

YELLOW WOOD NOTES

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

Summer 2002

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We Welcome Your Comments

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Update On Our Work

Surveying Vermont's Airports



Did you know that Vermont has seventeen airports? YWA staff have visited all of them, from Burlington International's jetways to seasonally operated grass airstrips.

Throughout this past spring and summer, YWA has been working in conjunction with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Massachusetts consulting firm, SH&E, to survey visitors using the state's general aviation and commercial airport facilities. The purpose of the survey is to document the impact airport users have on the state's local economies. One of the most interesting things we learned is that some of the more remote airports have become regional or even national centers for specialized users such as gliders, hot air balloons, and stunt planes.

Economic Impacts of School Location

The Town of Bennington, Vermont needs a new middle school. Unfortunately, they've decided to move the school from its existing downtown location to a big empty field on the edge of town.

Shanna Ratner, working on behalf of the Conservation Law Foundation, identified potential adverse economic impacts of schools located on the edge of town. She presented testimony before the regional commission that makes permit decisions according to Act 250, Vermont's planning and development law.

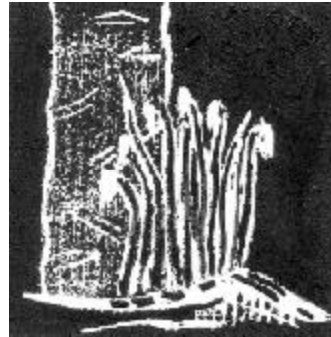
Impacts identified include: potential loss of property value for downtown properties, increased values on the edge of town which can lead to sprawl; the need for increased bussing that increases costs, causes air pollution deprives students of exercise, and results in increased public health costs; and reduced spending at downtown establishments by students, teachers, and parents who no longer visit downtown on a regular basis thus undermining previous public investment in downtown revitalization. Surprisingly little research has been conducted on the economic impacts of elementary, middle, and high schools and their location on communities.

Update On Our Work

Program Management Under Contract

YWA's latest round of strategic planning helped us recognize a new competency in the area of contracted program management. Since March, 2000, we have been administering the National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region on behalf of the National Network of Forest Practitioners. Our role includes program development, implementation, and administration.

We are interested in finding other contract opportunities to manage programs that contribute to the well-being of rural communities. If you have, or know of another organization that has a program that involves community outreach and information sharing that would benefit from decentralized administration, we'd be pleased to discuss how our capabilities may help you fulfill your mission.



Ford Foundation Community-Based Forestry

The Ford Foundation is conducting a multi-year experiment in community-based forestry by providing funding to twelve demonstration projects around the country. Shanna Ratner worked with Mary Virtue, a member of the project's management team from the Aspen Institute, to find the commonalities and differences among anticipated outcomes for nine of the twelve projects. The analysis includes outcomes related to economy, forests, community, and organizational development.



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.

Research & Development: Green Community Technology

We are pleased to announce a new project that is intended to help rural communities make choices that will save money, improve municipal service delivery, and create jobs.

The Town of Richmond, Vermont has agreed to serve as pilot community for this project, and will receive assistance from a team of technical experts including Jeff Forward of Richmond Energy Associates.

The project will include an inventory and evaluation of structures owned by the Town or services over which the Town has significant decision-making authority such as bridges, roads, sidewalks, lighting, parks and recreation facilities, and sewer and water plants. The inventory and evaluation will be followed by an assessment of a wide range of alternative methods and technologies developed over recent years to conserve energy and other resources and provide more efficient service delivery.

Yellow Wood Associates will facilitate the assessment by convening a roundtable of technology experts who have agreed to share their expertise. Working with these partners, Yellow Wood Associates will develop a

municipal infrastructure assessment tool, determine the availability and affordability of alternative technologies, and engage community members in learning about appropriate options for their community.

If successful, this pilot project will result in an assessment tool and process that Yellow Wood Associates can then offer to rural communities throughout Vermont and the nation to help them make informed choices about investments in public services and facilities. We expect that the new requirements from the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB 34) regarding infrastructure inventories and valuations will be immensely helpful in generating the background information needed to make our approach to Green Community Technologies a success.

If you know of alternative technologies you think we should know about and/or technologists who may be interested in contributing to this project, please let us know. This work is being funded by a Small Business Innovations in Research Phase I grant from USDA Rural Development.

Answer to Puzzler on Page 6:
The gibberish written on the cover of the book held the answer. Once decoded, it reads: *The pages of this book are poisoned.* To find this, write the gibberish backward, then separate the words just as they appear in the gibberish version. The beginning letters of each word in the code were also altered to throw the reader off. Smith was careful to handle the book with thick gloves and wrap it in plastic the first chance that he got. The book now appears in the Armitage Archive.

Tricks of the Trade Breaking the Ice

Do you have a hard time remembering names?

We've begun to experiment with alternative approaches to breaking the ice at the beginning of meetings and workshops. Rather than starting off by sharing our names, we start by sharing something else. It could be something you think that everyone in the group would be surprised to know about you. It could be something that you hope to learn from your involvement with the group. It could be the best joke you've heard in the past month. The point is, it gives everyone a different "handle" on who you are. That way, if they can't remember your name, they can always say, "You're the person who climbed Mt. Everest, aren't you?"!



Update on Former YWA Clients

Island Pond Woodworkers Alliance

The Island Pond Woodworkers Alliance, a group of woodworkers laid off by Ethan Allen and who were determined to form their own company, has become Island Pond Woodworking, Inc. The new company has produced prototypes for its first customer, Middlebury College, and is busy making tables and bookcases for the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics at the University of Vermont. If all goes well, at least 25 former Ethan Allen employees will have new jobs with Island Pond Woodworking. Yellow Wood Associates worked with Jon Zeltsman and Harry Kokkinis on the pre-feasibility study for this company.

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Union County Farmers

A couple of years ago, YWA conducted market research for a diverse group of farmers, community development specialists, business leaders, and farmland protection advocates in Union County, PA. They wanted to know what opportunities there were for farmers to add value to their fluid milk by selling products closer to home. The group has recently opened a producers-only farmers market in Mifflinburg, PA. In addition, a local dairy co-op has received a loan to construct a bottling plant and retail milk market featuring old-style glass bottles. The group continues to identify markets for locally produced farm products, and hopes to support a regional agriculture marketing specialist position.

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New Staff at YWA



Hi there! I'm Jesse McLean, YWA's new intern. I am a recent graduate of SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, New York. My

undergraduate studies focused primarily on community design & planning, and a little bit of landscape architecture.

I grew up in a two hundred-year-old post and beam house in Walden, Vermont and attended one of Vermont's last one-room schools. As a teenager, I enjoyed the opportunities to help my neighbors haying, logging, doing carpentry work, etc. Most of all, I enjoyed the ability to walk out my door and into the woods (I don't believe I ever took the same path to visit a friend's house).

It was not until I began college that I became aware of the dynamic relationships that comprise a community and the unique experience of growing up in rural Vermont. I eventually plan to return to school for my Master's degree. But until then, I am very excited to be part of the YWA team!

Hello!

My name is John Hoover and I'm the most recent addition to Yellow Wood Associates! I

recently moved to Vermont from my home state of Virginia, where I have spent 26 of my 29 years. I am originally from Rockingham County, which is located in the pastoral Shenandoah Valley. Rockingham County was recently known as the "poultry capital of the world" due to the plethora of poultry farmers and processing plants. To this day, it remains one of the largest agricultural producers in the state.

After attending school at the College of William and Mary, I returned to my hometown (Harrisonburg) and worked for the local Soil and Water Conservation District. At that job, I greatly enjoyed working with local land-owners and learning about many different aspects of farming and conservation. I will always feel particularly tied to that area, for my family roots trace back to the Revolutionary War. In fact, many of my personal interests originate from the

See John on Page 7



Summer Puzzler:

Pseudonym of the Orchid

The renowned explorer and treasure hunter Alabama Smith happens upon the fabled Book of Erehwemos in the Temple of an ancient theocrat known only as the Orchid. On the book's cover under the title is this phrase: *Den Osiop Er Akoo Bsih Tfo Segapeht*. Many explorers had gone in search of the book before Smith, but none of them ever returned. Can you figure out why?

John Continued from Page 6

Appalachian traditions in which my family and I have been steeped. Relocating to Vermont has been a relatively easy move for me, because many of these traditions are popular here as well, such as contra dancing and bluegrass music (I have been learning how to play bluegrass banjo for some years now).

I recently graduated with a Master of Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia. While in Charlottesville, I worked for a non-profit organization affiliated with the University called the Institute for Environmental Negotiation. It was there that I became especially interested in how community decision-making process could be used to resolve complex and multifarious natural resource issues on the local level. One of my greatest interests lies in the field of watershed conservation, because I believe it is the quality of our streams and rivers that is the ultimate reflection of our collective relationship to the land.

What We're Reading

Your Blues Ain't Like Mine by Bebe Moore Campbell explores many aspects of racial conflict in the deep south during the era of integration as seen through the eyes of the book's many characters, including poor blacks and whites, southern aristocrats, and northern city folk. Campbell excels at getting inside each character and exposing the internal conflicts between old traditions and the impending societal changes that threaten to unravel the "order" of the land and culture. A great summer novel! ~ John

Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software by Steven Johnson compares the similarities of how living organisms, cities, and software learn and grow in their knowledge. As a whole, systems are composed of many thousands of individual units. Most of these units are so simple that they cannot replicate the whole when singled out. However, put enough individual units together and the collective begins to grow and learn on its own, eventually becoming a complex system. It's an interesting way to think about how we live on this planet and one's role as an individual. ~ Jesse

After *The Death of Vishnu* by Manil Suri several months ago, certain scenes from the book continue to flash across my mind. In this particular incarnation, Vishnu is a drunk who has lived for many years on the stoop of an apartment complex in Bombay. Vishnu now lies in a coma, dying on his stoop as life in the apartment complex goes on about him. His condition in no way compromises Vishnu's ability to influence neighborhood events and experiences. ~ Debra

Paige Manning Completes YWA Internship

My work at YWA over the last two years has been an invaluable learning experience. I am taking away many tools and experiences that will change the way I interact with others and the direction in which I choose to focus my future work. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to interact with many unique individuals who are working hard to sustain our forests for future generations. The greatest lesson I learned at YWA is that it is possible to change the way people interact and how they see the forest.



New YWA staff members who declined our request to submit biographical information.

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