

YELLOW WOOD NOTES

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

Winter 2004

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We Welcome Your Comments

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Update On Our Work

Green Community Technologies Pilot a Success

In November 2002, Yellow Wood Associates (YWA) presented its findings on the Green Community Technologies (GCT) pilot project at a meeting of Richmond, Vermont's Planning Commission. Over the past year, YWA had assisted the Town of Richmond by conducting an inventory and assessment of its municipal infrastructure and researching a range of alternative technologies, including energy efficiency opportunities in the town building, alternative fuels for town vehicles, alternatives for repairing and replacing underground pipes, alternative wastewater and stormwater management.

YWA presented the costs and benefits of the alternative technologies compared with conventional technologies. In some cases, such as the energy efficiency retrofit of the town building, alternatives had clear cost benefits when considered in a life-cycle costing framework. Other alternatives were not currently commercially viable (e.g., biodiesel for town vehicles).

At the November meeting, the Planning Commission recommended going forward with implementation of the energy efficiency measures for the Town Center. YWA will continue to assist Richmond in this process by identifying financing options and addressing any regulatory hurdles. YWA is also applying for a Phase II Small Business Innovation Research grant to pursue commercialization of this service.

GCT Goes to the Big Apple

In February, Shanna Ratner and Ann Ruzow Holland will be presenting at the New York State Association of Towns 2004 Training School and Annual Meeting in New York City. Our session, Green Technology for Your Town, will cover the advantages to municipal officials of considering alternative technology applications to municipal infrastructure and outline a step-by-step process for doing so. More information on YWA's Green Community Technologies service is available on our website.



Update On Our Work

Measuring Canada's Impact on Clinton County, NY

YWA recently conducted its fifth replication of a *Study of the Economic Impact of Canada on Clinton County, New York* for the Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce (conducted in years 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002).

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, marinas, and export sales. In 2002:

- The total economic impact on Clinton County, New York was \$1.34 billion, an increase of \$8 million since 2000 and \$564 million since 1994. These are actual dollars that do not include multiplier effects.

- Canadian-owned businesses provided a total of 3,380 jobs in Clinton County and contribute \$104,121,925 to payroll.
- For Canadian-owned businesses, border-dependent businesses and public border-related agencies combined, there has been a 3% increase in employment, and a 14% increase in payroll in Clinton County due to the Canadian connection since 2000.
- Canadian visitors spent approximately \$191.4 million in Clinton County, or 18% of the estimated total gross sales of all industries subject to sales tax in Clinton County in 2002.



Clinton County, New York

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; John Hoover, Associate; Melissa Levy, Associate; and Mary Nieman, Office Manager.



Update On Our Work

National Community Forestry Center Northern Forest Region (NCFNFR) Stories for the Northern Forest

At our most recent retreat in December, Advisory Council members were asked to imagine life in a Northern Forest community 25 years from now. Many themes were provided as ideas, including timber and non-timber forest products, businesses, recreation, tourism, energy, education and more.

The results of this exercise can be found on the NCFNFR website, www.ncfnfr.net, where you can actually listen to the different stories told. The success and power of these stories prompted NCFNFR to partner with *Northern Woodlands* Magazine, in sponsoring an essay contest. We are asking people to write short essays (300 words or fewer) that describe what the Northern Forest will be like in 25 years.

Here's the assignment: Imagine life in a Northern Forest community 25 years from now. How are the people in the com-

munity connected with the forest? Choose a person or a type of person (a logger, a student, or a wildlife biologist, for example) from whose point of view your story is told. In this person's daily life, how does it look, feel, smell, taste, sound to be connected with the forest?

The entries will be judged by the editorial staff of *Northern Woodlands* and the staff of Yellow Wood Associates, who will evaluate the work for originality of thought and quality of the writing. The essay (or essays) selected by the judges will be published in the Autumn 2004 issue of *Northern Woodlands*. In addition, winners will receive a *Northern Woodlands* t-shirt.

The deadline for entries is May 1. Send your entries via email to mail@northernwoodlands.org with a subject line

of Essay Contest, or mail it to Northern Woodlands Essay Contest, P.O. Box 471, Corinth, VT 05039.



Update On Our Work

Studying the Potential Impact of a Liquid Natural Gas Import Terminal on a Small Coastal ME Town

Yellow Wood Associates (YWA) is currently putting the finishing touches on a fiscal and economic impact study of a proposed liquid natural gas (LNG) import terminal in the town of Harpswell, Maine.

Harpswell is a small town on Maine's southern coast (population 5,000+), consisting of peninsulas and many islands. Harpswell's economy relies heavily on a significant lobster fishery. In addition, the town attracts tourists and recreational boaters, including many second homeowners.

YWA was asked by a concerned citizens group called Fairplay to determine the impacts of the proposed facility on fishing, property

values, the tourism economy, and municipal government.

The gap between demand and supply of natural gas in the US is causing natural gas prices to rise. Recent advances in technology have significantly lowered the cost of liquefying, regasifying, shipping, and storing natural gas in the US, making it possible to access international sources of gas that were once considered stranded. Right now, an LNG import terminal on the east coast of the US is highly sought after; it is anticipated to be extremely profitable.

Shanna Ratner will be making a presentation to the group as well as interested town residents in February.

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Update On Former YWA Clients

Navajo County Forest Health Strategic Planning

Last spring, YWA put on a workshop in Arizona which involved creating a shared approach and cooperative solutions to managing the threats of catastrophic wildfire and improving community forest health among communities, tribes, the county, and state and federal agencies. The plan created by the 40+ participants over two days addressed long-term goals for the management of the community forest of the White Mountains in Navajo County.

Asked if they have been able to move forward with the resulting plan, Stephen Campbell, the Director of Navajo County Cooperative Extension, replied, "*Yes. We have incorporated the concepts into the revised County Plan and are using it as the model for Show Low's planning for forest health and fire safety.*"

Answer to Puzzler

An eye

What's up at YWA?

Farewell to Elizabeth

Elizabeth Golden is no longer a Yellow Wood Associate. We wish her the very best in all her future endeavors.

Life as a Donella Meadows Fellow

Shanna Ratner was selected as one of 16 members of the first class of Donella Meadows Fellows. Donella (Dana) Meadows was a systems thinker extraordinaire; fellows are all seasoned professionals working on sustainability in sectors as diverse as energy and marine life.

Twice a year, fellows are treated to workshops to develop and hone systems thinking skills, including mental models, visioning, personal mastery, root cause analysis, action to outcome mapping, and engagement through inquiry. We explore how we might integrate these tools and the thinking behind them into our daily practice. We share the homes of residents at Cobb Hill, a cohousing community and farm in Hartland, Vermont that Dana helped to found, and are guided by staff of The Sustainability Institute, a nonprofit organization offering consulting services in systems thinking.

The two four-day workshops held so far have offered the benefits of retreats combined with lots of intellectual stimulation and space to dream. Holding the balance of optimism amidst the pressure of increased evidence of planetary limits is a hard practice and lends itself well to the support of such a committed and compassionate group. We expect the systems thinking tools to enrich our capabilities to help you tackle complex issues. We hope the relationships forged with fellow Fellows will form its own long-lasting reinforcing loop.

Winter Puzzler

I am a window, I am a lamp, I am clouded, I am shining, and I am colored; set in white, I fill with water and overflow. I say much, but I have no words. What am I?



What We're Reading

The Speed of Light by Elizabeth Rosner is a remarkable book offering an unusual perspective on the Holocaust by showing how connections can be forged among a unique and memorable cast of characters scarred by horrific acts in different parts of the world. Absorbing, compelling, and uplifting.~ Shanna

Small Wonder by Barbara Kingsolver takes on issues such as safety and security, genetic engineering, nature and patriotism. Kingsolver wrote this book of essays as her response to the events of September 11. ~ Melissa

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Using the Dialogue Method: Creating a Framework for Meaningful Exchange

Often in meetings, participants can come away feeling that they were not heard or had not gotten to say what was really on their minds. As a result, many people feel that meetings are necessarily unproductive.

The dialogue method allows for all participants to speak. The word **dialogue** comes from the Greek words *dia* (through) and *logos* (word or meaning or relationship). “A dialogue is a conversation in which people think together in relationship. Thinking together implies that you no longer take your own position as final. You relax your grip on certainty and listen to the possibilities that result simply from being in a relationship with other possibilities that might not otherwise have occurred” (*Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* by William Issacs, page 19).

The dialogue method uses the skills of listening, respecting, suspending, and voicing. Listening means quieting one’s own inner voice to take in the words of another person. Respecting involves recognizing the legitimacy of what others are saying, whether we agree or disagree with their ideas. Dialogue requires that we suspend our own opinions while taking in someone else’s opinions. Voicing works best when we think through what we want to say before we say it; reflecting and writing down our thoughts provides a way of doing this.

The use of a talking stick is also helpful in the process of dialogue. In Native American lore, the talking stick is said to impart the courage to speak the truth to the one who wields it. This tool allows everyone an even space to talk and be heard. Only the person holding the talking stick is allowed to speak. This stick is passed around, so that everyone is given the space to talk uninterrupted, while the rest of the group listens. No one takes notes in front of the group; the focus remains on each speaker and the ideas emerging from the group.

Dialogue allows for diverse perspectives to be shared in a non-confrontational way. As the dialogue proceeds, people increasingly take into account what others have said, creating a richer understanding. Dialogue is exploratory rather than decisional, allowing people to examine complex issues or seemingly simple issues from many perspectives.

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