

YELLOW WOOD NOTES

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

Summer 2004

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We Welcome Your Comments

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Update On Our Work

Fresh Vegetable Processing and a Public Market for Madison, Wisconsin

The University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, HomeGrown Wisconsin, and others selected YWA to undertake a preliminary feasibility study of a fresh vegetable processing plant and a public market for Madison, Wisconsin. The purpose of the processing facility is to add value to the raw products of Wisconsin farmers in season and small family farmers throughout the United States, improve diets of consumers and help to increase the proportion of regionally consumed foods that are produced regionally, thus improving the security of the food supply and strengthening the regional economy.

The study examines consumption trends in fresh and fresh processed produce, institutional demand for produce in Wisconsin, and raw material supply, and provides a detailed description of a state-of-the-art fresh produce processing facility that would serve institutional markets such as schools, hospitals, universities and corporate

cafeterias, in Wisconsin and within a 200-mile radius of Madison. Also included is a site assessment of potential factory sites within and around Madison, conducted by MSA Associates under contract to YWA. We bet you don't know how many ways there are to cut a carrot!

The preliminary feasibility study of a public market is based on case studies of markets around the country and provides insights into market models, the role and involvement of farmers in public markets, market customers, vendor mix and characteristics, space utilization, ownership and management, staffing, market rules, promotion and community revitalization, as well as specifications for a Madison public market and a site assessment. For more information, contact Anne Reynolds or Greg Lawless at the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives at (608) 262-3981 or YWA.

Summer Puzzler

At the recent running of the Doggie Jog, every person ran with at least one dog. The organizers want to know how many dogs and people participated. Unfortunately, the photographer tripped as he took a group picture, and got a shot of the racers' feet, but nothing else. A reporter in a helicopter scanned the canines and humans from above, but his scanner picked up only the total number of eyes. If the photographer counted 196 feet and paws and the reporter tallied 126 eyes, how many people and how many dogs ran in the race? (answer page 5)



Update On Our Work

Stories for the Northern Forest

The National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region (NCFNFR) partnered with *Northern Woodlands Magazine* in sponsoring an essay contest. 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, whose essay will be published in *Northern Woodlands Magazine* and featured on the NCFNFR website later this summer. In the meantime, samples of the stories for the Northern Forest from our NCFNFR Advisory Council can be heard at www.ncfcnfr.net.



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 customized analyses and models of successful intervention in rural areas around the U.S. and abroad. 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

Measuring Social Capital in Minnesota

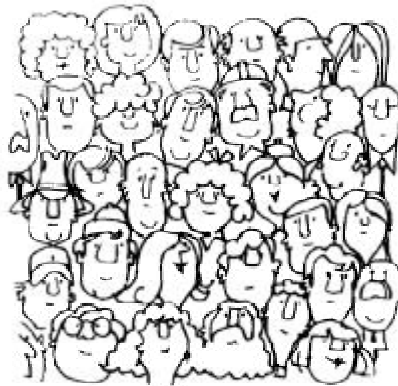
The University of Minnesota Cooperative Extension Service, Civic Engagement Program enlisted YWA to assist in creating a survey instrument to measure the impact of Extension programming on social capital in Minnesota communities. Social capital has been defined as the "...stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw on in order to solve common problems" (Siranni and Friedland). The survey explores a variety of dimensions of social capital, including: community norms of behavior; personal civic engagement; safety, access and avoidance; efficacy of effort; trust in institutions; trust in people; as well as presence, absence and extent of networks; diversity and sameness; inclusion and exclusion; and bridging and bonding.

Three Minnesota communities, Bagley, Red Lake Falls, and Grafton, have participated in pre-tests using the instrument, called Our

Community: Assessing Social Capital. YWA has developed two reporting templates, an internal report with detailed statistical analysis, and a community report indicating where communities have strengths and weaknesses in the fabric of their social capital. The University of Minnesota intends to make the tool available for purchase and use by researchers, communities, and organizations around the country. YWA will be available to assist communi-

ties and others in inputting survey data and producing reports.

Social capital: "...stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw on in order to solve common problems." (Siranni & Friedland)



Update On Our Work

YWA Receives Funding for Phase II of Green Community Technologies (GCT)



In June, YWA received notice from the USDA Small Business Innovation Research program that our application for Phase II funding had been accepted. During Phase I, YWA worked with the Town of Richmond, Vermont to inventory the condition of their municipal infrastructure (e.g. bridges, roads, vehicles) and to assess the potential of alternative technologies to improve municipal service delivery within the town. In Phase II, we will be working with up to five additional communities and will be expanding upon the range of municipal infrastructure issues and alternative approaches

that were considered for Richmond.

YWA will also continue working with Richmond to monitor implementation of Phase I recommendations, assist in identifying funding sources and financing mechanisms, and monitor the performance of alternative technologies once they are in place.

If you are interested in bringing the GCT service to a community near you, visit <http://www.yellowwood.org/gct.htm> and fill out our online form. You may be eligible for a free on-site consultation.



Update On Past Clients

Harpswell Votes Against Proposed LNG Facility

Yellow Wood Associates (YWA) completed a study earlier this year that projected fiscal and economic impacts of a proposed liquified natural gas (LNG) import terminal facility in the town of Harpswell, Maine. This study investigated impacts on the fishing industry in and around Harpswell, impacts on real estate values, impacts on municipal budgeting, and impacts on recreation and tourism.

Despite a bomb threat called in the day of the vote, voting was not interrupted. In the end, 3,468 people, or 72 percent of the town's approximately 4,800 registered voters, cast their ballots on four separate measures. More people voted on the LNG issue than voted in the last presidential election. Over 2,000 voted by absentee ballot. This was one of the highest voter turnouts in Harpswell's history.

On March 9, 2004, the citizens of Harpswell rejected the LNG

Answer to Puzzler

There were 28 people and 35 dogs.

Update On Our Work

Redwood Coast Rural Action

Shanna Ratner participated in a Redwood Coast Rural Action (RCRA) Regional Planning Team Retreat in May 2004, as one of 11 members of a National Advisory Team.

RCRA is a convening of people throughout the northern coast of California brought together by the College of the Redwoods, Humboldt State University, and Humboldt Area Foundation to “create a means for intentional, healthy regional decision-making and action that conserves our natural wealth, diversifies and expands our employment base, maintains our rural quality of life, cares for the health of our population and communities and expands the opportunities for family economic success.”

The Aspen Institute’s Community Strategies Group is providing guidance and facilitation to RCRA. Ideally, RCRA would like to become a model of rural development for the entire country.

Perhaps one of the most unique aspects of northern California’s economy is the important, if underground, role of marijuana cultivation. Integrating this ubiquitous aspect of



economic life into a formal planning process presents some interesting challenges that fit right into YWA’s longstanding interest in the interplay of formal and informal economies.

(Quote is from *Redwood Coast Rural Action: Framework for a Regional Future.*)

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YWA Now on GSA

Accessing Yellow Wood Associates (YWA) has never been easier. U.S. federal agencies and other eligible organizations can procure YWA's services through U.S. General Services Administration's (GSA's) Federal Supply Schedule for Management, Organizational and Business Improvement Services (MOBIS), including SIN 874-1 (Consulting services), SIN 874-2 (Facilitation services), and SIN 874-3 (Survey services).

Contract # GS-10F-0017P

Management, Organizational & Business Improvement Services (MOBIS)

Schedule: 874



SIN 874-1: Consulting Services

- Strategic and business planning
- Program evaluations
- Process & productivity improvement
- Public involvement
- Performance measures and indicators
- Pre-feasibility & feasibility studies
- Policy impact analysis
- Best practices research

SIN 874-2: Facilitation Services— Short-term or ongoing

- Agenda & process design for full engagement & fun
- Problem-solving techniques
- Systems thinking
- Large & small group briefings/discussions/work teams
- Providing a permanent record
- Logistical meeting/conference support when performing technical facilitation
- Team building
- Conflict management
- Focusing decision-making

SIN 874-3: Survey Services

- Objective-based planning & survey design
- Sampling
- Pretest/pilot surveying
- Assessing reliability & validity of data
- Production of reports
- Survey database development
- Quantitative & qualitative methodologies
- Multi-media survey administration
- Sharing survey results
- Analyses of quantitative/qualitative data



Update On Our Work

Using Systems Thinking in Millinocket, Maine

An energy entrepreneur has approached the Millinocket area of Maine with an idea for an eco-industrial park built around two 3-megawatt biomass plants that would produce heat and electricity for park businesses at below-market rates. Two potential sites were identified and a feasibility study for the park is currently underway.

Yellow Wood Associates, in collaboration with The Sustainability Institute, was asked by the Wilderness Society to design and facilitate a workshop for board members of the Millinocket Area Growth and Investment Council (MAGIC), local business owners, utility company representatives, local government officials, and environmentalists to examine community expectations with respect to the eco-park.

Using a systems thinking tool called Action-to-Outcome Mapping (see next page), the group identified the desired outcomes for the community from a successful eco-park, and the key components of the eco-park. Next, they discussed their theories of the relationships between the components of the park and the desired community outcomes. Theories addressed the question of how a successful eco-park would actually effect change in the community. Key assumptions underlying their theories were named and “show stopper” assumptions -- those that, if incor-

rect would cause the eco-park to fail -- were identified along with information needed to feel confident that these assumptions were correct. The group also considered what they could do, individually and collectively, to increase the likelihood that these critical assumptions would be correct.

Since the action-to-outcome mapping workshop, the project was given a new name, Katahdin Energy Commons, and the town of Medway was chosen to be the location.

Bruce McClean, Executive Director of MAGIC, found the action to outcome session, “one of the most useful things we’ve done in a long time.” For more information on using systems thinking tools in your development work, contact YWA at (802) 524-6141.



Action-to-Outcome Mapping

Action-to-Outcome Mapping is a systems thinking tool that helps groups articulate their theories of change and improve existing strategies by increasing the chances that the actions they take will result in the outcomes they desire. As with many systems thinking tools, action-to-outcome mapping can be used with varying degrees of rigor. The more experience one has with causal loop diagrams, the easier it is to incorporate loops into action-to-outcome maps. However, even without extensive experience with causal looping, action-to-outcome mapping can be useful. You might consider a six-step format as follows:

Step 1: Identifying Desired Outcomes

What are the desired economic, environmental, and social outcomes resulting from your strategy if it succeeds?

Step 2: Identifying Key Components of the Strategy

What are the key features of the strategy you are considering? What are the major actions implied by the strategy?

Step 3: Theories of Success

How do you think the strategy, if successful, will lead to the desired outcomes? Which components of the strategy support which outcomes? Are there contradictions between some actions and others or some outcomes and others?

Step 4: Surfacing Key Assumptions

What are the assumptions behind your theories, which, if not true, would affect one or more of the desired outcomes?

Step 5: Ranking Assumptions

Which of the assumptions, if proven false, would be “show stoppers;” which would be cause for concern but not “show stoppers;” and which would be relatively unimportant in the overall scheme of things?

Step 6: Identifying Information Needs

What do you need to know to feel confident that the “show stopper” assumptions are, indeed, correct? What can you do to increase the likelihood that they will be correct? For example, if community support is needed for success, what can you do to engender it?

For assistance in applying action-to-outcome mapping and other systems thinking tools to your strategic plans, contact YWA at (802) 524-6141.

What's up at YWA?

Staff Changes: Farewell to John

In July, John Hoover left Yellow Wood Associates to get married and travel to Argentina with his new wife, where they will be living for six months. We wish him the very best in all his future endeavors.

Science for Sustainability

The Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES) of USDA held a workshop in Washington, DC in March to discuss opportunities to integrate sustainability and whole systems science into CSREES programs.

Shanna Ratner was one of 40 leading thinkers and practitioners from around the country invited to recommend new program areas and modifications to existing ones, focusing on sustainability issues such as water availability, entrepreneurship, and land use. Workshop results are being used to produce a budget white paper, improve the agency's strategic program planning and write future requests for applications of competitive programs. The direction taken by CSREES affects new research and technology, teaching content, and extension education for professionals and the public.

The new CSREES program, Enhancing the Prosperity of Small Farms and Rural Agricultural Communities, is, in part, a response to input from workshop participants. For more information, go to www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/fundview.cfm?fonum=1200.

Sustainable Communities

Yellow Wood Associates is pleased to have been selected as a presenter at the Sustainable Communities 2004 conference in Burlington, Vermont, July 14-18, 2004.

We presented a case study of our Green Community Technologies program, based on our pilot project experience in Richmond, Vermont, as well as a You Get What You Measure® workshop.

For more information about Sustainable Communities 2004, visit www.global-community.org/conference/.

Opportunities for Innovators in Agriculture and Natural Resources

Shanna Ratner recently participated on a workshop panel about Vermont success stories with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program. Shanna and another successful SBIR grantee, Jeff Parsons of Beeken Parsons, gave their stories about seeking and winning research funds. Among other things, Shanna spoke about YWA's insights into the SBIR process in general, the challenges of commercialization, and reflections on the proposal preparation process.

YWA Website Gets a New Look!

YWA is proud to announce the debut of our newly redesigned website. The new website features a new look, updated content and an easy-to-follow organizational structure. Browse YWA project experience by areas of expertise (i.e. agriculture, forestry, community development) or by type of service offered (i.e. research, facilitation). Don't forget to check out the links to YWA products, including Green Community Technologies (see page 5), You Get What You Measure®, and See the Forest®. Please sign our guest book and tell us what you think of our new look!



What We're Reading

The Lobster Chronicles (Hyperion, 2003), by Linda Greenlaw, is a revealing look into the ups and downs of lobster fishing on the coast of Maine. Greenlaw, who is renowned for her role as a captain of a swordfishing boat in *The Perfect Storm*, gives us an in-depth picture of the grueling labor and idiosyncratic personalities associated with her trade. A fun, easy read! ~ John

The Seventh Telling (St. Martin's Griffin, 2001), by Mitchell Chefitz, is an absorbing, somewhat mystical story of paths to spiritual enlightenment trod by ordinary mortals following the teachings of the Kabbalah, a relatively obscure Jewish text. Interesting new knowledge for Jews and non-Jews alike. ~ Shanna

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