

YELLOW WOOD NOTES

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

Summer 2005

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We Welcome Your Comments

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Update On Our Work

Yellow Wood Completes Dairy Processing Feasibility Study for Frederick County, MD

In December 2004, the Frederick County Office of Economic Development hired Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. to undertake a feasibility study for a farmer-owned value-added dairy processing venture. Frederick County dairy farmers were looking for ways to increase their profitability, increase farmer control of products including quality and marketing, create local products with a local identity (brand), and help consumers make the connections between farm profitability, maintaining open space, and reducing the cost of community services by avoiding over-development.

Yellow Wood has just completed this study and found that opportunities for value-added dairy processing do exist in Frederick County, especially in creating a regional brand of dairy products made from Maryland milk, primarily for Maryland consumers. The regional market is underserved by regional brands, and Maryland consumers are looking for "local." Success in the local market area, even when it begins at a very small scale, can lead to wider success over time. There are enough buyers in Frederick County willing to work with a local enterprise to begin the process of establishing brand identity. However, it does not make

sense to build a processing facility at the beginning but rather to wait until the brand and market are well established. According to the report, "We believe there is a real and present opportunity to establish a business that develops a set of Maryland dairy products for Maryland consumers made from milk from Frederick County farms, along with a reasonable to high likelihood of profitability if the business were well managed."

According to Colby Ferguson, Business Development Specialist for Agriculture for the Frederick County Office of Economic Development, "*Obtaining Yellow Wood Associates services proved to be the right choice for this project. The professionalism, quality of work and efficiency was second to none. Even though there is a substantial distance between Vermont and Maryland, Yellow Wood did an outstanding job gathering all the necessary information needed to make this a viable feasibility study. The information was sent on time and the project was finished on the proposed finish date. Thanks again for providing us with such outstanding work.*"



Update On Our Work

Home Town Competitiveness

Over the past six months, Yellow Wood has been working with the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) Center for Rural Entrepreneurship in an effort to introduce the Home Town Competitiveness framework to rural communities in the Northeast. Home Town Competitiveness (HTC) encourages communities to take immediate action in four strategic areas:

- Mobilize Local Leaders
- Capture Wealth Transfer
- Energize Entrepreneurship
- Attract Young People

What differentiates HTC from many other development efforts is its integrated strategic

approach, its emphasis on mobilizing internal resources, and its commitment to targeted implementation with measurable goals. Nebraska communities as small as 500 people have found the human and financial resources required to implement this approach successfully. HTC won the 2004 Innovative Program Award from the International Community Development Society.

While designed originally for communities losing population and resources, many principles could be applied to rural communities stressed by growth. If you are in the Northeast and this sounds like something your community would like to pursue, please contact us. For more information about Home Town Competitiveness, contact Don Macke at (402) 323-7339 or visit www.ruraleship.org.

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; John Hoover, Associate; Lauren Esserman, Associate; and Mary Nieman, Office Manager.



Update On Our Work

Yellow Wood Welcomes 8 GCT Partner Communities

Yellow Wood has chosen eight new municipal partners to work with in its Green Community Technologies (GCT) program. GCT, an innovative process designed to help rural communities invest wisely in municipal infrastructure, consists of three main tasks:

- 1) Inventorying and assessing a community's current municipal infrastructure.
- 2) Identifying alternative technology options for municipal infrastructure improvement and comparing conventional technologies and alternative technologies in terms of cost, capacity and performance.
- 3) Assisting in implementation.

Our eight new partners include:

- Barnstable County, MA
- Hancock, NH
- Harrisville, NY
- Hinesburg, VT
- Litchfield, ME
- Milford, CT
- Richmond, MA
- Thetford, VT

These partners have a wide variety of needs and interests to be served by the GCT service, ranging from green building to wastewater upgrades to parking lot improvements to brownfields remediation. The majority of partners will begin with an inventory and assessment of their municipal infrastructure. A number of the communities expressed the need to upgrade or expand their wastewater capabilities. Other communities are interested in ways of

constructing new municipal buildings using green building techniques and energy efficiency to reduce their environmental and energy impact.

Don't forget to check out the GCT web page, www.yellowwood.org/gct.htm regularly for weekly green technology news clips!

Canadian Impact Study

Yellow Wood is in the midst of conducting 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 (conducted every two years from 1994 to 2004). The major sectors included in this study are: Canadian-owned businesses, international border businesses, public border-related agencies, energy, health care, financial and professional services, culture and education, real estate, Canadian visitor spending, marinas, and export sales. Look for more information in the next issue of *Yellow Wood Notes*.

Summer Puzzler

I never was, am always to be,
No one ever saw me, nor ever will,
And yet I am the confidence of all
To live and breathe on this terrestrial
ball.
What am I?

Update On Our Work

Facilitation Services

Yellow Wood had the great pleasure of working with CfED staff, managers, and a board member to apply **You Get What You Measure®** to CfED's groundbreaking work in developing asset building and economic development strategies. These strategies ensure that every person can participate in, contribute to, and benefit from the economy. Executive Director Andrea Levere wrote, *"I found the workshop to be excellent in every respect. The substance of the workshop was excellent, and the concepts explained clearly. The subject matter is difficult, which made the assistance that Shanna provided during exercises of great value. I plan on using this work and building on it in multiple ways."*

Forests and Parks

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation selected Yellow Wood to review the *Social and Economic Assessment: Green Mountain National Forest, VT and Finger Lakes National Forest, NY* to determine any additional or alternative data sources that could have been used to address the scope of work and to compare them to the actual sources used.



Vermont Soy

Vermont Soy, a start-up company, seeks to set up a soy processing facility in the Hardwick Industrial Park in 2005. The increasing popularity of soy as a food product is well-documented. Vermont Soy plans to supply the market with soy products made from locally grown soybeans, process them locally and distribute fresh products to consumers throughout Vermont and New England. Raw beans will be purchased from Vermont producers and transported to the Hardwick facility where they will be cleaned and stored in ventilated silos for further processing. Vermont Soy anticipates marketing its line of organic soy products to the largest users of soy products in the region, such as cooperative and independent natural food stores, restaurants, colleges and other foodservice venues.

Yellow Wood was tasked with two projects in an effort to assist Vermont Soy. The first is a market analysis of the Vermont and New England markets for soymilk, specifically with respect to distributors, food cooperatives and natural food stores, supermarkets, colleges and universities, and restaurants. The second piece will determine the feasibility of growing soybeans in northern Vermont, and whether there are farmers who are interested in growing for Vermont Soy. It is more difficult than one might think to determine how much prime farmland is being farmed in Vermont.

Update On Our Work

Lake Champlain Walleye Project

Yellow Wood recently completed a project for the Lake Champlain Walleye Association in which we assessed the potential fiscal and economic impacts of closing a fish hatchery run by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Bald Hill Fish Culture Station (BHFCS), located in Newark, Vermont, has been operating since the late 1940s and currently produces approximately 35,000 7-inch salmon smolt, 8 million walleye fry, and approximately 150,000 walleye fingerlings per year for stocking in state waters.

Although the economic impacts of this facility are state-wide, Yellow Wood focused on the localized impacts in the Northeast Kingdom, which includes Caledonia, Essex and Orleans Counties. Through our research, we determined that the total direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts of the BHFCS range from \$362,733 to \$451,535 and include 4.4 jobs in the Northeast Kingdom. The impacts include spending by the facility on local goods and services and payroll, in addition to technical assistance provided to other groups and local spending by visitors to BHFCS.

Madison Moving Forward

According to Anne Reynolds, of the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, "*Work on the feasibility of the public market is continuing as part of the Four Seasons Public Market Steering Committee. This group intends to build on Yellow Wood's pre-feasibility study, with further site analysis, market research, and work with the local foods/farming community. They will also begin to build relationships with the public and private funding community. A public announcement of this effort will be made in June. The public market and the vegetable processing facility will both be part of the recommendations of a Dane County subcommittee looking at issues within the local foods' system. The feasibility study for the processing facility has been shared with several interested groups, but no entrepreneur or organization has stepped forward at this point to take the project further.*"



Answer to Puzzler

TOMORROW

Collecting Information that Matters

No one committed to community development likes to waste resources. Yet we sometimes find ourselves having invested time, energy, and money in collecting information that we later find we do not use. You can save resources when collecting information if you first ask yourself, “What would I do with this information if I had it?”

If you know how you will use it, either directly to inform a decision you are facing or indirectly to influence someone else’s decision-making, then you also know (or can figure out):

- ◆ What information you really need (Avoid the temptation to collect more than you need)
- ◆ The manner in which it must be collected to be considered valid and useful (Does it need to be a controlled experiment, or will anecdotes suffice?)
- ◆ How and when to present it for maximum impact (Should you emphasize the numbers or the narrative? What do you need to include to put your information in context for the decision-maker?)

By figuring out as much of this in advance as you possibly can, you will greatly increase the efficiency with which your information collection proceeds. You will also be able to explain to those you need help from why you are asking them to do this, and what difference you expect it to make, thus motivating them to take the work seriously and get it done well.

Conversely, if you cannot answer the question of what you would do with the information if you had it, then you should not waste your time or anyone else’s in collecting it.

Next time you get ready to collect information, whether by yourself or in a group, try asking, “What would I do with this information if I had it?” and see if it doesn’t help shape your approach.



Tell Us YOUR Story

This winter, Yellow Wood will be celebrating its 20th anniversary. As we approach this milestone, we would like to hear from past and current clients about the progress you have made toward your goals and how Yellow Wood's work has made a difference, either directly or indirectly. Your experience is part of ours; it's the base we have to build from for the next 20 years. Impacts are notoriously hard to capture; yet our impact is sometimes greater than we know. We will be featuring some of these stories in the Winter issue of *Yellow Wood Notes*. Please share your comments by sending us an email at ailatyellowwood@yellowwood.org or, if you prefer, call or email us to set up a time for our staff to interview you.

Receiving *Yellow Wood Notes*

Everyone has their own preferences when it comes to reading newsletters; some prefer the tactile hard copy and some like the no-clutter simplicity of email. If you are interested in receiving an email notifying you when the newsletter is available in an Adobe PDF format on our website, instead of the hard copy version, please go to www.yellowwood.org/feedback.htm or simply email us at yellowwood@yellowwood.org. Also, you can use this form to give us the contact information for a friend or associate who you think would enjoy our newsletter, if you need to change your mailing address, or if you just have some comments or feedback on *Yellow Wood Notes*. If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter in hard copy, simply do nothing.

What's up at YWA?

Staff Updates

New Staff: Lauren Esserman

Hello! I am Lauren Esserman. I recently joined Yellow Wood Associates after spending the last year at home in Richmond, Vermont, with my new daughter Sylvia. While my path to Richmond, and to Yellow Wood, has been a circuitous one, I think it makes sense that I'm here.

I grew up smack in the middle of New York City, but spent many summers in central Vermont where the sights, sounds and smells of the Green Mountains became important to me. When the opportunity arose three years ago to move to Vermont, my husband and I jumped at it, and I happily continue to make this place my home.

After getting my undergraduate degree in Chinese, I completed a Master's in Journalism and worked for a number of publications. A highlight of my journalism experience was the chance to help cover the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, which set me on a path of learning and writing about natural resources.

From there, I moved to Portland, Oregon, where I went on to work for nonprofit conservation organizations. Through that work,

I gained practical skills in market research, organizational development, fundraising, board management, networking, and community organizing.



Lauren Esserman

After relocating to Vermont, I complimented this hands-on practical work with a Master's in Environmental Law at Vermont Law School, which gave me a grounding in the legal and policy framework that shapes our use of natural resources.

As you can probably tell, I share Yellow Wood's emphasis on life-long learning. Moreover, I have always been interested in helping people and communities become more effective stewards of natural resources. Yellow Wood and our clients are doing just that – so I am excited to be working here.

Check out our new Yellow Wood Associates logo on page 3.



← John and Laura in Thailand

New Baby

Melissa and her husband, Jim, are expecting their first child in early July. As a result, Melissa will be on maternity leave for the summer, returning to Yellow Wood in September.

John Back at Yellow Wood from Travels Abroad

In July of last year, John Hoover left Yellow Wood to get married and travel with his new wife on an extended honeymoon in South America and Southeast Asia. John returned to Yellow Wood in March 2005. The following is an excerpt from his travels:

"One of the most empowering experiences was participating in a natural building workshop in northern Thailand. Around 20 people from all over the world and throughout Thailand came together for 10 days to learn how to build adobe houses and bamboo furniture. The workshop was originally created by a Thai man five years ago who believed that the many Thais living in rural areas could benefit from learning skills that would enable them to build reliable, comfortable, and beautiful structures from the natural materials already present on their lands, instead of spending most of their savings on concrete-style homes. It was a wonderful blessing to have the opportunity to participate in the workshop and learn so much about different people and different cultures in some very hands-on ways. It is also wonderful to be home."

What's up at YWA?

Becoming a Measurement Guide

In February, Yellow Wood welcomed the fourth class of Measurement Guides. After undergoing three days of rigorous training, Susan Youmans said, *"This process actually does what other planning processes just say they do. This helped me understand why I couldn't follow glossy planning processes, revealed their arbitrary nature, and showed me instead exactly what is needed to get concretely from A to B."* Another participant, Lori Higgins, of the University of Idaho's Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, commented, *"As a facilitator, I have done a lot of strategic planning with groups. I wish I could go back and redo every plan with You Get What You Measure®."*

Samin Dadelahi, Program Officer of the Wyoming Community Foundation, having facilitated her first **You Get What You Measure®** session with great aplomb, has nearly completed the requirements for becoming a licensed guide. Monica Stone of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will be facilitating her first session in July. The next Becoming a Measurement Guide training will be held August 1-3 in St. Albans, Vermont. Class size is limited to five and one spot is already taken. 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 pro-

vide 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.

The Underground Economy

Shanna Ratner is quoted in "Searching for the Hidden Economy: Economists believe as much as 10 percent of the U.S. economy is 'underground.' Is that such a bad thing?" The article, by Senior Editor Doug Campbell, appears in the Spring 2005 issue of *Region Focus* published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. You can find the article online at http://www.richmondfed.org/publications/economic_research/region_focus/spring_2005/feature1.cfm.

You can also order Shanna's paper, *The Informal Economy in Rural Community Economic Development*, by contacting Yellow Wood by phone at (802) 524-6141 or ordering it online at www.yellowwood.org.



Presentations and Upcoming Speaking Engagements

In April, Shanna had the **opportunity to take You Get What You Measure®** on the road to the Wisconsin Community Leadership Summit in Eau Claire. Participants found the presentation easy to follow and they liked the indicators analysis and systems map used to identify key leverage points.

In May, **You Get What You Measure®** went to Canada for Building an Inclusive Movement 2005 National Conference on Community Economic Development and the Social Economy in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. During the Everyday Measures exercise, one participant shared that she keeps track of whether or

not she's had a good laugh in the past couple of days. If not, she finds something funny and takes time out for a real belly laugh. What a great measure!

If you have an upcoming conference with participants that would be interested in learning more about **You Get What You Measure®**, please let us know.

Shanna Ratner also spoke at the Community Forests: Possibilities, Experiences, and Lessons Learned conference in Missoula, Montana in June as part of a panel addressing community outreach strategies. She spoke about engaging citizens in planning for town forests and **See the Forest®**, Yellow Wood's community-based forest education program.



What We're Reading

The Kite Runner, by Khaled Hosseini is a wonderful story of a man who grows up in a privileged family in Afghanistan. It is a story of a boy's quest for his father's love and approval and takes place amongst the political turmoil in Afghanistan from the 1970s through the 1990s. ~John

Che Guevara, A Revolutionary Life, by Jon Lee Anderson, tells the story of the legendary Ernesto "Che" Guevara from the beginning to the bitter end. The book follows his transformation from the son of an aristocratic family to the famed socialist revolutionary he became. Despite this book's size (over 700 pages), it is action-packed and quite a page-turner. ~ Melissa

The End of Oil: On the Edge of a Perilous New World, by Paul Roberts (Houghton Mifflin, 2004) offers a good introduction to our global energy predicament. It explores the economics, science, and politics of our oil dependency and what it will take to shift to alternatives. ~Lauren

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