

YELLOW WOOD NOTES

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

Summer 2001

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We Welcome Your Comments

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Update On Our Work

Forensic Research

Over the past six months, Yellow Wood Associates has appeared twice to present economic testimony before the Vermont State Environmental Board—once in relation to a proposed Home Depot in the Town of Rutland, and once in relation to the proposed expansion of Stratton Mountain ski resort. The Environmental Board hears appeals from permit applications that are not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties at the regional level.

One of our clients, Friends of Vermont's Way of Life, took issue with Home Depot's estimates of its potential economic, and therefore fiscal, impact on the Rutland area market. YWA's research confirmed that Home Depot would be in direct competition with many stores and contractors in the area, which, when stressed to the point of closure, would result in lower values for commercial property, and, therefore, a weaker tax base. The weakness in the tax base would, in turn, limit the capacity of municipalities in the trade area to provide adequate municipal services. As is often the case, the community receiving the development, in this case Rutland Town, would benefit

from an increase in its tax base, while surrounding communities, including Rutland City, would lose first market share, then businesses, then tax base.

YWA highlighted the financial contributions made by communities to regional service providers such as councils on aging, hospices, chambers of commerce, industrial development authorities, humane societies, and meals on wheels as a critical part of municipal service provision. Though the amounts contributed by each community may be relatively small, collective contributions are often the basis on which these service providers raise enough money through matching grants and other means to remain in business. Yet, when municipal budgets are tight, support for such services begins to seem

nonessential. Another important issue in the Home Depot case is the undermining of public investment in Rutland City's downtown by continued commercial development outside the city limits.

YWA worked with the Vermont Natural Resources Council to research the impacts on local businesses and local tax bases of the

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Update On Our Work

Yellow Wood Helps Develop New Tools for Local Planning

Yellow Wood Associates was invited to contribute a section called "Planning for Economic Development" to a special Vermont edition of the Lincoln Institute's online planning course. The Vermont version will be called Basic Planning for Vermont Public Officials. The online course, scheduled to debut this fall, will allow local officials in Vermont communities to study 22 topics related to town planning from the comfort of their own homes. Funding for adapting the online planning course for Vermont local officials is being provided by the Orton Institute. The Institute believes that long-term growth, community vitality, and a rural way of life can be combined for the benefit of all.

In our segment of the course YWA emphasizes the difference between development and growth,

and how import it is for a community to clarify what it really wants and where it currently stands in relation to its goals. We introduce innovative strategies as well as the concept of measuring progress toward goals as a learning activity.

YWA is currently working with the Vermont Forum on Sprawl to prepare content for a guidebook on public investment strategies that support smart growth in Vermont. The guidebook, intended to assist Vermont's smaller municipalities, will focus on infrastructure investment decisions related to mobility, sewer and water, building location and reuse, downtown revitalization, and conservation and open space. We are looking for detailed information on innovative approaches in any of these areas. This work must be completed by August 1, 2001.

About 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 customized analyses and models of successful intervention in rural areas around the U.S. and abroad. Our clients include small towns; non-profit organizations; federal, state, and county governments; foundations; and the private sector.



a n V FOR THE BIRDS a n V

In each sentence, fill in the blanks with two words that will go together to name a bird. This puzzle is from *The Puzzlemaster Presents 200 Mind Bending Challenges from NPR* by Will Shortz & Liane Hansen. Answers are on Page 7.

Example: The thieves intend to _____ the museum, provided they can figure out how to get _____. [rob + in = robin]

1. We watched the boxers _____ from our first-_____ seats.
2. _____ of the farm is on the other side of the Blue _____ Mountains.
3. Barbie, looking very _____ in her new clothes, had a date with her boyfriend _____.
4. After the guest accidentally dropped the hostess' sterling silver _____ down the drain, the hostess ungraciously sent him a _____ to replace it.
5. When Arnold Palmer says he can't birdie a _____ four hole, that's just _____!
6. It took the domestic _____ almost an _____ to develop its modern "oink."
7. Dad was such a _____, he'd balance a Ritz _____ on the end of his nose.

The final two sentences have three words that combine to form a bird's name.

8. You may have to _____ the _____ old horse if he _____ not pull the cart.
9. Last _____ a storm came up at sea, and our ship was blown off course _____ the _____.

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Forensic Research Continued from Page 2

proposed Stratton Mountain ski area resort expansion. Here, one of the important issues was the likely impact of greatly expanded lodging facilities at the mountain on existing off-mountain lodging establishments that already struggle with relatively low occupancy rates. We proposed a scheme whereby new lodging development on the mountain would be tied to raising and maintaining occupancy rates for existing establishments. For example, if Stratton Mountain, through its marketing efforts, managed to raise occupancy rates throughout the region to an average of 50 percent for three years in

a row, they would then be allowed to add an additional 100 lodging units. Once the units were added, the same criteria would need to be met before adding more units. This type of arrangement would help prevent business dislocations that would otherwise result from a dramatic increase in the supply of beds without sufficient new demand.

The Vermont Environmental Board recently issued a decision unfavorable to our client's position in the Stratton case, and has yet to issue any decision with respect to Home Depot.

Update On Our Work

Assessing the Socio-Economic Sustainability of Forest Management



Debra Mason recently played the role of socio-economist on an interdisciplinary team chosen to conduct an independent, third-party assessment for one of Vermont's largest private forestland holdings. Debra worked with forester Alan Calfee and forest ecologist Rick Strimbeck to evaluate the owner's forest management according to criteria approved by the international Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The FSC criteria are administered here in the Northeast by SmartWood through their regional affiliate, the National Wildlife Federation. Landowners who choose to undergo the assessment process and successfully meet the criteria are "certified" and receive permission to market their wood using the SmartWood label.

The FSC criteria are designed to promote principles of sustainable forestry, and cover the following general topic areas: commitment to FSC principles and compliance with laws, tenure and use

rights and responsibilities, forest management planning and monitoring, forest management practices, environmental impacts and biological conservation, community and worker relations, benefits from the forest and economic viability, and tracing and tracking. SmartWood recruits an assessment team familiar with regional forest conditions with the specific expertise judged to be most critical for the operation under assessment.

During the assessment process, each team member takes primary responsibility for criteria in their area of expertise. Team members collect information, share it, and arrive at a numerical score for each criterion. The process used for gathering information is one of triangulation between written documentation such as management and business plans, face-to-face interviews with key informants, and observation of actual practices and conditions on the ground.

Suggested Reading

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life by John Kabat-Zinn, Hyperion Press, 1995. A great book for anyone looking for an easy-to-read introduction to basic meditation techniques. Short chapters describe different meditative practices, followed by simple exercises that anyone can perform. And no, you don't need your own Zen rock garden or a year's supply of incense to appreciate this book! Kabat-Zinn makes meditation accessible to people (like me) that generally steer clear of the new age section at their local bookstore. ~ Mike Ballard

Colony of Unrequited Dreams by Wayne Johnston, in paperback from Anchor Books, 2000. This fat (562-page) fun-to-read tome is a barely fictionalized account of the life of Joe Smallwood, Newfoundland's first Premier. Smallwood's personal ambition was a major driving force behind the island's confederation with Canada in 1949. The book has it all: history, politics, memorable characters, wild rural development schemes, and a quirky romance. ~ Debra Mason

Listserv Proves A Multi-Functional Tool

When we created a listserv for the National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region, we envisioned that lively online discussions would emerge spontaneously once we had a critical mass of subscribers. But our 68 participants, a diverse range of forest professionals, have their own objectives. We've provided a place to share information, announce training opportunities, offer technical resources, and request information to support effective community involvement in decision-making with respect to forest resources. Participants tell us that they check the listserv regularly, and that they value the information they find there.

Our staff set aside pertinent news articles, job opportunities, and events to post. We also post queries we receive from partners, community volunteers, and others. The response is impressive. When we asked for ideas about how to convince

local officials that it's good fiscal policy to invest in street trees, we received responses from around the country.

We monitor the listserv daily (4-5 hours a week of staff time) to ensure a smooth, continuous flow of information and dialogue. When the screen is blank, we offer up new information or ask a provocative question like "What is your favorite forest?" or "What does the term 'working forest' mean to you?"

In addition to providing a forum for information sharing and discussion, the listserv has enabled the National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region to broadcast our message to a national audience. In recent weeks individuals from as far away as Florida and Colorado have responded to listserv requests, broadening the discussion beyond the original subscribers.

Mike Ballard Joins YWA

Mike Ballard joined our staff in May as a Research Associate. Previously, Mike worked as a consultant for a high-tech consulting firm in Williston, Vermont, where he wrote business plans for start-up companies. His work experience includes research positions at the Cornell Center for the Environment, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and the Centro de Investigación y Docencias Económicas in Mexico City.

Mike's primary interests are in the fields of organizational design, eco-

nomics development, and environmental policy. He holds a Master's Degree in Regional Planning from Cornell University, a Master's Degree in Political Science from the University of New Mexico, and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Calgary.

YWA staff now consists of Shanna Ratner, Principal; Paige Manning, Research Intern; Mary Nieman, Office Manager; Debra Mason, Senior Associate; and Mike Ballard, Associate.

National Community Forestry Center

Northern Forest Region



Our first year as administrator for the National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region has been a real learning experience. Based upon input from our partners and advisory council, we've initiated several research projects including a demonstration forest database accessible on our website, www.ncfcnfr.net, and a study of the relationship between different types of forestland ownership and management styles. We are providing support services to facilitate community forestry initiatives in two northern forest communities and currently taking nominations for additional communities to receive our assistance.

Our publication series, available for downloading on our website, includes case studies of landowner cooperation and collaborative decision-making as well as a directory of school-based forest education programs in the region, examples from municipal planning for the forest resource,

a set of readings about participatory community-based research, and an introduction to community forestry throughout the U.S. and the world. We are currently planning to hold a series of fall workshops to expose professional researchers and community volunteers to participatory research methods.



We've held two retreats and monthly conference calls with our 18-member advisory council representing different forest interests from across the region. The group has jumped in enthusiastically to provide direction and focus for our work, provide us with information from communities in the area, and let others know about our services. We've provided them with information, learning experiences, and a chance to interact with others throughout the region who share their interest in healthy communities and healthy forests. We're currently soliciting nominations for advisory council members to fill terms ending this September.

The National Community Forestry Center, a network of four regional centers, is a project of the National Network of Forest Practitioners. The Northern Forest Center, administered by Yellow Wood Associates serves the states of Maine, Vermont, New York, and New Hampshire. To get more information, or to get involved, visit our website at www.ncfcnfr.net or give us a call from ME, VT, NY, or NH at 800-727-5404 or from elsewhere at 802-524-6141.

a n v e

FOR THE BIRDS (Answers)

1. Spar + row
2. Part + Ridge
3. Chic + Ken
4. Spoon + bill
5. Par + rot
6. Pig + eon
7. Nut + cracker
8. Whip + poor + will
9. Night + in + gale

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