

YELLOW WOOD NOTES

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

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We Welcome Your Comments

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See The Forest

We've held two sessions of **See the Forest**, our project to develop an interactive workbook and training program to enhance communities' appreciation of forests as social, environmental and economic assets. As far as we know, **See the Forest** is the only forest-related training and education program that is community focused, rather than directed toward individual landowners.

See the Forest is designed to jump-start conversations about forests and their many actual and potential contributions to communities. The program combines presentation of factual material, personal and collective reflection on participants' connection with the forest, and hands-on experience in the woods. The first session emphasized forest health, forest functions and values, and monitoring for forest health. The second emphasized the forest economy and inventorying the forest resource for economic uses including timber, recreation, and non-timber forest products.

The biggest challenge has not been developing materials, designing a training format, engaging volunteer speakers and exercise leaders, facilitating the workshops, or identifying resources, although these have indeed been challenging. So far, the biggest challenge has been enticing people to participate. To encourage participation, the Conservation Commissions decided to offer free child care and lunch. So far, we have had a total of 29 community participants at both workshops combined, with balanced participation from the two communities with whom we are working. (We send out

See the Forest participant using a penny to choose a plot to evaluate forest health.

letters of invitation to folks who have been identified by the Conservation Commissions as potential participants. Commission members follow up with phone calls.) We are working with the Conservation Commissions to test alternative approaches to recruitment, including advertising in local papers. We would like to see as many as 20 people from each community at the workshops.

Those who have participated have enjoyed the mix of background readings, interactive exercises, time for personal reflection, and hands-on experiences in the woods that our sessions provide. In April of 1999, after we have piloted four of the five sessions planned, we will begin looking for partners to sponsor the program in other states. **See the Forest** is funded by a grant from U.S. Department of Agriculture's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program.

Work:

Focus on Forest Projects

FOREST BANK FEASIBILITY

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy's Center for Compatible Economic Development, Yellow Wood Associates, in collaboration with R.J. Turner Company of Bristol, Vermont, is analyzing the feasibility of establishing a forest bank in the Tug Hill region of New York State. The concept of a forest bank was developed by the Center for Compatible Economic Development as a means to ensure long-term health of the forest ecosystem, while yielding a sound economic return to private forest land owners.

The bank would accept deposits of timber and forest land management rights from private landowners in exchange for an annual "dividend" payment similar to that of a certificate of deposit. The landowner would reserve the right to "cash out" and receive a payment of some portion of the value of their deposit. The forest bank would be

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FOREST LAND ASSESSMENT

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) is engaged in a nine-month assessment to determine the sustainability of forest management in New York State forests as part of a pilot project in conjunction with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. The 700,000 acres of land to be assessed includes state land managed for multiple use and does not include lands within the park system or the Adirondack or Catskill Parks.

The evaluation is based on criteria developed by SmartWood, the world's oldest forest certification organization, to ensure the long-term environmental, economic, and social sustainability of forest management. The New York State assessment builds on a growing national and international effort to certify sustainable forest management through the use of independent scientific review teams. Under this program, wood from "certified forests" can be labeled and marketed as coming

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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.



Puzzler

Each of the phrases below is a well known proverb disguised in the kind of obfuscating language which is always a red flag to editors. See if you can read through to clarity. Answers are on Page 11.

1. It is fruitless to attempt to indoctrinate a superannuated canine with innovative maneuvers.
2. A revolving lithic conglomerate accumulates no congeries of a small green bryophytic plant.
3. Where there are visible vapors having their provenance in ignited carbonaceous materials, there is conflagration.
4. The temperature of the aqueous content of an unremittingly ogled saucepan does not reach 212 degrees F.
5. Individuals who make their abode in vitreous edifices would be advised to refrain from catapulting petrous projectiles.
6. It is fruitless to become lacrymose over precipitately departed lacteal fluid.



Update on Our Work: Public Market Feasibility Study

An indoor, year-round public farmers' market, was first proposed for the city of Burlington, Vermont in the Fall of 1996. Soon after, The City of Burlington, The Department of Agriculture, The Burlington Community Land Trust, The Women's Agricultural Network at The University of Vermont, and others came together to form the Public Market Steering Committee. The Committee is responsible for determining the feasibility of the market, identifying potential sites, and developing an implementation strategy.

The mission of the public market is to provide a public commercial space in which local Vermont farmers, crafters, artists, small business people, consumers, and area residents can carry on traditional and innovative market activities. The steering committee hopes to create a market that is accessible to the broadest possible public, affordable to consumers and vendors, and diverse in size, type and

mix of products offered. The market will provide opportunities to vendors with a wide range of marketing experience and products.

YWA is conducting a detailed survey of potential producer/vendors to determine producers' market readiness, site preferences and related facility requirements, as well as their concerns and recommendations with respect to the market. Secondly, YWA will explore alternative organizational structures for the public market. Working with interested producers, we will identify the major criteria for choosing an organizational structure and develop a model incorporating producer preferences.

If you have any related materials, questions or suggestions, or an interest in examining the potential for other public markets in the Northeast, please contact us.

Community Forest Stewardship Has Dee

Through time, the ownership and management status of New England's forest lands has undergone a series of interesting permutations, but New Englanders have a long tradition of community forest stewardship. The following historical overview is gathered from *The Landscape of Community: A History of Communal Forests in New England* by Robert McCullough, published by University Press of New England in 1995.

THE COMMONS

While New England's first settlements replicated the functionality of Mother England's nucleated villages surrounded by common open fields and woods, the unfamiliar ecology and vast wilderness of the new country forced settlers to adopt novel patterns of land use. Individual grants of timber rights on common land occurred routinely, although often with restrictions ensuring some specific public benefit beyond that of clearing. For example, voters of Marshfield, MA sold rights to remove ore and cut pine for charcoal from common lands to support the manufacture of iron, but their grant was made subject to a condition that only town inhabitants be employed to cut wood.

Early on tension emerged between the quest for individual property and the birth of collective stewardship as relentless clearing quickly dwindled wood

supplies. Colonists remembered how scarce wood had been back in England, and quickly adopted measures to limit waste, distribute resources fairly, and prevent other towns from harvesting local timber. Woodland management was dictated by economic incentive: stewardship made fiscal sense. Eventually regulations extended beyond purely economic concerns and recognized the importance of trees as town amenities. In 1693, residents of Reading, MA acknowledged a need for shade trees in the village and

marked those to be spared the ax. As town administration developed, control of the forest resource assumed a more public function and sale or taxation of wood products taken from common land was used to

meet communal expenses.

In the early settlements, ownership and control of both land and community were vested in proprietors who received land grants from the colonial governors. As town populations increased, new immigrants demanded their share of the undivided lands and conflict ensued. By the early 1700s, this conflict, along with economic pressures, speculation, political and religious unrest, and evolving agricultural practices combined to hasten the transformation of common land from a collective resource to a commodity belonging to a select group of town members. Even so, McCullough argues that the commons clearly established



wardship Has Deep Roots in New England

collective stewardship as essential to the economic and material well being of town citizens, both on an immediate and a long-term basis.

PUBLIC LANDS

A second class of communal property, public lands, developed simultaneously with the commons. Lacking currency to pay salaries, colonists resorted to abundant land and resources to support the church and the school. Ownership of property accrued directly to the institutions or their ministers, or sometimes to towns through their selectmen.

During the nineteenth century, a new category of public lands emerged when poor farms became a widely practiced method of local welfare. In addition to crop and pasture land, poor farms often included woodlots which supplied fuelwood for resident paupers, building materials for farming operations, and lumber or other wood products for sale to the general public.

The collective stewardship evident on common lands also applied to public lots, often in a more consistent way due to the supervision of town selectmen or individuals linked to benefiting institutions. Many public lots have withstood centuries of change and remain community property, testimony to successive generations of local stewards. With routines of woodlot management in place, many towns simply converted woodlots and abandoned pastures within the public

domain into municipal forests as the town forest movement gathered momentum during the early twentieth century.

THE TOWN FOREST MOVEMENT

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the nature of collective stewardship in New England's local woods, their character of use, and their function in community structure once again began to change. Public concern for the country's depleted forests and damaged ecosystems swelled, and conservation became a rallying cry. Forestry developed into a profession with an organized association and university programs. In 1886, forestry became a formal division within the Department of Agriculture, and in 1891, the Forest Reserve Act authorized U.S. presidents to set aside designated areas of public land. The American forestry debate switched from preservation to the management of public timberlands. European-trained foresters, Bernhard Fernow in particular, introduced community forestry, patterned after Swiss and German city forests, as a model for New England towns.

In 1882, Massachusetts became the first state to enable towns to purchase land and place it in the public domain for the purpose of generating revenue. The MA legislation explicitly recognized the potential for timber-crop management by towns and acknowledged an important relationship between forests and protection of water supplies. In addition, towns

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Community Forest Stewardship, from Page 7

were quick to recognize the benefits of preserving woodland for park purposes.

Town forests rapidly became New England's dominant category of local woodland. The term frequently included watershed lands, and just as often, was applied broadly enough to encompass forest parks. Whether the primary focus was commercial harvest, protection of water supplies, recreation, or some combination of purposes, the town forest movement's primary objective was the cultivation of trees for common public benefit. However, the movement floundered almost as rapidly as it began when local forestry committees proved both politically and technically unequal to the task of long-term forest management. Attempts by state and federal agencies to offer assistance were frequently met with concern over outside interference. Conflicts between user groups emerged. By the mid 50s, many municipal forests were converted to alternative public use or sold back into the private domain. Many simply languished, forgotten by public officials and local residents.

CONSERVATION LANDS

The decline in the momentum of New England's town forest movement coincided with the appearance of laws enabling communities to establish conser-

vation areas. Local commissions were enabled to acquire and use undeveloped land to conserve natural resources, control development, and protect ecosystem values.

More recently, conservation commissions have begun to recognize the value of the working landscape and search for methods to support it. We hope that the materials and activities we develop for **See The Forest** (see article on Page 2) will prepare the ground for spirited local discussions about the role of forest land within the evolving landscape and economy of rural communities.

If every community will concern itself in the rational use of the land within its borders, if every town and every county will give profitable occupation to its waste lands by utilizing them for forest-growth, the movement would not only increase the financial prosperity of each community, the efforts of those who work for a rational forest-policy in the country at large would be subserved by every communal forest established. ~Bernard Fernow

Cornell Speech Hits Target

Shanna Ratner's keynote speech to Cornell Cooperative Extension at their annual meeting in Waterloo, New York was "right on target" according to Director of Extension, Merrill Ewert. The speech, entitled "Why Capacity Matters and What You Can Do About It," defines "building capacity" as "helping individuals and groups learn how to make decisions that will get them where they really want to go." Ms. Ratner shared lessons learned in trying to build capacity as a consultant and a business manager. She described community needs and opportunities, and discussed what she feels are the strengths and challenges of Cornell Cooperative Extension as a capacity building organization. Copies of the speech are available from Yellow Wood for \$10 including postage and handling.

Skills for Effective Communication

SKILLED INQUIRY

Purpose: To ask questions which assist an individual or group in discovering their own wisdom and insights. This skill differs from the usual expert mode of giving advice or solving problems for others. Skilled inquiry is most powerful when the inquirer maintains a nonjudgmental attitude and avoids the temptation to give advice. If the person or people you are inquiring of ask you what they should do, your job is to ask them what has worked for them in the past, or what they have done in similar situations, rather than supply them with your own answer.

There are two ground rules for skilled inquiry:

1. Ask questions that come from a place of not knowing the answers. You must be genuinely curious. This means approaching people and situations with the openness of a learner, and relinquishing the mind set of "expert."
2. Ask questions that only the person or people you are asking could answer. You must ask questions that draw out the personal experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of those you are questioning. For example, a question such as "What is it like for you to be an Extension professional?" is a legitimate example of skilled inquiry, while "Do you know how to lead a group?" is not. The latter could be determined through observation or conversation with others, the former could not.

SKILLED ADVOCACY

Purpose: To explain the way you came to a decision or recommendation in a way which invites others to understand the structure of your thinking and share their own. Skilled advocacy allows the assumptions behind decisions to be fully explored, creates deeper understanding of the reasons certain decisions are taken, and provides a tool for successful participatory decision-making.

There are three basic ways to use skilled advocacy.

1. Explaining the structure of your thinking. For example, I've made a decision about X, and I would like to take you through my thought process. This was a complex decision with several critical dimensions. My thoughts were....My feelings were.... My assumptions were.... In my experience, when we do X, Y often follows.... On balance, I have decided... Notice that all these statements begin with "I". Skilled advocacy begins with taking responsibility for the position you are advocating.
2. Getting help in sorting out your thinking. For example, I'm trying to make a decision about X, and I'm leaning toward Y, but I'm not sure why. I'd appreciate your helping me understand why I think that's the right way to go. This invites skilled inquiry by the other person or people.
3. Sorting out a dilemma with others. For example, "We need to make a decision about X. I am advocating for Y, because I think ..., I feel, in my experience.... Is my thinking clear? What have you been thinking about this?"

Adapted from *Learning Our Way Throught Complexity at Work* by Judy Sorum Brown, March 1998 draft.

SKILLED LISTENING

Purpose: To learn about the person to whom you are listening, and yourself as well. To put space and awareness between what you hear and how you react. Skilled Listening is an antidote to over-personalizing our communications. Often we overreact or react inappropriately to other people because we assume that their communication is about us or means something about us that is not at all what they intended. Skilled listening encourages us to check out our assumptions before we act on them.

There are four steps to Skilled Listening:

1. Monitor your inner reactions. When you are listening, notice how you feel about what you are hearing. Does it make you feel secure, scared, angry, sad, happy?
2. Analyze your own reaction. Why are you feeling that way? What is the story you are telling yourself about what you are hearing?
3. Describe your reaction to the other person. When you said X, I felt Y. The story I tell myself when I here that is....
4. Use skilled inquiry to understand the other person's point of view: "I want to check this out with you. I am hearing X; is that what you are saying?"



YWA to Study Informal Economy

Yellow Wood Associates has received a grant from the TVA Rural Studies Program to examine the entire economy of rural areas - including both formal and informal economic activities. The informal economy is a complex phenomenon that is poorly understood by rural development planners, practitioners, and policy-makers. It can include non-monetized household-based activities, non-monetized trade such as barter and volunteerism, and monetized transactions

that are not recorded and therefore go unmeasured by traditional measures of economic activity.

Our research will attempt to answer the question, "What type(s) of interventions by planners, practitioners, and policy-makers are likely to lead to improvements in the quality of life of rural residents when we consider the whole economy of rural areas and not just the formal aspects?"

Answers to Puzzler on Page 5

1. You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
2. A rolling stone gathers no moss.
3. Where there's smoke, there's fire.
4. A watched pot never boils.
5. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.
6. Don't cry over spilled milk.

We found this puzzle at <http://www.actualentertainment.com>

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