Dragon Run Steering Committee was presented with a wide range of possible topics on which follow-up research could be conducted. Seven areas were chosen to research further:

1) Controlling public access; research into models
2) Biodiesel utilization (including local sourcing of soybeans) for municipal vehicles
3) Estate planning program linked to rights of first refusal and/or easement purchases for Dragon Run landowners
4) Municipal recycling center for organic materials
5) Showcase for local foods and crafts with education exhibits and sales opportunities
6) Producing white oak staves for wine barrels
7) Organic produce production and Community Supported Agriculture

Enterprise papers on using biodiesel, recycling organic materials, showcasing local crafts and food products, and producing white oak staves for wine barrels provide examples of enterprises that fit within the overall goal of sustainable natural resource-based economic development for the Watershed, whether carried out within the public or private sectors. Learning papers on estate planning, organic production, and controlling public access are intended to inform the Dragon Run Steering Committee and improve understanding at a conceptual level. The Steering Committee is now moving forward on the biodiesel option.
Update On Our Work
Impact of EPA Funding on Brownfields Redevelopment Success

Yellow Wood worked with the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation to research the effect U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) brownfields funding has on the success of projects undertaken by regional development organizations. As part of this research, we managed an online questionnaire of regional approaches to brownfields redevelopment. In addition, we conducted interviews to profile regional development organizations at different stages in the process, as well as in different parts of the country.

The report profiled organizations in Vermont, Maine, Michigan, Iowa, North Carolina, Texas, Arkansas, and Idaho. We found that a regional approach to brownfields redevelopment can be successful due to the additional resources, such as funding and connections, found at the regional level.

Waypoint Interpretive Center, Bellows Falls, VT - redeveloped brownfields site

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. We provide clients with research services including feasibility studies and Green Community Technologies; and training and facilitation services including See the Forest®, 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 John Hoover, Associate.
Update On Our Work
Green Community Technologies

Yellow Wood recently completed work with the first of seven Phase 2 partner communities in developing the Green Community Technologies service.

Exploring Alternative Wastewater Technologies
In 2005, the Town of Hinesburg, Vermont faced a dilemma. With new development on the way and a wastewater treatment plant at capacity, Hinesburg realized that the time had come to increase its capacity. As a result, the town asked Yellow Wood to research alternative ways of increasing their wastewater capacity beyond expanding the plant, using their Green Community Technologies process. Hinesburg and Yellow Wood began their work together with the goal of allowing Hinesburg to manage a larger volume of wastewater (from 250,000 to 400,000 gallons per day or GPD) that would meet the discharge requirements of the state. The capacity to manage a larger volume of wastewater is desired to accommodate new development, estimated at an additional 500 residences in the village (or a combination of commercial, industrial and residential uses).

Yellow Wood began its work by considering all the possible alternatives for each phase of wastewater treatment from collection to primary and secondary treatment to disinfection and discharge. Yellow Wood researched the differences in cost, performance, capacity and impact between the conventional and alternative technologies that could be used to expand Hinesburg’s wastewater capacity.

By using a systems approach, Yellow Wood was able to look at the interactions and synergies between different technologies and pieces of the overall wastewater infrastructure. By looking closely at the Saputo cheese factory (which uses approximately half of the current wastewater capacity), Yellow Wood realized that the wastewater coming out of this factory was often cleaner than any of the other wastewater sources and there was no human waste in it. As a result, this wastewater does not need as much treatment as it is currently getting at the town-owned facility. Part of Yellow Wood’s recommendations to the town included the possibility of separating the cheese factory stream to create additional capacity at the existing treatment plant. This would involve enhancing treatment at the cheese factory. This work is particularly timely, because the pipe needed to link the treated waste from the cheese plant to a combined outlet for the town is still surrounded by open land; installation of this pipe would not be complicated by the development that will eventually encroach on this land. In this work, timing is everything.

Hinesburg has a number of options to accommodate growth given the
Update On Our Work

current capacity limits at the centralized wastewater facility. The options arrived at by Yellow Wood will avoid the need to enlarge the existing footprint of the wastewater treatment plant.

One systemic change from this work has been an increase in communication between the town and the state. The town and state have been discussing creative, cost effective ways to safely handle the combined discharge of the Town and cheese plant.

Hinesburg has already begun to move forward with our recommendations. The town will look at creating municipal ordinances requiring new construction to use energy and water saving appliances and fixtures. The town is currently looking for engineering firms to conduct preliminary engineering work on some of our ideas. Director of Buildings and Facilities Rocky Martin explains: “What you did was excellent. Some of what you guys thought about we never would have looked into, like mandating water saving fixtures. We never would have come up with these solutions on our own. Your approach to reducing flows was great. Your final presentation was very well received by the Selectboard. I think they’re now going to hold a special meeting on wastewater. It’s been well worth it in my opinion.”

Measuring Canada’s Impact on Clinton County, New York

Yellow Wood recently completed its sixth replication of a Study of the Economic Impact of Canada on Clinton County, New York for the Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce (this study has been conducted every two years since 1994). The major sectors included in this study are: Canadian-owned businesses, border-dependent businesses, public border-related agencies, energy, health care, financial and professional services, culture and education, real estate, Canadian visitor spending and marinas. We found:

- The total economic impact on Clinton County measured by this study was $863 million, which represents a decrease of $72 million since its last replication in 2002 and an increase of $272 million since inception in 1994.
- In 2002, Canadian-owned businesses provided a total of 3,149 jobs in Clinton County and contributed $101,426,048 to payroll.
- Canadian visitors spent approximately $201.7 million in Clinton County in 2004, which represents a 5% increase since the last replication.

Winter Puzzler

If, having only one match, on a freezing winter day, you entered a room which contained a lamp, a kerosene heater, and a wood burning stove, which should you light first?
Update On Our Work

Helping to Add Value to Organic Produce

Deep Root Cooperative hired Yellow Wood to help explore opportunities to profitably expand its market penetration within local, regional, and national wholesale markets through increasing its value-added capabilities. Deep Root is an organic farmers’ cooperative active since 1985 and now comprised of 12 Vermont and 7 Quebec members. Value-added products of interest include pre-cut, ready-to-eat, and ready-to-cook products protected by innovative, environmentally friendly packaging. Yellow Wood is working on a review of current operations, business practices, and sales, and an analysis of market opportunities for value-added products in light of current operations. Results of this research will be used as a guide to developing business plans and strategic marketing efforts for future business expansion.

Capacity Building in Maine Communities

Yellow Wood is working with Maine Rural Partners to design and deliver a workshop that will showcase Maine’s approach to rural community capacity building. This contract follows on the work we did last May in bringing Don Macke from the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship in Nebraska to Maine to introduce the Home Town Competitiveness framework for community development. The workshop will cover the elements of Home Town Competitiveness and will prepare Maine practitioners to serve on community assessment and implementation teams under the auspices of Maine Rural Partners. We look forward to continuing to work with Don and his colleagues, Jeff Yost and Craig Schroeder, to adapt the Home Town Competitiveness framework to the needs of northeastern communities. For more information on Home Town Competitiveness, visit www.ruraleship.org or contact us.

Answer to Puzzler

The match of course!
The Power of Visualization in Community Development

Experiments have been conducted that compare the performance of athletes who practice their sport in real time, athletes who both practice and visualize themselves performing, and athletes who only visualize themselves performing. Guess who plays best?

Yellow Wood Associates has begun to experiment with the power of visualization in community development. Visualization is not the same as vision or visioning. Community visions are verbal statements of a preferred future agreed to by a group of people. Visioning sessions result in vision statements. Visualization is a process of experimenting internally with behavioral changes that bring about progress toward a shared goal. What would it look like, feel like, smell like, seem like to be changing current conditions to reach a goal? What changes in behavior would be required?

We have introduced visualization into You Get What You Measure®, our trademarked values-based process for helping diverse groups measure progress toward shared goals. When participants actually visualize the changes that need to occur to claim progress is being made toward a shared goal, they come into relationship with the indicator more concretely and are able to see how the change would affect their behavior as well as the behavior of others. The result is more vibrant and meaningful indicators of change from a variety of different perspectives.

It is too early to share results from this work, but everything we’ve seen so far suggests it may be a powerful way to improve the practice of community development.

Answer: The athletes who both practice in real time and visualize themselves playing outperform the others.

For more information on You Get What You Measure® or Becoming a Measurement Guide, please contact us. The next Becoming a Measurement Guide training is scheduled for April 5-7 in St. Albans, Vermont. Space is limited. Come and enjoy spring in Vermont!
Update On Our Work
Evaluating Entrepreneurship

Yellow Wood Associates has been selected as the evaluator for the Advantage Valley Entrepreneurial Development Collaborative. Advantage Valley is one of six initiatives funded by the Kellogg Foundation to experiment with a variety of approaches for encouraging entrepreneurship across all sectors in rural areas. The Advantage Valley initiative is unique in that it incorporates the Entrepreneurial League System (ELS) as well as education, capital, and policy components. ELS takes a systems approach to creating an entrepreneurial culture by recognizing that four different skill sets -- technical expertise, management expertise, entrepreneurial expertise, and personal emotional maturity -- must come together for entrepreneurial success. The ELS model includes one-on-one and team coaching for entrepreneurs with different levels of skill. Coaching helps entrepreneurs clarify their needs, support each other in reaching their goals, and make better use of service providers. At the same time, providers of services to entrepreneurial businesses come together through ELS to create a system of mutual support and referral that truly meets the needs of entrepreneurs.

Yellow Wood’s evaluation has two essential components. First, we are using You Get What You Measure® to assist the Collaborative in identifying key leverage points for change related to their goals. Members of the Collaborative have worked together to create measures of change for key leverage indicators and are currently collecting baseline information for each measure. The second component of our evaluation is to serve as learning coaches for Collaborative members, staff, and others engaged in the hard work of implementing cultural change. Our work as learning coaches allows us to follow the narrative development of the project while providing our clients with periodic opportunities for reflection and learning. The combination of these two approaches will provide the means to tell a compelling story about the Advantage Valley experience over three years of Kellogg support and beyond.

More information on ELS is available at www.entreleaguesystem.com

More information on Advantage Valley is available at www.advantagevalleyels.com
Update On Former Clients
Island Pond Woodworkers Factory Purchased

The Island Pond Woodworkers employee-owned furniture factory has been purchased by a St. Johnsbury man. Bill Jackson, the purchaser, has 25 years of experience in managing factories with different companies in Lyndonville and St. Johnsbury.

The factory will stay open and operate under the name Island Pond Wood Products. Jackson plans to hire former Island Pond Woodworkers employees and plans a product line similar to that being produced before, including a variety of wood products in addition to furniture.

The employee-owned Island Pond Woodworkers opened in February 2003. It was opened by former Ethan Allen furniture workers. That company closed the plant in 2001, throwing 120 people out of work. Jackson worked for three or four months as a financial consultant for the company. He found it was for sale and then made an offer, which was accepted.

Outstanding contracts will be filled by Island Pond Woodworkers, as Jackson begins to take over operations and carry the company forward under the new name.

Yellow Wood conducted the pre-feasibility study that led to the formation of Island Pond Woodworkers.

Update On Our Work
Strengthening Local Governance on a Budget

Nancy Stark of the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) has been leading a Community Clustering Initiative in South Dakota, Washington, and Oregon designed to improve local governance through collaboration across sectors and political boundaries, youth involvement, and leveraging of regional resources. Participants are using information technology in place of face-to-face meetings to share information across sites. This low cost approach, online conferencing software called Macromedia Breeze, if it proves beneficial, may show how innovators in different parts of the country can learn from one another without breaking the bank. Shanna Ratner has been providing Nancy with outcomes measurement advice and expertise.

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What’s up at YWA?

Staff Updates

New Baby
Melissa and her husband, Jim, are enjoying parenthood with their baby boy, Noah, who was born in July. Melissa is back at Yellow Wood part-time.

Goodbye to Lauren
Lauren Esserman left Yellow Wood Associates this past summer. We wish her the very best in all her future endeavors.

Update on Mary
Mary Nieman no longer works here. She was arrested on embezzlement charges on January 5, 2006.

Update On Our Work

Measuring the Potential Impact of LNG

Save Passamaquoddy Bay has hired Yellow Wood Associates to conduct a study of the economic and fiscal impacts of liquid natural gas (LNG) import terminals in the Passamaquoddy Bay region. Save Passamaquoddy Bay is a three nation alliance (Maine, New Brunswick and Passamaquoddy Tribe) as is the make-up of the Passamaquoddy Bay region. In the first phase of this work, Yellow Wood is studying the economic impacts of LNG development on employment and real estate and the fiscal impacts on local government, transportation, public safety, and property values. Future phases may study the economic impacts on fishing, recreation and tourism.
Becoming a Measurement Guide

The next Becoming a Measurement Guide training will be held April 5-7, 2006 in St. Albans, Vermont. Class size is limited to five. 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). If you’re interested, we recommend that you register as soon as possible. We are also available to provide Becoming a Measurement Guide training or You Get What You Measure® In Use at a location of your choice. For more information, please visit our website.

What We’re Reading

Cloud Atlas, by David Mitchell, is a challenging but intriguing novel, which features six separate but related stories, which take place in different times and places. Incorporating fantasy, science fiction, and mystery, each of the stories figures into the same theme, how the strong take advantage of the weak. This was one of those books that I thought about long after I read it. ~Melissa

Small Island, by Andrea Levy, is a fascinating novel about what it meant to be a black Jamaican member of the British armed forces during World War I, among other things. There’s enough detail to make Jamaica and England come alive in all their cultural distinction. I enjoyed reading about an era so very different from our own, and yet not. ~Shanna