# RURAL VISION PROJECT

**PHASE I REPORT**

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PHASE I REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report serves as a broad resource for preparing and participating in the Future of Rural New York Symposium in Syracuse, NY, July 19-21, 2006. This report, along with supporting documentation, can be found on the Rural New York Initiative's website at http://rnyi.cornell.edu and by following the links to the Rural Vision Project.

Rural New York has been transformed by far-reaching national and global economic forces; the understandings and policies of the past no longer provide ready solutions for a world defined by change. Crafting a new, clear, and bold vision for rural New York State is vital for the success and well-being of its citizens, communities, and regions. To help clarify and articulate that vision, Cornell University’s Rural New York Initiative (part of the Department of Development Sociology), Community and Rural Development Institute, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources (LCRR) have launched the NYS Rural Vision Project.

This report is a comprehensive documentation of the Rural Vision Project information gathering methods and findings during the first six months of the project which centered on eleven regional Listening Sessions. Eleven broad policy and/or thematic areas were discussed: Agriculture & Food Systems, Community Capacity & Social Networks, Energy, Environment & Natural Resources, Housing & Transportation, Local & Regional Governance, Poverty, Rural Economic Development, Rural Health Care, Rural Schools & Youth, and Workforce Development. The sessions produced a remarkable—and surprisingly cohesive—picture of rural New Yorker’s desired future.

The emerging rural vision represents the diverse opportunities and challenges of our State’s unique regions. Rural development in New York suggests strong networks and partnerships, pride of place, solid citizen support, engaged local governments and enhanced regional coordination. There is an interesting tension in ideas that are complementary and contrasting relating to both decentralization and regionalism. There is general understanding that "rural" issues are interrelated and that comprehensive approaches are in the best interests of our communities. There is also great concern for all citizens living in rural communities; participants in the listening sessions identified the need for increased opportunities for youth, senior citizens, small businesses and farms as particularly important.

This document contains the Rural Vision Project’s goals and methods, including comprehensive synopses of each policy theme area covered during the regional listening sessions. Responses to the listening sessions from a group of Cornell faculty, results from Cornell University’s Empire State Poll, two web-based surveys, a youth vision session, two NYS grange meetings, a focus group of low-income citizens in rural New York, and “success stories” featured in the NYS LCRR’s newsletter Rural Futures are all highlighted.
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VISION: DEFINING OUR PAST, SHAPING OUR FUTURE

In order to thrive in the 21st century, Rural New York needs a sharp and well-articulated vision that recognizes and responds to rapidly changing social and economic systems. Success in today’s global environment requires such a vision, supported by strategic action steps and public will and investment. In the absence of such a vision, rural NYS will be less prepared to face the challenges and opportunities of this new era. Rural New York, along with the rest of the state, has been transformed by far-reaching and far-flung economic forces; the understandings and policies of the past no longer provide ready solutions for a world defined by change. Crafting a new, clear, and bold vision is vital.

More than a century before the interstate highway system forever changed American life, one public works project had already transformed our nation: the Erie Canal. Opened in 1825, the canal fundamentally altered agriculture, commerce, and the very rhythms of life in the nation. Forest became farms; villages became centers of commerce; and newly-sprouted cities became the hubs of vast commercial networks. And nowhere was this transformation more visible—and canal-related prosperity greater—than across New York. “Clintons Ditch” —as it had been derisively called—was soon hailed as the engine of New York’s growth and prosperity. More than geography, more than technology, more than thousands of mules and thousands of men, the canal and the prosperity it created for all of New York was—first and foremost—the product of one intangible element: VISION.

A new vision may be the most important element of all, for rural New York not only faces new challenges, but—according to some economists and development specialists—it faces a new economic world. As Robert Atkinson has written in The Past and Future of America’s Economy, four great waves of technological change have swept over the United State in the last 150 years; each wave has transformed the economy and each has profoundly changed American society. Since the mid-1990s, the United States has been riding (or, some would argue, “swept up in”) the 4th Great Wave: a global, entrepreneurial and knowledge-based economy, variously called the Information Economy or the New Economy.

In Atkinson’s terms, rural New York had enjoyed relative prosperity during technology’s 3rd Wave—when industries and consolidated corporations flourished in the United States (but before those industries migrated South). With the slow passing of that phase, rural and Upstate New York suffered from region-wide industrial restructuring, downsizing, and job losses as the manufacturing sector weakened nationwide under the pressures of a globalizing economy. This downturn came atop long-standing difficulties in New York’s agricultural sector. The results are evident to see: once vital rural communities are, in too many cases, marred by abandoned storefronts, declining housing stock and signs of general economic stagnation.

These economic weaknesses threaten to undermine the most critical resource for Upstate community life: its people. Over the past thirty years, a simultaneous movement of jobs and people
out of upstate New York has led to stagnant population growth, fueling an out-migration of roughly 6.5 percent of the population since 1980. In a 1998 survey of Upstate residents in three counties, nearly one in four survey participants (23.2%) reported that they anticipated moving within the next two years. Residents in their 20s and 30s reported even stronger intentions of leaving New York: one in three (32.5%) planned to move. Their plans, according to researchers, “hinge on finding a better job …” (Moen, p. 31) These survey findings are consistent with out-migration and population declines in five upstate regions: the Mohawk Valley, the Southern Tier, Central New York, Western New York and the North Country experienced zero to negative population growth between 1990 and 2000. (The State of Working New York 2001)

In particular, the region’s loss of young, working-age adults has produced an older demographic and a population significantly older than the national average. New York’s rural communities have a higher percentage of senior citizens, residents who depend on Social Security’s disability insurance, and elderly women receiving Social Security than the state’s non-rural communities. Indeed, rural communities in New York depend on income from Social Security 45 percent more than non-rural communities. The aging of rural New York results in limited labor force growth along with a greater share of the population in need of support—factors that put a continuing strain on the region’s economy and local fiscal conditions.

These economic difficulties are compounded by devolution, as more and increasingly complex responsibilities—economic, environmental and social—have shifted from the federal and state levels to the local level. However, those new responsibilities were not accompanied by increased training for local officials or more funds governments. Together, these systemic changes threaten rural communities.

![Moving Out Map](image_url)

From 1990 to 2004, the population ages 25 to 34 declined in counties across the state. Tioga County’s decline was the greatest, at 42 percent, and Tompkins was the only county in the state with an increase.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

NY Times, June 13 2006
communities on two inseparable fronts: establishing a healthy economy and maintaining a strong
good quality of life.

In writing about the potential for high-tech growth in Central New York, Cornell’s Susan
Christopherson notes that employers and employees favor locations with the qualities of a strong
community: an amenity rich environment. They have parks, good schools, recreational facilities,
and near-by retail centers and restaurants, affordable housing, a sense of place, expressed in
volunteer activity and an awareness and appreciation of local history.

Similarly, the family center study found that, in addition to job opportunities, study participants
valued the traits of strong communities: 1. Safety, 2. Schools 3. Affordable housing 4. Parks/community events (Moen, et. al., How Family Friendly is Upstate New York, p. 28) Cornelia
Flora, Director of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development simply notes that
when addressing economic problems, “local conditions are absolutely critical …” (Cornelia Butler

“This new context for regional economic development,” Christopherson concludes, “suggests that
public and private investments that improve quality of life may be important factors in renewing an
old industrial region.” (emphasis added, Susan Christopherson, “The Canal Corridor Initiative:

**MOVING TOWARD RURAL NEW YORK’S DESIRED FUTURE: THE RURAL VISION
PROJECT**

Today, a clear vision is essential for responding to and guiding change and development in rural
New York. To help clarify and articulate that vision, Cornell University’s Rural New York Initiative (in the Department of Development Sociology), Community and Rural Development Institute, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources have launched the NYS Rural Vision Project (see Appendix for more information on
the RVP partners). Phase I of this collaborative effort centered on eleven regional Listening
Sessions. Held in rural areas around the state, these sessions were attended by local elected
officials, leaders of non-profit organizations, state agency representatives, business owners,
farmers, social service agency representatives, policymakers, extension educators, community
college representatives, BOCES and school district administrators, and other rural New Yorkers.
Combined with two on-line surveys, grange meetings, and focus groups, the sessions produced a
remarkable—and surprisingly cohesive—picture of rural New Yorker’s desired future.

This report is a comprehensive documentation of the Rural Vision Project information gathering
methods and findings, as well as additional supporting material such as Cornell University
faculty responses, and “success stories” featured in the NYS LCRR’s newsletter Rural Futures. Much of this information will be referenced in the second phase of the project, commencing with
the Future of Rural New York Symposium in Syracuse, NY, July 19-21, 2006. This report serves
as a broad resource for preparing and participating in the Symposium.

The vision that emerged reflects a desire for balanced growth, with an eye toward the linkages
between economic, environmental, and social issues: vibrant rural communities working together
through strong regional networks, each taking pride in its own local knowledge and resources. These communities would contain a mixture of healthy and engaged citizens—from youth to seniors—all of whom have access to affordable and high-quality programs, services, and infrastructure. Successful rural communities would capitalize on solid citizen support for, and participation in, a range of formal and informal social networks and local institutions, including schools, governments, and community organizations.

Effective economic revitalization would benefit all community members, including support and services for youth, seniors, the working poor, small businesses, and small farms. Education would play a central role in creating the revitalized rural economy and community. In addition to nurturing and schooling the community’s youth, educational institutions would address local workforce development needs, promote active community engagement and positive recognition of rural opportunities, especially in vocational and agricultural arenas. With economic development would come the creation of accessible and affordable public transportation, housing, high-speed telecommunications, health care and insurance—all providing a critical infrastructure making rural New York a viable, attractive place to live and to work. Importantly, envisioning an attractive, vital rural New York begins with no change at all: maintaining the best features of rural New York’s natural and built environment.

**Rural Vision Project Goals**

The goal of the Rural Vision Project is to identify challenging issues and emerging opportunities facing rural New York State, with a focus on state-level policies to promote community and economic development. The Project’s success will not only impact rural New York but the entire state. Rural issues affect suburban as well as urban areas, although perhaps in different ways. The rural-suburban-urban continuum is rather fluid - community and economic development issues rarely adhere to jurisdictional and population boundaries; hence the need for a regional perspective. The Rural Vision Project seeks to capture this diversity of challenges and opportunities across rural New York State and help inform the next era of community and economic development policy.

The Rural Vision Project is comprised of many activities and elements. During this first phase, the emphasis has been on gathering information from a wide range of people and organizations about important issues and potential policy responses for rural NY and the state as a whole. The following is a discussion of the major efforts completed to date to capture this information.

**Regional Listening Sessions**

A series of eleven regional Listening Sessions were held around the state, nine in upstate NY and two in Long Island, inviting discussion around different issues and challenges in rural communities and regions. Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Executive Directors in each region were asked to help identify local elected officials, Extension Educators, leaders of non-profit organizations, state agency representatives, business owners, farmers, social service agency representatives, policymakers, community college representatives, BOCES and school district administrators, etc., to invite to each listening session in their region.
**Listening Session Format**

Each listening session was three hours long. Of the approximate 120 invitations issued for each listening session, the number of actual attendees ranged from 15 to 50 with an average of about 40 people. Each listening session had a particular mix of attendees, with some sessions experiencing more representation from CCE, some from local citizens, and others from social service agencies. Therefore, the information we gathered is likely to reflect these perspectives. The regional listening sessions were not a “scientific” method of data collection: rather they were a grass-roots sampling that identified:

- challenging issues and opportunities facing these rural areas;
- successful local, regional and/or state-level policies; and
- policies and programs that could be improved.

Participants were also asked to identify areas where further research and information is required, and make suggestions for new policy and program initiatives. Participant evaluations of the listening sessions may be found in the Appendix.

**Top Issues Identified**

As a “warm-up” to each session, participants were asked to speak with one or two persons seated nearby and identify what they felt were currently the three most important issues in rural NYS.

Among the most frequently cited issues were:

- Infrastructure development, especially public transportation and high speed internet
- High property taxes
- Land use and planning to combat sprawl and loss of working landscapes
- Job loss and lack of living wage employment opportunities
- Access to affordable health care
- Development of a comprehensive, coordinated plan; collaboration between agencies, governments
- Workforce development and education
- Agricultural viability
- Youth flight, out-migration, brain drain
- Lack of capital / funding

**Policy/Theme Areas Discussed**

Eleven theme or policy areas were discussed during each listening session. The eleven policy theme areas were:

- Local Economic Development
- Rural Health Care
- Environment, Land Use, & Natural Resources
Each listening session participant chose three of these topics to discuss in small groups, each group managed by a facilitator and lasting approximately 30 minutes. Participants were asked to discuss the current status (citing strengths and weaknesses) of the issue in their communities and region, to describe their desired future relative to this issue, suggest possible action steps to achieve this desired future, cite “success stories” in their communities or region, and identify where additional research may be needed.

**An Emerging Vision for Rural New York**

Rural New Yorkers are a socio-economically diverse, geographically distributed, and culturally rich population with wide ranging ideas, ideals, and dreams for their communities and regions. While rural communities and regions across NYS face unique challenges and opportunities, a surprisingly cohesive and well-articulated vision for rural NYS has emerged from the Rural Vision Project’s Listening Sessions.

This envisioned future includes the creation of vibrant communities working together through strong regional networks, with each taking pride in its own local knowledge and resources. These communities would contain a mixture of healthy and engaged citizens—from youth to seniors—all of whom have access to affordable and high-quality programs, services, and infrastructure. Successful rural communities would be based on a foundation of solid citizen support for, and participation in, a range of formal and informal social networks and local institutions, including schools, governments, and community organizations.

This vision emphasizes movement away from the one-size-fits-all paradigm of centralized control, and towards increased recognition of, and respect for, unique local needs. In order to realize this vision, there is a need to concentrate attention and resources at the local level. A system of local control and production is envisioned across various sectors and issues, from education and workforce development to agriculture and energy.

While local control and flexibility is emphasized, a successful future for Rural New York necessitates the creation of cooperative and collaborative networks at various levels—between institutions and organizations within the same community, between urban areas and rural areas within the region, and also across inter-municipal and regional levels. These partnerships would promote the sharing of both resources and information. Such a streamlining of services at the municipal level would reduce duplication and increase the efficiency of limited resources. Rather than contradicting the drive towards localization, such regional cohesiveness emerges as integral to the support and maintenance of vibrant local communities.
Participants believed that the achievement of this forward-looking vision requires that communities adopt a strength-based approach to both local and regional development. Building off of the current strengths associated with its natural capital, geographic capital, and social/human capital will enable rural New York to better utilize resources and fully develop its potential. Currently underutilized resources must be put to optimal use, as through the use of school buildings for community centers and marginal lands for alternative energy production. Rather than focusing on deficits, such a strategy requires the development of comprehensive plans that will promote a strong niche for rural New York within the larger context. These plans must be increasingly responsive to diverse and changing rural needs, in consideration of current trends in demographics and community structure.

The vision for rural New York reflects a desire for overall balanced growth, and an eye for the linkages between economic, environmental, and social issues. Economic development must allow for the maintenance of local identity and the preservation of rural character. In order to stop the sprawling form of development currently perceived of as eroding overall quality of rural life, these rural areas need to adopt comprehensive land use planning and policies that support working landscapes.

With this in mind, it is important to keep rising property and land values in check, and promote more widespread recognition that small, diversified forms of agriculture and businesses remain viable forms of economic development. Participants emphasized a need to reduce the overall cost of doing business in rural New York, while simultaneously improving access to living wage employment. Effective economic revitalization thus requires additional support and services for the working poor, youth, seniors, small businesses, and small farms—all of whom seem to be left behind under the current system.

This locally grounded, yet globally competitive future demands a strong foundation of regional services and infrastructure. Promoting the professionalization of rural programs, offices, and service providers, as well as recognizing and developing appropriate opportunities for volunteer services, will have a positive impact on regional sustainability. To this end, the creation of accessible and affordable public transportation, housing, high-speed telecommunications, and health care and insurance are critical to the development of rural New York as a viable place to live and work.

Education, broadly defined, plays a central role in creating this desired future. As such, the scope of rural education must be expanded. In addition to integrating with local workforce development needs, education must focus on promoting active community engagement and more positive recognition of rural opportunities, especially in the vocational and agricultural arenas. Effective education must consciously reach out to multiple audiences—not only youth, but also local and state policy-makers, urban populations, and community members of diverse means and backgrounds. By fostering an awareness of rural issues among this wider population, these educational initiatives may help to reduce cultural conflicts, break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, and develop understanding of both the rural-urban interface and the true importance of rural areas to society.

Innovative rural programming serves a particular role in attracting and retaining quality leadership, service professionals, entrepreneurs, and youth—all of whom are essential members of sustainable communities. In order to restock social networks and develop communities that are both diverse and inclusive, these programs and services must bridge both generational and socioeconomic gaps. In the long-run, investment in initiatives which foster a sense of community ownership among all
stakeholders will pay off with strong returns by reversing current trends of out-migration and youth flight.

Accounting for all of these aspects of the desired future, there is a need to better synchronize policy with unique rural opportunities and challenges. In program, service, and infrastructure development, participants identified a need for innovative alternatives that are viable for rural areas which face low population density, limited tax-bases, aging citizen composition, and frequent isolation. The true accomplishment of this goal requires systemic change, as well as better education of policy-makers at the state level. The current policy drive towards decentralization will only succeed if supported by corresponding funding and training initiatives. Achievement of this, however, depends largely on the implementation of a more equitable funding system with less reliance on burdensome property taxes.

In addition to the overarching, coherent themes that thus comprise the “Vision” for Rural New York, it is hardly surprising that the overall character of this vision is also shaped by certain inescapable tensions. This tension manifests itself most frequently through inconsistencies regarding small/large scale development, local/global orientation, and overall themes of tradition/change.

Despite these tensions, at the heart of this vision for a sustainable regional future remains the goal that rural communities will offer vital natural, social, and economic environments in which to live and work. A combination of these factors will make these rural communities a place that all community members, including youth, will be proud to call “home.”

LISTENING SESSION SYNOPSIS, CORNELL FACULTY RESPONSES, & “SUCCESS STORIES”

The notes and summaries for each of the eleven listening sessions are posted, according to the date of the listening session, on the Rural New York Initiative website (http://rnyi.cornell.edu). In addition, the notes and summaries have been consolidated by policy theme area and are also posted at this site.

To prepare for the Symposium, key Cornell faculty groups were organized around the policy theme areas covered in the Listening Sessions. Faculty prepared brief responses to the issues raised in the Listening Sessions, pointing to past and current research that addresses the points raised, and suggesting directions for future research according to their particular perspective and area of expertise.

The Rural Futures newsletter is a publication researched and prepared bimonthly by the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, to help New York’s citizens and leaders keep abreast of important issues that are impacting rural New York. The publication highlights what's working, or could work, in rural areas in an effort to encourage replication in communities and regions across rural New York.

The following are the listening session synopses, faculty responses, and relevant Rural Futures articles (“success stories”) organized by policy theme area:
As a theme, Agriculture and Food Systems spans a wide variety of issues, with relevant comments appearing in virtually every other theme area—most notably Environment and Land Use, Rural Schools and Youth, and Rural Economic Development. In addition, agricultural viability consistently surfaced as one of the three most important issues currently impacting Rural New York. The breadth of comments suggests that agriculture remains a key component of successful rural communities and an important aspect of the desired “quality of life and state identity” for Rural New York.

Participants focused positive attention on the diversity of New York State agriculture in terms of the mixture of farm sizes, the range of agricultural products, and the existence of marketing opportunities. The quality of the local environmental resource base provides a solid foundation for the development of agriculture and food systems, with inexpensive land still largely available for agriculture in many areas. An increasing consumer interest in locally grown products has resulted in strong opportunities for regional agro-tourism and the development of direct and niche markets.

With these strengths in mind, New York State demonstrates a healthy blend of the natural and social capital necessary to sustain a vibrant agricultural system with a strong resource base, consumer base, and producer base. To a large extent, these positive comments reflect potential “growth opportunities” for New York State agriculture.

However, many of the observed strengths also emerge as weaknesses because they represent currently underutilized, or “undeveloped,” opportunities. Although specific agricultural practices and issues vary widely by region (reflecting regional specialty products, for example), participants noted the need to address several critical, intertwining themes: the re-invention of agricultural education, the promotion of marketing/branding campaigns for NY products, and the support of small and diversified farms and processors.

Through all of these needs, agricultural education emerges as perhaps the overarching theme within agriculture and food systems. In order to fully develop opportunities, utilize current strengths, and move toward the future, participants placed an overwhelming emphasis on the importance of expanding and redefining agricultural education to reach a more diverse public audience. Such education should foster more public knowledge of, and appreciation for, agriculture among a wide range of audiences, including institutional food system suppliers, youth of all ages, policymakers in Albany, and both rural and urban consumers.

In turn, this education plays a key role in allowing the public to make informed and conscientious purchasing decisions which benefit both producer and consumer through the support of local systems. On an institutional level as well, increased consumer awareness of the benefits of local agriculture and its relationship with health and nutrition will determine the degree of loyalty to New York products. Thus, the successful promotion and marketing of healthy, local foods cannot be achieved without the institution of corresponding agricultural education for the broad public.
In addition, comments suggest that the agricultural system needs to directly address the lack of young people entering into agricultural and farming careers. Support for young and start-up farmers, and the integration of aging farmers with these newcomers, is an essential component of ensuring a vibrant future for agriculture in rural New York. Only by overcoming the negative perception of agriculture, promoting awareness of local agricultural careers, supporting opportunities for youth who want to farm, and encouraging overall appreciation of agriculture will young people be attracted to this industry.

Many comments reflect a perceived inequality between the way current agricultural policy and regulations impact small versus large farms. Comments suggest the need for more targeted support for small farms and local foods initiatives in order to achieve “more equity between small and large farms” and maintain a healthy agricultural diversity. Along these lines, a wide range of programs were identified as deserving of support and promotion, including Farm to School, Agriculture in the Classroom, “Come Farm with Us,” “Pride of NY,” and various “buy local” campaigns.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:

- farmland protection and purchase of development rights (PDR)
- alternative energy production
- look into successful models from other states
- loyalty to local foods (distribution/promotion through schools, institutions, groceries)
- consistent labeling/branding/marketing for NY products
- cooperative efforts on various levels (farmer-to-farmer, farmer-to-community, regional)
- issues of scale, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency (economies of scale)
- support for small farms, start-up farms, intergenerational farm-transfer, youth ag. programs

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:

- zoning, competing land uses, and increasing land prices
- farm labor shortages (lack of qualified and stable labor, entry-level labor)
- high cost of doing business (especially health care/insurance, tax structure)
- aging farm population, with corresponding lack of opportunities for youth
- lack of infrastructure (local manufacturing facilities, value-added and small scale processing--local slaughterhouses, dairy plants, etc)
- disconnect and conflict between agricultural and residential uses, rural and urban populations (reflects lack of agriculture education and awareness)
The listening sessions generated numerous food and agriculture issues that are strongly consistent with the results of the Community, Food and Agriculture Program’s (CFAP) own research and outreach activities over the last 18 years. The results, for example, are remarkably similar to those of focus groups which CFAP conducted in 2004 and 2005 to identify community perceptions about the impacts of agriculture in New York State. They are also consistent with feedback we receive from food and agriculture-based development professionals during annual Cornell Program Work Team meetings where research and extension priorities are identified.

Our interpretation of these results is that agriculture and other food system stakeholders in New York are very concerned about public policy, which many view as piecemeal, incongruous, and inconsistent both within and between different levels of government. Farmers and allied businesses and organizations often seek policies that they believe will lead to a strong, diversified food and agriculture industry supported by a public that greatly appreciates farming’s unique multifunctional contributions to the economy (e.g., jobs, businesses), the environment (e.g., open space, wildlife habitat), and quality of life (e.g., fresh and nutritious food). These stakeholders also want the public and policy makers to recognize that farms generally contribute more in tangible benefits to communities than they receive. In return for these benefits, the farming community wishes for more favorable tax treatment, increased access to economic development resources, scale-appropriate environmental and food safety regulations, expanded applied research and grant programs, and land-use dispensations at both the local and state level.

That said, farmers and allied businesses and organizations are clearly torn between pushing for the freedom of farmers to conduct business in a manner which they see fitting and necessary, and the realization that in the long run resources and support needed for a transition into a more viable industry will have to come from taxpayers and the government. These conflicting views reflect, in part, the contradictory character of contemporary food and agriculture systems; agricultural and food production, processing, and distribution businesses and industries are essentially privately-owned public goods. In other words, although the agricultural and food industry is owned privately, it serves an important public function, and fulfills the most basic of all human needs: to eat and to be healthy.

Our research shows that members of the general public—important food system stakeholders, while very supportive of agriculture and small farms in the abstract, tend to see large dairy farms as factories which produce odors, manure on roads, insects, dust and noise, as well as hire foreigners who are not integrated into the community. These perceptions may have some justification, but they are also often unfortunate misconceptions that result from having less than two percent of Americans employed in farming. Conflicting interests, divisive politics, limited resources, and a lack of critical forethought have resulted in a piecemeal approach to addressing our farm communities’ struggles and that has not reversed these deleterious trends and made progress toward a more viable
and sustainable agriculture. The challenge for those in the Land Grant system (Cornell University is New York’s land-grant college) is that the strategic industry planning and policy development and implementation which might mitigate many problems raised and lead to the development of opportunities identified in the listening sessions are also considered by some to be intrusive. Others feel that vision, leadership, public input and proactive, long-term planning are sorely lacking and are needed before more farms, farmers and farmland are lost forever.

We strongly believe that visioning, planning, and policy development and implementation could actually provide the freedom (e.g., more farm-friendly zoning), resources (e.g., grants and loan funds), and other support (e.g., research and extension) from taxpayers and governments that will be necessary for the food and agriculture system to make the successful transition to more economically viability, environmentally sustainability, social responsiveness. We believe that to address the issues and opportunities raised in the listening sessions, New York State needs to develop a strategic plan which democratically articulates the shared vision of our residents and outlines complementary economic development, land-use, and tax policies that recognize and capitalize on the multifunctional benefits of the food and agricultural industry. We believe that such a course is the logical next step for bridging the mutual needs of food producers, processors, retailers, and consumers of all socio-economic backgrounds in New York State.

**Agriculture’s Contribution to NY’s Economy and Communities—a Brief Review**

The following are examples of CFAP and other research that relates to the issues and opportunities raised in the listening sessions, including agriculture’s contribution to communities, marketing needs, value-adding needs, agritourism, and diversification.

First, understanding New Yorker’s perceptions of agriculture’s contribution to local communities is critical for understanding policy and politics (local and state) and community needs. In 2004, Gillespie, Hilchey, Smith and Kay conducted a series of nine focus groups with farmers, agribusiness reps, and non-farming residents in three New York counties. They found that economic impacts such as business and job creation were the most commonly perceived impact. However, additional responses ranged from preserving open space and providing a local source of quality food, to promoting social values and preservation of highly valued rural heritage and traditions. Participants not connected directly with agriculture tended to favor small and family farms and to oppose larger farms, which they often seemed to view invidiously (but erroneously) as “corporate” (Hilchey and Gillespie, 2004).

Second, just as small business is a critical driver of the American economy, small agricultural enterprises are a critical driver to agriculture-related economic development. Yet there are still many questions about the needs, operations and economic opportunities and contributions of small agricultural enterprises, and CFAP has been addressing these:

What are the needs of roadside stand operators, farmers’ market vendors and u-pick operators? Working with the New York State Farmers Direct Marketing Association, Francis and Hilchey (2003) conducted focus groups identify the marketing information needs of these agricultural product retail businesses. Overall, participants reported needing (a) more information on what motivates customers to buy; (b) techniques to understand who their customers are; and (c) other information that Cornell could develop to educate consumers about local products (e.g., the health benefits of particular foods). Francis and Hilchey are currently beta testing a new marketing tool.
called “MarketScape” which is designed for Extension field staff to use in working with farm clients
to identify niche market opportunities, for example, as found in concentrations of ethnic, gourmet,
and organic consumers.

While there is much interest agritourism, there is little solid information that can inform agritourism
policies and programs. Hilchey and Kuehn (2002) conducted studies of agritourism businesses and
customers in New York, identifying their management barriers and opportunities, and measuring
regional farm-based recreation and hospitality sales.

Organizing cooperative ventures in agriculture is another area where discussion and interest often
exceed the information available to farmers and policy-makers. Hilchey, Gillespie and Henehan
(2006) studied small-scale fruit and vegetable cooperatives in the Northeast to identify their
opportunities and threats as well as their impacts on members’ farms and families. They concluded
that while members reported that their co-ops are critical to the success of their farms and the
families, these co-ops are organizationally and financially fragile, with more than three-quarters of
the co-ops’ managers questioning the viability of their employment at their respective co-ops.

Another agricultural economic structure that is an engine of community and economic development
is farmers’ markets. CFAP has conducted a number of studies on the role of farmers’ markets
(Gillespie, et al., forthcoming; Feenstra, et al., 2003) in New York, Iowa and California. The studies
clearly identify an “incubation function” that farmers’ markets play in communities. They provide a
low-risk, low-cost way to start a new farm enterprise or to test-market a new product. These studies
have also highlighted the role farmers’ markets play in bridging the cultural gap between farmers and
local residents.

Microbreweries, brewpubs and regional breweries are also emerging as critical vehicles for the new
agriculture-related economic development. In cooperation with the Northeast Hop Alliance
(NeHA), CFAP conducted a market research survey in 2002 to learn about potential sales in the
Northeast of regionally grown hops. The results support the conclusion that a potential market
exists for regionally produced hops, perhaps including as many as several hundred small breweries in
the Northeast and Ohio. Many brewers even reported a willingness to pay a small price premium
(between 5 and 10 percent). Hilchey (2003) concluded from this research that it is possible for small
hops yards to build partnerships with small breweries to produce specialty beers with Northeastern
hops.

With these new ventures and directions in agriculture-related economic development, the
“agricultural economic development specialist” becomes a critical figure in community-economic
development planning and training. What are the needs of self-identified “agriculture economic
development specialists” in NYS. These Extension educators, planners, and NGO staffers were
surveyed in 2004 by CFAP. Indeed, they indicated a growing emphasis on agricultural development
as opposed to simply agricultural production. However, the study also suggested that agriculture
economic development specialists need professional development training, especially in process
skills, funding strategies, and project evaluation (Hilchey, 2004).

Farm to School is an example of an emerging approach to environmental change in school food
service that helps schools provide fresh fruits and vegetables to students while at the same time
assuring the future health of local food systems through essential market development (Graham, et
al, 2004; CFSC, 1998; USDA, 1998). Active projects now exist in more than 400 school districts in
20 states (CFJ, 2005). Farm to School aims to increase children’s consumption of fruits and vegetables by: (1) increasing their access to a wide variety of locally grown, fresh fruits and vegetables; and (2) connecting the cafeteria to the classroom and to farms through nutrition and food education. Food service directors are interested in farm to school for several reasons, including supporting their local economies and communities; accessing fresher, higher-quality food; and potentially increasing students’ fruit and vegetable consumption (Izumi, et al., 2006). Model farm to school programs show the potential for farm to school nutrition education development that promotes youth empowerment, environmental stewardship and healthy lifestyles (O’Brien, 2006).

**Ag Economic Development Success Stories**

Specific examples of programs and policies capitalizing on the link between food, agriculture and community include the following:

**Small-Scale Food Processing Association**

The New York Small-Scale Food Processing Association was the outcome of a partnership of the Farming Alternatives Program (now known as the Community, Food, and Agriculture Program), the New York Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (an NGO), and individual New York small-scale food processors, who worked together to research the opportunities and challenges this emerging group of entrepreneurs were experiencing. Started in 1996, the Association provides a variety of services to the industry.

**Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association**

The Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt Heritage project is a collaboration of businesses, farmers, and organizations established to implement community and economic development projects that stimulate new vitality in the struggling Concord Grape Belt region of Western New York and Pennsylvania. In partnership with Cornell University’s Community, Food, and Agriculture Program, the Association has achieved the following:

- Mobilizing of local leaders to address the challenges and opportunities embedded in this rich grape-growing region.
- Working across both municipal and state boundaries, as well as across competing organizations within the grape industry
- Implementing an agriculture industry cluster development approach, which brought together representatives from the grape juice industry subsectors, including growers, cooperatives and processors, as well as tourism, planning and economic development agencies and organizations.

The project is expected to lead to the first state Agricultural Heritage Area in the United States, an innovation which will set a standard for other communities in New York and the Northeast. As a result, competitors in the grape-juice processing industry are collaborating for the first time ever.

Community, Food, and Agriculture Program leaders Duncan Hilchey and Gil Gillespie recently won the David J. Allee & Paul R. Eberts Community and Economic Vitality Award. The award highlights integrated and innovative research, extension and/or teaching projects and is given for innovation, achievement, collaboration and application. The award is also intended to honor Cornell colleagues and to inspire others to consider adopting the successful elements of their work and to encourage
recognition of Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension programs that develop innovative solutions to community issues.

The Growing Home Certification Program
The Growing Home Certification Program was a two-year professional development program funded by the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NESARE) Program of USDA to help agriculture development professionals better serve the needs of their communities. As a result of the program, participants completed a one-year professional development curriculum and, in the second year completed local agricultural development projects. These projects included the development of an agricultural ambassador program; the Farm-to-Chef Express – a regional distribution program shipping agricultural products from the Washington/Saratoga Counties area to New York City restaurants; two livestock processing facility feasibility studies; the revitalization of a farmers’ market in a low-income, urban community; and a first annual regional community forum on agriculture.

Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty Program
The first “culinary bounty” program was established in the Finger Lakes by French-born Henri Benveniste. Benveniste is a Beard Award-winning chef who follows the European culinary tradition of focusing meals on seasonal local foods -- meats, produce, wines, cheeses, breads, etc. The closer the food is to its source of production, the better. With assistance from CFAP and other groups, Benveniste established a regional organization that would help restaurants and other food businesses make contact with local farms and food producers. Since 2000, a number of culinary bounty programs have popped up in New York, including a new one in the Concord Grape Belt. Strategies to promote the farm-food service link, including tastings, trade shows, conferences, Web sites; and printed materials including point-of-sale posters and menu labels. The goal is to encourage chefs to source fresh local food in season which promotes “gout de terroir” (a taste of place).

Farm-to-School Programs
The number of farm to school programs in New York State is increasing and, in partnership, the Cornell Farm to School Program, the New York State School Food Service Association, New York Farms, and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets have created a New York State Farm to School Coordinating Committee that has served as a catalyst for many of these emergent projects. Efforts to increase the amount of New York farm products that is served in school meals are creating partnerships between farmers, food service directors, suppliers and processors. Several value-added ventures have been spawned by the need for school food service to receive products that have been at least partially processed.

Agriculture Development Specialist Positions
The number of Agriculture Development Specialist positions in Cornell Cooperative Extension and local governments is increasing, suggesting that more and more communities are interested in supporting their food and agricultural industry, and in linking that industry to their broader community and economic development goals.

What has past/ current research failed to address?

- Impact analysis, particularly long term
The links between community development and food and agriculture-based development, beyond economics (social capital, etc.)

Innovative agricultural land preservation techniques (much has been done with existing techniques, but more could be done to propose new models)

Links between agriculture, food, and health

Opportunities for communities to link local health goals to local agriculture and food development initiatives

The role of sub-state regions in bridging local and state policy

Exploring the mutual interests of farmers, rural businesses, and urban consumer needs and desires.

What are the new research and extension questions that result from the information gathered at the listening sessions?

What is NAFTA’s impact (positive and negative) on local food and agriculture?

What are the impacts of CALS, NYSDAM, and SARE grant programs?

What are the direct and indirect impacts of CALS research, extension, and outreach programs? For example, discussions about farm-to-school, Pride of NY, Agriculture in the Classroom, buy-local campaigns, and New York Farm Viability Institute funding—but what research points to impacts or effectiveness, particularly in the long term?

How can development policy integrate the concerns of both urban and rural stakeholders and yield benefits for both?

What are the social, economic, and environmental indicators by which we measure impact or progress?

Studies on food system infrastructure have been piecemeal and lacked scientific approach. Statewide studies on USDA slaughterhouses, state licensed facilities, shared-use kitchens, co-packers, etc. are needed.

How can Cornell Cooperative Extension shift its emphasis from farm production to agriculture and food system development (with strong connections to NYFVI)?

What are the short and long-term impacts of food and ag-based development professionals on the food and agricultural industry and on community development?

In what ways do viable and vibrant local food systems impact local health?

In what ways do local agricultural marketing initiatives serve or not serve low-income members of our communities?

What are proactive, effective local policies that increase the viability of the food and agricultural industry?

What are the features of development projects which have proven to strengthen the ties between local farmers and the members of their communities?

Citations


• A St. Lawrence County farmer has developed an indoor farming system using dirt — that he calls, the Dirtponics Growing system (currently awaiting a patent). Unlike hydroponics, which grows plants in water infused with nutrients, dirtponics puts them in irrigated boxes filled with soil. The building is not a greenhouse — there are no windows and it is heavily insulated. All of nature’s elements are controlled inside. Lamps are used to emit light similar to the sun’s and to heat the building. Irrigation hoses supply a continuous source of water and nutrients. Fans keep a steady breeze blowing to ensure strong stalks; a dehumidifier repels the growth of mold; and the temperature is kept between 74 and 76 degrees during the day and from 66 to 68 degrees at night. A beehive and hundreds of ladybugs pollinate the plants. No pesticides or fungicides are needed because of the controlled environment. The rows of crops require no weeding because the building is sealed so seeds of unwanted plants can’t get in. Tomato, tobacco, pepper, cucumber, strawberry and lettuce plants were planted in the indoor farm (a 3,000 square foot old converted garage) in December 2005 — and by spring 2006, the cucumbers, tomatoes and strawberries were yielding fruit. The farmer and his partners plan to move to a larger facility (15,000 square foot) in the Massena Industrial Park. The yields are more productive because all of the elements are dictated — the wind, the rain, and the temperature. The partners/farmers envision the company operating throughout the United States and the world — attached to farms and supermarkets, where you can see your vegetables picked while you shop!

• Farm-to-School programs are popping up all over the United States — connecting schools with local farms — to serve healthy meals in school cafeterias, improve student nutrition, provide health and nutrition education opportunities, while supporting local small farmers. Schools buy and feature farm fresh foods on their menus; incorporate a nutrition-based curriculum; and provide students learning opportunities through farm visits, gardening and recycling programs. Farmers have access to a new market through schools and connect to their community through participation in programs designed to educate kids about local food and sustainable agriculture. In New York state, the Cornell Farm to School Program is available to anyone wanting to initiate a farm to school program or learn more about the variety of strategies employed by the fifteen New York school districts that have an operational farm to school program. Last spring we featured an article on one of those fifteen operational farm to school programs — the Wilson Central School District in Niagara County, who invited local growers and processors to display and describe their products at a superintendent’s conference day to initiate school fund raising efforts. The school has taken that project one step further and developed a Local Grower’s Collaborative Catalog. The catalog highlights produce from farmers in the area that can be used for school fund raising. We’d like to take this project a step further by encouraging such catalogs in rural schools statewide. The following web sites should help jump start your farm-to-school efforts. To locate farmers in your region interested in selling to schools, visit Cornell Cooperative Extension offices on the web at [http://www.cce.cornell.edu/countymap.php](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/countymap.php) and the New York Farm Bureau at [http://www.nyfb.org/](http://www.nyfb.org/). Also, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets established the Pride of New York Program to promote New York products — find products and farmers regionally or by county at [http://www.prideofny.com](http://www.prideofny.com). Cornell University’s Farm to School web site can be found at [www.cce.cornell.edu/farmtoschool](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/farmtoschool). Another good resource is the National Farm to School web site at [http://www.farmtoschool.org/](http://www.farmtoschool.org/). Note: The Rural Schools Association brought this matter to the Rural Resources Commission’s attention and plans to pursue encouraging its rural schools to develop such catalogs.
FoodLink is a not-for-profit foodbank serving a 10-county region — Orleans, Genesee, Monroe, Wayne, Wyoming, Livingston, Ontario, Seneca, Yates and Allegany counties. FoodLink also prepares and delivers more than 2,000 meals per day for low-income children at Kids Cafe after-school programs. Previously, after delivering to non-profits in the region, FoodLink trucks returned to Rochester empty. Now, through the Farmers’ Fulfillment Center, the trucks are available to local growers to deliver their fresh produce to expanded markets. Beginning in July 2005, FoodLink has delivered over 900,000 pounds of produce to local markets and beyond. The Fulfillment Center recently received a $75,000 matching grant from the New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI). With the grant, FoodLink hopes to deliver more than two million pounds in 2006. Often markets only accept produce from midnight until early morning, making delivery impossible for smaller farms whose owners work the fields all day. FoodLink trucks now pick up the produce in the afternoon from the farm, keep it refrigerated and deliver to the markets for a small fee. Once produce is at the FoodLink warehouse, it can either be delivered directly to regional retailers or combined with produce from other growers for larger deliveries to New York City and beyond. The Fulfillment Center also helps participating growers by serving as an ordering and central distribution point using FoodLink’s food warehousing infrastructure, USDA-certified repackaging facility and computerized inventory system. For more information on the FoodLink Farmers Fulfillment Center, go to www.buyhereny.com. This program is worthy of replication in other rural regions in New York state.

An old (built in 1869) courthouse in Salem (Washington County), also home to the former county jail, is the new site of a cooperative facility C kitchen C where people can turn family recipes into marketable products. Volunteers have been working for the past year to transform the early 20th century jailhouse kitchen. The kitchen is due to open this fall and will provide access to commercial equipment for a small hourly fee, including a professional oven, dishwashing equipment, and an industrial refrigerator. The idea is to incubate small food-oriented businesses and give local farmers a chance to make value-added products they can sell year-round. Facilities used to process food sold in New York state must be certified, which is an onerous process. Battenkill Kitchen, Inc. will take care of certifying the product, as well as obtaining the proper liability insurance. Interested entrepreneurs are counting down the days until the facility is open. Products include mustard, old-fashioned pickles, bakery items, and hot fudge. The closest cooperative facility is in Poughkeepsie, which has been very successful. If you are interested in developing a value added product from your agricultural produce and need an approved commercial kitchen to work in, then consider the Battenkill Kitchen Inc. Send the Battenkill Kitchen an e-mail message at battenkillkitcheninc@juno.com.

The Winery at Marjim Manor, located in Appleton (Niagara County), in Western New York’s fruit belt is a W.O.W. (Woman Operated Winery). Owned by Margo Sue Bittner, the winery, featuring wines made from fruit grown in local orchards, opened in August, 2004. The winery is housed in an historic mansion, built in the 1800's as a farmhouse, which later became a summer retreat for the Sisters of St. Joseph convent. This historic landmark gained a reputation 100 years ago as a haunted house C the story is told in "The Legend of Appleton Hall," written by Margo Sue Bittner. Please call the Winery at 716-778-7001 to get a copy. The cost is $4.95 plus $1 for shipping. The name Marjim Manor comes from a blending of the owner's first name with that of her husband, Jim. The Winery is truly a family affair: Margo Bittner is president; the winemaker is her son, Kevin Bittner; her daughter, Janet Bittner assists with sales and marketing; and the fruit comes from Singer Farms, located about a quarter mile down the road where Margo’s husband Jim, is a partner. Marjim is open for wine tasting: Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 6:00 pm and Sundays noon to 6:00
pm. Many gift items, including gourmet and wine related merchandise, are available at http://www.marjimmanor.com/. Also visit http://singerfarms.com to order fruit and dried fruit. The former McCadam Cheese Plant in Heuvelton (St. Lawrence County) is now home to Pro Soya, Inc., a soybean processing plant able to process 10 to 15 tons of soybeans a day. ProSoya is currently using Canadian-grown soybeans for start-up quality assurance testing at the new plant, but they hope to use locally-grown soybeans soon. The plant will make a soya milk base and ship the liquid product to co-packers, sell to a third party, or package as a ProSoya label product for distribution as far west as Chicago, south to the Carolinas and into Canada.

• A husband and wife team use to spend their Saturdays traveling from Washington County to New York City to sell their heritage breed pork products at the Greenmarkets and to NYC restaurants. Then, in 2002, after learning about a NYS Ag and Markets Food and Agriculture Industry Development (FAID) grant, the couple applied for a grant to develop a project to make it more economical for local producers to tap into the NYC restaurant market. In August of 2003, they received the FAID grant entitled “Farm to Chef Express” (FCX) for $52,214 to create a direct marketing and distribution link between farmers of Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties and New York City chefs. FCX has two components: 1) an in-City Marketing Liaison to facilitate transactions between farmers and chefs; and 2) the refrigerated trucking services of an Upstate carrier to deliver fresh products to City restaurants from the three county farmers. New York City chefs will have access to dozens of New York State farms and the fine-quality meats, cheeses, and produce they offer and NY FarmsExpress will offer chefs the convenience of delivery, which is essential to the efficient operation of their businesses. New York State will benefit because more dollars will stay in the State. FCX’s main goal is to develop a strong relationship between the producers and the chefs within one year; so farmers can plan production and chefs can rely on New York State producers. Farm to Chef Express even has its own website, www.farmtochefexpress.org. The site has product lists and general information. Online ordering and farmer profiles are coming soon.

• A new kind of butcher is setting up shop in Schoharie County. Eric Shelley plans to drive his modified box truck to the farm and slaughter the animal, then take the carcass back to his large cooler for aging, then back to the farm for cutting, grinding, wrapping and labeling. This would be a huge convenience for farmers, who must now drive out of the region to find a facility to do such services. Many area farmers are interested in selling their products at farmers’ markets and to New York City market chefs, who want fresh, hormone-free lamb, pork, poultry and beef. The next time your school is looking for a fundraiser, why not look to selling local farm products. The school brings in needed funds while the community supports local farms and agriculture. Products could include apples, jams, jellies, maple syrup, honey, and more. Kudos to Superintendent Michael Wendt of Wilson Central School District (Niagara County), who recently invited local growers and processors to display and describe their products at a superintendent’s conference day. To find out more about marketing opportunities in schools, contact the Cornell Farm to School Program at 607.255.2730 or visit www.cce.cornell.edu/farmtoschool.

• Speaking of value-added agriculture, Roxbury Farm of Columbia County is one of the largest community supported farms in the country. Vegetables, herbs, melons, and strawberries are grown on 225 acres in Kinderhook for over 750 shareholders representing over 1000 families in four communities Columbia County, the Capital Region, Westchester County, and Manhattan. Jean-Paul Courtens, founding farmer and owner of Roxbury Farms, has developed an innovative, streamlined distribution process of delivering in bulk to drop-off sites and using coordinators to
manage the pick-up process. Another fresh idea by Courtens to guide future farmers is to hire apprentices to work alongside his permanent farm crew in hopes of training more farmers. Visit [http://www.roxburyfarm.com/](http://www.roxburyfarm.com/) to learn more.

• Value-added agriculture is a key economic development strategy for rural areas. It includes any activity that takes an agricultural product and adds value to it, before it leaves the area in which it was produced. Visit [http://www.agmrc.org/ag/ag.html](http://www.agmrc.org/ag/ag.html) to help you assess the newest value-added market opportunities, investigate processing options, and understand business and production issues. Value-added processing and market opportunities involve such things as agitourism, aquaculture, biomass, energy, fiber, fruits, grains/oilseeds, livestock, nuts, co-ops, processing, and specialty crops.

• Newly created, the New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI) is a farmer-led organization supporting applied research, education, information transfer, technology adoption and market analysis to reduce practical barriers to the success of farming enterprises. The Institute with support from Cornell, solicits input from agricultural producers, farm industry organizations and agribusiness firms to identify barriers and work with farm and agricultural business operators and groups of operators on their removal. The Institute collaborates with public, academic, and private sector organizations that provide education, information, and technical advice and assistance to businesses in the agricultural sector. The Institute is currently working with 24 producers on value-added product lines; assisting business planning for on-farm manure management systems and horticultural enterprises; and on-farm specialty cheese production. Nineteen projects have been approved for a total of $153,890. To learn more contact R. David Smith, Executive Director at 607.255.7286.

Richer Feeds Company stepped in and acquired the 14-acre property in Adams Center in November 2003 for $200,000 through US Bankruptcy Court. The plant had sat idle since June 2001 after Agway Feed and Nutrition closed the mill, noting it would be too costly to upgrade. Richer Feeds completely gutted the mill and converted it from a “line” feed mill, where ingredients are not weighed, but mixed by volume, to a “batch” mill, where each batch is precisely weighed before materials are mixed. Dairy specialists at the company develop prescription feeds offering the right proteins and minerals for each individual farmer. The proper mixing formulas are monitored by a $100,000 computer system that controls all of the mill’s operations. Visit [www.richerfeeds.com](http://www.richerfeeds.com) to learn more.

• North Country Grown Cooperative, Inc. formally incorporated this year and continues to expand its future endeavors. The New York Ag Innovation Center (NYAIC) assisted the North Country with the formation of the cooperative, which allows them the flexibility to set their own prices and to enter into contracts. North Country Grown Cooperative, Inc. is focused on selling to schools, such as SUNY Potsdam, and to other institutions in Northern New York. Fresh vegetables account for about half of sales. Soybean oil, bison, maple syrup and honey make up the other half. Some growers are even putting up greenhouses to extend the produce season. The cooperative is hoping to broaden sales to such other institutional markets as hospitals and prisons. North Country Grown Cooperative’s long-term business plan includes processing. The group is looking to share a certified kitchen or to develop a processing facility, which would allow growers to process potatoes, broccoli and other vegetables, and to develop value-added products. For more information on the North Country Grown Cooperative, contact Sue Rau, 315.769.5061, drumlins@northnet.org. For details on business structuring assistance, call the NY Ag Innovation Center (NYAIC) at 607.255.7215, nyaic@cornell.edu, [http://nyaic.cornell.edu](http://nyaic.cornell.edu).
• Lifestyle farmers, otherwise known as, sundowners, U-turners, hobby farmers, ruralpolitans, micropolitans, gentlemen farmers, X-urbanites are on the rise. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines residential/lifestyle farmers as those generating $1,000 to $10,000 in annual farm income and reporting a major occupation other than farming. Using the USDA definition, Market Directions (a marketing research company out of Kansas City, MO), conducted a nationwide study on Country Living. The company evaluated the size of the lifestyle farmer segment today as well as its growth trends and geographical hot spots. The analysis determined that not only is this market segment sizeable, but it is growing. Currently there are approximately 1.2 million residential/lifestyle farms, expanding to 1.6 million if you include "farms" with less than $1,000 in revenues — representing more than half of US farms. Farms with less than $2,500 in sales had the most significant growth from 1997 to 2002. Residential/lifestyle farms are found in every state, but geographical concentration is apparent; with the top 10 states representing more than one-third of the farms. Placement of residential/lifestyle farms — metro-fringe counties or outlying areas — varies from state to state. Individuals living this lifestyle are typically middle-aged, educated, married with traditional values. In some cases children are still at home; in others this lifestyle may follow an empty nest. Lifestyle farmers generally work full-time away from their homes in addition to working on their "farm". They have higher-than-average incomes, with the bulk of their earnings and assets not related to the farm. The individuals who have chosen this lifestyle are investing in country life. Visit http://www.lifestylefarmer.com/ to learn more.

A few years ago a Washington farmer sold the family’s dairy cows and went into the heifer-raising business — buying calves, raising them to maturity and selling them to other farmers. The switch allowed the farmer the luxury of more time to pursue his love for photography. He set out into the fields and woods around his farm to capture the naturalness of the landscape. A local writer saw his photos and is now collaborating with him on a book. 15 of Peter Hanks photos are in John Katz’s new book Katz on Dogs published by Random House. Visit your local book store or order online from http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/1400064031/104-6301502-4070351?v=glance.

• A small, little-known winery, Chateau de Belleau, in Scio in the rural Genesee Valley is thinking out of the box when it comes to fermenting its wine. Vinters, Kenneth and Mary Bellows, use a long list of vegetables and fruits to make their wine. The list includes the normal fare — grapes, apples, and blackberries; the unusual — dandelions, rhubarb, blueberries, elderberries, plums, and honey; and the downright strange — tomatoes and potatoes. He won a Silver Medal at the 4th Annual “Wine Festival” in August, sponsored by the Winery at Wilcox, near Johnsonburg, Pennsylvania, for their Potato Wine. Judges said the potato wine was “surprisingly good” and designated it a sherry for its high alcohol content (20%). Mr. Bellows said his next fruit/vegetable wine experiment may just be the pumpkin.

• A growing number of states are lifting longtime bans on out-of-state shipments of wine to residents’ homes. New York, Connecticut, Ohio, and Texas recently removed their bans bringing the number of states that no longer prohibit direct wine shipments to consumers to 30. And more states are reexamining their laws to remove interstate shipping bans. The New York Wine and Grape Foundation, a trade group, is launching a new marketing campaign to direct consumers to the Internet to www.newyorkwines.org. On the web site, customers can explore which wineries are shipping to which states, and be linked directly to the wineries to buy the labels. FedEx Corp. is getting into the game providing wineries with “Swirl, Sniff, Sip and Ship!” signs for their tasting rooms to remind visitors from other regions that they may be able to ship bottles directly to their homes around the country. This is good news for New York’s wineries.
A hydroponics farm has taken root in an abandoned school in St. Lawrence County. The Edwards Elementary School had been vacant since 1989. This is such an interesting use of an old building. Four of the school’s rooms will be used for growing vegetables. The owner plans to rent the remainder of the building for a diner or other shops. If successful, the first harvest is expected in October or November. 

Note: Hydroponic plants grow without soil in an inert medium with nutrition provided by water soluble minerals. On a similar note, Innovative Energies Systems (IES) built a hydroponic greenhouse at Lewiston in Niagara County that produces 80,000 pounds of tomatoes a week and employees 50 people. IES is considering similar operations in the Jefferson County town of Rodman and the Albany County City of Cohoes.
COMMUNITY CAPACITY & SOCIAL NETWORKS

Community Capacity & Social Networks - Listening Session Synopsis

Community Capacity and Social Networks reflects a wide variety of multidimensional issues that were perhaps not so easily captured in the more structured themes of the listening sessions. In general, comments were most closely associated with Rural Schools and Youth, Local and Regional Governance, and Economic Development.

Listening session participants suggested that their rural areas have a strong “legacy” of community involvement. Rural social networks exist in a wide range of both formal and informal sectors, including social service agencies, schools, fire departments, churches, families and neighbors, and clubs (i.e., Rotary, Girl Scouts, Grange, Kiwanis, Moose, Elks, 4-H, etc). Activities sponsored by these social networks, such as sporting events, church suppers, and the county fair provide settings for the community to gather.

Because rural populations are low in number, part of their unique challenge lies in recognizing the diverse and changing needs of this population. Socioeconomic status emerges as particularly divisive in rural communities, and may result in isolation and segregation of different populations even within the same community. Participants indicated that the current economic system, which often necessitates working two jobs in order to get by, effectively blocks many working people from engaging in social networks. This further compounds the division between rich and poor, as community action seems more feasible for members of higher socioeconomic status.

General sentiment suggested the erosion of overall community interaction and socialization at all levels. As various forces drive people to spend more time outside their communities, community members have less interaction on a daily basis and are less likely to invest in local resources. Although participants suggest that technology plays a valuable role in maximizing resources and bringing people together, they also acknowledged that it may contribute to this decreasing socialization.

In order to overcome these barriers, participants favored opportunities that bring community members together to share in common experiences and develop community cohesion and pride. Rather than mobilizing over divisive and negative issues, communities have more to gain from fostering positive associations. This strength-based approach focuses on developing the full potential of available resources, through means such as community festivals (often rooted in local agricultural tradition), tourism, heritage traditions, and other multigenerational activities.

Volunteerism emerges as a strong, but underdeveloped, resource in rural communities. Comments suggested that rural communities need to promote a spirit of volunteerism and develop local leadership among their members, rather than depending on external and commercialized sources of capacity building.

Despite the strong foundation for rural social networks, comments indicated that rural areas currently find themselves engaged in a struggle to “restock” these networks. Traditional community organizations, clubs, and formal institutions are experiencing difficulty in attracting and sustaining
membership. Brain drain and the out migration of youth further challenges the sustainability of rural social networks.

In response to this, opportunities for youth and seniors emerge as a top priority in the development of community capacity and social networks. Retirees represent a currently untapped resource for building community capacity in rural areas, as do local college students. In order to instill the sense of community pride and ownership that participants see as critical to both short-and long-term community capacity, rural areas need to increase youth involvement in community activities and community decisions.

Given the typically limited resource and population base, community divisions may be especially detrimental to rural community capacity. The compartmentalization of, and resulting competition between, various groups in the community prevents meaningful social interaction and furthers the divisions between population groups.

In order to foster more inclusive and effective social networks, participants emphasized the need for communication, resource sharing, and reciprocal relationships between existing community networks and institutions. In general, comments suggested the need to adopt a more holistic approach to the development of community capacity and social networks in rural areas.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:

- Increasing numbers of retirees present a strong potential volunteer base
- Opportunities for youth—increase quality, not necessarily quantity
- Establishment of community identity and pride; focus on what brings people together
- Schools as community resources; integration of school and community
- Rural spirit of volunteerism (need a better understanding of what motivates people)
- Creation of more inclusive and diverse social networks
- Increased cooperation, communication, and pooling of resources

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:

- Isolation and segregation by socioeconomic status (rich vs. poor, haves vs. have-nots)
- Brain drain and associated challenges of youth engagement
- Barriers to community involvement and volunteering
- Parochialism and territorialism are outdated and restrictive
- Trend of declining socialization and local interaction, at all ages
- Changing social structures and values
- Lack of infrastructure and funding support
Community Capacity & Social Networks - Faculty Response

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Main Issues and Challenges Raised in Listening Session

Many observers on the contemporary scene, including most participants in the Rural Visioning Listening Sessions, recognized what Professor Maurice Stein of Brandeis University 45 years ago called the *Eclipse of Community* (1960), and Robert Putnam just a few years ago called *Bowling Alone*. In other words, the predominant perception was that social networks and community capacity have declined in rural New York communities.

Listening-Session participants also recognized some major causes of the eclipse, namely, movement of key people from central places to suburban and rural towns, increasing diversity of people the majority of whom are not organized to participate well in community affairs, and commuting longer distances for work which reduces amounts of time available for community involvement. The participants identified this diversity to include ethnicity, but also increasing gaps between richer and poorer; commuters and stayers; seniors, middle-aged, and youth; second-home residents, vacationers, and permanent residents; business owners or managers and their employees; churchgoers and non-churchgoers; marrieds and singles; two-parent families and single-parent families; and so forth. Some also perceived that this increasing diversity challenges, and perhaps destroys, existing community-level social networks. Each of these social segments may have their own “little” social networks, but whole-community networks were perceived to be less prevalent than previously.

Other Listening participants disputed this perception with counter-evidence. More young people, they asserted, participate in a greater variety of activities than previously. School sports, for instance, now include both males and females equally, whereas twenty years ago they were largely limited to boys. Athletics have broadened considerably from football, basketball, and baseball to include soccer, lacrosse, swimming, and field and track in greater numbers. “Soccer moms,” and even “soccer dads,” are not merely euphemisms, but a reality. Further, school and community clubs or associations in drama, biking, environment, and so forth find increasing participation.

These activities also often require more adult involvement with their offspring, as coaches, as role models, even as “security.” Some felt church attendance was also up, as was participation in rural clubs and associations, such as Troy’s Rotary, rural volunteer fire departments, garden clubs, and some Granges (as in Milton). Thus, adults, also, have increased their community participation and engagement in social networks. In other words, many Listening participants recognized evidence that people participate in community activities more often in contemporary society than they were previously.

Yet, another Listening observation was that rural people often feel a form of hopelessness; they feel more acted upon than acting. Many rural people recognize that they live in a global society, and feel that decision makers in social institutions outside their communities more than those inside their communities make key decisions for them. Such decisions include those of state and federal mandates, often without due compensation, put on local (county, town, and village) governments and their decision makers. In other words, some Listening participants believed that local social
networks and community capacity evolving from them in general seem to make little “real” difference in the course of community-level events.

Examples of these feelings were expressed by participants who recognized that multi-locational stores in malls are tending to dominate their communities, draining more money from their communities than they are leaving there in jobs or other investments. Others felt that social institutions in their communities, even their schools—all funded at local property-owners’ tax expense—live under mandates from outside sources that the Listening participants found neither necessary nor appealing. One Session’s participants complained that their children don’t socialize as much as previously because they are too bogged down by homework, and other school activities, and/or the internet as in MySpace.com. All such trends result in increased numbers of school dropouts, they asserted, under the rationale that “I can get my GED and not have all this pressure.” In other words, many people believed they had little control over or input into the very social institutions they depend on in their daily routines.

For this response paper, then, two key issues are 1) the extent to which rural people are involved in any social networks; and 2) whether, among rural people who do have social networks, there is more or less community capacity coming from the networks. There was more consensus by Listening participants on the latter than on the former; they deplored the conditions that put their communities’ capacities in eclipse.

**Previous Studies on these Main Challenges**

Harvard’s Robert Putnam (2000) also recognized his version of the eclipse of community by noting declines in numbers of associations (and their social networks). One striking example he cited: people tend, increasingly, to bowl alone rather than in leagues. Yet, other studies based on the General Social Survey by the National Opinion Research Corporation show few differences over time in numbers of Northeast U.S. rural people in their participation rates in community organizations of one sort or another (Eberts, 1999).

Two concepts in contemporary social science are relevant here, namely, social capital, related to extent of social networks, and political capital, related to a community’s capacity for decision making (cf. Flora and Flora, 2003). Both social capital and political capital vary in any set of communities, hence the possible dispute about participation among the Listening participants.

Social capital focuses on communities’ social associations and social networks they produce, and whether people from every social segment participate in social associations and/or social networks. Political capital focuses on whether community leaders and decision makers (elected, appointed, and/or their key supporters) work to identify communities’ problems and aggressively act to resolve them. Studies show that, when communities have higher levels of participation and competition in them, their community capacity and political capital is probably higher (than under the circumstances when they were lower) and that these communities have larger agendas of key issues and more often find strategies for resolving issues on their agendas (cf. Eberts, 2002, 2004).

**Success Stories**

Listening-Session participants pointed to a number of what they considered specific success stories in generating social networks and community capacity. But, they were recorded only sketchily in the
session notes. Westfield and its grape history and festival was one; Cuba and Wellsville and their art galleries another; other festivals and celebrations in communities throughout the state; North Country public radio; the Cape Vincent Local Development Committee that “applies for grants so people there are not municipality dependent”; pooling resources as in Messina’s school systems; and so forth. Still, only by more systematic study of each of these communities would it become clear how these communities used their community capacities to become success stories.

A systematic set of success stories in New York’s 44 rural counties was reported by Eberts (2004, ch. 11). This study set out to determine whether political capital affected the well-being indicator of “births to single mothers” controlling for effects of other variables relevant to such births. The study produced inter-correlated indicators of these counties’ socioeconomic status, family disruption, participation in voting, and so forth, with births to single mothers. The result was that, in general, counties with higher levels of voter participation in national elections did indeed have lower percentages of births to single mothers. This study, then, documents that political capital (or community capacity) can provide for better well-being in counties (as communities).

Another systematic study of community capacity (or political capital) looked at mayors and supervisors in 69 communities (villages and towns) in the Erie Canal Corridor (Eberts, 2002). It found that, when mayors or supervisors created linkages with social networks in their communities and/or with agencies or elected officials outside their communities, they were more successful in having larger agendas and in overseeing the writing of more proposals to deal with community issues compared to mayors or supervisors who did not take these initiatives. This form of community capacity (or political capital) inter-related political and social networks through the mayors’ and supervisors’ offices to a variety of well-being outcomes in communities; they identified larger agendas of solvable community problems, and found strategies for obtaining funds to help in resolving those problems (e.g., by making proposals to outside agencies). Moreover, this form of community capacity through mayors’ and supervisors’ commitments and actions can be taught to--or learned from--other mayors or supervisors.

**What Past Research Failed to Address**

Processes through which social and political capital (community capacity) help in resolving community problems are still mysterious to most people, and needs further elaboration through future research. On average, only 5 percent of adults participate in political processes other than writing letters to editors or voting (Eberts, 1999, using General Social Survey data). Local elections usually average less than one-quarter of eligible voters voting. How do communities achieve higher percentages of people voting? How is voting related to local political parties’ activities in mobilizing voters? … only through media, organizations, and personal contacts? And, how, specifically, do people become better off when communities resolve their problems through their political capital? Research has failed to elaborate such connections.

Consciousness of community capacity through local politics is also poorly reported by most local newspapers, as well as poorly researched. Newspapers seldom report in-depth on local political issues and events. Most people do not know the name of the person who is the chief-elected official in their local political jurisdiction, or the name of the person who chairs the county budget committee, or what happens in town or county political committees as they select candidates for local offices. Research so far has failed to make such community capacity knowledge more transparent.
In other words, even to researchers, community capacity is a vague concept. And, public education about such processes is virtually non-existent by Extension or anyone else. What communities have more adequate community capacities and political capital (e.g. local political knowledge, participation, and competition between candidates for office)? Which ones have less? How many people form a critical mass in creating greater political capital? … and why?

**New Research & Extension Questions**

In *The Tipping Point* (2000), an interpreter of social science research, Malcolm Gladwell, reports on Mark Granovetter’s (1973) concept of “the strength of weak ties.” In examining social networks, social researchers identify social networks built on “strong ties” or “weak ties.” Strong ties occur when association members strongly identify with the goals and people of specific associations. Weak ties occur when people are members of several associations and thus can become linkages among associations. We remember Paul Revere, Gladwell maintains, because he had many weak ties with key people in the communities through which he rode and, where he went, these communities mobilized against the “Red Coats.” In contrast, only historians remember other riders who rode that fateful night because they lacked the same kinds of “weak” ties, and their communities failed to mobilize as effectively.

Community capacity, apparently, is built on larger numbers of community people who have multiple linkages among several social networks that constitute weak ties. But, researchers have made little attempt to compare communities where there are more people with such weak ties with communities where fewer people have weak ties. Further, research is also necessary to determine whether those Extension programs which foster larger numbers of people with weak ties do indeed have more viable programs than those which do not.

In sum, community capacity and social networks appear essential for community well-being and life-quality. And, we have scratched the surface in understanding how these phenomena happen, and how they produce more satisfying outcomes in communities. But much more research remains to be done if we as citizens and Extension as an organization are to use these concepts and phenomena effectively in rural New York communities.

**References**


The Story Quilt captures images of rural Galway — the people, events, and landscape that make Galway the community that it is — in poetry. In an effort to preserve memories of a simpler time, the poems incorporate the recollections and impressions contributed by the people of Galway. The goal of the project is to bring the community together in a cross-generational sharing of perspectives and experiences. The oral histories (150 collected so far) will be shaped into one page poems and stitched together as patches of the Story Quilt. Many organizations are involved in this project: The Galway Public Library, Friends of the Galway Public Library, Galway Preservation Society, Galway schools, Galway Players, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, Lions Club, and Galway Senior Citizens. Organizers hope to publish the Story Quilt next year to be used as a local history/cultural resource for the community, library, and schools; and distributed to book stores throughout the Capital District. This program was funded in part by the Decentralization Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts, administered by the Saratoga County Arts Council. For more information, call (518) 882-6385.
ENERGY

Energy - Listening Sessions Synopsis

Major themes in the area of energy relate to environment and land use, transportation, and agriculture. To a large extent, comments in this area focused on identifying specific sources of alternative energy and evaluating the associated costs, benefits, and barriers.

Overall goals concentrate on the development of a self-sufficient system based on more localized production of alternative energy, while at the same time increasing overall energy efficiency and conservation. Efficiency is the key to all aspects of creating a sustainable energy system--from promoting resource conservation to developing useful forms of alternative energy.

On a positive note, participants believed that New York State has the potential to develop diverse energy sources based largely on the strength and diversity of current natural resources. Underutilized, marginal farmland and currently unmanaged woodlots present strong opportunities for development in this area. In addition to its value as alternative energy, participants suggested that biofuels will play a valuable role in maintaining productive open space and creating new opportunities for agriculture.

Participants identified various sources of alternative energy. Biofuels (including grass/hay pellets, corn, and forest products), wind power, methane gas, ethanol, hydropower, and possibly solar energy seem to be particularly suited to use in rural New York. Other specific suggestions included cryogenics fuels (e.g. liquid hydrogen), coal gasification, geothermal energy, and the use of waste tires for oil. The success of any of these endeavors, however, largely depends on the research and development of more efficient technology that can harness this energy in a cost-effective manner.

Participants identified several overarching social concerns that impact overall energy consumption and attitude and are suggestive of problems associated with an “over-consumptive” lifestyle. These concerns include the lack of energy efficient consumer products, NIMBY attitudes, and the auto dependence of our society. To this end, comments suggested a need for initiatives that promote conservation education, alternative transportation networks, energy efficient (“green”) buildings and consumer products, and opportunities for sustainable communities.

The general sentiment was that many barriers currently hinder the effective development of sustainable energy. In order to overcome this, participants emphasized that government must take a lead role in expanding the incentive system. Tax credits and rebates, net metering programs, and education are key. NYSERDA was generally viewed as positive, but individuals felt that in some cases it was mismatched with local needs.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:

- Opportunities to link with agriculture and forestry (biofuels production)
- Education of diverse audiences (landowners, consumers, producers, Army Corps of Engineers, k-12 and college)
- Decentralized, small scale, local production and locally owned energy facilities
• Increasing energy efficiency through more sustainable communities (public transportation, green buildings, energy-saving products)
• Potential role of local business and employers

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:

• High current energy costs (ie, “heat or eat”)
• Lack of hard-data on cost efficiency and benefits of alternative energy  (high up-front cost, short versus long term expenses)
• Problems of infrastructure and distribution (current structure of the grid system)
• Lack of incentives for energy efficient and alternative energy development
Renewable Energy Systems to Enhance the Prosperity of Rural Communities

Hypothesis: The development of renewable energy systems can enhance the prosperity of rural agricultural communities.

The Facts: With the September 22, 2004 announcement by the New York State Public Service Commission, there are now 18 States that have Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) or RPS-type standards that require that a certain percentage of the state’s electricity come from renewable energy methods (Schoofs, 2004; Petersik, 2004). Renewable energy technologies have made such rapid strides in performance and price that they are currently competitive with fossil fuel power plants in an increasing number of situations and are being recognized as a major source for future U.S. energy (AWEL 2004). According to a policy analysis of the Federal Renewable Portfolio Standard (Schoofs, 2004), the increased demand for renewable energy is warranted for many different reasons including:

- Increased national security and reduced major blackouts (decentralized production),
- Increased energy efficiency (reduced energy transmission losses from distributed supply),
- Reduced dependence on foreign energy sources,
- Increased economic prosperity (job creation and retention of energy supply dollars),
- Increased sustainability compared to depleting fossil fuels, and
- Improved environmental effects (cleaner combustion with less harmful emissions).

State and federal governments recognize the benefits and increased need for renewable energy and are implementing a variety of programs to promote its development including:

- Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards that require electricity providers to obtain a portion of their electric supply from renewable sources and

These federal and state policies clearly indicate a major national focus on renewable energy that will enable many new opportunities in the next twenty years.

1 Adapted from: Scott, N. "Project Description: Integration of Renewable Energy Systems to Enhance the Prosperity of Rural Agricultural Communities"
The Effects: One study commissioned by the Renewable Fuels Association in 2002 (Urbanchuk, 2002) indicates that establishing a 40-million gallon per year ethanol plant:

- Provides a one-time boost of $142-million to the local economy during construction,
- Creates 41 plant jobs and 694 other new jobs throughout the entire economy,
- Expands the local economic base by $110.2-million per year,
- Generates $1.2-million in new state and local taxes per year, and
- Increases the local price of corn by 5-10 cents per bushel.

Renewable energy systems are thus of interest to a diverse group, including state and local policy makers, rural agriculture community leaders, farmer cooperatives and industry groups, and entrepreneurs.

Why farms and rural agricultural communities? The economies of rural agricultural communities throughout the United States are suffering. After several decades of change including the initial shifting of the rural economic base from natural resources and agriculture to manufacturing and services in the 60’s to the current off-shore movement of manufacturing and heightened increase in global agricultural competition, rural economic performance is currently lagging behind that of urban areas and is leading to an inefficient spatial distribution of economic activity within the U.S. (Porter, 2004; ERS, 2004) In order to reverse this trend and enhance the prosperity of rural agriculture communities, new industry opportunities that create jobs and increase rural household incomes are needed.

One such opportunity that is especially suited to rural agriculture communities is the renewable energy industry. Nearly all the available renewable energy systems in use and under development are suitable for rural agricultural communities. Renewable energy is energy obtained from sources that are essentially inexhaustible (unlike, for example, fossil fuels, of which there is a finite supply). These renewable energy systems include wind power, solar power, geothermal power, and the wide array of biomass-based energy sources such as anaerobic digestion of animal manures and crops (combined heat and power), gasification of crops and wood residues (production of gaseous and liquid fuels), and direct combustion of wood residues and crop pellets (combined heat and power).

For our purposes, renewable energy will refer to the most likely forms to be located in rural agricultural communities: wind energy, solar energy, and biomass-based energy. Since all natural resources are location dependent, the first step of the evaluation process is to assess the natural resources available in a specific area. Solar insolation, wind exposure, potential biomass availability, and the location of transportation conduits are all geographically dependant and thus are able to be analyzed using Geographic Information System (GIS) tools. Nearly all the basic GIS based information on solar insolation, wind exposure, potential biomass (e.g. crop) production, and transportation conduit locations needed for this project already exist and are available for public use and assessment. Resources such as the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and AWS Truewind (for wind) websites, as well as land use maps and agriculture statistics/census information and other state resources may be of assistance in this.

Several recent studies have shown that renewable energy systems are well suited for rural locations (closer to resource base) and that establishing renewable energy systems in rural agricultural communities provides significant economic development impact (McKissic, 2004 Urbanchuk, 2002, NREL, 1997). Rural agriculture communities are widespread throughout the U.S. (offer distributed
generation), offer a range of natural resources for renewable energy production (energy crops, wood and crop residues, waste sources, wind, and solar), have land suitable for renewable energy system construction, and have a cost-competitive production labor force. In particular, biomass-based power tends to be concentrated in rural areas due to its transportation expense, which, according the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), creates a great opportunity for revitalizing rural America (NREL 1997). Thus, the final products of energy can either be consumed by the communities themselves or sold to the market.

There are many recent studies that indicate the positive economic influence of renewable energy systems including:

- 140 jobs and more than 30% of the town’s property tax base from an existing 32-MW biomass (wood based) plant near Fort Fairfield, ME (NREL 1997),
- An estimated average of 694 jobs and expansion of the local economic base by $110.2-million per year for 40-million gallon per year ethanol plants based on an analysis of existing plants such as the Chippewa Valley plant in Benson, MN (Urbanchuk, 2002),
- A projection of 69 jobs and more than $10 million to the local economy for rural biomass production (through gasification) in Georgia (McKissick, 2004), and
- A projection of 300 rural jobs and energy crop fuel sales of almost $20 million in NY from 40,000 acres of willow trees by 2010 (NREL 1997).

The confluence of the policy drive for renewable energy, the suitability of renewable energy for rural locations, and need for new economic opportunities for rural agricultural communities makes the implementation of renewable energy production system in rural agricultural communities a natural course of action.

Implementing a renewable energy project can have profound effects on a community. Improved understanding of how different policy and market factors affect the renewable energy business entity, as well as how the project impacts the community, (the social, economic, environmental, and biological effects) will enhance project success. Understanding the larger business picture can help avoid project failure such as that experienced by Tri-State Corn Processors of Rosholt, S.D., which recently filed for bankruptcy due to inability to operate within ethanol production design specifications and raise capital for repairs and modifications (Thompson, 2004).

The renewable energy business environment includes resource, technology, finance, market, regulatory, environmental, and social aspects. With this in mind, cooperatives can play an essential role in a renewable energy project. In most cases, renewable energy initiatives such as biomass, wind, and solar projects require large quantities of resources that are beyond the scope of a single farm. Cooperative efforts can be applied to the management of energy system resources, production of the energy product, and marketing and sale of the energy product. Agricultural cooperatives play an important role in assisting farmer-members in securing cost effective farm inputs, credit, insurance, or marketing across a wide range of agriculture including the grain, dairy, and poultry industries.

Compared to larger operations, small producers typically have higher operational, production and transportation costs due to the nature of their scale and distribution and can realize a number of economic benefits by cooperating. An example of renewable energy cooperatives is the U.S. ethanol industry where a majority of ethanol production is produced by cooperatives and there is increased
interest in cooperative marketing to help producers capture more of the profits of the ethanol market (Campbell, 2004).

As a number of small to mid-sized farms consider efficient raw product assembly and processing alternatives, a cooperative approach can make logistical and economic sense. Significant economic efficiencies of coordination can be gained at various stages of the biomass energy chain from raw product production to conversion to energy products to energy marketing and sales. Small-scale renewable energy processing firms, cooperatively owned or otherwise, might benefit from forming marketing cooperatives to better position them in a market comprised of large-scale refiners and marketers (a trend seen in the ethanol industry, Campbell, 2004).

Various roles that cooperatives can serve in renewable energy production and marketing include:

1. Purchasing production inputs for growing renewable energy crops (seeds, nursery stock, cultivating equipment, etc)
2. Sharing the costs of purchasing and/or operating expensive harvesting equipment
3. Coordinating the harvest and post harvest handling. With growing seasons comes seasonal supply. Coordination of raw material supply can ensure consistent market supply, particularly important in energy systems.
4. Cost effective transportation – small-scale producers spread out over a large area might work together on transportation of products to a plant.
5. Cooperatively grading and assembling raw products. This can further aid the consistent nature of product supply required by integrated energy businesses.
6. Providing entrepreneurial opportunity - Investment opportunities might arise with producers working together in potential “downstream” value-added processing (ethanol, biodiesel, etc) owned by a cooperative.

In summary, a vibrant renewable energy industry that includes small scale producers will require an economically sound business structure. Research and outlook conducted under this component will build on the experience of the Cornell Cooperative Enterprise Program as well as the outreach capacity of the NY Agriculture Innovation Center at Cornell University.

**Opportunities:**

**Biomass-Based Energy:** Biomass refers to a) energy crops grown specifically to be used as fuel, such as fast-growing trees or switch grass, b) agricultural residues and by-products, such as straw, sugarcane fiber, and rice hulls, and c) residues from forestry, construction, and other wood-processing industries (NREL 2003). Energy can be derived from biomass through three main processes, biochemical, thermochemical, and direct burn (often through a pelletizing step). The biochemical method of anaerobic digestion of manure on dairy farms with on-site electricity generation has been successfully demonstrated in New York State and worldwide. A report by Peranginangin and Scott (2002) indicated that the payback period for this renewable energy system with on site manure digestion and electricity generation, and liquid-solid separation at AA dairy Farm, located in Candor, NY, could be 4 years if the farm operated with 1,000 cows. In addition, this system offers opportunities for entrepreneurial activities such as indoor aquaculture, greenhouses, and on-farm milk pasteurization by using the excess heat and electricity generated and other byproducts of the liquid effluent and carbon dioxide. Research and experiments conducted by
Jewell (1997) showed positive results for digesting energy crops such as napier grass and sorghum. Co-digestion of manure and crop residues is well documented in Europe (Zicari, 2004).

Direct burn of biomass is primarily associated with wood residues where much information on this subject exists. Pelletization of grasses, though not new in concept, is gaining increased attention as a direct burn fuel.

**Wind Energy:** According to Greening Federal Facilities (2001), more than half the United States has wind resources that could support the development of utility-scale wind power plants, and most states have enough wind to at least support small-scale wind systems. An annual average wind speed in excess of 8 miles per hour (12.9 km/h) has a potential to make small-scale systems economical, and annual average wind speeds of at least 11.5 to 12.5 miles per hour (18.5 to 20 km/h) have economic potential for utility-scale turbines. Small turbines—500 watts to 100 kW—can supply enough electricity to power remote sites, small homes, or businesses. Large, utility-scale turbines—250 kW and larger—can provide enough electricity to power hundreds of homes and businesses. The New York site of 20-1.5 MW machines near Fenner, NY provides approximately 80,000 MWh/yr or enough electricity for about 13,000 average homes (www.fennerwind.com). All of the wind turbines at the Fenner site are on farmer-owned land and provide an upfront and yearly income to the farmer in this rural agricultural community.

**Solar energy:** The Greening Federal Facilities (2001) indicates that photovoltaic (PV) systems are cost-effective in small applications removed from utility power. PV prices have historically declined about 5% per year, and PV systems are typically less expensive than operating a stand-alone generator in a remote location. For example, in 1970, PV cells cost more than $1,000 per peak watt of power. Prices today are under $4 per peak watt, wholesale, for standard modules. Complete stand-alone systems typically range between $6 and $12 per peak watt.

**Biofuels:** Bio liquid fuels (biofuels) production is an important subset of a community-based renewable energy system that targets transportation vehicles, heavy equipment, fuel storage, and heating applications. This integrated system relies on the concept of liquid biofuel value chains and partnerships for sustainable agriculture (VCPSA) similar to the Pork VCPSA concept used at Iowa State University [Source: http://www.valuechains.org]. Whereas ISU focuses on pork value chains and downstream processes, renewable energy production projects can focus on biofuel value chains and upstream processes. Preliminary analysis has shown that approximate daily gas production from about 500 cows has substantial potential to contribute to energy production. Chopped grass, wood, manure solids, food wastes, stover, forest residues and pelletized grass are additional renewable energy feedstock for the biofuel value supply chain.

**Biodiesel** (methyl ester or ethyl ester) is a clean-burning diesel replacement fuel made from new and used animal fats and vegetable oils. The primary coproduct of this production is glycerol, which has commercial value in the cosmetic, pharmaceutical and other industries. A blend of 20% biodiesel: 80% petroleum diesel, known as B20, demonstrated significant benefits for the environment with minimum cost increase to consumers and fleet operations (EPA, 2002).
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Energy (& Telecommunications) – “Success Stories”

• A group of homeowners, frustrated with the high cost of propane and heating oil, have joined forces to form a cooperative to buy home heating fuel. The concept is not new, farmers use cooperatives to keep feed prices down or to buy fuel. But such a fuel co-op amongst neighboring towns would be a first in New York State. The fuel co-op would be a nonprofit bulk-buying membership organization that pools the needs of the individual users to make large purchase commitments to vendors. Hundreds of homeowners in Galway, Perth and Broadalbin (the Saratoga/Fulton counties region) are joining the co-op with hopes of cutting the high cost of heating. Such a co-op can balance the price to a reasonable level for all its members. A bid document has been created and will be sent this spring to propane and fuel oil distributors throughout the region and documentation is in the works to register the co-op as a nonprofit organization with the Department of State. Any profit the co-op makes will be distributed to local volunteer departments in the region. For more information call 518.882.5445.

• Catalyst Renewables is in discussions with the Otsego County Economic Development Office and the city of Oneonta to build a biomass plant on the former Delaware-Hudson Railway roundhouse site. Depending on permits and the city approval process, the $70 million plant could be operational by the end of 2007. The plant expects to employ 20 people at an average salary of $50,000. The plant would require between 370,000 and 400,000 tons of wood chips per year, with most of the wood coming from unusable wood (limbs, small diameters, and poor quality trees). The energy generated would then be sold into the grid. Catalyst Renewable also owns Lyonsdale Biomass in Lewis County.

• Construction of New York's first dry mill ethanol plant — Western New York Energy’s $87.4 million Orleans County facility — is scheduled to begin this summer, with the state contributing nearly $6 million. The facility is expected to produce about 50 million gallons of the fuel each year. The clean-burning, corn-based product is combined with gasoline to produce a blended, higher octane fuel. The plant will buy an estimated 20 million bushels of corn each year, 6 million from western New York, opening a new market for the state's farms. The plant uses a process that grinds the entire corn kernel into flour and converts the starch into ethanol via fermentation. The facility also will produce two byproducts that will be marketed for sale: carbon dioxide, used for beverage carbonation and freeze drying; and distiller's dried grains, a high-protein livestock feed. The facility, located on a 144-acre site in the town of Shelby, is expected to begin production in January 2008; employing 58 people.

• Premier Wireless provides high speed Internet service to rural residents in Morley (which is in the hamlet of Canton in St. Lawrence County where the home office is located). Premier has recently spread out to provide high speed Internet service to Canton residents, as well. Monthly residential service rates begin at $19.95 plus $4.95 for a receiver and external antenna. The company also offers dial-up Internet service for $8 monthly. The company hopes to expand wireless service into Madris and Potsdam next. Learn more at http://www.premierwireless.us/.

• The village of Frankfort began offering a community-wide wireless Internet access network last summer with the help of WavHost, an Internet service provider in Frankfort (Herkimer County). Subscription costs are $29.99 per month under a one-year contract or $24.99 per month under a two-year contract. Portions of each subscription go to the village. Village officials are considering developing a hightech neighborhood watch, which would allow WavHost subscribers to pull up a
• The city of Utica in rural Oneida County is breaking ground with city-provided wireless Internet access; joining a small, but growing number of cities nationwide, that view wireless Internet networks as an essential piece of modern infrastructure. Small businesses, like restaurants and coffee shops, are excited about the prospects of patrons armed with laptops visiting their places throughout the day. Joe McCoy, president and chief executive officer of WavHost, an Internet service provider in Frankfort (Herkimer County), helped develop the network pro bono, and the city partnered with SUNYIT graduate students looking for real-world experience. The city government will own the network, but SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome will host the Web server (SUNYIT students will maintain it). Total start-up costs were between $15,000 and $20,000. The city is still working to determine what to charge users beyond the free daily hour. Officials expect to offer several packages, with the revenues helping to pay for upkeep. WavHost and Premier Wireless are also pursuing wireless systems in underserved North Country communities.

• Hudson Valley DataNet provides fiber-optic digital communication services to schools, businesses, and hospitals in small communities.

• The Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) based in Watertown in Jefferson County has been instrumental in advancing the deployment of a fiber optic trunk line up into St. Lawrence County. DANC is currently looking into ways to link smaller communities to the network. Now, rural Clinton and Franklin Counties in Northern New York hope to link with the St. Lawrence County network through a joint project with local leadership being provided by SUNY Plattsburgh Technical Assistance Center with financial support from a bi-partisan effort of Congressman John McHugh and Senator Hillary Clinton.

New York state farms and homeowners will be able to utilize wind to create electricity and sell the excess to utility companies thanks to a new law (S.4890-E/A.4245-A; Chapter ). This will be the first time wind generation has been eligible in New York state for net metering. Wind energy is a viable source of alternative energy and rural New York is lucky to have considerable wind energy resources. This new law has the potential to provide farmers and homeowners low-cost, clean energy. For a copy of the bill call Senate Sponsor Wright at (518) 455-2346 or Assemblyman Englebright at (518) 455-4804.

• Renew NY was launched this summer by a partnership between the Greater Rochester Enterprise, High Tech Rochester and Rochester Institute of Technology. The company’s aim is to foster growth of renewable energy companies located between Buffalo and Syracuse and encourage new startups in the industry. Renewable energy sources include wind, biomass, solar, geothermal and hydropower.

• Laidlaw Energy Group in Ellicottville (Cattaraugus County) has been awarded a $1 million state grant to convert a natural gas power plant into a wood burning plant. The company will use wood-based biomass fuel to generate approximately five megawatts of output. Four of those megawatts will be exported to the New York state electricity grid. A joint venture with Cousineau Forest Products will bring wood pallets to Laidlaw’s site, where they will be cleaned and ground up to produce clean wood fuel.
• The demand for renewable energy sources continues to grow. One such renewable energy source, biodiesel fuel, is at the forefront because of ever-increasing gasoline prices. And New York is in the game. Clarkson University and NextGen Chemical Processes, Inc. have joined forces in the development of a biodiesel plant in the north country C expected to open the end of June. The technology was created by Clarkson researchers, while NextGen builds the commercial-scale equipment. Biodiesel fuel is more environmentally friendly with fewer harmful emissions than petroleum diesel.

• Rapid growth in oil and gas exploration within the Trenton-Black River natural gas fields throughout New York’s Southern Tier spurred State Senator George H. Winner, Jr. (R-C, Elmira) and State Assemblyman William Parment (D-North Harmony) of Chautauqua County to introduce legislation (S.5553B/A.8672B) revising New York’s oil and gas exploration and development laws, which were first enacted in 1963. The measure was developed following discussions between state government and industry representatives, as well as a series of public hearings held on the issue last fall. The bill encourages the economic potential and promise of this industry, updates industry safeguards and environmental standards, and ensures landowners have clear guidelines to better understand their rights and consider economic opportunities. S.5553B/A.8672B was signed into law as Chapter 386, Laws of 2005. Call Senator Winner’s office at 518.455.2091 or Assemblyman Parment’s office at 518.455.4511 for more information.

• Using the Internet as their link to the world, photographers, graphic designers, web designers, publicists, writers, real estate agents and more (most transplanted from New York City) — are finding ways to conduct their business in the Catskill mountains. The Catskill E-Business Exchange is a business support group that helps wired professionals make the transition from city life to country life. And, a new business incubator — the Delaware County E-Center — is under construction in the village of Delhi. The E-Center will nurture emerging small businesses, while creating jobs and promoting economic growth in the region. The E-Center also received a federal grant to equip its computer lab.

• Fuel-cell technology is being explored across the country to meet the energy needs of customers in extremely rural or remote areas. Experts have found economic advantages to using the advanced technology over constructing and maintaining more traditional poles and wires to deliver power to some remote customers. With the cost of extending distribution being approximately $50,000/mile plus associated maintenance costs of keeping lines clear of vegetation and in service, co-ops are investigating alternatives to “running wires” to homes in remote locations. Here in New York, Delaware County was chosen as a test site for a fuel-cell technology residential power generation project. The Delaware County Electric Cooperative (DCEC) received a $300,000 grant in 2003 under a US Congressional Earmark, to demonstrate this highly efficient, clean energy project in a home in the Town of Tompkins. The fuel cell/battery system (developed by Plug Power of Albany County) was placed into operation in June 2005. A one-year demonstration period is planned where the unit will be subjected to varying load and environmental conditions. In addition, as part of the joint New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDCA) and Department of Energy (DOE) Energy Storage Initiative, $175,000 will be provided for an integrated power electronics and energy storage system. Also, as part of the project, the State University of New York (SUNY) at Delhi will work with DCEC on incorporating fuel cell and energy storage technologies into the engineering curriculum at SUNY Delhi. Visit http://www.delhi.edu/ for details. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s Cooperative Research Network (CRN) is coordinating the efforts of electric cooperatives around the United States to maximize the benefits
of this and similar demonstration projects. Visit http://www.nreca.org/ to learn more. The Delaware County Electric Cooperative serves 5,000 customers in rural areas of Delaware, Chenango, Otsego and Schoharie counties. For more information, please contact DCEC Engineering Manager Mark Schneider at (607) 746-9297 or visit their web site at http://www.dce.coop/.

• In June 2005 we did an article on Northeast Biofuels who purchased the former Miller beer factory in Oswego County to produce ethanol. The article mentioned the company’s intention to open up a new market — the use of willow trees (not the tall weeping willow, but the smaller, straighter shrub willow) as an alternative to corn. Northeast Biofuels has been working with SUNY’s College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) at Syracuse on the use of willow trees. ESF researchers have found that the starchy cellulose from willow and other trees can jump-start the ethanol fermentation process. As a follow-up, we learned that Belleville Henderson Central School in Jefferson County is taking part in a renewable energies research project with the SUNY-School of Environmental Science & Forestry (SUNY-ESF), the Jefferson County Agricultural Development Corporation (JCADC), the Jefferson County Job Development Corporation (JCJDC), the Tug Hill Commission, Lyonsdale Biomass LLC, and Jefferson Community College. In May, SUNY-ESF students planted nearly 6,500 ten-inch willow tree cuttings on a two-acre plot of land on the Belleville Henderson school campus. And in June, students in Mr. Steve Jones’ agriculture class at Belleville Henderson Central School planted a separate section of approximately 1,200 willow plants of their own. SUNY-ESF graduate students will monitor the growth and yield measurements of their two-acre plot, and students at Belleville Henderson will do the same with their section. SUNY-ESF will also provide Mr. Jones with a classroom curriculum that coincides with his students’ hands-on experience with the willow crop. Willows are fast growing shrubs, producing a harvestable crop in three years. A single crop can be harvested 6 to 7 times before replanting is required. In addition to the benefit of willows as an alternative and renewable energy source, willow shrubs can also be used effectively in riparian buffers, as living snow fences, and as a crop that can be used to clean up contaminated sites. Willow biomass can be converted into heat and electricity, biodegradable plastic and biofuels. After important components are extracted, remaining willow residue can be burned by wood-fueled energy plants like the Lyonsdale Biomass facility in Lyons Falls, making the willow a valuable, multi-purpose crop. SUNY-ESF already has the largest willow crop – 500 acres — in North America on farms located in central and western New York. With an increase in public support for sustainable energy research from the state and federal governments, SUNY-ESF plans to plant 10,000 additional acres across the state over the next three years. Also, Jefferson Community College is planning an educational energy program in the fall for area high school students.
Environment, Land Use & Natural Resources

Environment, Land Use & Natural Resources - Listening Sessions Synopsis

Overall, comments from the “Environment, Land Use, and Natural Resources” theme area related directly to many other theme areas—especially agriculture, energy, housing/transportation, and economic development. To this end, comments focused on the need to create sustainable communities that preserve the rural character of the natural environment as a way to both help the local economy and maintain a high quality of life.

Current quality of the natural environment, with its many diverse features, was consistently identified as a strength upon which communities can build. The strength of the natural resources themselves was the main focus here, and suggests a good opportunity for creating sustainable communities. Many of these comments also suggest that the opportunity, knowledge base, and among many rural New Yorkers the will for “conscientious land use” seem to be in place.

Despite these strong foundations, participants were concerned about the inconsistencies caused by a lack of comprehensive regional planning. The lack of a vision often leads to unplanned growth, sprawl, and loss of valued environmental resources. With this in mind, a new focus needs to be placed on regional efforts and coalition building.

Growth and development pressures play a large role in creating conflicts among community members. In many areas, farm land preservation—and other issues of agricultural viability—emerged as a major concern. “Cultural conflicts,” as when urbanites relocate in rural areas, often lead to tensions between various land uses. Additionally, participants emphasized that issues of housing and transportation are inherently connected to zoning and land use in rural areas.

To these ends, emphasis was put on the need to create “viable rural working landscapes.” These include the use of natural resources and land for farming, forestry, alternative energy, recreation, and tourism. Greater public understanding must be promoted, emphasizing that land is the most important resource within the community, and must therefore be used in a sustainable way. In order to accomplish this, education needs to focus on multiple audiences that range from land owners to community members and policy makers.

Many participants focused on the need to look towards holistic, long-term solutions. In general, this desired future centers on creating controlled growth with a long-term “game plan.” Education and monitoring are central to this future, as is a decision-making process that accounts for both environmental and cultural sustainability.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:

- Alternative energy (especially wind and biomass)
- Creative forms of tourism
- Regional planning and policy building
- Education
- Connections between rural and urban

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• Agricultural preservation

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:

• Property taxes
• Funding
• Cultural conflicts (e.g., farm-neighbor conflicts, relocated urban vs rural values)
• Zoning
• Water and sewer systems
• Loss of active rural landscape
Listening sessions organized for the Rural New York Initiative generated considerable discussion on issues related to environment, land use, and natural resources. Participant comments are wide ranging and go to assessments of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities facing rural communities throughout the state. The comments also reflect considerable depth and relate to decisions made by individual households, businesses, elected public officials, third-party not for profit organizations, and program agencies at both the local, state and federal levels.

There is probably no single way to decipher the listening session feedback in terms of its implications for educational programs. We recognize Cornell’s educational partners but choose to comment on one central dimension: the linkages we see with the CALS applied research agenda on the environment, land use, and natural resources. That research agenda is being pursued in several academic units in CALS, drawing on numerous funding sources and some engagement with faculty in other Cornell units. Graduate education is often an integral part of the applied research effort. A significant number of students presently see environment, land use, and natural resources as core issues and ones central to their own professional development.

Our assessment of the feedback from these listening sessions strives to link that dialogue to five key applied research themes that, in our opinion, merit regular attention in the CALS applied research community. Most of these topics are long-lived and reflect issues, research agendas, and policy concerns that have been familiar for decades and in some cases trace to back to the late 19th century when environmental/natural resource concerns emerged as a public issue in the United States.

These key applied research themes are:

1. **Housing markets and residential preferences.** Workshop participants from a number of regions highlighted residential growth and development pressures, noting in particular that they often lead to conflicts over land use, environmental and water quality concerns, and to values conflicts between newer and older residents. The call of many for more comprehensive intermunicipal and regional planning was explicit, and the need for more emphasis on collaborative problem solving and planning approaches and related research into their efficacy was implicit.

Patterns of residential settlement in New York State wield enormous influence over land use and environment. There is growing recognition that more compact mixed use development patterns can help preserve farmland and open space, reduce effects on the environment, improve housing affordability, lower costs of private and public transportation, and distribute the costs of other public infrastructure more efficiently. However, this kind of compact growth is not the norm. Research has long documented the persistent desire of a significant minority of urban and suburban dwellers to move to lower density small town and rural settings. Though only intermittently actualized due to economic and other realities, there have been significant periods of rural population growth nationwide during the 1970’s and again through the 1990’s (since moderated but continued into the new century). Americans as a whole have also increasingly segregated themselves by race and class in their residential settlement patterns. In upstate New York, with a number of
counties experiencing slow or negative population growth, a version of these trends has been manifested as many village and city centers have continued to lose population to outlying towns.

We want to know more about the factors that condition and influence residential choice and housing prices, while capitalizing on new developments in analytic capacity to undertake spatial analysis. This work needs to take into account the rural markets that are within the sphere of influence of urban centers, the ways these markets are segmented based on housing type, and the relationships between rural and urban residential markets. The implications for a tradition of strong home rule and weak regional planning need to be more fully developed and articulated. We also need a more comprehensive understanding of the distinctive development patterns that occur in rural areas, the key components of demand for residences in rural areas, the specific combinations of housing and neighborhood characteristics that are in demand, and how bundles of different neighborhood and housing characteristics may or may not serve as substitutes for each other. The relationship between the potential or latent demand for more sustainable development patterns and the current supply of housing needs to be better understood.

While there is a good research foundation to help begin to quantify the empirical importance of proximity to open space, housing density, quality and quantity of public services, zoning restrictions, house and lot size, and so on, the results for a number of the neighborhood variables such as open space, zoning, and density tend to be case and context specific. More focus on New York’s rural land markets facing differing degrees of development pressure and different mixes of housing resources and existing housing stock is warranted. The phenomenon of gentrification, mostly observed in urban areas, needs more attention in rural areas experiencing growth.

2. Changing demographics and lifestyle choices. Numerous demographic factors underpin and in fact drive decisions made on environment and natural resources. Land management goals, and knowledge of land management options, as well as residential choices, vary by demographic status. Demographic trends in rural as well as urban areas suggest that the future population of New York will be older and more ethnically diverse. These trends are already in evidence in rural as well as urban New York. These elements of demographic change were not necessarily a focal point of many participants in the land use sessions. Nevertheless, more needs to be learned about the land use, housing, and environmental implications of a more diverse, aging rural population. This is especially important in a state like New York that features, as was noted by a number of workshop participants, pronounced rates of out-migration among younger age cohorts.

3. Agricultural economic development. Farm and food production is woven into the fabric of rural communities throughout New York State. Over the last 15 years, there clearly is a growing concern over the ultimate economic fate of that industry in the densely populated Northeastern US and the viability of various alternative survival strategies. In general, the number of medium sized farms has been declining, but this is offset in recent years by an increased number of both small and large farm enterprises. Farm and forest owners have also been adapting to the increasingly important rural economic bases of recreation and tourism which are strongly influenced by local land use patterns and options. Moreover, the vast majority of farm families are dependent for financial survival on off farm income sources, underscoring the connection to the local economy in ways which are rarely at the center of attention. More needs to be done to fully understand the long term viability of farm families, with continued attention given to the fundamentals of small-business management, nurturing business startups, and advising individual entrepreneurs on steps they can take to grow and diversify farm and food enterprises. In addition, research and public education on
the relationship between the range of contemporary farm and forest management practices to public amenities and disamenities (open space, recreational opportunities, wildlife populations, water quality, etc.) should intensify.

4. Energy alternatives. Awareness of this new economic opportunity for rural areas was high among participants. Concern over cost and availability of fossil fuels in this decade is quite literally "fueling" a return to energy research topics that gripped the Academy in the 1970s. Rural wind energy installations on farmland are already increasing in upstate New York, and interest in fuel crops is strong. The economic implications for more forest and farmland owners and for the character of some rural communities are potentially significant. More work needs to be done to explore the environmental and natural resource consequences of acquiring more energy from alternative sources, including the potential opportunity costs as well as benefits. The key ingredient is a more orderly assessment of the economic tipping points, where bioenergy sources can be substituted for fossil fuels. This work is hindered by unstable expectations about future price regimes.

5. Ownership and control of natural resources. Interest in patterns of land ownership plays into some of the oldest academic pursuits at Cornell. Monitoring ownership trends and ferreting out their implications for environment and natural resources is a central responsibility of the applied research community. Major developments in recent decades include aggressive interventions by third-party land trusts and conservancies. This makes land use and environmental policy in New York's rural communities a three-way discussion between individual landowners, governments, and third parties. Effort in this area is plagued by significant and growing problems with basic intelligence on land ownership patterns; this is a crucial element in the applied research community, which is now preoccupied with spatial analysis. Despite significant improvements in select electronic and geographically referenced record keeping, substantive data layers on ownership are not available; instead, poor surrogates are employed (e.g., property tax records) or instrumental ownership issues are ignored/glossed over analytically.
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Sustainable Management of Natural Resources: Critical Element for a Healthy, Rural New York

New York has a wealth of natural resources that provide a critical underpinning to its communities, their economic vitality, and to the health of its citizens. Natural resources, for the full suite of values they represent, are essentially at the core of what makes "rural" special. These natural resources cannot be taken for granted now or in the future. Rural environments are not just sparsely populated places to live in. Rural areas are where people have a special dependency upon the land and important stewardship relationships with their environment that benefit all New Yorkers. Sustainable natural resource management and environmental protection are important elements to a successful plan for rural New York over the coming decades. In addition, how rural New York performs as stewards of these natural resources will have great bearing on the quality of life of all New Yorkers who depend on them for water, food, fiber, and recreation, now and far into the future. There is a compelling need for research and education to serve informed decision-making for effective and proactive natural resource policy and management.

New York's natural resources are varied. With a landscape that is more than 2/3 forested, it is not surprising that forests directly contribute to rural economies, particularly through their value for timber, water quality, wildlife habitat, and tourism. More recently, landowners are gaining awareness of the added high value of forest-related products such as maple syrup, ginseng, nuts, and mushrooms. Less obviously, we also benefit from healthy forests because the shading provided by forest canopies contributes to cooling and rainfall. Forests help prevent erosion on hillsides and improve water quality in streams. These benefits can be lost without careful management. Forest trees are threatened by waves of invasive beetles, fungi, and other pests. Exploitive and other improper logging practices degrade forest health. Widespread, uncontrolled development threatens these valuable ecological services of forests and exacerbates the decline in quality of the rural landscape in New York. Public-supported research and education, aimed at informing state and local policy development and individual landowners' management practices are essential ingredients for sound forest management statewide.

New York also has an abundance and diversity of freshwater and marine resources. New York's borders embrace 3,400 km of coastline, 8,500 lakes including the Finger Lakes, Lake Ontario and Lake Champlain, and more than 80,000 kilometers of rivers and streams within watersheds that drain north into the Great Lakes, east to the Atlantic and to Long Island Sound, south to the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, and even west through the headwaters of the Ohio River into the Mississippi River drainage. New York’s wealth of water resources is one of its greatest natural and commercial assets. These resources are the basis for both rural and urban populations to flourish, providing many ecological, commercial, and aesthetic benefits that New Yorkers have taken for granted, but that could become imperiled without strategic management. Freshwater and marine resources make possible swimming, boating, recreational fishing, and water-based tourism; they are home to fish and shellfish populations that fuel a tremendous commercial industry; and they are important conduits for international commerce. These water resources are already being managed to protect water quality from point and non-point sources of pollution. However, as high-quality freshwater becomes increasingly scarce in some areas of the United States, we can expect policy
makers to turn their attention toward the water wealth of New York. This should be anticipated and policy alternatives explored and analyzed.

New York's lands and water are home to a multitude of mammals, waterfowls, fish, and other wildlife that can have impacts on virtually everyone's life, in ways both beneficial and harmful. Insects are critical for pollination of our crops and flowers, but mosquitoes carry harmful diseases and beetles and other insects wreak havoc with our crops and forests. Likewise, birds and bats help control insect populations but can be disease vectors themselves. Deer, bears, and other wildlife are components of healthy ecosystems, and many species of birds and mammals are highly sought after for recreational purposes. But populations of some species can have significant undesirable impacts warranting management intervention. For example, deer decimate young tree seedlings and impact forest regeneration. Bear and coyotes can pose safety risks. Canada geese and beavers can be costly nuisances and also public health risks. These risks and detrimental effects need to be minimized, but simultaneously, we recognize the importance of protecting unique wildlife species for their ecological and economic benefits. Achieving relief from negative impacts while yielding benefits from these diverse wildlife species is a research, education, and management challenge of huge proportions, involving both ecological and human sociological dimensions.

All of these "local" and regional natural resources will play important roles while local communities deal with the significant changes that are occurring globally, and being felt at the state and local levels. Human populations continue to grow at an alarming rate, putting pressure on already limited resources on a global scale. Most human settlement is concentrating near the megacities along coastlines, such as New York City. Some of the most intense development pressure will occur in the Lower Hudson River Valley, which is the region of New York with the greatest biodiversity. This concentration of people results in a tremendous drain on water and food resources from the surrounding landscape and through waste outflows back into it. Additionally, there is an increasing proportion of the U.S. population being represented by senior citizens, some of whom are moving to rural environments upon retirement. Farmland is also changing as aging farmers consider non-agricultural uses of their lands for income, and young people choose less labor-intensive professions. Economics are changing in response to globalization of markets, information, and transportation. Along with the continuous flow of information worldwide, there is also a rapid transfer of invasive pests and diseases that affect our ecosystems and human populations. These invasive organisms will have long term but unpredictable impacts on the state's aquatic and terrestrial resources. Global climate change is increasing the frequency and magnitudes of both floods and droughts, with the uncertainty of water availability affecting agriculture and all aspects of society.

Within this array of changes, we will need to protect and manage use of our natural resources in a sustainable manner while utilizing the environment to help support our local communities. Sustainable environmental management needs to be identified as an explicit goal in rural policy, comparable to the priority assigned to community economic vitality. It has direct relevance to all levels of society, from individuals who seek economic returns, to communities that seek environmental quality (water, aesthetics, way-of-life attributes, etc.) as well as positive contributions to local economy (tourism, NR based industry and commerce, etc.), and to regions where the system of inputs (water, timber aesthetics, etc.) and feedback (solid waste, waste water, etc.) inextricably connects the rural and urban environments.

There is a strong need for a coherent rather than a fragmented approach to policy. The most successful management approaches have been shown to involve a diversity of complementary
strategies, including federal, state, and local regulations, outreach and education, and economic incentives and disincentives. It also involves the active engagement of many stakeholders. Effectively utilizing, managing, and conserving New York's natural resources will require research, education, and action at three different spatial scales. Individual landowners, farmers, and citizens need a better understanding of how to manage their woodlots, protect streambanks, and deal with problem wildlife and invasive plants while enjoying other species. Communities, whether they be urban, suburban, or rural, need to increase their capacity to work together and with natural resource agencies to manage wildlife, forests, wetlands, and other resources whose impacts, both positive and negative, affect them. This involves both an increased understanding of natural resources and of group planning, social learning, and decision making processes. Finally state and federal natural resource agencies need stakeholder input to assist them in managing New York's fisheries, wildlife, and forests on a system-wide basis for the benefit of all New York residents.

A great example of success was demonstrated in the late 1970's with the movement to eliminate roadside littering. This national effort included every type of strategy, including billboard and television advertisement, K-12 education, adopt-a-highway programs for volunteer clean-ups, enactment of laws and fines against littering, and the beverage container five cent return program (e.g. "the bottle bill"). However, this example also demonstrates the importance of persistent and long-term programs that continue the educational outreach to our youth and to new, uninformed stakeholders, because roadside litter is gradually reappearing. Without vigilance and continuity of attention, the importance of all natural resource protection and management can be neglected. Cumulative effects of global change, land use and demographic pressures across the landscape, and ecological perturbations can unexpectedly and rapidly cascade into an insurmountable scenario that will destroy the natural resources, and their associated benefits, throughout rural New York. Through careful and thoughtful planning now, our natural resources can be managed in a sustainable manner that benefits New York residents for decades to come.
Environment, Community and Decision Making

Main Issues and Challenges

The Rural Vision Project collected valuable data from a variety of stakeholder groups across New York State. The breadth of environmental concerns raised in these sessions demonstrates the complexity of natural resource policy and management issues that face the public as well as those in the regulatory realm. Creating sustainable communities and preserving the rural character of New York were overriding themes. Generally, participants focused on protecting the natural environment, agricultural land and local control over resource use. Many respondents addressed the issue of rural/urban conflict, as seen in statements such as:

“Increasingly people on town boards have little connection to agriculture.”

“In recent years, it has become prevalent for newcomers, unfamiliar with rural setting, to become engaged in local government and decision making, which could have devastating irreparable effect on the local environment.”

Although these statements, especially the latter one, are somewhat disturbing, they represent very real views that must be addressed by policy makers, involved citizens, and regulatory personnel. Our issues in New York are not necessarily new or unique among states. However, the challenges of working within our “home rule” structure necessitate especially creative approaches that must be holistic, as noted in many session responses, and must emphasize civic involvement in resource management. A review of the data demonstrates that New Yorkers are well-aware of these challenges but optimistic that solutions exist.

Public Involvement and Environmental Decision-Making: A Brief Review

Because public involvement was a central theme in the data collected for the Rural Vision Project, this section will address that issue, especially in the area of water resource management. Public engagement in environmental policy has evolved considerably over the years often becoming more narrowly focused on specific citizens or other stakeholders. The basic challenge has been to provide effective channels for nonagency inputs and agency response to those inputs in the formation and implementation of environmental policies. It is widely acknowledged that lack of meaningful inputs in the planning process from a variety of publics may lead to barriers to successful environmental management including public opposition (Walesh, 1999). In recent years there has been a significant emphasis on citizen and stakeholder engagement at the local level where there can be an ongoing process of community involvement and collective learning (NRC 1999; John 1994).

Water resource management has undergone a paradigm shift in the last decade. Previously, when control of point source pollution (deriving from a single point, such as a pipe) was the primary goal of the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and other regulatory agencies, involving the public in management of natural resources was a secondary objective. Rather, the command and control model was commonly utilized (USEPA 2002; Kraft 1999; John and Mlay, 1999; Murdock and Sexton 1999). With the success of point source pollution control measures, attention turned to the
impact of nonpoint sources of pollution (deriving from diffuse sources, such as septic systems), which required the focus to be on the relationships between individuals and environmental contaminants that result from human behavior (USEPA 2002). This shift toward “place-based” rather than “media or issue-based problems” demanded that citizens and other stakeholders be incorporated into environmental management if it were to be effective in addressing problems associated with nonpoint source pollution (USEPA 2002). The current view is that success in environmental management comes from a number of varied “publics” rather than inclusion of merely a number of different individuals or special interests (Walesh 1999; Smith et al., 1997; Sanoff 2000). As well, there is a move toward management on the watershed scale, as opposed to a municipality or county basis. This creates jurisdictional challenges that, therefore, necessitate collaboration and cooperation.

Dryzek (1997) contrasts two abstract models of the social organization of environmental planning: administrative rationalism and democratic pragmatism. The former is based in professional resource management bureaucracies, is expert driven, and has an emphasis on regulation and the rationalization of environmental planning. On the other hand, democratic pragmatism involves elements of public consultation, alternative dispute resolution, policy dialogue, public engagement and an emphasis on local decision making and local control. Dryzek understands, however, that there are limits to democratic pragmatism because of power differentials among stakeholders with competing interests. Also, there is typically weaker institutional support of public interests than private ones, and the administrative rationalism of the past continues to pervade democratic pragmatism that is currently taking shape.

Many authors see this movement toward including broad-based input in environmental management decisions as a positive occurrence for both ecosystem and human well-being (Williams 2002; Ravindra 2001; Zazueta 1995). However, there is little understanding concerning the best way to involve the community in decision making (Finnegan and Sexton 1999). Kraft (1999) echoes this conclusion and sees public opinion as having a significant impact on environmental policy for the past three decades with an inherent problem that public opinion does not necessarily coincide with scientific evidence. John and Mlay (1999:361) suggest a dual system encompassing a strong centralized regulatory infrastructure combined with focus on “top-down support for bottom-up initiatives.”

Recently, the USEPA issued their Public Involvement Policy (USEPA 2003d) outlining broad goals for citizen and other stakeholder participation in environmental decision making and management as well as specific guidance for its implementation. The USEPA includes as part of the discussion a commitment to an open process that it sees resulting in increased agency credibility. The agency outlines minimum requirements for public participation and encourages efforts to go beyond those requirements defining involvement as a consideration of “public concerns, values, and preferences when making decisions” (USEPA 2003d). There is a long list of goals within the policy, many of which focus on soliciting information from specific stakeholders and the public more generally in order to better inform decisions and to glean possible consequences of whatever technical issue the USEPA addresses.

Success Stories

In light of this emphasis on public involvement in environmental management on a watershed scale, some of New York’s most relevant success stories have emerged from the Finger Lakes Region.
Interestingly, the Rural Vision Process respondents highlighted a lack of regional planning as a concern yet watershed based management provides that regional perspective.

In the 1990s, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) determined that each of the eleven Finger Lakes should have a management plan in place. There was some state funding provided as well as regional expertise; however, the process was locally derived and managed. These management plans (also called restoration and protection plans) were developed on a watershed basis, rather than at the individual county level. Therefore, as mentioned above, collaboration among many stakeholder groups, municipalities and regulatory agencies was essential. As a functional unit, each watershed management group was able to make decisions on the approach to take, and many initiated the process by naming a watershed steward or watershed manager to be the point person for the effort. This seemed to help in coordination across stakeholder groups. Overwhelmingly, there was commitment to public involvement and to hearing diverse voices in terms of concerns and desires, much like the Rural Vision Process.

Importantly, once the management plan was in place for a particular watershed, the state committed funding for several years to implement these plans. This was crucial to the success of the effort because a plan that stands alone without implementation is essentially worthless. Also, a strong collaboration with the Cornell Cooperative Extension system guaranteed that education and outreach went along with the plan implementation. A knowledgeable, engaged citizenry is a key part of successful resource management.

**Shortcomings of Past and Current Research**

Although there is an emerging recognition in environmental research that the human or social side needs to be addressed, in the past, scientific studies focused on the biological or physical domains. Human impacts might have been considered but broadly-based civic involvement in environmental management was not given significant notice. Yet, without that, success in environmental management is so much more elusive. Certainly at the state level, through NYS DEC, there is recognition that the public voice needs to be heard and incorporated into the regulatory realm. This is a positive step.

In terms of water resource management, the challenges related to controlling nonpoint source pollution remain. Because of the diffuse nature of these contaminants, large-scale, i.e., watershed-based, approaches are required. As mentioned previously, the jurisdictional issues related to watershed management require a certain element of cooperation that may not exist throughout the state. Although there are many documents outlining approaches to effective watershed management, research results that demonstrate how these approaches actually reduce water pollution are not widespread. There is an underlying assumption that they do work, but verification is lacking.

A third area of research that would benefit from increased attention is in the area of conflict resolution at the rural/urban fringe. Many participants in the Rural Vision Project commented on the issues related to urban dwellers moving to rural areas or housing developments encroaching on agricultural land. Again, with a strong watershed group in place, many of these housing and zoning issues can be addressed on a scale that helps preserve water resources and the rural character that makes upstate New York so unique.
Emerging Issues

The listening sessions highlighted certain areas of environmental research that are of concern to New York residents. Rather than distinguishing new areas that need attention, the data point to issues that could benefit from renewed interest on the part of researchers and extension/outreach personnel. Many of these are discussed in this paper, and certainly the overarching theme of civic involvement in the management of our natural resources is a priority. Linking scientific research and findings to the public policy arena is a broad area of general concern and relates well to items raised in the listening sessions. Conflicts at the rural/urban fringe are also under that umbrella. How agricultural enterprises can be sustained while preserving environmental quality is important since many professional planners and managers see agriculture as a preferred use of the land.

What was not addressed by participants in the listening sessions were the issues surrounding stormwater management and regulations promulgated by the USEPA. These will have fairly significant impacts on residential development, environmental management, and potentially, agriculture, although currently agriculture is exempt from the regulations. This is certainly an area in which many Cooperative Extension Associations are now and will continue to be involved.

References


Environment, Land Use & Natural Resources - “Success Stories”

• The Town of Rhinebeck in rural Dutchess County has prepared a draft comprehensive plan, which calls for the creation of traditional neighborhood designs. The Town's plan requires that developers earmark 10 percent of such traditional neighborhoods designs for affordable housing. The goal is to provide a sufficient amount of housing units for the people who work in the town, but can't afford to live there. The Town is also encouraging the construction of more multiple-family homes and accessory apartment units to address the lack of affordable housing. The plan still needs to be submitted to the town board, and then a public hearing will be held before it is accepted or rejected by the town board.

• The City of Johnstown (Fulton County) has an interesting twist to the success of their Main Street. 70% of the businesses are owned and operated by women. Main Street has charming cafes and six antique shops. The city is also home to the oldest Court House in New York state. For more information, including accommodations and dining guides contact the Fulton County Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry at 1-800-676-3858 or E-mail: info@fultoncountyny.org.

• Towns across New York State have been revisiting their comprehensive plans to ensure the guidelines therein aim to maintain rural character. Most recently, the Town of Wilton in Saratoga County set out to revise its 1994 master plan to commit to planning town growth in a way which preserves the remaining rural character, protects environmental quality, and balances land use. Public hearings will be held this fall, and town officials hope to have the new master plan adopted by the end of the year.

• The City of Norwich (Chenango County) has been working hard to bring back the charm of their downtown. Norwich is home of the famous Norwich-Eaton Pharmaceutical Company (known for its many household remedies). New sidewalks and street lamps now line Main Street accentuating their historic buildings, museums, restaurants and shopping. Neighborhoods date back to the early 1800s. Also to see, the Northeast Classic Car Museum and the Bullthistle Model Railroad Society. Two other reasons to go Colorscape Chenango, a regional arts festival on September 11 and 12; and the Norwich Pumpkin Festival in October 29 and 30. Visit www.chenagony.org or call (877) CHENANGO for more information. Pick up a walking tour map at the Eaton Center on Eaton Avenue C home to the Chenango County Chamber of Commerce and start exploring.

• The Guilderland Town Board is set to approve a new local law, which officials say could be the first of its kind that would give the village a limited veto on everything from building projects to zoning variances in the area surrounding it. While a newly created village committee would not be able to block a project on its own, the town's zoning and planning boards would need a supermajority vote to override the village's objections. The law would give the village committee a say over projects that fall within 1,200 feet of Altamont's boundaries or the furthest reaches of its current or future water system. The town law gives the village committee 30 days from the time it is notified about the project to vote on it. The law is modeled after one that refers projects in all municipalities that are within 500 feet of a state or county road to the county's planning board. The Rural Resources Commission introduced a bill, sponsored by chair and vice-chair respectively, Senator George H. Winner, Jr. (R-C Elmira) and Assemblyman David Koon (D-I Perinton), which passed both houses and awaits the Governor's signature into law, that encourages municipalities to give notice to their neighbors when they are undertaking certain planning and zoning actions, which
may impact on those neighboring municipalities. For a copy of the bill (S.3154A/A.6219B) call the Commission at 518.455.2544.

- Feeling the brunt of ever-increasing local property and school taxes members of The New York State Forest Owners Association, Empire State Forest Products Association and Catskill Forest Owners Association have joined forces to promote forest property tax reform. Local governments and school districts are unhappy with the current system as well. What is behind such dissatisfaction? Seventy percent of the 18 million acres of forested land in New York state is privately owned. Forested land consisting of 50 acres or more that is commercially viable allows landowners to receive an 80 percent reduction in forest property taxes in exchange for making a commitment to maintain commercial forest uses of the property for a rolling 10-year period. Enrollment in the program has never been high because the strings attached to the legislation and regulations governing the tax abatement program (known as 480-a) are unattractive to forest landowners and a burden for local governments and school districts. A recent study of the Catskills by Professor Hugh O. Canham of the Syracuse School of Environmental Science and Forestry deemed property taxes on forest land in the region “confiscatory”, meaning that property taxes exceeded the potential income from the sale of forest products, thus making long term forest ownership a bad business investment, compared to selling or using the land for non-forest purposes. An important step was taken by the Governor and state legislature to address the fiscal impact of the tax abatements on local governments and schools in recent state budgets, but advocates and program administrators say a basic overhaul of the forest preservation program is the next step.

- CleanSweep is a program aimed at the environmentally safe removal of unwanted agricultural or commercial pesticides, most forms of empty pesticide packaging, and elemental mercury from dairy manometers. The program is directed by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), in cooperation with Agriculture & Markets, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Cornell Cooperative Extension. CleanSweep NY began in 2002 and has successfully swept through Long Island, the Hudson Valley, New York City, and Central New York C collecting a total of 309,000 pounds of obsolete and unwanted pesticides from previous programs. Funded by negotiated penalty settlements that channel one-time enforcement money into an "Environmental Benefits Program," the Cleansweep NY Program assesses no charge and no limits on the quantity of obsolete pesticides or mercury that can be returned by farmers, former farm owners, and commercial applicators involved in production agriculture. Commercial pesticides are also accepted free of charge from governmental and non-agricultural commercial applicators provided that no more than 100 pounds are returned. For each pound above 100 lbs. a fee will be assessed. The Fall 2005 CleanSweep Program will target Western New York C the counties of Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Wayne and Yates C during the week of November 6. Residents outside of these counties may also participate, but the collection sites and outreach are limited to these six counties. The CleanSweep NY program will continue to move westward until either the funds are expended or the program begins again in the East and starts another cycle. CleanSweep NY does not allow routine homeowner participation. However, retail establishments selling either agricultural, commercial, OR home/garden pesticide products may also participate with the same 100 lbs. payment threshold in effect. There is no limit to the quantity of metal or plastic pesticide containers, nor any restriction on the source of the plastic containers, other than the crop protection and other pesticide restrictions imposed by the industry supported Agricultural Container Recycling Council as listed at http://www.acrcycle.org/ or instructions available from contacting 1-877-952-2272. All participation in the CleanSweep NY Program for 2005 is through advance enrollment only. Details, as they become available, and locations of collection sites will be posted at http://www.cleansweepny.org/.
Additional information and enrollment forms can be obtained by contacting your local DEC Pesticides Office, Cornell Cooperative Extension agent, Soil and Water Conservation District or from the CleanSweep NY information line at 1-877-SWEEPNY or 1-877-793-3769 or by sending a request, including your name and address, via email to info@cleansweepny.org.

- The Black River Blueway Trail Project was awarded a $27,000 Environmental Protection Fund grant. The Town of Martinsburg in Lewis County submitted the application on behalf of all 36 municipalities along the 144-mile river. A “Blueway Trail” is a boat and/or paddling route along a waterway that combines recreation and environmental awareness while linking communities and land-based attractions such as recreational trails, historic sites, and parks.

- The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) is working to expand and develop open space waterfront and wetland areas, located along a segment of the Black River, into recreational parks in the villages of Carthage and West Carthage as part of their downtown revitalization initiative. The plan includes a pedestrian trail system linking downtown areas to existing trails. RACOG has led the way in developing community and regional partnerships that incorporate shared interests and resources. The Town of Champion is serving as the lead agent to design waterfront plans in West Carthage, Great Bend, Felts Mills, and the village of Black River. Also, the village of West Carthage received $25,000 from Senator James W. Wright to purchase key waterfront property. Carthage Area Hospital and Carthage Central High School have also joined RACOG in their effort to promote a more walkable community.
HOUSING & TRANSPORTATION

Housing & Transportation - Listening Sessions Synopsis

While the Housing and Transportation theme did not generate as many comments as some of the other, more comprehensive theme areas, the development of this infrastructure plays an underlying role in the overall health of our rural communities. A more accurate picture of the true importance of housing and transportation can thus be gleaned from also looking at comments in the poverty, rural economic development, and environment and land use theme areas.

Participants identified relatively little strength in the current systems of housing and transportation. In general, the strengths that were identified concentrated on the fact that housing in rural areas is often more affordable than housing in more urban communities. In addition, land for building remains relatively inexpensive.

Participants pointed out that the overall lower cost of housing in rural areas may serve as a double-edged sword in that housing is accessible in these rural areas whereas jobs are not. A disconnect was noted between where people must live for reasons of affordability and where people must work because of job availability. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the limited public transportation that does service rural communities does not meet employment needs (e.g., timely and convenient commutes to work). Consequently, issues of housing and transportation are related and must be dealt with in a coordinated fashion.

With this in mind, transportation planning and land use planning need to be integrated. Zoning plays a key role in this, and must reflect an appropriate balance between growth and preservation, between concentrated development and open space. As a potential policy solution, participants proposed high-density, mixed-use zoning, with corresponding changes in development regulations to promote more pedestrian friendly, concentrated “smart growth.”

Ultimately, access and affordability remain major concerns for both housing and transportation. A lack of quality affordable housing was consistently identified as problematic. Along these lines, concern about rising property and land values—in some cases as the result of second-home buyers—reflects a significant current trend.

Participants emphasized the need for increased diversity in affordable housing and transportation options to meet the needs of diverse populations: senior citizens, farm workers, seasonal employees, and single working parents, etc. With the recognition that traditional public transportation may not be economically feasible in low density areas, participants suggested the need to focus on more viable alternatives. Suggestions included incentives for car sharing, development of wheels to work programs, purchase of taxis and small buses, revival of rural railroads, and establishment of biweekly bus runs to rural communities.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:

- Connections between housing and transportation demands
- Alternatives to traditional public transportation
- Exploration of new models (European models, New Urbanism principles)
• Opportunities for public/private partnerships
• Changes in new housing development regulations

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:

• Aging and deteriorating housing stock
• NIMBY-ism
• Increasing property and land values
• Gentrification, rural/urban conflict
• Cost of services
Housing & Transportation - “Success Stories”

• The Healthy Community Alliance (HCA), a rural health network in Western New York, is the proud recipient of a $2.2 million grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to construct senior apartments in a former elementary school in Gowanda (Cattaraugus County). This award represents 50 percent of the total $4 million dollar project to transform the vacant building into a valuable community asset, which will create affordable senior housing and new jobs. This is truly a win-win-win situation for all. Reuse of an abandoned property, affordable senior housing, and new jobs. Wow — congratulations!

• In an effort to encourage people to improve their neighborhoods, the Mayor of the City of Buffalo, has created a new tax incentive for property owners who make major home improvements (between $5,000 and $80,000). The owners of one- and two-family homes who launch home improvement projects would receive a 100 percent property tax exemption equivalent to the value of the improvements the first year; and then a decrease of 12.5 percent annually until the incentive disappears in the ninth year. Property owners can obtain applications for exemption at City Hall.

• Affordable Housing Unlimited of Buffalo is developing low income housing in North Creek (Warren County) in cooperation with ComLinks of Malone. The housing is planned for people who work at local hotels, restaurants, and attractions around Gore Mountain. Rent will be based on income, which can range from $16,000 to $27,000 a year. In addition, One Economy, a newly formed nonprofit organization, in cooperation with the National Equity Fund will provide computers, broadband Internet access, and technology training to the tenants.

• Area residents in rural Springville in Erie County now have access to a new van for medical and human services appointments. A joint venture between the Healthy Community Alliance Rural Health Network, LOVE InC, Emerling Ford/Mercury, and the Charles D. Cook Office of Rural Health is to thank for the purchase of the van. The partnership between LOVE InC and the Alliance began in the late 1990s in an effort to address the lack of transportation in rural communities. In addition to Springville’s van, the Alliance operates the Ford Friendship Express van in the Gowanda (Cattaraugus County) area in partnership with the Gowanda Chapter of LOVE InC. To learn more about this service, call LOVE InC at 716.592.3761.

• Several years ago we featured a story on a nonprofit agency in Schenectady County called Umbrella of the Capital District. The group helps senior citizens and persons with disabilities keep their homes and their independence. The agency hires retired contractors, housekeepers and landscapers to complete home-maintenance chores for members. Members pay an annual fee (of $125 to $275) depending on income and the size of the house and receive 24-hour emergency services, a yearly home inspection and gutter cleaning. For additional chores, members pay an hourly rate of $10.00 directly to the handyman. (Licensed plumbers and electricians are also available at a rate of $50.00 per hour.) Launched ten years ago, the company started with 10 handymen doing work for three clients C today, Umbrella has over a hundred workers helping over 500 households. Demand for the organization continues to grow. Call Umbrella at (518) 346-5249 or visit their web site at www.theumbrella.org.

• Seventy townhouses are proposed to house moderate income residents of the city of Hudson, who are being pushed out of the city and county by escalating housing costs. The Crosswinds Projects will offer rental housing to ensure that the local workforce, including municipal and hospital
employees, volunteer firefighters, and manufacturing employees, has the option to live in the City where they work. Local businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified employees due to the lack of affordable housing. This is a step in the right direction; next, moderate income residents deserve a shot at affordable homeownership.

- Broome County is replacing nearly half of its diesel bus fleet with hybrid buses in an effort to provide more energy-efficient public transportation. Replacing the aging diesel buses with hybrids will save the county about 25 percent in fuel costs — reducing the need to raise fares and cut routes. Not to mention, hybrid exhausts emit less pollutants into the air. The hybrid buses are being developed by BAE Systems Platform Solutions. Broome County’s effort will help to decrease the state and nation’s dependence on foreign oil while expanding the market for new, renewable energy sources.

- The Dutchess County Workforce Housing Coalition (WHC) is focusing on three tasks to address the lack of moderately-priced housing for the County’s workforce: 1) advocacy; 2) employer-assisted housing programs; and 3) development. The advocacy program increases awareness of the need for moderately-priced housing, the short and long term impacts of a lack of such housing in the community, and the variety of housing solutions available to communities. The Employer-Assisted Housing Program will include education and a downpayment/closing cost assistance program. The WHC will also work with municipalities to develop workforce housing, both rental and homeownership. For more information, call (845) 463-5405.

- The Village and Town of Red Hook, the County, the State, and the private sector have formed a partnership to convert a 20-acre brownfield in the Village of Red Hook into 100 units of affordable senior housing in Northern Dutchess County. The Perx initiative will return the abandoned property to the local tax rolls. The new construction includes pedestrian connections to surrounding neighborhoods and businesses. This project is a win-win for all.
LOCAL & REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Local & Regional Governance - Listening Sessions Synopsis

Comments during the listening sessions suggested that the area of Local and Regional Governance represents complex opportunities and challenges for the future of rural New York, associated mainly with issues of Community Capacity & Social Networks and Rural Economic Development.

Local officials, and local governments in general, are perceived as accessible and responsive to public needs. In contrast to the unresponsiveness of state agencies, these traditionally small governments are better able to listen and react directly to constituent input. In related fashion, the local nature of rural governance allows strong opportunities for public participation and community ownership.

Many of the characteristics identified as strengths, however, also represent potential weaknesses that challenge the overall effectiveness of rural governance. Although the small scale may increase efficiency through its responsiveness to local needs, it may also act to reduce efficiency because of the duplication of services and the lack of clarity and delegation of responsibility. Currently, local government is perceived as fragmented, uncoordinated, and burdened by multiple “confusing layers.”

Limited financial resources combine with unfunded state mandates and regulations to overwhelm the capacity of local governments. In response to this, participants suggested that efficiency and effectiveness may be increased through the development of regional collaboration and inter-municipal resource sharing. With this in mind, there is a need for a single point of entry, i.e., “one stop shopping,” for access to services. General sentiment reflected the idea that consolidation of municipal services successfully improves efficiency. At the same time, participants emphasize the importance of maintaining awareness of, and responsiveness to, local issues and needs.

Along these lines, comments specifically indicated a need for governance policy that recognizes the regional interconnections between economic development, zoning and land use, and highway, water, and sewer infrastructure. Because these are largely regional development issues, the achievement of long-term success will require consistent, joint comprehensive planning.

Participants suggested that limited competition for public office presents another challenge to the sustainability of rural governance and the overall health of rural communities. In general, the lack of incentives to participate in local government results in the election of public officials that are part-time with a high turnover rate. Participants express concern that this lack of highly qualified rural officials is compounded by the lack of adequate training and educational opportunities. Therefore, rural areas face a strong need to “professionalize” their governance through means such as use of technology, development of supportive infrastructure, and improved options and incentives for more focused training.

Education emerges as key to the development of stronger systems of local and regional governance. In addition to education for local officials, all citizens need to know how local government works and be aware of opportunities for participation. This education will encourage greater local leadership and involvement, which, in turn, may refresh the rather stagnant system of rural
governance. In addition, state officials must be made aware that a “one size fits all” model of regulation does not work for meeting the special needs of rural areas.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:
- Sharing of models, best practices, mentoring, and case studies across regions
- Education on multiple levels--local officials, citizens, youth, and state policy makers
- Inter-municipal cooperation and consolidation of municipal services (e.g., highway departments, police forces, water and sewer services)
- Development of joint and regional comprehensive plans and regional infrastructure
- “Professionalization” of local governance positions through appropriate training
- Citizen participation and leadership development
- Strong linkages with Economic Development

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:
- Burdensome tax structure
- Current overlap and duplication of services
- Overwhelming state mandates/regulations remain unfunded for rural areas
- Resistance to change
- Lack of regional cohesion and planning for zoning, economic development
- Tension between consolidation and local knowledge/needs
- Lack of infrastructure (e.g., high speed internet, cell phone coverage) hinders effective communication on a regional and statewide level
New York’s Local Government Prospects and Challenges

New York has a rich history of pausing to examine the state of affairs, looking for emerging needs and problems as well as questions that require additional research and study. The rural vision project has renewed this tradition. The effort has helped to highlight themes of concern to Rural New Yorkers about the local government system. Changes in this system are approached with caution and respect for the wisdom of existing practices. But it is also true that the need for change in local and regional government is ongoing and persistent. It always has been.

The need for changes in local government, regional structure and service provision is linked to forces that continue to change. Local government’s appropriate scale and organization is influenced by changes in our economy, technology, demographics and other factors that help determine public service need, effective size and cost efficiency. The forces that drive the need for change in local government will continue. New York needs a flexible framework and approach to facilitate and encourage important adjustments. We are not facing a one time “house cleaning” but an ongoing maintenance and improvement program to keep an effective local and regional governance system.

Participants in the listening sessions identified a number of areas for serious consideration. Their suggestions provide guidance for policy makers, both state and local, as they consider their priorities for the coming years. Here, four key areas of concern will be highlighted:

The General Performance of State and Local Government

Participants in the listening sessions expressed a number of concerns about state government’s role in New York’s state-local partnership. These concerns were varied and included: mandating new local services without providing funding, using a “one size fits all” approach to state lawmaking, overspending for state government purposes, etc. The concerns of participants mirror the results of recent survey research on New Yorker’s attitudes toward state and local government. For example a recent Empire Poll question asked: From which level of government do you feel you get the most for your money (federal, state or local)? Responses from New Yorkers put local government first and state government last in providing the best value for the public tax dollar (the federal government ranked between the two). New Yorkers rate state government extremely low in comparison with nationwide survey results on this question. For some time, national results have placed local governments first and the federal government last in terms of providing “the most for your money.” National polling data has consistently placed state government between the two on this question about public return for investment.

Assessing the need for state-local fiscal reform is a high priority area in the state-local partnership. Many citizens place property tax burdens as the top public issue among rural New Yorkers. The property tax is the most unpopular tax among New Yorkers. The roots of property tax burdens are multiple. One important area for further research is an assessment of need for changes in the overall state-local fiscal system, including the availability of other new revenue sources to localities and state-local tax sharing with municipalities.
Improving Efficiency: Regionalism, Cooperation and Consolidation

Rural New York Visioning participants expressed a range of concerns about the structure of local government and the impacts of local government structure on economic development, planning and land use. Structure concerns were expressed in a variety of ways, including: impediments to regionalism, negative impacts of “layering” of governments or “duplication” in service delivery, and the need for more intergovernmental cooperation. These concerns were balanced by expressions of satisfaction or support for the responsiveness and effectiveness of the state’s decentralized system of local government. Striking the balance between smaller units, which facilitate citizen participation, and the provision of public services at an efficient scale is an ongoing challenge.

One of the main reasons to look at change or reform in local government is to achieve cost savings and improve efficiency. Improving service quality and effectiveness is usually also a high priority. This leads us to ask questions about where cost savings can be achieved. A fundamental idea is that local governments can decide to provide services for their citizens which they don’t produce “in-house.” They may contract-out a service, jointly provide it with other municipalities, etc. Economies of scale vary by service area and service components; hence, optimal size varies by service and service components. This reality frustrates attempts to find optimally sized local governments. By asking the question, “What is the best way of providing services that citizens want?” we can help break the local control versus “centralization is better” gridlock that frustrates many local discussions.

One recent report which provides the best summary of a broad range of existing research on the results of government overlap indicated that “as the number of general purpose governments (or governments per capita) increases, service costs decrease.” That is, the more government entities, the less government services cost. (Regionalism on Purpose, Kathryn A. Foster, Cambridge: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2001). Another summary of recent researches the same conclusion, noting that, while consolidation of local governments is often pursued to achieve savings, almost every study of “after consolidation spending” indicates it costs more (Honadle, 1998).

In summary, recent research indicates that the consolidation of whole governmental units is costly. The majority of local government spending is for services and administration. Reform efforts that facilitate and encourage local officials to achieve cost saving may better focus their efforts on specific public services and administrative opportunities. The current grants program administered through the New York State Department of State, with expanded budget resources for 2007, is focused on this area of opportunity. Efforts are needed to better document and disseminate case summaries of these funded projects that investigate and develop intergovernmental opportunities.

There are two areas that warrant additional attention by state policymakers. A number of observers have argued for the need to provide a merger statute which lays out a clear process and authority for two or more communities to assess and/or accomplish combining their governments. The need for such a statute was first identified during Mario Cuomo’s tenure as governor. More recently, some observers have indicated the need to review our annexation laws. Reform of New York’s annexation laws may help address a number of concerns about local growth and development around existing developed communities in rural areas.

Administration and Management: Is There Enough?

The importance of professionalism in managing New York’s rural governments was highlighted by visioning project participants. This concern was reflected in concerns about a thin pool of candidates for local office, the burden of governing for part-time elected officials, and the need for
more professional skills. Local government observers have also raised concerns over the level of professional management and administrative resources in New York’s local government system.

For example, Ohio and New York have a very similar local government structure. Both states’ legal frameworks provide for cities and villages as well as towns. While the two states are very similar in local government structure, Ohio has been identified as having a higher incidence of professional management than New York. One measure of this incidence is the number of municipalities with municipal managers/administrators. The percent of municipalities with managers for Ohio is nearly triple that of New York State. In both states municipal administrators are more common in cities and villages than in towns and townships. But Ohio has a higher presence of municipal managers/administrators in both of these categories of general purpose local governments. The potential importance of this difference for local governance and administration is an area of needed research. For example, this difference in the prevalence of professional administration may have important relationship with the burden of elected governing board members and the willingness of citizens to run for local office.

The Role of Local Government in Economic Development

Statewide survey results indicate that economic development policy and training is a high priority among rural local officials. Visioning project participants affirmed this priority need. There is a wide range of activities that local governments can engage in to promote economic development. Questions about what are effective policies for smaller and rural governments, and how they should be pursued regionally remain unanswered for many practitioners. The turnover of local officials makes educational efforts in this area an ongoing task.

Maintaining and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local government is an essential component of local economic health. Competitiveness with other communities & regions is often the key concern driving local interest in local government improvement.

Capacity Building to Improve the Pace of Efficient Change

The pace of adjustment to needed changes is important for rural municipalities. The existence of and effectiveness of capacity building resources is an important resource to help rural governments continue to make needed changes. New York has valuable capacity building resources including the Tug Hill Commission and a number of other effective state and regional organizations. State policymakers should assess the “evenness” of availability of these resources statewide. It appears that there are significant zones or regions within the state that do not have access to the kinds of technical assistance and capacity building resources available in other areas. It would also be valuable to provide a more effective forum and “peer to peer” opportunities for those providing capacity building and technical assistance resources to rural governments across New York’s regions. Direct peer to peer strategies that link communities with valuable innovations with those interested in such change also need to be enhanced. Peer to peer programs and quality, accessible case studies can both help promote good or best practices among rural governments. Visioning participants emphasized a critical component of rural capacity building efforts: flexibility in policy and administration for different community sizes and circumstances.

Another key aspect of local governance capacity is the general citizen knowledge base about our local government system. Policy makers have tended to focus on providing educational opportunities for elected and appointed rural government leaders. There is an equally important need to enhance general knowledge among citizens about local government institutions and issues. Educational content in this area needs to be reinstituted in the public school curriculum.
Local & Regional Governance - “Success Stories”

- Crime has risen considerably and become more serious in the rural Village of Bath located in Steuben County. For this reason, landlords in the village are joining forces with the police department and code enforcement office to help quell crime in the village. The police department is providing landlords with tools to better screen prospective tenants. Prospective tenants must fill out detailed applications, which include disclosures of financial and criminal histories. Under the law, such checks can be made as long as they’re done for all prospective tenants. The village hopes a cooperative effort between law and code enforcement officials and landlords will serve to reduce crime.

- The Commission has been getting numerous requests for its Promoting Intermunicipal Cooperation for Shared Highway Services Report published fall 2004. Communities are also requesting the sample contract and resolution from the appendix in electronic format. If your community would like a hard copy or an electronic version of the sample contract and resolution, please contact the Commission at 518.455.2544 or e-mail: ruralres@senate.state.ny.us. In addition, we would like to hear from those communities who are adopting such local laws. One such community C the Town of Saugerties (Ulster Co.) C advised the Commission recently that they enacted the Commission’s shared services sample contract in 1998 and again renewed it in 2003. The town has been sharing services with neighboring townships, the County, and NYSDOT in giving and receiving services C with proven savings and improved service for taxpayers. For more information on the Town of Saugerties program e-mail Bernie Ellsworth, Superintendent of Highways at bellsworth@saugerties.ny.us.

- A web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) network is being developed for the six-county Catskill region by Applied GIS, Inc. of Schenectady. The plan is unique to New York state and is intended to improve communication among municipalities and agencies utilizing geographically-linked data. The goal is to enhance sharing between agencies and the general public. We’ll keep you up-to-date on their progress.

- The Village of Lake George joined forces with the local community college in 2004 to create an innovative program to enforce such village ordinances as, littering, open containers, vandalism and noise. Criminal justice students from the Adirondack Community College (ACC) serve as peace officers for the Village. The Mayor, County Sheriff and professors from ACC collaborated to create the “Peace Officer Program”. Nine students were trained through a NYS Certification Program Training School, as well as a local training session. The students learned the Village streets and met the merchants and residents. The total budget for the first season was $40,000, resulting in a cost savings of over $250,000. Contact Robert Blais, Village Mayor at (518) 668-5771 for more information.

- The Steuben-Allegany BOCES is planning to merge with the Schuyler-Chemung-Tioga BOCES. Equipment has been pooled together and telecommunications have been coordinated on the three campuses.

- In Chemung County, six police agencies, including the City of Elmira’s and the county sheriff’s department, are considering merging services to save money and consolidate services. The county is seeking $80,000 in state funding to help pay a feasibility study.
• For the third time, residents of the Village of Naples in Ontario County have voted against dissolving the village into the Town. About 40 percent of eligible voters came to the polls; resulting in a vote of 144-128. The village tried and failed to dissolve in 1994, 2001 and most recently in June 2005. South Corning village (Steuben County) residents are also considering dissolution. A merger study is underway; village officials must complete a dissolution plan and have it approved by the Department of State before a vote could take place, pushing the earliest possible vote to March 2007.
Poverty

Poverty - Listening Sessions Synopsis

The complex nature of rural poverty makes it impossible to tackle this issue without simultaneously examining the other themes of Rural Economic Development, Workforce Development, Schools and Youth, Housing and Transportation, and Health Care. Because poverty remains largely “invisible” in rural areas, listening session participants emphasized that it represents a particular challenge for the future of Rural New York. Rural areas present unique opportunities and obstacles in the struggle against poverty.

On a positive note, participants suggested that strong networks of committed agencies and individuals are in place to effectively provide a safety net for those in need. Under this system, increasing amounts of cooperation and collaboration between agencies also serves a positive role. But, despite the problem of poverty, rural areas are still seen as offering a high – if economically challenged - “quality of life”.

Participants identified a number of interacting factors that contribute to high levels of rural poverty—on both personal and structural levels. Lack of access to public transportation, affordable housing, daycare, healthcare, and internet prevents many otherwise capable people from obtaining quality jobs. These structural deficiencies play a directly observable role in the creation and continuation of poverty. In a cyclical fashion, these same factors that contribute to the creation of rural poverty also serve as barriers that prevent effective poverty alleviation in these areas. For example, lack of accessible transportation and childcare prevents many people from visiting agencies and obtaining the services that might enable them to move out of their current circumstances.

In addition to these gaps in infrastructure and services, cultural factors also contribute to perpetuating what is described as the rural “cycle of poverty.” Cultural values of independence and self-reliance often perpetuate the stigma associated with asking for help, while the current lack of relevant education programs in these rural areas may further the intergenerational nature of poverty.

The diffuse nature of the rural populace means that poverty is often “hidden,” which results in a lack of awareness about the true extent of rural poverty and makes it difficult to identify and serve those in need. Compounding this challenge, participants suggested that rural people are often unwilling or unable to seek out assistance on their own – due to the stigma associated with asking for help, lack of awareness of services that are available, and the structural barriers that prevent access of these available services.

As rural demographics change, the nature of poverty changes as well. Current trends identified as impacting rural poverty include the increasingly non-traditional nature of family structures, “brain drain” and out-migration of educated youth, the increasing percentage of senior citizens, and, in some areas, the appearance of transient and migrant workers in rural communities. In order to effectively combat poverty, participants suggested the need for innovative programs that account for these changes and target youth, working parents, the elderly, and, in some cases, farm populations.

Education occupies a central role in both preventing and alleviating poverty. Along with the clear importance of a strong overall education that prepares citizens for quality jobs, education must also
promote general awareness of poverty as a rural issue. In order to change the way poverty is perceived and handled in rural communities, this education needs to reach a diverse audience that includes the general public, local leaders, policy-makers, and youth. Directly related to the current state of poverty, participants also suggested a critical role for widespread community outreach in order to increase awareness of the programs and services that are available.

On a more fundamental economic level, participants identified a need to spur economic development through increased availability of, and access to, living wage jobs. This may be accomplished by developing programs that assist small businesses and promote rural entrepreneurship (including in the agricultural sector). Without such living wage jobs, the “all or nothing” approach of the current system leaves the working poor behind. To address this disconnect, participants suggest a need to recognize and support those people who work more than one job but still remain in need of services. In some cases, failure to do so may ultimately serve as a disincentive to work.

Participants repeatedly identified an overall need to de-politicize the way poverty is handled, suggesting a return to local control and grassroots programs. Participants emphasized the need to foster a spirit of volunteerism and social responsibility in rural communities, beginning with community engagement at a young age. Along these lines, schools and faith-based institutions-- as key social networks in these rural areas-- have a large role to play in increasing awareness of poverty, providing services for those in need, and reducing the stigma associated with receiving assistance.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:
- Development of, and access to, infrastructure (public transportation, housing, internet)
- Decentralization, with corresponding increase in local control (e.g., role for schools and faith-based institutions)
- Increased support and services for working poor and working parents
- Opportunities for youth
- Economic development based on living wage employment
- Cooperation, collaboration, and resource sharing between agencies

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:
- Disconnect between jobs, transportation, and housing
- Lack of access to health care (general care, dental, prenatal, mental health, nutrition)
- Changing demographics (family structure, “brain drain,” aging population)
- Apparent “cycle of poverty,” with generational transfer
- Stigma and general lack of awareness prevent people from obtaining assistance
- Struggle for program funding (competition between programs)
Many Americans view poverty as a product of economic cycles and downturns. The adage, “A rising tide floats all boats,” is the simplest way of expressing this view—when the economy grows stronger, all Americans benefit; when it weakens, Americans suffer. However, poverty rates in the U.S. have become less responsive to market forces due to structural changes in the labor market, the internationalization of capital, family change, and international migration. After the 1980-81 and 1990-91 recessions, poverty rates remained high through much of the subsequent decades, and the welfare rolls continued to grow. Since the welfare reforms enacted in the mid-1990s there are some indications that markets are becoming less effective in reducing poverty, but states continue to turn toward markets as the solution.

It appears that public policy—not market forces—may be the most important factor for understanding and addressing poverty. International research utilizing the Luxembourg Income Study (cf. Smeeding, Rainwater and Burtless 2001) demonstrates that cross-national differences in poverty are less a function of market forces than of social policy differences. This finding confirms the notion that policies have impact on poverty. Thus the social scientists should focus on particular policies and they may or may not lead to poverty reduction. This important area for research intersects with the public’s desire to reduce and eventually eliminate poverty (O’Connor 2002).

Progress in poverty research depends upon confronting the reasons for the current impasse in poverty reduction, and I surmise that these reasons are likely related to how society engages the poor. My own research suggests that the poor experience stigma when they apply for means tested services, but that stigmatization is more common in rural areas where the poor tend to be geographically dispersed (Rank and Hirschl 1988; 1993). This finding is corroborated by the fact that many of the Cornell University listening sessions reported that the rural poor are stigmatized.

It seems likely that past and current research has failed to consider the possibility that a direct path to reducing or ending poverty is for the poor to end their own poverty. There is a clear need for further research on this question. One way to begin would be to follow up on a proposal for an information “clearing house” voiced during a CaRDI listening session of low-income individuals in Schuyler County. At this session the individuals in the room began sharing their knowledge of resources and how to access resources. After some discussion they concluded that collectively they possessed the means to improve their lives significantly, but that this doesn’t happen because they are isolated from one another.

References


Two consistent themes in these reports stood out for me as I read through them. One is the multiple challenges faced by low-income, rural families and two is the necessity of agencies serving the poor to better coordinate services and programs.

My research focuses on the role of poverty in children's development. Allow me to share some of the basic conclusions about poverty and children's development and then address the coordination of services issue. Persistent poverty, particularly in the first five years, has more negative consequences for children's development than intermittent or later poverty exposure, although even these forms of poverty still have ill effects. The impacts of early childhood poverty are widespread and include cognitive development and academic achievement, psychological well being, and physical health. The cognitive and academic impacts are the greatest in magnitude, and some evidence indicates that all three of these impacts, cognitive, psychological, and physical, persist throughout life unless the trajectory is interrupted early on.

A second and very salient aspect of poverty and child development aligns directly with one of the themes mentioned throughout the comments on poverty--no one risk factor such as housing, access to health care, family turmoil, etc. provides an adequate explanation for how/why poverty is harmful. Instead evidence points toward the confluence of risk from physical and social factors as a primary reason for why poverty is harmful.

The magnitude of multiple social and physical demands that many low income families face can be daunting and overwhelm even the most motivated and skilled families. Research focusing on resiliency or characteristics of persons or situations that help them counteract the ravages of poverty has been an attractive model for intervention programs. Unfortunately what these well intentioned program authors have not known or paid attention to is that the accumulation of risk far outweighs any protective factor in predicting developmental outcomes. As but one example, low IQ children with low cumulative risk exposure have better grades from first grade through high school than high IQ children with high cumulative risk exposure. Cumulative risk exposure outweighs the impact of intelligence on grades.

An important implication of this perspective on poverty is that services and programs that target either a. protective factors (e.g., parenting education), or b. only one aspect of accumulated risks accompanying poverty (e.g. housing), are unlikely to be successful. Instead, what is needed is an approach that targets the multitude of risk factors accompanying poverty. This is one reason why coordinated delivery of services and programs is so critical. Such an intervention perspective will not be easy or quick, nor will it be cheap. But the costs of poverty, both in suffering and in dollars, are not cheap either.


Food Insecurity in Poor Rural Families with Children: A Human Capital Perspective

Introduction

Food insecurity is now recognized as a core indicator of nutritional state. Addressing food insecurity is part of the scope of practice of nutrition, health, and education professionals in food-rich countries such as the United States (US) (Olson & Holben, 2002).

Background

Food insecurity is defined as “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways” (Anderson, 1990). Food security means ready, steady access to sufficient nutritious foods to lead an active and healthy life. Hunger, the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food or the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food, is a possible consequence of food insecurity.

Prevalence

Food insecurity and hunger have been assessed annually in nationally representative samples of the United States (US) population since 1995, as part of the Current Population Survey (CPS). For 2004, the most recent year for which national data are available, 11.9% of US households (13.5 million households) were food insecure, 8.0% were food insecure without hunger and 3.9% (4.4 million households) were food insecure with hunger. The prevalence of food insecurity among households with children was nearly double the prevalence in households without children (17.6% vs. 8.9%). Non-metropolitan households had a prevalence of food insecurity that was 13.1% compared to 9.0% in metropolitan households not in principal cities (Nord, Andrews & Carlson, 2005).

From 1995 through 1999, there was a downward trend in the prevalence of household-level food insecurity in the US. From 1999 to 2004, there has been a steady increase of nearly two percentage points (from 10.1% to 11.9%).

Goal and Call for Action on Food Insecurity

In recognition of the negative nutritional, health, psychological and academic consequences of food insecurity, the nutrition objectives for Healthy People 2010 include the following: increase the prevalence of food security among US households to 94% of all households (Office of Disease Prevention, 2000). In 2006, the American Dietetic Association published its third position statement on domestic food insecurity and hunger: “It is the position of the American Dietetic Association that systematic and sustained action is needed to bring an end to domestic food insecurity and hunger and to achieve food and nutrition security for all in the United States” (Holben, 2006).
Findings from this Research

Factors Contributing to Food Insecurity
Overall, 49.1% of the 316 rural low-income households with children in the multi-state research project (North Central Regional Hatch) were food insecure in 1999-2000 (Olson, Anderson, Kiss, Lawrence, & Seiling, 2004). In multi-variable statistical analysis conducted with families who had complete data, food and financial management skills were protective against food insecurity, and difficulty paying for medical expenses and symptoms of depression were contributors to risk of food insecurity. Owning a home (and not having to pay rent) was a significant protective factor.

The protective relationship between food-and financial-related management skills and food insecurity was replicated in the second and third wave data (Gutzmacher & Braun, 2005).

The quantitative findings linked to the qualitative case studies from this project paint a picture of how poor health in low-income families leads to food insecurity: Poor health of the mothers in these families results in medical bills that families pay out of their pockets, taking needed cash away from buying food. Poor physical and mental health, as well as the associated psychological stress, makes it difficult for women to work, further decreasing household income and the money available for food acquisition. Both paths lead to depression and food insecurity.

The inter-relationships between specific health conditions such as diabetes, overall physical health and functioning, and mental health conditions including depressive symptoms are well documented at different time points in the study by several research teams (Gutzmacher & Braun, 2005; Mietlicki, Mamen, Dyk, & Dolan, 2005). The challenge for both practitioners and researchers interested in poverty in rural families is identifying the direction of the causal relationships between food insecurity and its “human capital” predictors.

Escaping Food Insecurity Over Three Years
While 57.1% of the initially food insecure families remained food insecure over the entire three-years of the study, 42.9% escaped food insecurity. Thus far in the preliminary research, three factors were predictive of leaving food insecurity over three years: absence of depressive symptoms, growing up in a family that did not receive welfare and with parents who had at least a high school education, and absence of hunger in the household at the beginning of the study. Related to depressive symptoms, this finding lends support for depressive symptoms causing persistence of food insecurity (Olson, Miller, & Strawderman, 2005).

Policy Implications

Nearly one-half of the rural low-income families with children from 14 states across the US were food insecure. This rate is five times greater than the national average and about 50% less than the Healthy People 2010 objective of 94% of families being food secure by 2010. More than half of the families, 57%, persisted in food insecurity across the three years of the study. Clearly, something more and possibly something different needs to be done. The American Dietetic Association’s call for systematic and sustained action bears heeding by officials in the US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Health and Human Services.

Recent research demonstrates that graduates of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in New York State showed greater decreases in their food insecurity scores than
individuals who participated in the program but terminated before graduating (Dollahite, Olson, & Scott-Pierce, 2003). This program and similar nutrition education programs should be expanded and strengthened. Federal Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs (Food Stamps, WIC and School Meals) must continue at current or increased levels of funding, but they alone will not solve the food insecurity problem in rural America.

Ill health, both physical and mental, is a major factor in the ecology of food insecurity in rural areas. The provision of health care at an affordable cost, for mental health problems and for physical disabilities, is central to promoting food security in rural areas of America. Coherent national and state-level health policies, including Medicaid, that recognize the unique nature of delivering comprehensive, quality health care in a rural setting are needed.

Multi-generational poverty and severe poverty in rural America stand in the way of achieving food security. Significant investments are called for to build the human and social capital of rural Americans and to expand economic opportunities for earning a living wage in rural America so families can escape poverty and achieve food security.

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**Acknowledgements:**

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Escaping Food Insecurity:  
A Portrait from Rural New York Families  

Introduction  

Food insecurity is a growing problem in America, especially in rural areas. Determining factors that are associated with escaping food insecurity can help guide policy development aimed at decreasing food insecurity in rural areas.

Background  

Food insecurity is defined as “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways” (Anderson 1990). Food insecurity has been steadily increasing in America since 1999, including in rural areas. In 2004 food insecurity was more prevalent in non-metropolitan areas, at 13.1%, than metro areas, at 11.7% (Nord, Andrews & Carlson 2004). Previous research has shown that food insecurity has numerous negative health consequences, including decreased food and nutrient intakes (Kendall, Olson & Frongillo 1996), increased risk of obesity in women (Olson 1999), compromised cognitive achievement in children (Alaimo, Olson & Frongillo 2001), and decreased ability to follow medically prescribed diets in elders and others with chronic disease (Nelson, Brown & Lurie 1997).

Findings from this Research  

This study focused on 29 families in Upstate New York, each with a household income below 200% of the Federal poverty line, and at least one child less than 13 years of age. Of this sample, 58.6% (17 families) were food insecure at Wave 1 of data collection in 1999-2000. Three years later six of these families (35.3%) had escaped food insecurity.

Statistical data analysis showed that families wherein the mother was currently working were more likely to escape food insecurity, as well as families with income greater than 100% of the Federal poverty line. Families in which the mother had a high level of life-skills, and no or low depressive symptoms were also more likely to escape food insecurity during the three year time period. Participants using the Food Stamp program were more likely to remain food insecure, but this may be a result of selection bias (only the poorest families utilized the program, decreasing their chance to escape food insecurity).

Qualitative data analysis of the six New York families who ultimately escaped food insecurity provided greater insights into the factors associated with becoming food secure. Four themes were found among the participants who escaped food insecurity, including high levels of family support (both practical and social/emotional), attaining better employment opportunities (additional training, higher wages, more hours), having a positive outlook (lack of depressive symptoms and optimistic attitude), and positive financial strategies (using family budgets, comparison shopping).
In summary, quantitative and qualitative data analysis of rural New York families showed that characteristics of those who escaped food insecurity included:

- Higher levels of family and social support;
- Currently working and attaining better employment opportunities;
- Lack of depressive symptoms and having a positive outlook; and
- Higher levels of life-skills, especially financial management strategies.

**Policy Implications**

Prevalence of food insecurity was significantly higher than the national average in this sample of rural low-income New York families with children (58.6% vs. 11.9%). Only 35.3% of these food insecure families were able to become food secure in three years.

Families that left food insecurity had several common characteristics, and these factors could be supported by public policies and programs to decrease the prevalence of food insecurity.

**Family & social support:** Social support could be instrumental for those lacking family support. Community efforts to create social support networks could be beneficial for these families. Educational programming serving low income individuals should be provided in a group format, to facilitate social interaction.

**Employment:** Increased employment and training opportunities are needed in rural areas. Provision of paid or no cost training opportunities is necessary for low income individuals to obtain increased job security, skills, and mobility, all crucial for leaving food insecurity. In addition to providing employment training opportunities, the creation of jobs in rural areas is essential for food security. More investment in rural job creation is needed, and these jobs must pay a living wage in order to decrease food insecurity.

**Depression:** Accessible and affordable mental health care is necessary in rural areas. Medicaid and other national and state insurance policies should provide coverage of these services to those in need, as well as incentives for health care providers to practice in rural areas.

**Life-skills:** Increased life-skills training, both formal and informal, is needed in rural areas. Programs like the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNE) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) are important for these reasons, but they should be expanded with the goals of reaching a broader audience and including practical skills training as well as nutrition education.

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Rural Economic Development - Listening Sessions Synopsis

Rural economic development is a comprehensive theme that encompasses virtually all of the other theme areas. Especially apparent are its connections with workforce development*, environment and land use, agriculture, education, and, to group broadly, infrastructure development (housing, transportation, and healthcare).

Participants focused on a diversity of strengths that ranged from specific strategies for successful economic development to the quality of the rural resource base in terms of natural capital, geographic capital, and social/human capital. Tourism, value-added production, and niche markets were highly emphasized as successful ways of promoting economic development while still retaining and valuing the rural character of place.

As identified in other theme areas, rural economic development is also impacted by changing demographics. Adding to this concern is a lack of infrastructure, especially in high-speed telecommunications, public transportation, affordable housing, and access to health care/insurance, which makes it difficult for these rural areas to be competitive.

A large part of creating a successful future, therefore, involves overcoming these infrastructure barriers and building on the talents and capacities of local people. Paralleling a theme from Workforce Development, successful rural economic development depends on a “need to nurture [the] entrepreneurial spirit and keep intellectual capital in the community.”

Many participants suggested that agriculture does indeed play a large role in rural economic development, and they expressed concern about whether sufficient resources were devoted to agriculture as a viable form of economic development.

Participant’s comments reflected awareness that rural economic development must represent “balanced growth” and must maintain and expand diversity. Broadly speaking, there is an identified need for increased cooperation and coordination—not only on a regional or inter-municipal level, but also between various agencies operating within the same locality, and between urban areas and rural areas within the region.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:

- Small business incubation/development
- Niche industry and niche markets (for both industry and agriculture)
- Cooperative efforts and regional coordination
- Tourism (eco-tourism, agri-tourism, cultural tourism)
- Agriculture as form of economic development
- Benefits of buying locally

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:

- Lack of telecommunications (e.g., high speed internet)
- Issues of taxation (on both an individual and business level)
• Empire Zone program, as currently structured
• “The high cost of doing business” for small businesses
• Is bigger always better?
**Rural Economic Development - Faculty Response**

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The ten listening sessions provided valuable insight into the local hopes, desires and frustrations among rural leaders throughout New York State. My response to these sessions will be from the perspective of how our communities can prepare for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. The respondents at the listening sessions, as well as experts on the rural economy, all agree that changes, whether we like it or not, are under way. Indeed, two very traditional features of the agricultural industries and rural communities are disappearing in the new business model of rural communities: interdependence replaces independence; and new ventures in agricultural products replaces traditional commodity support and subsidization.

The Center for the Study of Rural America at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, has articulated ten key stages needed for the reinvention of rural regions. These stages are: 1) build a foundation of regional partnership that is relevant, consistent and sustainable; 2) find a unique competitive niche; 3) work for a broad-based and sustainable economy; 4) create clusters around the core niche; 5) improve or leverage local amenities; 6) invest in people through the traditional educational systems and beyond; 7) enrich the region’s supply of equity capital; 8) tap technologies suitable to the region; 9) invest in 21st century technology; and 10) reinvent regional government.

Comments made at the listening sessions feedback certainly track the ten steps listed above. However, in most cases these comments were expressed as future steps necessary to achieve a more viable rural economy. I will address only a few of these steps and how the information from the listening sessions might guide our future vision.

One important aspect of new rural development that weaves throughout all of the listening sessions is innovation and entrepreneurship. My opening comments about new rural interdependencies and agricultural production are early indicators of innovation. Presently, many of New York’s rural areas already exhibit innovation and entrepreneurship, but the road to complete success is still long and full of potholes. How can New York be successful at rural innovation and entrepreneurship?

Innovation and entrepreneurship does not happen; it must be nurtured and supported. Rural areas present obstacles to innovation and entrepreneurship like small and remote communities, lower skill levels, limited access to technology, and very limited access to venture or equity capital. Rural areas in New York have a greater potential to overcome these limitations compared to most other rural areas in the United States because of proximity to large urban population centers. However, it takes the commitment of the rural community, local/state/federal government, educational systems, and non-governmental agencies who work in these areas.

Innovators and entrepreneurs bring vigor and energy to a locale. They create opportunity. They create and build new companies to bring innovation to market. They take significant, calculated personal risk to build their companies. They view globalization not as a challenge, but as opportunity to support new ideas and new economies.
The immediate actions that rural areas can take are to first define a region of innovation and entrepreneurship based on an assessment of the resources and potentials within that region. From this first step, alliances must be created so that the region acts with a unified set of actions and goals. More importantly, the plan must be broad-based with long-term solutions, not quick fixes or “me too” solutions. More specifically, regions should create the opportunity to establish business and technology clusters because clusters have the ability to attract similar businesses. The regions must then take specific steps to insure knowledgeable and skilled citizens, enlist the aid and strengths of area higher education institutions and those institutions and agencies that can lead economic change. Regions must also support critical foundational elements such as broadband infrastructure and access to equity capital. One final action is to exploit the amenities of the region; mountains, lakes, and other natural attractions that enhance the quality of life.

The Finger Lakes Partnership, a U.S. Department of Labor-sponsored project to create regional economic development, is approaching the key components of rural economic development as described above. The key strength of this effort is a nine-county effort along with the City of Rochester. Participants note that never before has such a large group of organizations and institutions collaborated in a unifying effort to move the region, rural and urban, towards innovation that will sustain economic development. It is a grand experiment in the sense that the plan must be turned into action by the partners, and all of the components listed above for rural economic development must be invoked to insure success. The project has a three year plan that was initiated in May of 2006. Time and the partnership will determine its success.

Within the Finger Lakes Partnership is a component dealing with innovation in food and beverages. Here is where the Finger Lakes excels because of its historic fruit production, and in particular, wine production. While the region is already experiencing a surge of agricultural economic development because of the wine industry, this cluster has spurred the tourism industry and other opportunities for value-added agriculture and rural businesses. There are other numerous actions planned by the Finger Lakes Partnership that support innovation and entrepreneurship (e.g., regional broadband; creation of technology clusters, establishment of regional equity capital, and tapping into the expertise of regional colleges and universities). While these resources and actions may seem to provide an advantage to the Finger Lakes, there is no reason why other regions in New York cannot build on their individual visions.
Rural Economic Development - “Success Stories”

• Last issue we highlighted a program at Morrisville State College where students were helping area small businesses develop web sites. The Wellsville Area Chamber of Commerce in Allegany County recently initiated a similar program. A new web-based service that allows small businesses to build, maintain, and host their web sites for a flat fee of $25 a month. The Chamber has partnered with Lance Technologies LLC to access SiteSwing.com. Many small businesses are unable to develop web sites due to the high initial cost of development, high maintenance and update costs, and the cumbersome general process of sending information to a web developer who then puts it on the web. SiteSwing.com allows a business owner to update their Web site as often as they like with point-and-click ease. A small business can be up and running with a new web site in less than a week with the Chamber’s new partnership. Area small businesses can learn more about this new web-based service by visiting www.wellsvilleareachamber.com. Other interested parties can learn about SiteSwing by trying out the Interactive Demo at SiteSwing.com. The demo does not require any kind of registration, and you will be able to try out all of the features immediately. Every Saturday through April 16 chefs from local restaurants are invited to the Brewery Ommegang in Cooperstown (Otsego County) to prepare special dishes made with the brewery’s Belgian-style ales. Visitors can experience the way ales match up with fine food as a part of the standard tour. A free event. Visit www.ommegang.com to learn more. Also check out the recipes in the FUN STUFF section of the web site.

• The College of Agriculture and Technology at Cobleskill (Schoharie County) has developed the concept of combining fish production and plant production in an effort to increase both. The idea is to team a hatchery with a greenhouse. The Appalachian Regional Commission, a Federally funded agency, has awarded the project $111,290. The grant will pay for a new complex of fish farms, including four small ponds that will have greenhouses above. Fish production will expand to include more tropical varieties, such as prawns; and if it all works out, Cobleskill could become the country’s northern-most producer of prawns. Plant production will grow leafy greens, such as lettuce, spinach and Swiss chard, in the greenhouses; and the school hopes to extend the growing season an extra month on both ends. For additional information on: SUNY Cobleskill’s Fisheries & Aquaculture project contact: John Foster; Tel.: (518) 255-5243; E-mail: FosterJR@cobleskill.edu. Visit http://www.cobleskill.edu/Academic/AG/AGBU/FWLD/.

• In 2002, New York State gave farmers the ability to sell excess energy generated by methane digesters back to utility companies called net metering. And in 2004, the legislature extended that same benefit to farmers and homeowners who create more electricity from wind energy than they use. The law, sponsored by Senator James W. Wright (R-C-I Watertown) and Assemblyman Steven Englebright (D-Setauket), allows for the difference between the amount of energy generated by the customer with on-site generation and the energy supplied to the farm or residence by a utility to be measured called net metering. What makes the wind energy inclusion different from the methane digesters is that it can assist small farms, allowing them to use the natural resource of wind to supply electricity and create economic and environmental benefits for their business and family. Although the methane digester concept is excellent, it is cost prohibitive for most small farms. New York State has a significant capacity for wind resources, with many regions having sufficient wind speed to use a turbine. David Rudd, owner of a 70-cow dairy on Lake Ontario in Oswego County, began his experiment with wind energy by using a one kilowatt mill that fed into a bank of batteries. After realizing the potential this new source of energy possessed, he added a three kilowatt mill and, using a farm viability grant from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, installed a ten kilowatt...
mill. The ten kilowatt mill is connected to the main grid so when the electricity it produces is not used by the farm, it flows into the pool of electricity generated by the utility company. Rudd estimates that the windmills provide about two-thirds of his electric needs, yielding an increase in profits of roughly 10.6 percent. (Energy is one of the highest costs for a farm operation.) With this new legislation, Rudd would receive a credit from the utility for the electricity he sends back. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority has helped numerous farms in New York state with grants to install methane digesters. Hopefully, help is on the way for wired energy too. Visit http://www.nyserda.org/ to learn more. And for more information on wind energy, visit http://www.clean-power.com/nyserda/.

• An Essex County caterer has found success bottling her own salad dressing recipe. After years of 00's and 90's from family, friends and customers of her catering business, Debbie Mackey set out to bottle The Gourmet Gal’s Savory Sauce. The sauce can be used as a salad dressing, for dipping vegetables, and for marinating meat. With a little help from Cornell University's Entrepreneurship and Personal Enterprise Program, the sauce is now available in 30 regional stores and is being used by meat markets and restaurants to prepare foods. Ms. Mackey is in the process of converting her garage into a commercial kitchen to handle the growing needs of sauce production. Visit www.gourmetgal.com or call (518) 585-6309 to purchase a 12 ounce bottle for $4.99. Sugar-free and gluten-free versions are also available.

• The Upper Hudson River Alliance is an organization devoted to pooling the resources of several smaller Hudson River communities to foster tourism and funding opportunities. Communities include the City of Hudson, the villages of Athens, Catskill, Coxsackie, Saugerties, and Tivoli. The original goal was to create a better relationship between Columbia, Greene, Ulster and Dutchess counties. The innovative group began informally about two years ago while organizing the Hudson River Regional Festival, a music and arts festival coordinated by the communities to promote tourism. The new goal is much broader than an international partnership between the Upper Hudson River Alliance and interested communities in Italy. NOVITAL, Inc. a US-Italy link up firm is looking at the Hudson River region as a critical transportation link. The region offers links that range from Chicago to Boston and Washington, DC to Montreal, while avoiding the congestions and cost of other nearby regions. More importantly, the Hudson River Region allows direct access to markets from agriculture to high technology, supporting business-to-business relationships needed to make trade and commerce a reality. The partnership is being focused into four work areas: Agriculture/Trade, Education, Tourism/Culture and Economic Development. Agricultural trade links will not only get produce from the Hudson Valley to Italy, but will help support the region’s infrastructure by utilizing off-season capacity in areas linked with produce handling to maintain jobs, and extend seasonal jobs to annual jobs. For more information, contact Peter Marotta, Executive Director of the Upper Hudson River Alliance at 518.828.2661 or by e-mail at hvac@mhcable.com.

• Two Capital region business development groups C the Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Center for Economic Growth C have paired up to raise $11 million to market the Tech Valley brand over the next five years. Pledges have been received from area businesses to launch the “Advancing Tech Valley” campaign, which will include business climate, business growth, work force recruitment and retention, training, and marketing. Business growth efforts will include incubator programs and tours for foreign consulate officials. The Albany-Colonie chamber first began marketing the region as Tech Valley about seven years ago. Since then, chambers of commerce from 18 eastern New York counties, from the Canadian border south to Putnam and Rockland
counties, have joined the effort to encourage high-tech businesses to settle and grow in the area. Learn more at http://www.ceg.org/index.htm.

• A few years back we featured Damon Rods of Potsdam (St. Lawrence County) a maker of fly fishing rods. Owner, Timothy J. Damon, started making his fishing rods as a hobby and turned them into a brand synonymous with high-end, quality products. Each rod is handcrafted. He also capitalized on utilizing the Internet to sell his rods. Online sales account for more than 90 percent of Mr. Damon’s business. The Internet is where Damon Rods was recently discovered by a Vietnamese distribution company who wants to purchase 1,000 graphite spinning rods for $150,000. In addition, International Furniture Co. has requested reels totalling $90,000. With a staff of only four, Mr. Damon plans to add two or three people and may even build a larger facility to accommodate these new deals. Mr. Damon’s Internet success has also turned him into a mentor for the Northern Adirondack trading Cooperative, a venture to teach north country craftsmen to sell their products online.

• The Glen at Highland Meadows in Queensbury (Warren County), a senior community, offers its residents a seasonal residency program or snowbird program, which allows people who live elsewhere for a portion of the year to get a rent reduction for the time they are gone, as well as 24-hour security and maintenance. The program also covers seniors who own vacation homes in the Capital Region and even allows residents to come back for 14 days during the time they are away without paying full rent (like for the holidays.) Other retirement communities in the Capital District offer discount programs as well. The Avila in Albany County offers a sliding scale discount to residents who are gone for over a month. The Coburg Village in Rexford (Saratoga County) offers discounts on meals for those residents gone more than two days and cable discounts for residents away for over a month. Kings Way in Schenectady County cuts rent in half for those residents gone more than a month.

• Sunday Driver Directories was founded in 1987 for a small quantity of Western New York antique shops as a means to help customers get from one shop to another. By 1991, Sunday Driver Directories was serving all of Western New York with three localized directories. In 1996, all three Western New York directories were combined into one large, easy-to-read, directory for the Western New York region. Soon afterwards, the enhanced directory took notice with shops and shoppers to the East. In 1997, Sunday Driver expanded eastward into the Finger Lakes, & Central-Leatherstocking regions of New York State. Two years later, they expanded into Virginia with a directory for the I-81 corridor. Since then they have continued to expand and presently publish eight different directories covering parts of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina. Sunday Driver serves over 700 antique shops and distributes over 550,000 directories annually. Call Ron Szustakowski, President of Sunday Driver Directories, Inc. at 716-353-4295 or visit their web site at http://www.sundaydriver.com.

• Bradford and Campbell-Savona school districts in Steuben County are joining districts to bring additional funds to help students and taxpayers. A straw vote passed in mid-October and a formal vote passed in November. State aid will provide more than $25 million to the joined school over 14 years. During the first five years of consolidation, 40 percent of both districts’ operating aid would be provided on top of their normal state aid. For the next nine years after that, the aid is reduced by 4 percent a year. The money will be used to expand electives and extracurricular activities for students while reducing the tax burden on property owners. Campbell and Savona school districts
have already been through this, merging successfully in the 1990s. The merger will be effective in July 2006.

• The Northeast is in the midst of a wave of immigration from Mexico. In Newburgh in Orange County in the Hudson Valley new residents from Mexico have opened dozens of businesses that have begun to reinvigorate the ailing downtown district. New communities of Mexicans are filling farm, construction, and domestic jobs. Despite the economic development boon, challenges remain — a shortage of affordable housing, inadequate health care, and lack of public transportation. New York’s Southern Tier — Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties — has experienced an increase in Hispanic, black, and Asian American populations. The Native American population in Chemung, Schuyler, and Tompkins counties also grew. And in the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania the Hispanic and black populations increased. Population has also grown in Massachusetts, and Connecticut due to such immigration from Mexico. Dr. Paul R. Eberts, Department of Development Sociology Professor at Cornell University and Author of Socioeconomic Trends 2000, published by the Rural Resources Commission, found evidence of the same immigration and analyzed the data in Chapter 3/Population and Demographic Trends of such report. Contact the Commission at 518.455.2544 for a copy.

• Bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) and inns provide a boost to New York’s tourism industry and contribute greatly to New York’s economy; especially in rural areas where such lodging businesses are frequently found. New York state is home to an estimated 1,135 bed and breakfasts (B&B) and inns according to a survey conducted in 2002 by the New York Sea Grant, Cornell University’s Community and Rural Development Institute, the Northern New York Travel and Tourism Research Center, and the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oswego County. The tourism region having the greatest number of responding B&Bs and inns was the Finger Lakes region with 27% of all the B&Bs and inns in the state (an estimated 305 businesses). The Adirondacks and Central Leatherstocking regions followed with 13% of respondents each, and the Catskill region had 12%. B&Bs and inns in New York state were estimated to have a total of 6,865 rooms accommodating about 1.287 million guests in 2002. The survey found that customers came mainly from locations in New York state to visit family and friends. For a copy of the Fact Sheet contact New York Sea Grant at SUNY at Oswego at 315.312.3042. For a listing of B&Bs and inns in New York state, visit www.iloveny.com, click on accommodations; and then on B&Bs and inns.

• The Metropolitan Development Association’s “Come Home to Syracuse” program is working. Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego counties gained 3,800 people between 2000-2004, according to the US Census Bureau. The change is the result of a reduced reliance on manufacturing jobs and increases in professional and business service jobs and educational and health service jobs — points we highlighted in the report Socioeconomic Trends 2000. The improved job picture is luring young professionals back to the area and keeping others from leaving the area.

The Grants for Growth program is made possible by a $1 million grant secured by State Senator John A. DeFrancisco (R-Syracuse). It offers matching funds up to $50,000 to partnerships between companies and regional universities that demonstrate the potential to turn laboratory discoveries into marketable products. First round awards have been announced and total $264,317, leveraging $404,582 in private sector and university matching support. The award recipients represent real partnerships between companies and universities all over the region. The winning projects offer the potential for more than 150 new high-end jobs, more than $16,000,000 in new revenue, and the creation of two new start-up companies in the region. Funding is still available for the Grants for
Growth program. Companies interested in taking advantage of the program are encouraged to contact Ben Walsh at brwalsh@mda-cny.com or by calling (315) 422-8284. Applications and program guidelines are also available online at www.essentialny.com/gfg.

• Did you know that local currencies Photonics is the science of using light to detect, transmit, store and process information, either in data or images. And upstate New York, specifically Monroe County, is leading the nation in the photonic industry. More than 50 optics companies are now doing business in the Rochester region; including more than 15 photonics-related companies in the Town of Henrietta. The businesses cover a variety of fields within photonics, from manufacturing to consulting. Industry officials tout Rochester’s central location, access to the optics and photonics talent at area universities, convenient amenities, and the availability of buildings that can accommodate the sensitive processes used by the industry. Visit the Rochester Regional Photonics Cluster’s web site at http://www.rrpc-ny.org/ to learn more.

• The Ithaca region is embarking on a significant economic development initiative — the Targeted Marketing (TM) Initiative — aimed at attracting new businesses and other economic opportunities to the area — primarily focusing on nanotechnology and materials sciences. Nanotechnology is an important key to the future of the Ithaca region. Cornell University dedicated Duffield Hall, a $58.5 million nanotechnology research and education building last year. The TM initiative is a three-to-five-year team effort involving the Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD), Cornell University, New York State Electric & Gas, and the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency. Senators Winner, Seward and Nozzolio (all representing parts of Tompkins County) offered their support for the TM initiative by contributing $150,000 in state funding. State and local sources so far have committed $400,000 to the initiative. What makes this initiative different is the focus on luring businesses from elsewhere in the United States or in other countries. The TM project will target smaller companies that could relocate completely to the Ithaca area, as well as larger companies who might set up a local office for 25 to 50 employees. For more information, please contact TCAD at 607-273-0005 or visit their web site at http://www.tcad.org/.

• 40 Below — are a group of artists, lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs, professionals, entertainers and activists from Central Upstate New York. They first came together on November 12, 2004 for what became the largest young professionals' summit in our nation's history — more than 630 young people. They united to make Central Upstate New York a more vibrant place to live, work, learn and play; to restore pride and hope to their communities; to spark a cultural renaissance putting Central Upstate New York on the "creative" map; and to harness the collective strength of their communities to make positive change. A second summit was held in October. Visit their web site at http://www.40belowny.org/. A similar event, encouraging people under 40 to take an interest in their communities, is being organized in the North Country, called Emerge NNY. An April 2006 summit is in the works.

• Municipalities across the country are recognizing that visitors to their communities are not concerned with political boundaries, but with entertaining experiences wherever they may be found. Counties are realizing that they have a far greater chance of attracting tourists if they seek out all of the hot spots within the region regardless of which side of the county line they fall. Some good examples include:
  o The Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). The CVB’s 2005 Visitors Guide lists 95 attractions, 43 of those fall outside of Erie County.

- The Hudson River Valley Greenway is a state agency joining together all of the municipalities within these counties: Albany, Rensselaer, Columbia, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester; municipalities in Greene and Ulster counties outside of the Catskill Park; the Village and Town of Waterford in Saratoga County and the Hudson River waterfront in Bronx and New York counties. Their mission is to preserve scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources, while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making. Upstate 88 is a regional directory of businesses and tourism destinations along Interstate 88 (a 150 mile stretch). Visit the web site at http://www.upstate88.com.

- New York Canal’s web site promotes the towns, cities, and businesses located along New York's canal. The site highlights local history, historic sites, fact and fiction related to New York's beautiful canals. It features special events, park locations, boat launches/docking information, trail information, and maps. Regions along the canal include the Adirondacks, Capital-Saratoga, Catskills, Central-Leatherstocking, Finger Lakes, Hudson Valley, Niagara Frontier, and Thousand Islands-Seaway. Visit the site at http://www.nycanal.com.

- Western New York considers itself one community, but has divided the 17 counties area into six regions: Buffalo/Niagara Frontier, Rochester/Erie Canal, Chautauqua/Allegany, Genesee Valley/Letchworth, Corning/Elmira, and Western Finger Lakes. Features attractions, accommodations, services, and events. Visit their site at http://www.westernny.com/index.html.

- The Finger Lakes counties include: Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne and Yates and are featured at http://www.fingerlakes.org. The site lists attractions, accommodations, events, and much more.

- The New York State Seaway Trail is a 454-mile scenic route paralleling Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. Traveling the well-marked Seaway Trail takes you to sophisticated cities, quaint villages, laid back fishing ports, dozens of family attractions, restaurants, accommodations and shops. The site encourages visitors to also enjoy Seaway Trail PA as it extends along Lake Erie—Pennsylvania’s historic and scenic “Beach Resort” for a total of 506 miles. Visit the web site at http://www.seawaytrail.com.

- The Adirondacks are highlighted at this site, featuring events, attractions, campgrounds, recreations, maps, and much more. Visit the site at http://adk.com.
Long Island’s beaches, vineyards, farms, and attractions are featured at this web site. Visit it at http://www.longislandtourism.com.

**RURAL HEALTH CARE**

*Rural Health Care - Listening Sessions Synopsis*

Rural Health Care is connected to issues of Transportation, Workforce Development, Economic Development, and Poverty. Recognizing that the health of community members is important to all aspects of community development, listening session participants placed a strong emphasis on the need for long-term planning in rural health care.

Participants suggested that rural health networks have positive community-level impacts, stemming largely from their local nature and commitment to the community. Because of this community emphasis, health care professionals and volunteers who work in rural areas form a strong and dedicated network. From a practical standpoint, health care services present a sound linkage with economic development because they require stable, year-round employment.

Despite the advantages associated with local health networks, the overall health care system is perceived as complicated, unclear, and inaccessible. Problems of access associated with transportation and health insurance emerge as the major barriers to receiving effective rural health care services.

As currently structured, health insurance is particularly restrictive to the working poor, small businesses, rural hospitals, and specialists. Medicaid in particular seems to be associated with a burdensome set of challenges and barriers, including poor reimbursement rates for hospitals and clinics and limited coverage. Rising costs of both health care and insurance are forcing rural hospitals into a fight for survival. Specialty services, including mental health/psychiatric, dental, prenatal, and reproductive services are already especially lacking in rural communities, and insurance issues exacerbate this problem.

General comments suggested that rural communities are engaged in a fundamental struggle to increase access to health services for low-income community members, without simultaneously bankrupting the local health care providers who accept these patients. To this end, participants indicated a need for a more inclusive system of national health care.

Comments suggested that these structural barriers are compounded by a general lack of awareness of available programs and services. Community members who are not eligible for major programs such as Medicaid are not made aware of the other options that exist, and thus tend to “fall between the cracks.” Also, citizens are often unaware of the local health care services that do exist in their communities. This may reduce the use of these local services and facilities, which, in turn, contributes to their closure, and the corresponding need to drive long distances—a problem which is again exacerbated by the lack of transportation.

Participants recognize that rural areas face a special difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified health care professionals—the effects of which are already being felt and may continue to increase as many doctors and nurses approach retirement age. Along these lines, volunteer EMT services play a critical role in servicing rural areas and must be promoted through appropriate recruitment and training. New initiatives in workforce development and education will thus play a large role in developing a sustainable system of rural health care.
Overall, the future of rural health care depends on improving what listening session participants identified as issues of availability, access, and awareness. In order to be truly effective in the long term, health care services must be accompanied by educational and preventative initiatives that begin with youth in the community. There is a need for innovative outreach and programming that emphasizes mental health, preventative care, tele-medicine and other linkages with technology, and volunteer and community-based services.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:
- Strong potential for tele-medicine (requires development of IT capacity and infrastructure)
- New paradigm of preventative care
- School-based health clinics and services (as community health centers)
- Role of EMTs and other volunteers
- Incentives within health care education system to encourage service to rural areas
- Perceived long term benefits of investment in this area

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:
- Restrictive insurance, with cumbersome paperwork
- Lack of public transportation greatly reduces access to services
- Shortage of healthcare workers and emergency services volunteers
- Lack of mental health services (particularly for youth)
- Cooperation vs. competition among rural hospitals
- Health care for low income and working poor populations
- Low Medicaid reimbursement rates restrict coverage and burden rural hospitals
**Rural Health Care - Faculty Response**

**Nina Glasgow**  
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Participants in the Rural Vision Project listening sessions heavily emphasized health care rather than health per se. The quantity and quality of health care services are lower in rural than urban areas of New York State and the nation. But available and accessible health care services alone are not predictive of a healthy population. Behaviors of individuals and the structure of an array of social institutions also affect the health status of a population. Therefore, after assessing participants’ recommendations for improvements in rural health care, I shall briefly focus more broadly on other factors that influence the health of rural New Yorkers.

Among the affluent countries of the world, the United States stands alone in not having a national health insurance program that provides general coverage for its citizens, and the uninsured portion of the population is 26 percent higher among nonmetropolitan than metropolitan residents (Hammer et al. 2004). Over 50 million Americans have no health insurance, making the uninsured burden high regardless of place of residence, but it is especially high among rural residents. The percent of uninsured in New York State grew during the 1990s (Rodriguez and Parra 1999). The recurring recommendation for a national health care system among participants in the listening sessions indicates awareness among New York State residents of the magnitude of the problem. A national health insurance program would require political action at the national level of government, and historically the political will to pass such legislation has been lacking. A groundswell of public support for a national health care/health insurance program for all Americans, however, could be instrumental in bringing universal health care coverage into existence.

Participants in the listening sessions rightly emphasized the challenges facing the Medicaid program that provides health coverage for indigent residents of the state and the nation. With federal and state government cutbacks in funding for Medicaid, a large cost burden has been shifted to local governments – the level of government least able to fund the program. Poor residents of the state have only limited access to health care services, and the low reimbursement rates to hospitals and clinics for Medicaid patient services place them at risk for closure. Rural hospital and clinic closures are likely to affect all residents of a rural community adversely, as the distances that must be traveled to access health care will increase. Listening session participants were correct, in my opinion, in focusing on the particular vulnerability of poor rural residents.

Listening session participants valued development of rural health networks and regional delivery of health care services. Rural health networks facilitate coordination and cooperation among the health care providers of an area, and they have the potential to improve rural health care. The failures among groups that have started rural health networks, however, outnumber the successes (Wellever 2004). Wellever emphasized the need for careful planning if rural health networks are to succeed, and he has outlined the characteristics of successful rural health networks (see page 235, Wellever 2004). Wellever gave three examples of successful rural health networks, including the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative ([www.rwhc.com](http://www.rwhc.com)), CHOICE Regional Network ([www.chicenet.org](http://www.chicenet.org)) in Washington State, and the Panhandle Area Health Network ([www.pahn.org](http://www.pahn.org)) in Florida. Rural Vision Project listening session participants also provided examples of rural health networks that function effectively. The point is that referring to such examples is important when communities or groups of health care professionals decide to form a rural health network.
A lack of public transportation to facilitate access to health care, recruitment and training of health professionals and volunteers, and lack of awareness among rural residents of the services and programs that are available were also cited as problems in rural health care. Bringing these issues to the attention of public officials and providing public education to rural residents to better inform them of what is available are means to addressing these problems.

Social gerontologists and other social scientists have identified the potential for healthy aging. Healthy aging should be viewed from a life course perspective inasmuch as behaviors at an earlier age can influence health at later stages of the life course. For example, risky health behaviors such as smoking, using drugs, and/or practicing unsafe sex among youth can have lasting effects on the overall state of a person’s health. Regular exercise and good nutrition have been identified as factors that influence health. It is clear that individuals bear some responsibility in maintaining their health. Extension and outreach education can facilitate awareness of behaviors that will lead to better health. A body of research has also shown that persons with strong social networks and those who are socially integrated in their community are healthier and live longer. Encouraging individuals to become and stay socially connected and promoting community institutions that are democratic and socially inclusive (Glasgow 2004) are ways that extension and research can aid in the development of a healthy population in rural New York.

References:


**Rural Health Care - “Success Stories”**

- Members of the Senior Health Alliance of Greater Rochester (upstate Monroe County) have created many successful programs as alternatives to nursing home care — skilled care and rehabilitation, assisted living, memory care, home casework, and chore services — to meet the growing and diverse needs of the elderly. Driven by consumer choice, these services offer comfort, safety and living assistance as needed. Many times the need for nursing home care is delayed or avoided through the use of these services. Medicaid is the primary payor of nursing home care and health officials are concerned with Medicaid’s future and how long-term care options will continue to be funded.

- A financially ailing rural hospital has turned itself around and is once again healthy. Faced with possible closure a few years back, the Moses-Ludington Hospital in Ticonderoga (Essex County) has been increasingly profitable. The hospital is a part of the Inter-Lakes Health Complex, which includes a nursing home, an adult care home, and a dental clinic. The hospital now has a CT scanning facility, a teletrauma link, and helicopter-transport capability. Inter-Lake’s strong point is its high-quality 24-hour emergency room. With 265 employees, the hospital is one of the largest employers in the county. In order to stay current, 5 to 6 percent of the hospital’s operating margin is invested in new technology.

- The ranks of volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians continue to decline. Over the last decade, FASNY estimates that membership in volunteer fire companies has sagged from about 175,000 to between 100,000 and 110,000; and volunteer EMT numbers have fallen from 70,000 to less than 50,000. A new bill has been signed into law (Chapter 451, Laws of 2004) creating a temporary task force to study the feasibility of companies, local governments, or the state offering full or partial health insurance coverage for volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers. Supporters advocate that this measure could be a strong retention item, as well as a recruitment item. The target market will be 18 to 25 year olds who have a tendency not to have any health insurance coverage. The bill sponsors are Senator Betty Little (Tel. 518-455-2811) and Assemblyman Robert Sweeney (Tel. 518-455-5787). Also, the state continues to offer scholarships to volunteer firefighters or EMTs — more than 1,100 volunteer-students receive the special state incentive.

- CHAT C Compassionate Heroes Active Teens is a youth volunteer program in Western New York at the Center for Hospice and Palliative Care. Volunteer duties range from special event fundraisers for the foundation to home visits for patients in Hospice within the community. The program has been in existence for a little over a year with more than 80 youth volunteers. For more information, Contact Shelly Marabella, Volunteer Coordinator at (716) 686-8375.

- The Rural Area Health Education Center in Western New York has announced that the successful M.A.S.H. (Medical Academy of Science and Health) summer camp is being offered again this year. The camp is a two-day, hands-on learning experience into health careers. Date: July 19 and 20. This program has been very successful in guiding students into health careers and is worthy of replication. Call Dave Preste, R-AHEC Coordinator at (607) 243-9838 to learn more.

- Fit & Fun is a school to community physical fitness and nutrition program designed to address the obesity problems among children in four rural New York counties who are in grades pre-kindergarten through 8th grade, their families, and the community. The program began in 1999 in the Gowanda Central School District to address childhood diabetes. It has now expanded into
seven more school districts with another four planning activities next school year. The program was
developed by the Healthy Community Alliance, a NYS Rural Health Network, in partnership with
the Gowanda Central School District and five additional organizations. The two major contributing
factors to the growing obesity epidemic are addressed—poor nutrition and physical inactivity.
There are five major components to the Fit & Fun program including, Healthy Snack Taste Testing,
Healthy Choices Sticker Program, Fitness Bucks, Fit & Fun Relay Night, and Family Fit & Fun Night. All
activities take place in the school setting except for the Fitness Bucks activity where students record
their amount of physical activity in and outside the school setting. A Fit & Fun manual is
available—call (716) 532-1010. Learn more about Fit & Fun at
Also visit Activ8Kids! — New York’s Childhood Overweight and obesity prevention program at
http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/obesity/activ8kids/.

- Albany Medical College (Albany County) joined forces with Hudson Valley Community College in
2002 to develop a work-study program called “Growing our Own”. The program provides eligible
Albany Medical Center employees with full tuition and a reduction in work hours with full-time pay
to return to school in an associate degree program to become registered nurses. In exchange, the
students must commit to work for four years at Albany Medical Center. The medical center is
proud to announce that the first 14 graduates of the program were honored recently.

- Kudos to the Adirondack Medical Center (AMC) for uniting hospital and insurance officials to
form the Uninsured Task Force. Since the committee formed in 2003, the number of uninsured
residents in the Tri-Lakes area has dropped. According to a recent survey 89 percent of adults in the
area have some kind of insurance. The task force will look next at identifying the levels of coverage
local businesses are providing and will continue to work to increase the number of area residents
who have coverage — one family at a time.
Albany Medical Center in the Capital District created the “nurse hotel” — consisting of six
dormitory rooms with a single bed, a nightstand with a phone, a chair and a sink — as an incentive
to fill the 200 nursing vacancies they faced three years ago. Today, Albany Med has only 40 nursing
vacancies out of 1,200 positions. At St. Peter’s Hospital in Albany, nurses can get a year of school
loans paid off for every year they commit to work at the hospital. Both hospitals pay for employees
to go to school to become registered nurses and allow nurses to bid on unpopular shifts, allowing
them to control when they work and how much they get paid.

- Statewide, municipalities continue to struggle to attract and retain local volunteer emergency
services personnel. For this reason, Senator George H. Winner, Jr. (R-Elmira) introduced legislation
known as the "Emergency Services Volunteer Incentive Act" to help communities fend off an
ongoing statewide decline in the ranks of volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel.
According to the Firemen’s Association of the State of New York, the number of volunteer
firefighters statewide has declined from 140,000 in the early 1990s to approximately 110,000 today.
Volunteer emergency medical technicians (EMTs) experienced a decline from more than 50,000 to
35,000 during the same period. If this struggle continues, it will cost billions of dollars for localities
and local property taxpayers to pay for the critical services currently provided by volunteer
firefighters and EMTs. The Firemen’s Association estimates that volunteer firefighters save local
taxpayers $3 billion annually. The state Legislature has tried to do more on recent years to recognize
and reward the contributions of emergency services volunteers. A college tuition incentive program
was established for volunteers in 2002 and funded at $2 million. The intent for this measure was
developed by the Rural Resources Commission as S.6279/A.9829 and encompassed into the
Governor’s State Budget Bill S.6258B/A.9706B. In addition, Senator Kemp Hannon (R-C-I Garden City) sponsored a bill (S.4240) to allow volunteer firefighters to take tuition-free courses at state universities and community colleges. Those who take courses under this bill would receive the same course credit as any other student, thus allowing a volunteer firefighter to receive a degree in a chosen field of study. Contact Senator Hannon's office at 518.455.2200 for a copy of the bill. Numerous counties across the state provide as much as a 10% real property tax exemption on the primary residence of a volunteer firefighter or ambulance worker. A new law enacted late last year created a temporary task force on "Volunteer Firefighter and EMT Recruitment and Retention." Task force recommendations are expected this year. For a copy of the bill, contact Senator George H. Winner Jr.’s office at 518.455.2091 or the Rural Resources Commission at 518.455.2544.

• The Hudson Mohawk Area Health Education Center (HM-AHEC) created an innovative curriculum series focusing on five of the human body systems and the health careers associated with these systems. HM-AHEC provides a one-day interactive training workshop for teachers in grades 4-6, providing them with activities and resources to help students develop an awareness of the many careers in health care. The curriculum integrates English language arts, math, science, social studies, and technology, while keeping the content focused on health career awareness. Some of the activities include: forensic science labs, building a lung model, acting out the digestive process of a hamburger through the intestines, and interpreting document based questions (DBQs) on death records of the 1800s. The Teacher Triage curriculum is available for purchase by contacting Beth O’Brien at (518) 480-2432 or E-mail her at bobrien@hmahec.org.

• Health-e-Access enables patients and their doctors to readily connect via telemedicine for the purpose of diagnosis and treatment of acute medical problems in children. The program was conceived by physicians of the Golisano Children's Hospital of the University of Rochester's Medical Center in Monroe County. Using high-quality videoconferencing and digital medical cameras, a child in school or child care programs can be seen by a doctor located in an office many miles away. The program has active telemedicine service programs in seven Rochester-area child care centers, and the number of participating sites keeps growing. When a child is sick, the child care center's Certified Telehealth Assistant (CTA) contacts the parent to discuss symptoms and initiate a videoconference with a Health-e-Access clinician. Within a few minutes, the doctor determines the cause of the earache and, if necessary, prescribed appropriate treatment. If the parent chooses to use a participating pharmacy, a prescription can be delivered to the center so it can be given to the child immediately. Using digital photos, stethoscope sounds, and video images obtained with telemedicine equipment, physicians can carefully analyze available information. With telemedicine, the camera can be in and out quickly, allowing the doctor to replay video image and then freeze it at the precise moment when the eardrum is clearly visible, allowing the doctor to take a long, careful look. Health-e-Access services include pediatric urgent care; telemedicine consulting; and sustainability research. Visit their web site at http://www.health-e-access.org/. Pediatricians in this program envision Health-e-Access in every pediatric office, every child care program, and every elementary school in upstate New York. Note: The state of Kansas has had a similar program in place in elementary schools since 1998 called TeleKidcare. The school-based service was the first to provide urgent care and behavioral health care through telemedicine to children while at school.

• The Genesee Valley Health Partnership (GVHP) launched HIP HOP (Healthy Input and Health Output) — a school-based health improvement plan for students in the Livingston County school districts. HIP HOP assists school staff in developing interventions and programs that support life-
long wellness starting with school age children. Learn more at http://www.gvhp.org or call the Wellness Coordinator at 585.724.2786.

• Earlier this year we did a story on the frustration rural counties were experiencing with finding enough revenue sources to meet the burden of ever-increasing Medicaid fees. We highlighted the County of Chemung, that had taken matters into its own hands and partnered with a local business, Salient Technologies, to develop a software program to discover cost savings in Medicaid. The software discovered some alarming expenditures, like $1.8 million spent in the county on brand-name drugs when a generic was available. We are pleased to report that money has been allocated in the 2006-07 State Budget for Chemung County to begin a pilot program to further investigate Medicaid fraud allegations. The county will serve as a test case—utilizing a private health insurer to administer the County’s Medicaid program.

• Rome Memorial Hospital in Oneida County is another success story. The hospital’s economic impact on the community increased by nearly 30 percent in three years—contributing $108 million to the area in 2004; not to mention, supporting 1,460 jobs.

• Ellenville Regional Hospital, a rural hospital in Ulster County, survived two bankruptcies over the past several years and is back in the black, thanks to community support and the hospital’s new chief executive officer, who took over 2 ½ years ago, shortly after the two bankruptcies. The CEO set about mobilizing the community, cutting expenses, renegotiating insurance contracts, and convincing the Ulster County Legislature of the need to keep the hospital open. With the help of the community, he was able to convince the Legislature to put up $600,000 to sustain day-to-day operations. That money has since been paid back to the Legislature. Critical to making the hospital a sustainable operation was its federal designation as a Critical Access Facility, which supplements funding with higher Medicare reimbursements. New services geared to the needs of the community were also created. A geriatrician was hired to oversee a primary care program for seniors. And many of the departments were improved and upgraded. Another program which served to revitalize the hospital was the NYS Swing Beds Program, which designates a certain number of beds for those who have been discharged from a hospital after surgery or illness, but aren’t quite ready to go home. This program was originated by the Rural Resources Commission several years ago for use in rural hospitals. A new and up-to-date emergency room is in the works as well as efforts to attract new physicians to the hospital. Kudos to this rural hospital!
Rural Schools & Youth

Rural Schools & Youth - Listening Sessions Synopsis

Rural Schools and Youth is a comprehensive theme area with important implications for the overall health and sustainability of Rural New York. Especially apparent are its ties to Rural Economic Development, Agriculture and Food Systems, Community Capacity and Social Networks, Workforce Development, and Poverty. In addition, concerns associated with the loss of youth from rural communities consistently emerged as one of the top three issues currently facing Rural New York.

Although the bulk of comments focused on the rural school system, it is important to note that these themes have crucial implications for youth development organizations and other youth services as well. Given the sheer volume of response, it is surprising to note the overall consistency of comments in this area.

Rural schools have strong community support, and occupy an integral position as “center[s] of the community.” To a large extent, positive comments reflect the perception that small school and class sizes offer increased opportunities for active participation and help foster quality connections between teachers and students.

In order to build upon these strengths, participants expressed a clear desire for greater local control and community integration of curriculum. Participants indicated a need to expand the curriculum to increase its responsiveness to local needs and to include education for social issues, physical and nutritional health, entrepreneurship, agriculture, and life skills such as financial literacy. There is an overall drive to reduce the centralization of the education system and the unhealthy emphasis on standardized testing—current national trends that participants feel are mismatched to the unique needs of rural areas.

At the same time, participants suggested an increased need for coordination and collaboration at various levels—not only between school districts, but also counties, community colleges, and public and private youth agencies. Given the recognition that course offerings and extra-curricular activities are generally more limited in scope at small rural schools, the development of these partnerships may expand opportunities and maximize use of limited resources. Although a few participants directly referenced traditional school consolidation as positive, the more individuals emphasize creative methods—such as resource sharing between districts or consolidation at an administrative level—that will enable communities to retain the value of the rural school as a local institution.

Participants consistently identified BOCES as a valuable rural institution that serves an important purpose in filling an educational niche and preparing students for the labor force. Despite the actual value of their services, however, BOCES and other forms of Career and Technical Education suffer greatly from a negative image and lack of respect. Once students are branded as being on one track or another, there is little opportunity for movement or exploration between the two. Comments suggest that this polarization between CTE and college-track education is particularly detrimental to rural areas, in which youth who are perceived to be more talented are often trained to be “exported” away from the local community—at the expense of the needs of other students.
In order to enable rural communities to make use of local resources and promote community engagement and workforce development, participants suggested the need for a paradigm shift towards local education for local needs. All youth, regardless of which “track” they are on-- whether college-bound or not-- need exposure to the full range of opportunities and possibilities. Guidance counselors must be aware of local employment needs and opportunities, including those in agriculture and the trades. Partnerships between schools and local businesses, which may take the form of career awareness programs, internships, mentorships, and job-shadowing, must be encouraged in all fields-- including agriculture.

Because small rural schools thus “provide a focus and identity for promoting community and economic development,” participants felt that schools offer strong potential for community engagement. A framework must be developed to better encourage school-community collaboration and foster a sense of community ownership among students. To this end, hands-on activities within the community, in forms such as experiential and service learning, were seen as critical to retaining youth in these rural areas.

Participants observed that rural education must instill appreciation for agriculture and nature, pride in the rural culture, and “rootedness” in local/regional economic opportunities. At the same time, this education must also ensure that students become globally competitive in their use of technology and telecommunications in order to succeed in the wider society. Participants acknowledge somewhat of an emerging tension between these two needs as reflective of themes of old vs. new and local vs. global.

To achieve successful rural youth development, participants indicate that schools need to be recognized as more than just a place where youth go to fulfill requirements. The role of schools must be expanded to include an overall emphasis on the physical, mental, and emotional health of youth. In order to maximize their outreach, youth organizations should work in partnership with rural schools to create more coordinated and comprehensive youth services that respond to changing profiles of communities. To this end, needed services and programs in rural areas include counseling, child psychiatry, leadership development, both before- and after- school programs, and youth-built programming.

In order to achieve the true potential of rural education and youth services, funding priorities need to be re-examined and current taxation models reformed. Rural programs must develop new ways to successfully compete for available grants. The capacity of rural schools to attract and retain quality teachers and administrators must be promoted through measures such as competitive pay, professional development, and creative incentives.

Under the current system, declining population in rural areas often results in a lack of resources available for education and youth services, which, in turn, contributes to increased youth out migration and the loss of further resources. Overall participant comments demonstrate widespread recognition that this vicious cycle reflects the relationship between education, youth, and the rural economy.

The general sentiment was that future integration of youth, school, and the community will have positive ripple effects throughout the community-- with an overall emphasis on youth retention and local workforce development. “Investment in youth” is thus seen as a necessary component of rural community development.
In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:

- More effective use of school buildings as community resources
- Development of flexible curriculum, with experiential, school-community collaborations and service learning opportunities
- Local education for local needs, with increased awareness of local workforce development needs and career opportunities
- Alternative funding models (reform tax structure)
- Integration of physical, mental, and emotional health (school-based health centers)
- Communication, collaboration, and resource-sharing between various levels of educational institutions
- Community colleges as emerging resource

In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:

- Overemphasis on Regents, standardized tests, and “teaching to the test”
- Current phenomena of “brain drain” and out migration
- Mismatch between local needs/resources and current curriculum
- Funding and taxation concerns (property taxes are ineffective)
- Devaluation of vocational and agricultural education (e.g., stigma, tracking of “college” vs. BOCES/CTE)
- Travel distance and lack of transportation (may be a disincentive for after-school activities and services)
- Lack of stable leadership (due to retention difficulties)
If they are to survive and thrive, rural communities need to keep more of their young people. To contribute to the vitality of their communities, young people need a high quality education. The cruel irony is that when small rural schools are most successful, their graduates go away to college and never come back. How can rural communities provide the kind of education their youth need to be productive workers in a global economy and simultaneously instill in youth a sense of connectedness to people and place that will lead them to stay or return?

Retaining young adults is clearly contingent upon the availability of good jobs (OECD, 1993; Gibbs & Cromartie, 1994; Gibbs, 1995). Creating and sustaining labor market demand is central to community vitality and prosperity. But economic opportunity is not the only critical factor (Flora & Flora, 1993). The decision to remain in or return to the home community is based not only on the availability of jobs but also on family ties, on personal ties to peers and unrelated adults in the community, and on a sense of commitment to and identification with the community (Wilson & Peterson, 1988). Even more than urban youth, rural youth are likely to feel conflicted about moving away for economic reasons because of close ties to their families (Hektner, 1995). According to Garasky (2002), who compared rural and urban youth and young adult migration patterns in the 1979 cohort of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth:

Many community development efforts have come to perceive youth retention as a high priority, an understanding that the quality of life for local residents is tied to the ability of the community to maintain a viable base of younger adults. The results of this study suggest that non-economic factors play an important role in the youth migration process. (p. 429)

Crockett, Shanahan, & Jackson-Newsom, (2000) came to a similar conclusion, identifying as a major conflict for rural youth the dilemma of remaining near their family in a place they know or leaving to pursue more attractive educational and career opportunities (see also Elder, King, & Conger, 1996).

When young people find a community attractive, they are motivated to solve the fundamental challenge of finding a job in creative ways. They might be willing to make a longer commute or telecommute. Entrepreneurship is another option. Accepting the necessity of economic development, we contend that economic development alone is not sufficient. Youth also need strong ties to adults and active involvement in the communities, and their communities must support their aspirations. Among the strengths of rural schools identified in the listening sessions were the close relationships between students and teachers that small school size makes possible along with greater opportunities for youth involvement in school and community activities.

We propose developing and testing a systematic approach to retaining a larger proportion of the best and brightest youth in rural communities by increasing high school students’ connections with adults and their engagement with community issues both to make their transition to adulthood more successful and their communities stronger.
The germinal activity is youth interviews of successful local adults about their life histories. These stories will stimulate youth reflection on their own life goals and steps to implement those goals. Youth in pairs will interview selected adults about their career paths and civic engagement. Each pair of youth will write a report on the life history of their interviewee. These will cover at a minimum key points related to the adult’s education, employment, mentoring relationships during their youth, and civic engagement. These life histories will then be shared, for example, through a newsletter, a self-published journal, and/or a special section in a local newspaper. The web will also be used to disseminate photos and video clips as well as life history texts. They will also be used to stimulate discussions among groups of young people and in youth-adult pairs about plans for the future.

The life histories will reveal not only personal qualities that lead to success but also the ways in which communities in the past have helped or hindered young people in achieving their dreams. Using information generated by the life histories, youth and adults will assess the opportunities their communities provide to youth and those that are lacking. Community forums will consider recommendations for actions to enhance youth opportunities. Subsequent community action will build on the recommendations of the forums. We believe this approach will increase natural mentoring relationships as some youth come to see the adults they interviewed or worked with as advisors and role models (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004). It will create more opportunities for youth to have the experience of making a difference in their communities, which builds their commitment to those communities. Participation in these activities will build life skills and self-confidence. Youth will be better able to make informed decisions about personal career paths. Ultimately, some portion of those youth will choose to live in the community as a result of this experience and will be more active citizens as well.

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The main issues and challenges raised by the participants appear to hinge on three axes. First, there exist strong feelings that the current trend toward state control of curricula and graduation requirements is misplaced. Local communities should have much more control over the content of their children’s schooling and the requirements for graduation. Second, the participants argue that current academic offerings and demands are not relevant to some of the students, particularly those interested in vocational work. Students should be offered the opportunity to study and involve themselves in schoolwork that directly reflects outside interests and local needs. Third, the summaries suggest the financing of public schools in its current form is unfair and unwise. The wide variation in local property values calls for a more centralized and redistributive finance scheme.

These three points represent traditional battlegrounds in the development of the public educational system over the past two centuries. At issue are local rights and priorities in light of compelling and sometimes competing state interests (Strike, 1997). When interests diverge, conflict exists. Of course, publicly funded schools should meet the local needs of youth and communities. However, as the state contributes a larger and larger share of the local school district’s revenue stream, should not the state have significant influence on the content and standards in the local schools? Moreover, the redistribution of wealth from the state to poor communities is clearly taking place. Variation in per-pupil-expenditures is quite small within regions, however the needs of students across these equally funded districts vary tremendously (Killeen & Sipple, 2006).

Of course, the growth in state-mandated curriculum and content standards stems from the state perception that local communities and their schools were not preparing students for an economic future that supports the state’s needs (see the Board of Regent’s Call to Action, 2006: http://usny.nysed.gov/summit/summit/summitcall05.htm). Thus the growth in state intervention (and hence state funding) has been motivated by the variation in need and performance across local communities.

I want to focus this discussion on the outcomes of the current educational system, for it is the outcomes that are driving the policy conversations (e.g., curriculum and graduation requirements) at the state level and the programmatic responses at the local level (Sipple, Killeen, & Monk, 2004). While much has been made of the increases in the 4th grade ELA and mathematics test scores, the relatively flat scores at the 8th grade level, and the steady increase in the Regents English performance, I wish to focus on dropout rates and highlight the importance of high school completion and preparation for at least some college.

Local Community Control and Centralized Educational Goals: A Brief Review

The press for improved curriculum, pedagogy, accountability, and academic learning opportunities is not new. At the outset of the 20th century, administrative progressives and efficiency experts called for the reform of schools, particularly the small, rural school houses (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). Reformers argued for the consolidation of small schools and districts into large, and the standardization of reporting mechanisms and measures that new professional administrators could use to assess the productivity of each school (Callahan, 1962; Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).
The very existence of numerous small, inefficient, and disconnected schools was termed the “Rural School Problem” (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). It was argued that only through consolidation and centralization could adequate capacity be gained to offer a wider range of educational opportunities in what was termed the comprehensive high school. What ensued during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century was a dramatic reduction in the number of very small schools and school districts (Killeen & Sipple, 2000).

Over the course of the last century, some have argued that American educational reform has been dominated by efforts to centralize, standardize, consolidate, and homogenize the nation’s schools and school districts (Howley, 1997; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Meyer, Scott, Strang, & Creighton, 1988). The goal of this reform was to pressure all schools into the mold of large, urban schools (Tyack, 1974), aggregate student populations to allow for comprehensive high schools (Conant, 1959), and contribute to "nation building" (Howley, 1997). Building on these centralized notions of education, state governments have actively pursued the push for larger, more centralized schools.

However, a fracture in this view is occurring, spurred on by an increasing awareness of local educational demands and constraints and the relative success of small and rural schools on standardized performance measures. As evidenced by the expanding body of research focusing on state standards and the unique challenges and opportunities found in rural schools, the goals of education are splintered (Strike, 1997) though state established standards and local curricula are not necessarily incompatible (Jennings, 2000). One road is heading toward homogenization of schools, curricula, and practice while the other meeting local ecological needs of communities (Arum, 2000; Sipple, 2004). This contrast highlights the crossroads of current policy debates: centralized curriculum and assessments in smaller and less bureaucratic school systems. Scholars have argued convincingly that we need to “strike a principled balance” between individual and local community liberties and centralized educational goals (Strike, 1997, p. 5).

Today many rural schools remain and have recently enjoyed a renaissance of sorts (Beeson & Strange, 2000). This attention has been sparked, in part, by reports of reasonable performance at lower cost when compared with their urban and suburban neighbors (Fan & Chen, 1999; Reeves & Bylund, 2005) and research proclaiming the advantages of small schools to communities (Lyson, 2002).

Moreover, the state has turned its attention to completion, dropout, and transfer rates (see http://www.regents.nysed.gov/2006Meetings/January2006/106brd3.htm). In doing so, the state mirrors a national conversation on new and improved dropout calculations and measures (Laird, Lew, DeBell, & Chapman, 2006; Swanson, 2004). The state has recently released newly calculated completion, dropout, and transfer rates and rather than support the traditionally reported statewide dropout rate of approximately 5%, the new numbers are two to five times as large. This is not to say that the dropout rate is increasing (there is much debate in the literature on this), but rather a more accurate assessment of dropout rates is closer to 12% statewide and as high as 30, 50, and 70% in a small number of districts. These new numbers come from the tracking of new 9th graders in 2000, and documenting where they are four years later. This reveals only 67% of the 9th grade cohorts graduating after 4 years.

The reason this is important and relevant to the responses to the listening sessions is that the State of NY is spending $40 Billion per year on K-12 education and only two thirds of the students are graduating on time. Moreover, another 12% are dropping out, 10% are remaining in school for at
least part of a fifth year, and 4% are entering GED programs. The value of a high school diploma and the barrier to college the lack of a diploma represents is of import to individuals, communities, and to the state writ-large. Personal income differentials between those without a high school diploma and those with a high school diploma are large (i.e., $5000 - $8000 annually). In generational terms, a study by the National Center for Children in Poverty (2004) found that 59% of children in NYS whose parents do not have a high school degree live in low-income families. In contrast, only 10% of children whose parents have at least some college live in low income families.

So, what does this mean for the issue of local vs. state control of curriculum, graduation requirements, and finance? The state is arguing that the centralized curricula, etc is key to raising the standard of living and economic potential for the state. The respondents argue that it is the very centralization of decision-making that impacts high school offerings and results in student disengagement and lack of success. It is this juncture that we need to focus our conversations, alter our educational practice and policies (local and state), and aim our research.

Benchmarking studies have identified very successful anomalies in school performance. – key is commitment to academic learning and success, leadership quality and tenure of school leaders. What has past/current research failed to address?

Research on rural school performance has been hindered by a lack of consensus on a singular definition of rural. Toward this end, the National Center for Education Statistics just released new classifications of rural with hopes of providing a more consistent and fine-grained disaggregation of “rural” schools (http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/Definitions.asp and http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/Rural_Locales.asp).

The second substantial area of debate is the disagreement in the research literature is over outcome measures. For instance, many argue for school consolidation so that students can experience a greater range of academic and non-academic offerings. Conversely, others suggest that a sense of belonging and community is essential for a positive school experience and small rural schools are uniquely equipped to provide this for their students. It is often the case in the literature that both sides are technically able to support their claims, and hence both are “right”.

**New research and extension questions that result from the information gathered at the listening sessions:**

- Can local communities design demanding curricula and opportunities for students that will both meet local and state needs?
- Can a strong sense of community in small rural schools overcome the lack of breadth in course offerings and teacher expertise? Studies rarely follow the students into their 20s and 30s to see how well their schooling served them.

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2 Low income is defined as twice the federal poverty level, or $37,700 for a family of four.

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Rural Schools and Youth

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There is no question that the school is playing an increasingly important role in most upstate rural communities, and this is very evident in the responses of participants. There is also recognition of the need to make better use of resources through collaboration and partnering. Participants acknowledge the important role of BOCES in terms of district services to students. There were few if any comments, however, on the role that BOCES can play in facilitating and developing collaborative arrangements and partnerships. Many comments appear to suggest that participants were looking “inward” and not “outward.” It is important that rural youth develop a “sense of place” and pride in their communities. At the same time it is important to recognize that the young people attending our rural schools will be living and working in a global economy and in a society that is highly mobile. Appreciation of the rural culture and preparation for living and working in a global economy are not incompatible goals. We need to recognize this new reality and its implications for rural communities.

Relevant Literature

- Work of Tom Lyson – importance of schools to communities
- Work of Rural Schools and Community Trust dealing with declining enrollments in rural schools
- Work of Paul Eberts – Socioeconomic Trends 2000 and his “population pyramid” provide some interesting analysis on what is happening in rural areas.
- Studies done by the Center for Government Research in Rochester on school collaboration and school consolidation
- Work of John Sipple – Student Performance and organization of school health clinics

Success Stories

- Central Business Office program at the Broome Tioga BOCES involving seven districts. (Program is being replicated at the Greater Southern Tier BOCES).
- Family Support Centers – in the Union Endicott CSD and the Erie County School Districts.
- Distance Learning initiatives – Greater Southern Tier BOCES, Broome Tioga BOCES, Madison Oneida BOCES, and Washington – Saratoga – Warren – Hamilton – Essex BOCES.
- School to Work Initiatives through several BOCES; e.g. Genesee Valley.
- Early Childhood initiatives in Broome County and Chemung County.
Research Questions

- Do large systems lead to improved student performance, greater efficiency, and significant savings?
- Comparison of student learning in traditional classroom setting with learning in distance learning settings, and with learning through web based instruction.
- Impact of pre-school early intervention strategies on student learning in rural school settings.
- Does a full service school lead to improvements in student performance? Full service being defined as broad based family and child support services.

New Research Questions

- Changing rural demographics and its impact on the aspiration level of rural children.
- What Teen Assessment Data suggests about school performance and student aspiration level.
- School/Community College connection and its impact on student learning.
Youth Organization

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The listening sessions for the Rural Vision Project certainly identified many, if not a comprehensive list, of the key challenges and opportunities facing rural NYS schools and communities, especially in regards to rural youth organizations and activities. While providing unique opportunities, today’s rural communities also face special challenges of providing youth with quality out-of-school leadership and organizational experiences. In agricultural areas, rural youth traditionally participated in 4-H and FFA (formerly Future Farmers of America). Today, these organizations remain viable opportunities for many youth, but other organizations may also be of interest to youth and provide opportunities for leadership, communication, cooperation, and life skills development.

Individuals identified several key areas of interest regarding youth organizations and activities for rural youth in NYS. These include:

- Development of youth in the areas of leadership, communication, and life skills.
- Creation of youth organizations that empower youth to address rural social issues, that initiate service learning, and that otherwise engage youth in the community.
- Engagement in rural communities to attempt to alleviate the “brain drain” experienced by many rural NYS communities.
- Provisions for rural youth to experience the broader world and its opportunities.
- Lack of after-school and organizational opportunities for rural youth—what can be done to increase the extra- and intra-curricular offerings at local schools?

Youth organizations often strive to develop individuals in a holistic approach. For example, the National FFA Organization’s mission is to develop students’ “potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success” (National FFA Organization, 2006, p. 4). As such, involvement in extracurricular organizations tends to strengthen students’ interest in and success with diverse learning environments (Brown & Theobald, 1998). Conventional wisdom and research indicates that youth who participate in organizations as youth also engage in organizations at a higher level as college students and later in life (Balschweid & Talbert, 2000; Park & Dyer, 2005). College students who are former 4-H and FFA members participated in college and community organizations at a higher level than their peers who were not engaged in such organizations.

Service learning was identified as an area of concern within rural communities in NYS. Research indicates that involvement in service learning activities leads to improved leadership and increased contributions to the community (Israel & Ilvento, 1995; Stafford, Boyd, & Lindner, 2003). It improves decision making and cooperation among youth (Boyd, 2001), and may contribute to overall academic achievement (Dorman, 1997). Schools continue to seek ways of involving students in service learning and community engagement opportunities.

One area of youth organizational involvement that was mentioned by only one listening session, but which is having an impact nationally is the influx of females into leadership roles within youth
organizations. Ricketts, Osborne, and Rudd (2004) concluded that females dominated local FFA chapter officer teams and leadership activities more than their male counterparts. This finding is similar to the phenomenon happening throughout the National FFA Organization. How are NYS rural communities addressing both the needs of female youth in leadership roles and encouraging males to reengage with these organizations?

A key to the success of youth organizations, especially those targeting adolescents, is the balance between youth-centered and adult-driven leadership that is espoused by the organization’s advisor or adult leader. Because learning in such contexts is inherently social, when adults give youth autonomy and power to make decisions, yet create a structure for the learning, then youth tend to participate more intensively and gain more from the experience (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005; Mitra, 2005). Maintaining an appropriate balance between youth-centered and adult-driven leadership is important to enhancing the life skills and leadership development of youth.

While youth organizations, like FFA, include a community service component, most local schools do not utilize the 1988 New York State policy that allows CTE students to utilize a planned program of leadership activities with a CTE student organization to fulfill the Social Studies IV: Participation in Government ½ credit (New York State Education Department, 1989). Local FFA chapters often engage students in community service projects such as agricultural awareness expositions, environmental clean-up campaigns, and service projects for underprivileged populations. Additionally, through FFA participation, students may take advantage of travel opportunities to Washington, D.C., or to the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. FFA advisors often coordinate educational tours along the travel route for students.

An example of a youth organization/FFA success story is the implementation of Partners in Active Learning Support (PALS). In the PALS program, high school students and elementary students partner for structured mentoring activities in local agriculture programs. This program provides high school students with a community service experience and provides additional hands-on and peer mentoring experiences for elementary children. Examples of PALS activities include literacy projects, school gardens, and after-school activities.

Local FFA programs both challenge and provide opportunities for students in a variety of ways. For example, through participation in FFA, students learn parliamentary procedure, a skill that enables them to participate on boards of education and other civic organizations. FFA members compete in Career Development Events, such as the agriscience fair, agricultural issues forum, and agricultural communications CDE, where they learn about agricultural issues and problems, then create solutions to those problems. These issues and problems are not fictional, but rather actual problems and opportunities in the local community.

Past research involving the FFA and other youth organizations has failed to address the social capital generated by such organizations. How many hours of community service does the FFA chapter contribute to the community? What is the impact? Another area is the impact on students’ leadership development. How do youth organizations develop leadership? What happens to these leaders upon graduation from high school? In essence, what are the five-, ten-, and twenty-year effects of participation in organizations such as FFA?
Areas of new research and extension related to youth organizations and FFA include:

- How and in what capacity do former FFA and other youth organization members engage in leadership and community service after high school graduation?
- What is the impact of youth organization involvement on core academic achievement?
- Why are females increasing participation and leadership in such organizations while the numbers of males in leadership roles continues to decline?
- What is the social capital impact of a youth organization on the local school and community?
- How does involvement in youth organizations help prevent high school drop-out?
- What is the value of an FFA chapter or other youth organization to a local school and community?
- How can FFA and other youth organizations attract and retain members who are engaged in both the youth organization and the greater community?

References


CTE and Agricultural Science Education

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The listening sessions for the Rural Vision Project identified many of the key challenges and opportunities facing rural NYS schools and communities, especially in regards to career and technical education (CTE), including agricultural science education. While providing unique career opportunities, today’s rural communities also face special challenges of providing youth with a balanced education that prepares them with skills and knowledge necessary for careers, college, and life. CTE, especially with advanced models of curriculum and delivery, challenges students intellectually while providing applications of knowledge to solve real-world problems. CTE provides a context in which the lessons of core academic areas are applied in rigorous, relevant, and engaging contexts that pertain to student interests and future career aspirations. While yesterday’s CTE may have been a dumping grounds for poor-performing or discipline-problem students, today’s CTE challenges even the most academically talented youth and offers opportunities for growth among ALL students.

The listening sessions identified several key concerns and opportunities that avail themselves to solutions that hold the potential of improving the status of rural NYS communities. Among these are:

- The creation of articulation agreements between local and/or state colleges and rural high schools for awarding college credit in rigorous, relevant courses.
- Improving the image of CTE and agricultural science education.
- Creation of rigorous, relevant, and engaging curriculum within CTE and agricultural science education to address student and societal needs for graduates who are prepared for college, careers, and citizenry.
- Engagement in rural communities to attempt to alleviate the “brain drain” experienced by many rural NYS communities.
- Provisions for rural youth to experience the broader world and its opportunities.
- Discontinuity between high school preparation of rural youth and the expectations of major universities for incoming students.
- Lack of career awareness of CTE and agricultural science careers beyond those traditionally identified.

Many students participate in at least one CTE course throughout their secondary school experience, thus CTE programs are a major component of students’ high school education (Stone & Aliaga, 2005). Nationally, nearly 21% of students participate in CTE programs (Levesque et. al., 2000). CTE courses, including agricultural science education, have shown positive impacts on students’ dropout rates, college enrollment, high school attendance, and grade point average (Hughes, Bailey, & Mechur, 2001). Further, CTE has been shown to have a positive impact on students at-risk of academic failure (Castellano, Stringfield, & Stone, 2003).

With the advent of movements toward standardized testing and national educational standards, as evidenced with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, CTE has begun to feel the need to
provide evidence of programmatic contributions to students’ overall achievement in the core academic areas (Belcher, McCaslin, & Headley, 1996; Conroy & Walker, 2000). Agricultural science teachers as well as other CTE teachers are beginning to help all students succeed in core academic areas, including reading, mathematics, and science (Park & Osborne, in press; Shinn, Lindner, Case, Edwards, Osborne, & Park, 2003). Initiatives have begun to be implemented to strengthen the agricultural science curriculum in New York State. For example, a Cornell University Department of Education project is currently underway to develop comprehensive assessments for agricultural science education courses.

CTE programs offer much to a local school district, including articulation agreements with post-secondary programs, curriculum that is cross-walked with academic coursework, supervised opportunities for work-based learning experiences, work skills employability profiles for all students who complete the program, and a technical assessment that meets industry standards (Stevens, 2001). Current agricultural science teachers have communicated their interest in creating more articulation agreements between local high schools and colleges where students earn college credit upon successful completion of certain CTE high school courses (Camp, Park, & Moore, 2006). CTE programs may also provide third year science and math credits, as well as the fourth year of English and fourth year of social studies credits for students.

Agricultural science education and CTE success stories are often related to expanding career opportunities for students. For example, The Fillmore and Wellsville FFA chapter advisors plan an annual trip to explore agriculture and historical sites related to broad careers in agriculture. One year the students toured a $3.5 million hog facility in northern Pennsylvania, Herr’s Potato Chip factory in southern Pennsylvania, Longwood Gardens, and the King of Prussia Mall near Philadelphia. As an example of a non-traditional agribusiness, students were welcomed by the manager of the company that provides mallscaping, the landscaping of the mall with foliage that can tolerate low light and provide atmosphere to mall patrons (Than Mehlenbacher, personal communication).

Because of the beneficial nature of agricultural science education to students’ overall academic, leadership, and social development, several school districts in New York State have created agricultural science programs in their local schools. Over the past three years, six new programs have been initiated in New York State. This modest growth has only been slowed by the lack of qualified teachers for new programs. Had an abundance of qualified teachers been available, then more programs would have been added. As such, agricultural science education is experiencing controlled growth in the numbers of programs and students served by the curricula.

Agricultural science education programs are not found solely in rural communities. They are also found in suburban and major urban communities, such as John Bowne High School, in New York City. In traditionally rural communities, agricultural science programs help students develop awareness and competence in a broad array of agricultural careers, such as animal science, plant science, natural resource management, food science, horticulture, landscaping, and leadership.

Areas of new research related to CTE and NYS high school programs include:

- What curricula do current secondary students need in order to prepare themselves for productive careers?
- How does CTE engage students so that they remain in school and complete NYS graduation requirements?
• How many, and in what capacity do, agricultural science education and/or CTE students return to or stay in their local community upon completion of post-secondary education?
• How can post-secondary institutions and the teaching profession recruit, prepare, and retain highly qualified CTE teachers who are prepared to provide rigorous, relevant courses that can be awarded academic credit?
• How does experiential learning in agricultural science education and other areas of CTE provide value to students and the school system?
• How does dual certification of CTE teachers in another academic area influence the retention or expansion of CTE programs in local school programs and BOCES?
• How does participation in CTE programs influence student achievement in core academic areas?
• What professional development is needed by CTE teachers to prepare them to deliver rigorous, relevant, and engaging curricula that helps students improve achievement in core academic areas?

References


Rural Schools & Youth - “Success Stories”

• In New York, the Adirondack Business and School Partnership introduces teachers and students to local businesses. The Partnership was formed by a group of regional business and education leaders who believe that in order to stimulate the economy, businesses and school must work together to prepare students for the work force. The Partnership acts as a clearinghouse for information and develops programs to fulfill unmet needs between the business and school communities. Learn more at http://www.adirondackchamber.org/business-to-school.htm

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology has become a critical tool in numerous industries around the world and the numbers continue to grow at about 15 percent every year. Recognizing that GIS is here to stay, schools, community projects, and outreach programs are introducing GIS technology to youth. The projects bring interdisciplinary studies, science, math and community service to the real world for students and teachers. In New York in the Spring semester 2000, components of GIS were added to an existing methods course for students pursuing secondary social studies certification through the education program at Hartwick College. As part of a 2000-2001 college/community partnership for learning, Hartwick social studies students collaborated with social studies classroom teachers at Oneonta Middle School to design ways to align GIS with existing units of instruction in the middle school social studies curriculum. For details visit www.esri.com/k-12.

• Students in rural areas are increasingly looking to distance education to take advanced-level courses that aren’t available in their schools. The US Department of Education released a study this year that found one-third of public school districts had students enrolled in e-learning courses in 2002-2003; and nearly half of all rural school districts had students taking distance education courses. Teleconferencing and interactive video also have become more common. Check out the Virtual High School at http://www.govhs.org/Pages/Welcome-Home.

• aka Science is a pre-K through sixth grade after school science curriculum developed and distributed by Hands On Science Outreach (HOSO), a Maryland-based nonprofit corporation. The Western New York Rural AHEC (R-AHEC) began sponsoring the program a little over three years ago and has already provided outreach to 312 students and their families. The program connects students with math and science and at the same time allows R-AHEC the opportunity to expose kids to potential careers in health care. Five separate school districts in the region are now offering aka Science. Learn how you can get your schools involved at http://www.hosoprograms.org/.
**Workforce Development**

*Workforce Development - Listening Session Synopsis*

Workforce development issues are interrelated with the other themes of rural economic development, education, poverty, and, in some cases, agriculture. Overall, participants’ response in this theme area seemed to reflect the changing age and job structure in these rural communities.

Participants identified a wide range of current strengths, many of which focused on the quality of existing resources in the community—including higher learning institutions, healthcare and human services sectors, and general quality of life. Many of the strengths identified might best be classified as social/human capital. With this in mind, workforce development centers on the need to build off of and improve upon these strengths.

The weaknesses identified were also diverse, but mainly represented structural barriers to workforce development and retention. The lack of a living wage and underemployment was consistently identified as a barrier to establishing or retaining a quality workforce, underemployment-problems compounded by high costs for housing, transportation, and healthcare/insurance.

The changing age structure of rural communities resulting from out-migration (including brain drain), was also an area of concern for workforce development. Suggestions of a decreased work ethic and lack of motivation/incentives among young people compound this problem. With this in mind, workforce development was framed in terms of a need to attract and retain a skilled and knowledgeable workforce — including an emphasis on young professionals and entrepreneurs.

In terms of education for workforce development, participants believed that state standards seem to be out of line with local needs. There was widespread concern about the current educational emphasis on Regents and other tests at the expense of the vocational and BOCES programs that are critical for workforce development. Negative perceptions associated with vocational training, BOCES, and certain types of jobs will have to be overcome in order to promote successful workforce development. With this in mind, participants suggested that it is important to focus on innovative ways to match education and job training with local needs.

Participants believed that better communication networks could facilitate an awareness of working models for workforce development. In addition, rural communities need more information about the available grant opportunities in this area and how to best take advantage of these opportunities.

In general, some emerging opportunities/research needs include:

- BOCES and community college opportunities
- Entrepreneurship programs
- Partnerships between local business and education (mentorships, internships, job shadowing, career fairs, etc)
- Comprehensive local/regional needs assessments (ie, agricultural education/workforce development needed in some areas)
In general, some emerging concerns/tensions include:

- Funding
- Lack of a living wage
- Barriers to small businesses (both existing and start-up operations)
- Aging population and brain drain
- Stigmas, labels, and negative perceptions – “lack of credibility in existing systems”
- Displaced workers and economic adjustment
Workforce Development - Faculty Responses

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NYS Farm Workers-- Issues and Challenges

It is estimated that between 40,000 and 60,000 farmworkers are engaged in agricultural production in the state. The vast majority of these workers are Latino and many are undocumented. While it is difficult to know specific numbers of undocumented workers, farmworker service providers and advocates estimate that between 70% and 85% of those currently engaged in farmwork in NYS are undocumented. Given their illegal status, cultural barriers and the demands of work, it is not surprising that these farmworkers were not represented at the Rural Visioning Listening Sessions. In this brief reaction paper, I will try to capture some of the unique challenges faced by farmworkers living in rural New York State.

Brief Review
It is difficult to conduct research that captures the opinions and stated needs of farmworkers in New York State, although this is in part the mandate of the newly reorganized Cornell Migrant Program. To date the most valuable research on this topic was conducted by Dr. Max Pfeffer and Dr. Pilar Parra and published through four research reports on Immigrants and the Community available at <http://rnyi.cornell.edu/poverty_and_social_inequality>. These reports provide important insights on what farmworkers see as their most pressing needs, demographic changes in the farmworker population, the challenges faced by farmworkers with families, perspectives of former farmworkers, and community perspectives on immigrants and their integration and interactions with their new communities.

The Cornell Migrant Program (CMP) is currently engaged in a series of research efforts to gain greater insights on the needs of farmworkers in New York State. One current CMP research project focuses on collecting demographic information including the number of farmworkers engaged in agricultural production by county, by month of the year, and by commodity. This information will be gathered by various sources including state agencies and farmworker service providers. Another CMP research project examines the economic contributions of farmworkers through taxes, social security and disability payments. These payments are collected regardless of the worker’s immigration status. The CMP is also actively engaged in a state-wide research effort to examine services that are available to farmworkers and gaps in those services. These research results will be published in a state-wide bilingual directory for farmworkers. The CMP is also involved in an ongoing farmworker needs assessment to determine new areas for Cornell to address farmworker needs through research, education and extension. The CMP has also facilitated a research effort to address the need for an immigrant driver’s license. This is combined with field testing of an educational program on NY State driving rules and regulations (including information related to alcohol consumption).

The Challenges of Research to Address Farmworkers’ Needs
Research with farmworkers is difficult because of their long hours, language barriers, and their mobility. While some agricultural work is year-round (in particular for dairy workers), many
farmworkers are engaged in a wide range of agricultural activities (planting, pruning, weeding, harvesting, sorting, packing) that may require that they move from workplace to workplace during the season. A small number of farmworkers are in the state for a short time and move out of state to engage in agricultural activities in another state or return to their homes. Moreover, farmworkers may not see a clear advantage to using their limited free time to participate in research unless it is closely linked to efforts to address their needs. These are some of the challenges the CMP is trying to address. Research related to the needs of farmworkers often takes place in an environment in which farmworker advocates are at odds with agricultural producers and their advocates. Consequently, many research projects fall to criticism by one or both parties regardless of the research methodology utilized.

**Workforce Development**

In the absence of farmworker participation in the “listening sessions,” one can draw from research results outlined in *Immigrants and the Community* (Pfeffer and Parra) and issues identified through ongoing CMP farmworker needs assessment. One of the most important challenges faced by Latino farmworkers as well as their employers is the language barrier. Some farmers are interested in learning some Spanish and in some areas of the state, Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) has facilitated evening Spanish classes for growers. Latino farmworkers consistently express their desire to learn more English although time is a significant limiting factor. Work schedules prohibit them from participating in many English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional programs offered by local community organizations. The CMP is facilitating an ESL on farm program through CCE and the Tompkins Learning Partnership, but this is not sufficient. It will become increasingly important to examine ways to support farmworker efforts to learn more English. As well as learning English, many farmworkers express interest in learning more about US culture and developing social relationships with local residents.

Another challenge farmworkers face is physical and social isolation. Increasingly undocumented workers do not leave their place of employment/housing unless they are accompanied by their employer. These trips are frequently short trips to grocery stores and the post office. While some NY State legislators have proposed an immigrant driver’s license for NYS, there is significant opposition to the bill in the rural areas of NYS. This may provide an opportunity for discussion of the barriers immigrants face when living in rural areas.

The CMP is also exploring opportunities to provide bilingual training related to agricultural production and farm safety in collaboration with other Cornell educators.

Perhaps the greatest concern for farmworkers now is the legislative debate on immigration. The proposal to criminalize undocumented workers (and their employers or anyone who provides them with assistance) would have a devastating effect on the lives of undocumented farmworkers and their families both here and abroad.

These are just a few of the most salient issues related to the quality of life for farmworkers and their families that have been raised in recent research efforts. It will be helpful to engage in further discussion of how the concerns of farmworkers can be integrated into the Rural Vision Project.
Workforce development issues regarding people with disabilities in rural New York State

The U.S. Census Bureau (2005) reported that about 30.1% of rural families had at least one member with a disability, compared to 28.5% of urban families. The Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities, University of Montana estimates there are 12.5 million rural Americans with disabilities (RTC, 2006). The following details three rural issues that impact New Yorkers with disabilities and their participation in the workforce: transportation, self-employment, and education.

Transportation

In their search for affordable housing, many people with and without disabilities reside in rural areas. However, the farther away one is from urbanized areas, the more reliant one will tend to be on personal transportation. Therefore, people whose disabilities make it difficult to drive can face severe limitations in traveling to work and participating in community activities. In 2005, the National Council on Disability issued a report on disability and transportation issues. Rural issues were profiled in this report:

“Although some model programs have been established in rural areas, a significant discrepancy in funding to such areas means that public transit in general, much less accessible public transit, is in grossly short supply. The human cost is great, resulting in many problems, including institutionalization of people with disabilities solely as a result of the lack of adequate transportation to medical appointments.” (p. 16)

One societal cost associated with the inability for some to go to work has been documented in New York State. According to the Institute for America’s Future (2005), 7.7% of total income for residents of New York’s 44 rural counties comes from Social Security – i.e., benefits for retirement, survivorship, and disability. This compares with 4.2% for residents of non-rural New York counties. People who receive disability benefits under the Social Security Act often cannot afford the cost of a private car, reinforcing the transportation/employment problem.

The New York State Independent Living Council issued a position paper detailing transportation issues and recommendations in 2005. In it, they recommended the following strategies for improving rural transportation for people with disabilities:

- **Coordinated models** with shared vehicles, whereby the county would be given a wheelchair accessible van which would be utilized by agencies or volunteers. Agencies would be encouraged and rewarded for sharing vehicles and coordinating services.
- **Volunteer systems**: Volunteer drivers should be reimbursed for providing transportation to friends, neighbors and co-workers. The rural supported volunteer transportation voucher program has been successful with this.”
Self-Employment

According to Cornell University’s Employment and Disability Institute, in 2004 only about 20% of people with disabilities were employed (Houtenville, 2006). This reflects such factors as extensive medical and non-medical costs associated with having a disability, a fear of losing Medicaid and Social Security benefits, and the potential for discrimination in the workplace. Over 12 million individuals with disabilities live in rural settings; a lack of rural services, such as transportation, can create an additional barrier to employment. As a result, many rural Americans have chosen self-employment as a preferred option.

According to U.S. Department of Labor statistics, small businesses have accounted for more than 52% of the workforce in this country:

“The 1990 national census revealed that people with disabilities have a higher rate of self-employment and small business experience (12.2 percent) than people without disabilities (7.8 percent). The Disabled Businessman’s Association estimates that 40 percent of home-based businesses are operated by people with disabilities.”
(U.S. Department of Labor, 2000)

The New York State Education Department’s lead agency for disability services, Vocational and Educational Services for People with Disabilities (New York State VESID), has developed a technical assistance brief for state investment in self-employment. In it, they have established a list of indicators to develop self-employment as an option for their consumers with disabilities (2003). These can be broken down into three broad categories:

Assessment: Deciding Whether a Self-Employment Goal is Feasible
Business Plan Development
Benchmarks for Business Success

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (2006) described one such successful entrepreneur:

“In 1995, Schwender contracted Lyme disease and, within a year, was unable to continue in his chosen profession. Schwender performed a market analysis and determined that there was sufficient demand in Spencer, New York, to sustain a water garden supply store. He approached New York State Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) after finding a property that included both a residence and outbuildings. With an $11,000 grant from VESID that leveraged a $20,000 bank loan, Schwender was able to convert the outbuildings into greenhouses and retail space, purchase needed equipment, and launch his business. Schwender has never collected government benefits.”

Education

The Rural Vision Project (2006) considers the loss of youth from rural communities as one of the top three issues currently facing rural New York. The New York State Comptroller (2000) reported that as the overall numbers of youth in New York State have been going down, the number of students classified as disabled has been increasing. New York's number of special education students
has more than doubled over the past two decades from about 182,000 to 393,000. During the same period, New York's total student population has declined from about 3.6 to 3.3 million students.

To keep pace with this emerging workforce, all schools must engage in post-school planning for students with disabilities, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (OSEP, 2006). Transition planning, services, and activities for secondary education students with disabilities provides instruction and support to help students achieve post-school goals in the areas of further education, employment, training and community living. By law, student strengths, interests, and needs must be identified and addressed through integration of individualized planning within the school’s curriculum, making the focus of schooling essential and relevant to the student’s own needs.

Mobilizing more multigenerational, inclusive, positive social networks in rural communities will benefit all students, including students with disabilities. One such program inclusive of all students and with an extensive track record for New York State is Learn and Serve America. Under this federal initiative, “service learning” combines community service with academic instruction. For instance, student participants may rehabilitate local monuments while learning about its background from community historians. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service (2006), 39,000 students in New York State have been engaged in community service linked to academic achievement. Opportunities for multi-generational volunteerism and service learning help all students gain employability and entrepreneurial skills and provide exposure to career options within the local region.

Citations


Workforce Development - “Success Stories”

• A one-stop career center is in the works for Chemung County. Thanks to a $5 million grant secured by Senator George H. Winner, Jr. (R-Elmira) and Assemblyman Tom O’Mara (R-Horseheads) in the 2006-07 State Budget, a vacant school building will be renovated and restored to house the Academic Career Development Center. The 35,000 square-foot building will hold 15 to 20 classrooms; and will include an 800-square-foot drop-in day care center; so parents can take classes, training or receive services. The Corning Community College will be the lead agency in providing education and training services. The center will also be home to state Department of Labor offices; Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben Counties Workforce Development; and portions of the county's Department of Social Services. The center is expected to open in 2007.

• In upstate New York, the new Finger Lakes Knowledge Fusion project unites new technologies, new businesses, a prepared workforce, and an informed community for economic impact. Funded by a three-year, $600,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the project will create a new technology cluster to meet 21st century food and agricultural challenges and fuel job creation and economic growth. The project will promote cutting-edge scientific research, new technologies, start-up companies and education for a better workforce. The Cornell Ag & Food Tech Park, the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES), the Infotronics sector, and the Finger Lakes Investment Board joined forces to create the regional economic powerhouse model. For more information visit Finger Lakes Works web site at http://www.flwny.com/.

• Also in upstate New York, the Pipeline 4 Progress Network (P4P) was established in the Southern Tier to generate an ongoing "pipeline" to engage, retain and attract bright-minded, talented young adults to live and work in the region. Many communities in Upstate New York have been struggling from the "brain drain" or loss of young creative people. This demographic is locating in regions that are innovative, tolerant, inclusive and open to new ideas. The first P4P Summit was held in January where over 350 young people gathered to share their views about living and working in the Southern Tier. P4P teaches young adults the importance of being a part of a community. To learn more about this project visit http://p4pnetwork.com.

• The Metropolitan Development Authority (MDA) in Syracuse held a summit last November to reduce the exodus of young, talented people from the area. Organizers hoped to attract 200 people C 630 showed up C 400 had to be turned away due to lack of space. A five-point action plan was developed by young professionals at the summit. The five priority actions include: 1) Community and Infrastructure Development. Create a task force of young professionals and artists to transform vacant buildings into theaters, artists' lofts, music clubs and other creative uses. The goal is to get at least one redevelopment project off the ground within a year. 2) Business and Workforce Development. Secure scholarship money for young people who want to attend entrepreneurial training programs. The goal is to train 25 young entrepreneurs in the next year. 3) Marketing and Communications. Develop a web site that serves as an information clearinghouse for the region. Expand throughout the Central Upstate region a marketing campaign started by Syracuse PROPS (People Reforming Opinions Positively of Syracuse). 4) Leadership. Set aside 100 board positions throughout the region for young professionals. The long-range goal is to increase that to 200 such positions. 5) Arts, Culture, Nightlife and Recreation. The goal here is to carry out public arts projects in Syracuse and other downtowns throughout the region. The group also plans to form a 40 Below Executive Alliance consisting of a diverse group of regional young professionals, artists and entrepreneurs who
will serve as the primary implementation vehicle for 40 Below projects. Visit the web site at
http://40belowsummit.com/.

• Thanks to a generous grant from the Bank of America, the Metropolitan Development Association
(MDA) developed a cutting-edge search-engine technology to assist prospective job-seekers. Essentialjobs.com offers FAST, FREE access to thousands of jobs in the 12-county Central Upstate region. There are no lengthy forms, and no fees for posting or searching. The database currently contains 6543 job links from 406 web sites. Note: Central New York’s 30 largest employers currently have 1,700 job openings.

• Thanks to the Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center and area Rural Health Network and their partners a hospitality house and learning center is being built in Western New York. The Thiel Center for Health and Health Workforce Development in Warsaw, Wyoming County, is also part of rural Wyoming County Community Hospital and Medical Center. Similar to the Ronald McDonald House concept, the Thiel Center will provide short-term housing for family members with loved ones in crisis, allow for temporary stays by short term ambulatory care patients, and house hospital staff, such as on-call and specialty physicians. In addition, it will afford multi-week housing for health professions students brought to Warsaw to experience rural living and practice. The Learning Center will have state-of-the-art distance education capabilities to allow for rural training for the surrounding areas. It will also be used for after-school learning programs for area students, exposing them to health care career opportunities while working to enhance math and science skills. The project received funding critical for its success from the Thiel Trust administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. For more information, visit www.r-ahec.org or call 585.344.1022.

• The Retain the Brains (RTB) Marketing Plan Competition was first conceived of by Peter Bruu and organized by a small group of volunteers who were concerned about the consistent outflow of the area's talented college graduates and young professionals. Their aim in developing RTB was to make these young people see all the awesome things Rochester can offer! The competition was aimed at undergraduate college students. Their mission was to write a marketing plan that would help keep them and their friends and peers in Rochester after they graduated and entered the workforce. Twelve area colleges were offered the chance to participate. A team of two University of Rochester (UR) students won the “Retain the Brains” marketing plan competition. The winning brand message is titled, “ROC NY—Live it Up!” Themes and messages from the plan are expected to be integrated into the region’s “Rochester. Made for Living” marketing campaign. The UR team recommended establishing apprenticeship programs with local businesses. Another idea involved hiring college students to promote the Rochester area to their friends and peers during the summer. During the winter months, one of the team’s ideas was to showcase the fun that exists in the area, for instance, by establishing a “Winter Wonderland” festival. Winners Greg Stein and Ben Margolis each will receive $1,000, a guaranteed job interview with a local company of their choice and a “Rochester Pass,” a free entry to some of the area’s cultural and sporting venues. The judging panel included officials from Greater Rochester Enterprise Inc., Greater Rochester Visitors Association Inc., Rochester Business Alliance Inc., Home Properties Inc. and Roberts Communications Inc. The competition was organized by the Rochester Young Professionals in collaboration with the Rochester chapter of the American Marketing Association. Plans are under way to hold the contest next year as well. Retaining our talented college graduates and young professionals is vital to the future of New York’s economy. This is an idea that could be replicated in other areas of the state. Visit www.retainthebrains.com for more information.
GENERAL GROUP COMMENTS

Following the more focused issue groups at each listening session, the larger group reconvened for a wrap-up discussion. There were important ideas shared and discussed that were not specific to one of the policy areas. Three common themes were an appreciation for "listening" to rural New York concerns, an acknowledgment that more opportunities are needed to bring different voices and perspectives together to discuss complex issues, and that the issues are interrelated which implies solving for the big picture. There was a recognition that at times there are conflicts and that more attention might be paid to conflict resolution, consensus building and public issues education. Those familiar with the New York Rural Development Council and its potential to be a voice and an advocate for rural New York called for re-energizing that entity. General discussion items also included the changing demographics of rural communities (listening session quote: "As we see an increase in Latino immigrants, we do not support their cultural needs and/or encourage cultural appreciation for these immigrants through the educational system"); interest in rural broadband access ("We need to make rural information technology a higher priority!"); current strengths and assets ("The Rural Health Network system in NYS is highly effective and cost-effective/cost beneficial; these networks offer collaboration to meet health and human service needs in innovative ways that would not otherwise happen."); call for more regional planning ("I never thought I would say this, but my conclusion after seeing what has happened to the area in the last ten years is that we need a regional planning commission for the Finger Lakes, similar to the Tug Hill Commission, to spearhead a comprehensive planning and development process."); and the importance of education: an informed citizenry as the basis for positive change, education institutions as catalysts, and for innovation and creativity.

EMPIRE STATE POLL AND THE RURAL OVER-SAMPLE

Another activity of the Rural Vision Project is the annual Empire State Poll. The poll, conducted by the Cornell University Survey Research Institute, allows comparison between metropolitan and non-metropolitan residents’ opinions on the most important issues facing NYS as a whole and those facing rural New York State. Commenced in the 2003, the Empire State Poll (ESP), interviews approximately 800 New Yorkers each spring; it is the first annual general survey of adults, age 18 and over, who are residents of New York State.

The Rural New York Initiative commissions a rural “over-sample” every year which allows broad comparisons between metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties, and then further differentiates non-metropolitan counties into micropolitan, and non-core based counties. (Micropolitan—a new government classification—effectively differentiates places caught in between metropolitan areas and more traditionally conceptualized non-metropolitan areas—a more complete discussion can be

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3 The survey sample consists of randomly selected households within New York State. The sample selection procedures ensure that every household within New York State has an equal chance to be included in the survey, and that once the household is sampled, every adult has an equal chance to be included in the poll. With 800 respondents, in no more than one time in twenty should chance variations in the sample cause the overall ESP results to vary by more than 3.5 percentage points from the answers that would be obtained if all New York state residents were interviewed. Furthermore, the sampling frame was proportionally split between Upstate and Downstate residents, allowing comparisons between the overall state and these geographic regions with a one in twenty chance of sampling error greater than 4.9 percentage points. The random sampling frame used within the ESP allows for the poll results to be generalized to the entire state.
found in the Appendix.) Empire State Poll survey results reveal that people living in more consistently rural counties have different opinions about the state as a whole and their rural communities and the relative importance of specific issues.
Employment is identified as one of the most important problems facing NYS as a whole, with 1 in 3 micropolitan residents identifying it.

However, employment was perceived as a greater problem for rural NYS than for the state as a whole, across all county types.
While metropolitan and micropolitan residents identify state taxes as an important problem facing the state, they do not perceive it to be as important for rural NYS.

Rural residents, on the other hand, feel that state taxes are almost equally important to rural areas as to the state as a whole.
Rural residents were somewhat more likely than metropolitan or micropolitan residents to identify health care as an important problem facing NYS.

Interesting, rural residents, along with residents of all other county types, are less likely to identify health care as a specific rural issue.
Most Important Problem – Education

All Upstate NY residents identified Education as a more important issue for rural areas of the state than for the state as a whole, but this was particularly true for rural residents.

**Regional Variation in Identifying Important NYS Issues**

**NY Matters Poll**
Just as New York State residents’ opinions vary depending on whether they live in rural or non-rural places or metro versus non-metro counties, as illustrated in the Empire State Poll, there are distinct regional variations in issue identification across the state. The NY Matters Poll shows these regional variations very clearly. The NY Matters Poll is conducted by the Center for Governmental Research (CGR see [http://www.cgr.org/](http://www.cgr.org/)), a nonprofit, nonpartisan, independent research organization based in Rochester. See [http://www.newyorkmatters.org/](http://www.newyorkmatters.org/) for further information on the NY Matters Project. The following text and data comes directly from the NY Matters report, but we focus on the same four issues identified above in our discussion of the metro/non-metro differences: taxes, health care, employment (jobs), and education.

The New York Matters poll identifies the issues that matter most to New York and its regions. The study interviewed 2,492 New York State residents, including the statewide benchmark of 850 residents. The statewide benchmark has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. That includes 303 Democrats and 193 Republicans; the margin of error for these groups is plus or minus 5.6 percentage points and plus or minus 7 percentage points, respectively. At least 350 residents were interviewed in each of seven regions across the state. The margin of error for each of the regions is plus or minus 5.5 percentage points.
Residents name taxes and education, in almost equal proportions, when asked what they believe is the greatest issue facing the state that a governor could do something about. Twenty percent say taxes and 19 percent say education. Next is jobs, the choice of 10 percent; health care, 8 percent; crime, 5 percent; and housing, 4 percent.

But taxes and education are rated differently by residents in different parts of the state, revealing a stark Upstate-Downstate dichotomy. Taxes top the list for about a third of residents of the Finger Lakes, Long Island, Western New York, the Upper Hudson Valley and Central New York. Just 6 percent of New York City residents identify taxes as the top issue; they are far more concerned about education, with 26 percent rating that first.
### What is the greatest issue facing NYS that a governor can do something about?

#### Percent of respondents who answered health care, by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Health Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western New York</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Hudson Valley</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Island</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Hudson Valley</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger Lakes</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central New York</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Percent of respondents who answered jobs, by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western New York</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Hudson Valley</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Island</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Hudson Valley</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger Lakes</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central New York</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Total State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Total State</th>
<th>Central New York</th>
<th>Finger Lakes</th>
<th>Lower Hudson Valley</th>
<th>Long Island</th>
<th>New York City</th>
<th>Upper Hudson Valley</th>
<th>Western New York</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Additional Information
- The table above shows the distribution of responses across different regions in New York State regarding the greatest issue facing the state that a governor can do something about, with a focus on health care and jobs.
- The data is presented in percentages for each region.
WEB-BASED SURVEY

To gather additional NYS citizen input to the Rural Vision Project, an on-line web survey was developed and can be accessed at the following location:
http://hosts.cce.cornell.edu/nyi/005_rural_vision_project/005_rural_survey/

The survey is fairly short and concise - asking participants to individually rate eighteen issues and topics on a scale of “not important at all” to “extremely important”. Participants also have the opportunity to provide additional comments on existing or needed programs and policies. The survey will remain for the foreseeable future. The following two charts show the results to date which are based on 72 responses we have received thus far.
Rural Issues Identified as Not Very Important & Not Important At All by Respondents to RVP Web Survey

- Security / Threat of terrorism
- Foreign Immigration
- Crime
- People leaving the State
- Rural Entrepreneurship
- Poverty
- Rural Schools and Youth
- Health Care
- State Budget
- Local & Regional Governance
- State economy
- Agriculture & Food Systems Development
- Rural Economic Development
- Energy
- Taxation
- Employment / Workforce Development
- Environment, Land Use and Natural Resources
- Education
- Security / Threat of terrorism
- Foreign Immigration
- Crime
- People leaving the State
- Rural Entrepreneurship
- Poverty
- Rural Schools and Youth
- Health Care
- State Budget
- Local & Regional Governance
- State economy
- Agriculture & Food Systems Development
- Rural Economic Development
- Energy
- Taxation
- Employment / Workforce Development
- Environment, Land Use and Natural Resources
- Education

Percent

Issues

0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%

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RURAL YOUTH VISION --SURVEY AND VISION SESSION

Youth can play a critical role in building community capital and in establishing community cohesiveness and continuity. A Youth Survey and a special Youth Vision Session were both designed to give youth a vehicle to express their concerns and hopes, and to add their voices to Visioning process. This April, a Youth Vision session was conducted as a workshop offered at the 4-H State Teen Action Representatives Retreat (STARR). Of the 130 4-H youth in attendance, 25 youth from rural areas across the state participated in the one-hour visioning sessions. Each session focused on theme areas that impact their lives and their communities: education, safety, environment and land use, community and economic development, and safety. We also conducted a Youth Survey to solicit input from rural youth, we have designed a special survey for New Yorkers under the age of 18 years; for complete survey information, see: (http://atcdb.cit.cornell.edu/survey//wsb.dll/jb61/youthruralvisionproject.htm).

In addition to gaining a critical youth perspective, one of the most important lessons we learned was that there is a need for more opportunities for youth to voice their concerns and vision: Youth who had the opportunity to participate in this Rural Youth Vision workshop consistently listed it as their favorite workshop at STARR. We also learned that in order to bring a diversity of youth to the table, community vision must be framed from a creative, fun, and empowering standpoint— with youth involved in its design. With this in mind, rural communities need to begin tapping into the strong potential for youth vision, and perhaps 4-H educators and youth on a county level can lead the way. 

YOUTH SURVEY

Current State:
Youth have a strong sense of social and natural capital in their communities. Comments suggest that youth value the fact that their small communities have close knit social networks, in which everyone knows, and helps, everyone else. In general, people care about one another and are friendly, which leads to a positive feeling of community. Youth appreciate feeling safe in their rural communities as a result of generally low crime rate.

Youth identify school and community spirit as important positive aspects of their rural areas. Youth describe that, although their communities may be small, they have the opportunity to participate in many different activities. While everything may not be “the best,” a variety of services and programs are at least available.

Youth appreciate the rural nature of their communities, citing the presence of farms, fields and open space, and beautiful scenery as things they like about their communities. Youth value activities and places that bring community members together, such as county fairs, festivals, and parks, and also enjoy the convenience of having shopping centers nearby.

Agriculture and the presence of open space, small population size, and opportunities for involvement in youth activities make up a large part of what youth identify as strengths in their rural

4 Counties Represented at the Rural Youth Vision Workshops were: Cayuga, Washington, Franklin, Rensselaer, Chautauqua, Cortland, Tompkins, Ontario, Seneca, Madison, Niagara and Livingston

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communities. Overall sentiment seems to be, as one respondent stated, that youth value “the ability to have rural areas and to [also] have a lot of stuff to do.”

At the same time, youth suggest that the small nature of these rural communities can sometimes seem “too small” when everyone always thinks they know everyone else’s business. Despite this smallness, youth describe a problematic lack of interaction between community members and an overall lack of community involvement. Youth frequently see social “cliques” forming in their communities, often on the basis of socioeconomic and racial disparities. Youth see high rates of poverty in their communities, which are compounded by the lack of job opportunity.

Jobs and other opportunities for teens are limited, and the lack of available transportation impedes youth access to the opportunities that do exist. Currently, there are not enough activities that target older kids, such as adolescents and teens. The general lack of safe, clean places for youth to play, have fun, and just “hang out” means that youth sometimes end up loitering in the streets. Boredom sometimes leads to problems with drugs, alcohol, and vandalism—among both youth and adults. The lack of recreation and constructive opportunities for youth results in the frequent perception that there is “nothing to do” in rural communities and makes it seem “like no one cares.”

**Desired Future:**
With this in mind, youth envision a future of clean, well-kept, and revitalized rural communities with plenty of opportunities for youth. More options for recreation, community involvement, and employment are needed for people of all ages. Youth recognize economic growth and improved schools as central to the future of their rural communities. In this, many comments reflect a desire to create higher quality job opportunities while maintaining the rural atmosphere.

Youth comments suggest somewhat of a divided opinion about the type of development that will enable this desired future. While some comments emphasize downtown revitalization and open space protection, other comments suggest a desire to give up some farmland and increase development of malls and other amenities. With this in mind, youth comments reflect a need to find balance between retaining the qualities of their rural communities that are valued—such as open space and a small, close-knit social structure—and promoting new opportunities that encourage growth and reduce isolation.

In the future, youth generally hope to see:

- Clean and beautiful communities—well maintained, colorful, well-painted, no littering
- Economic growth—more businesses and stores
- Improved schools
- Open storefronts downtown
- Increased access to convenient shopping
- Reduced poverty
- Farms and open space
- Spaces for both outdoor and indoor recreation
- Community unity and engagement
- More opportunities and amenities for youth
In order to achieve this, youth comments suggest a need for:

- More activities that bring community members together—community gatherings, cross-cultural events
- Improved job opportunities for teens and a way to get there
- Economic development that promotes better paying jobs
- Opportunities for involvement in community projects, including the revitalization of downtown and community service projects
- Creation of community centers
- More youth programs—church, art, drama, sports, teen programs
- Cleaning up the litter and garbage; painting older buildings; other maintenance and beautification initiatives
- More opportunities for sports and recreation, including public swimming pools, indoor sports centers, and outdoor parks and playgrounds
- Fundraisers and other ways to raise money from the public

**Most important issues:**

Education
Schools and Youth
Employment
Health Care
Energy
Followed by State Economy; State Budget; and Taxes
"Extremely" and "Very" Important Issues identified by Youth Visioning Survey Participants, as of 6/30/06
PHASE II: THE FUTURE OF RURAL NY SYMPOSIUM, JULY 2006

The Future of Rural New York Symposium (July 19-21, 2006 in Syracuse, N.Y.) is an important step toward developing programmatic and policy recommendations for rural New York State. The culmination of the six months of a multi-phase process designed to identify challenges and emerging opportunities facing rural New York State, the Symposium builds on the information gathered via the eleven regional listening sessions, the Empire State Poll, the on-line surveys, focus groups, Cornell University faculty responses, and “success stories” compiled by the NYS LCRR. Participants in the Symposium will focus on these issues at greater length and formulate programmatic and policy proposals to inform this fall’s rural legislative agenda. Equally important, the Future of Rural New York Symposium will support a sustained dialogue to support this emerging vision—one that can lead to inclusive and sustainable growth for rural New York.

Symposium proceedings will be posted to http://rnyi.cornell.edu, and by following the Rural Vision Project link.
Since 1990, the Community and Rural Development Institute has strengthened Cornell's role as a leader in responding to current and emerging needs in community and rural development. Working with Cornell faculty and staff—including Cornell Cooperative Extension's network of county offices—and other state and regional institutions, CaRDI is a center of dialogue and collaboration addressing needs at the local, state, and national levels.

Our Mission

The Institute benefits communities at the state, regional, and national levels, individual Cornell faculty, staff, and students, by accomplishing the following objectives:

1. Fosters communication and collaboration among existing community and rural development research, extension, and teaching programs at Cornell, and monitors trends in community and rural development.
2. Serves as a point of entry to Cornell for policymakers, practitioners, and faculty and academic staff at other institutions interested in community and rural development.

Please visit our website at http://www.cardi.cornell.edu
• Rural New York Initiative (RNYI)

Members of Cornell University's Department of Development Sociology (formerly Rural Sociology) have had a long history of research, extension and education relevant to rural New York. The Rural New York Initiative is a Departmental effort to further strengthen this engagement, enhancing the Department's capacity to interact with policy makers and other stakeholders around the state and provide critical and up-to-date information on rural New York people and communities. The Rural New York Initiative is therefore an effort both to integrate our own rural New York activities, as well as to develop stronger connections and networks across the state with others engaged in and concerned with social scientific research and community development efforts relevant to rural New York.

The overarching Goals of the Rural New York Initiative include:

• Strengthening intra-Departmental synergies and collaborations, and providing institutional and technical resources to support the Department's applied research efforts focused on rural New York;
• Networking with a broad range of researchers, institutes and stakeholders across the state to build and sustain a broad inter-institutional dialogue about key issue areas as well as to disseminate rural New York-focused Departmental work;
• Establishing the Department of Development Sociology as a key source of social scientific research-based information on rural New York.

Please visit our website at http://rnyi.cornell.edu
Cornell Cooperative Extension is a key outreach system of Cornell University with a strong public mission and an extensive local presence that is responsive to needs in New York communities. The Cornell Cooperative Extension educational system enables people to improve their lives and communities through partnerships that put experience and research knowledge to work.

The nationwide network of Cooperative Extension programs began in 1914 as a means of applying land-grant university research in understandable and useful ways to farmers and rural families. Today, Cooperative Extension serves urban, suburban, town and rural areas by offering programs in five broad areas: Agriculture & Food Systems; Children, Youth, & Families; Community & Economic Vitality; Environment & Natural Resources; and Nutrition & Health.

Cornell Cooperative Extension operates on the Cornell campus through the leadership of faculty and staff in departments in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Human Ecology, with contributions from the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Our county-based Cornell Cooperative Extension associations and the New York City office provide 56 portals to Cornell University. Extension educators in these locations form powerful community-university partnerships with the Cornell campus, and involve local constituents to address the issues and concerns of New Yorkers.
The NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

The New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources is a key partner in the Rural Vision Project. The Commission was created by the state Legislature recognizing that the economic and social well-being of all New Yorkers is closely related to the state’s rural resources, both human and physical, and that rural areas offer an important alternative to urban and suburban living. Created in 1982 as a bipartisan agency in the state Legislature, the Commission’s charge includes: examining the impact of rural resources upon the state’s economy; reviewing existing laws and regulations as they pertain to rural resources; assessing the effectiveness of programs designed to promote rural viability, and making recommendations and sponsoring legislation in the state Legislature to enhance and protect rural resources.

Ten members of the state Senate and Assembly are appointed by the state Legislature’s leadership to serve on the Rural Resources Commission. An important impact of the Commission’s endeavors has been to increase the sensitivity of state government to the unique needs of Rural New York’s 3.5 million people, a significant proportion of the upstate population.

The Commission’s scope of work and focus encompasses all aspects of rural life. Included in the Rural Resources Commission’s action program are agriculture, economic development/employment, education, environment/land use/natural resources, local government (structure, functions, finance), health/human services, housing and community facilities, transportation, and technology development.

The Commission assists state legislators in addressing rural needs through such on-going activities as the sponsorship of legislation; issuing research reports, resource guides and the Rural Futures newsletter; the involvement of constituents and experts in problem solving through the conduct of public hearings, roundtable discussions, and symposia. Several Commission publications are available on the New York State Senate web page.

The Rural Resources Commission introduced its first legislative program in 1986, soon after sponsoring two first-ever, statewide rural development symposia and 18 public hearings in 1983 and 1985. Since then, the Commission has sponsored five additional statewide symposia on rural health care, local government, municipal planning and zoning and education. Over the years 100 of the legislative initiatives it has developed and sponsored have been enacted into law. Moreover, Commission members have been gratified that numerous other measures introduced by others were sparked by its efforts and signed into law.
NYS LCRR-Sponsored Legislation Since 1986

The following is an abbreviated listing of legislative actions since 1986 that are directly attributable to the Rural Resources Commission’s efforts:

**Agriculture**
- Including Agricultural Tourism in State and Local Farmland Protection Programs (2006)
- Farmland Viability Program Revisions (2004)
- I Love NY Agriculture License Plates in support of Ag in the Classroom Program (2001)
- Food and Agriculture Industry Development Program (2000)
- Authorizing Regional Labels and Trademarks for Agricultural Products (1999)
- NYS Agricultural Economic Development Program in Dept. of Economic Development (1999)
- Real Property Transfer: Disclosure of Farm Operations in Ag Districts (1998)
- Coordination of Municipal Land Use Regulations with Ag Districts Program (1992)

**Business/ Economic Development/ Employment**
- Regional Revolving Loan Program for Small Business (2002)
- Rural Economic Development Revitalization Program (2001)
- Review of Business Financial Services in Rural Areas (1987)

**Education**
- Sparsity and Small Size Correction in School Aid (1988)
- Rural Education Research Program (1990)
- STAR School Property Tax Reduction program (1996)

**Environment, Land Use & Natural Resources**
- Promotes the Training of Municipal Planning and Zoning Officials (2006)
- Promotes Inter-municipal Cooperation in Planning and Zoning (2005)
- Authorizing Cluster Development in Planning and Zoning (1992)
- The Regulation and Coordination of Subdivision Review with SEQRA (1992)
- Authorizing Incentive Zoning in Municipalities (1992)
- Recodification of Municipal Zoning Boards of Appeal, Area and Use Variances (1992)
- Creating a New York Forest Resource Industry Council (1991) (Vetoed by Governor)

**Government**
- Enabling Comprehensive Planning by County Planning Boards and Regional Planning Councils (1997)
• Requiring Rural Impact Statements by State Agencies when development regulations (1994)
• Creating an Interagency Geographic Information Systems Task Force for State and Local Government Coordination and Information Sharing (1994)
• Authorizing Municipal Shared Services Contracts with State Agencies (1991)
• Creation of State Office of Rural Affairs (1986)

Health and Human Services
• Reauthorizing Pilot Program for Recertification of EMS Volunteers (2006)
• Provides Scholarship and Loan Forgiveness Financial Incentives to Attract Nurse Educators (2005)
• Authorizing Not-For-Profit Health and Dental Clinics on School Grounds (2005)
• Providing Rural Representation on State Hospital Review and Planning Council (2003)
• Enabling Alien Dentists and Dental Hygienists to Practice in Rural Areas (2002)
• Providing a Rural Health Diversification Financial Assistance Program (1993)
• Establishing a State Office of Rural Health (1991)
• Providing Rural Representation on State Public Health Council and Home Care Services Council (1989)
• Establishing a NYS Rural Health Care Networking Pilot Program (1986)

Telecommunications
• Promoting Broadband Services in Rural Areas (2006)

Transportation
• Promoting Intermunicipal Cooperation in Sharing Highway Equipment (1997)
• Creating a State Local Roads Research and Coordination Council (1990)
• Authorizing Certain Passengers to Ride on School Buses with Pupils (1989)
• Creating a State Local Roads Classification Task Force (1986)
• Creating a Rural Public Transportation Coordination Assistance Program (1986)

Current members of the Rural Resources Commission are: Senator George H. Winner, Jr., Chairman; Assemblyman David Koon, Vice-Chairman; Senators Mary Lou Rath, James W. Wright, William T. Stachowski, and David J. Valesky and Members of the Assembly Darrel J. Aubertine, Barbara S. Lifton, James Bacalles, and Daniel J. Burling. The Commission may be reached by calling 518-455-2544 (Senate); or 518-455-3999 (Assembly) or e-mail ruralres@senate.state.ny.us
APPENDIX B:

NEW YORK STATE IN TRANSITION: A HALF-CENTURY OF DYNAMIC CHANGE IN MAJOR SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND WELL-BEING INDICATORS, 1950 - 2000

Socioeconomic Trends 2000
and Well-Being Indicators in New York State, 1950-2000

By: Paul R. Eberts, Ph.D. and Kris Merschrod, Ph.D.,
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Published by the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources
A new vision for rural New York State must recognize the significant changes that have occurred during the last several decades, the direction of specific trends, and reflect a basic understanding of how those changes have come about. At each of the Rural Vision Project’s regional listening sessions, socio-economic trend data was presented for each county in the region. The data was provided by Dr. Paul Eberts, from the Department of Development Sociology at Cornell University. Also provided was comparable data for NYS as a whole, and for the U.S., enabling comparison across the various geographic units. These regional socio-economic profiles can be viewed in the Regional Listening Session section of the RVP website at: http://hosts.cce.cornell.edu/rnyi/005_rural_vision_project/002_regional_listening_sessions/

The following section is taken from the Executive Summary of Socio-Economic Trends & Well-being Indicator in New York State, 1950-2000. This report was written by Paul R. Eberts, Ph.D. and Kris Merschrod, Ph.D., of Cornell University’s Department of Development Sociology. The report is published by the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. Printed copies can be obtained by contacting the NYS LCRR at (518)455-2544. The full 408 page report can be viewed on-line at http://www.senate.state.ny.us/SenateReports.nsf/Public_ViewReports?OpenForm.

Demographics

Population growth in New York was greatest from 1950 to 1970. Since then the state’s growth rate has been slow, almost flat. Differences by county types, however, vary considerably. Population in New York City boroughs declined in the 1970s then grew slowly again into 2000. New York City suburbs continued at very flat rates during the latter part of the half-century and did not show a marked upward trend until the 1990s. Upstate Metropolitan counties showed a dramatic increase in population from 1950 to 1970, and did not drop, in contrast to New York City boroughs from 1970 to 1980. Instead their population growth remained rather flat since 1970, except for selected counties. Upstate, rural counties continued their steady population increase throughout the half-century, thus reversing pre-1950 migrations from rural to metropolitan counties.

A particularly dynamic demographic trend during this time was the change in population composition. The state began these last fifty years, along with the rest of the country, in a post World War II baby boom. From 1950 to 1970 the proportion of working-age people declined from 55% to 50% and then rebounded to nearly 60% in 2000 as baby boomers grew up and took their place in the workforce. A relatively large working-age cohort is indicative of a mature population in its most economically productive time of life.

For policymakers the fiscal implications of baby-boom trends were seen first in greatly expanding educational needs in the 1960s and 1970s, when nearly 40% of the population required additional educational facilities. In contrast, less than 30% needed such facilities in 2000. On the other hand, in 1950 less than 9% of the population was age 65 and over. In 2000 this age group grew to about 13%. An increasingly older population, of course, needs expanded health care services.

These dynamics are not uniform across county types, however, thus making for differentiated policy challenges. One policy guideline does not necessarily fit all counties, especially the sparsely populated and comparatively poorer rural counties.
Employment

Although total employment in the state overall was stagnant in the last decade of the half-century, different types of counties grew at different rates. During most of the last half-century, employment levels in most counties demonstrated a healthy, if generally slow, growth. In New York City boroughs, except for a downward then upward movement between 1970 and 1990, employment levels were flat. But, after employment numbers grew in the state from 1950 to 1990, they stagnated to virtual no-growth from 1990 to 2000, adding only 12,270 jobs between 1990 and 2000.

The composition of state and county workforces changed dramatically in overall numbers and proportions in various ways. By 2000, women made up over half of the workforce, and over a third of the workforce was in professional or managerial occupations. Such high proportions are firsts in history, especially for rural counties. Proportions of people employed in the three major employment sectors also changed. In the tertiary-services sector, the proportion and number of jobs grew, so that by 2000 almost 90% of the workforce was engaged in occupations in this industry.

Trends in the primary-extractive (including agriculture) and secondary-manufacturing sectors consistently sloped downward throughout the half-century. Although manufacturing was traditionally considered the state economic base, during the last 50 years this belief became a myth. In 1950, for every employee in manufacturing two were employed in service jobs. By 2000, for every manufacturing employee there were nine service-sector employees. This dramatic transition of historic proportions was particularly rapid during the most recent 20 years when the economy restructured, and the term “postindustrial” was applied to the decline in manufacturing and extractive jobs over the entire period. In the midst of all these changes, manufacturing firms as well as farms were still economically important in many rural counties.

Tertiary Services

By 2000, 89.3% of the state’s workforce was employed in tertiary services jobs. Adapting to the transition from agriculture and manufacturing to services during the latter part of this half century was difficult for many New Yorkers. Despite population growth in the state, job growth from 1990 to 2000 was flat in most counties across the state. As much as the tertiary sector took up the slack in this enormous transition from primary and manufacturing jobs to services jobs, services themselves were also being restructured during the 1990s.

Huge retail-wholesale sector losses amounted to nearly 439,000 jobs, moving from 19% of the workforce in 1990 to 14% in 2000. Health care accounted for the largest growth in all employment sectors, about 320,000 jobs, moving from 10% of the workforce in 1990 to 14% in 2000. Professional and managerial occupations also experienced large net increases throughout the state, growing by about 570,000 jobs in the various services sectors, many in the health care industry. In 2000, professionals and managers averaged over 35% of the state’s workforce, distributed in various specific industries including retail-wholesale, health care, education, and financial services. Other types of services remained rather flat in their respective proportions of the workforce over the last five decades. During the last decade, the state’s workforce (including the service sector) continued its relentless restructuring in all counties, even in the relatively less populated Rural Suburban and Rural Periphery counties.
Manufacturing

As noted previously, a major employment trend was the continuous shift from manufacturing to a service-based economy, featuring a 32% decline in numbers in manufacturing, a loss of nearly 390,000 employees in the 1990s alone. With almost 48,000 manufacturing firms in 1950, by 2000 the state was left with just about half this number (25,000). Again, in the 1990s the state suffered a net loss of over 500 manufacturing firms employing 100 or more workers, 23% of all such firms. In the 1990s, the state also lost a net of over 1700 firms (24%) employing from 20-99 workers, and a loss of 2,500 firms (12%) employing 19 or fewer workers.

New York City boroughs and nearby suburban counties experienced the greatest losses in manufacturing firms. Upstate Metropolitan and rural counties grew slightly in numbers of smaller firms, and held steady in larger firms. Overall, Upstate Metropolitan counties ended the half-century with substantially more manufacturing firms employing 100 or more compared to New York City boroughs, 531 to 416. Likewise, rural counties together had more such firms than New York City Suburban counties, 423 to 313. Since the two types of downstate counties had significantly more people in the workforce than upstate counties, these findings are astounding.

Even with these losses in manufacturing firms, in 2000 New York City had twice as many firms in the 20-99 employee size as upstate (about 2400 to 1200), and two and a third times as many firms employing 19 or fewer (about 8000 to about 2800). New York City Suburban counties also had 20% more firms employing 20-99 workers compared to rural counties (about 1100 to 900), and one-third more firms employing 1-19 workers (about 4000 to 2700).

New York City boroughs and suburban counties may be too dense and expensive in terms of population, land costs, and environmental controls to be hospitable to future large manufacturing firms, so that Upstate Metropolitan and rural counties with more available space may become the future home to New York’s larger manufacturing operations.

The Primary Sector & Agriculture

Extractive and agricultural industries have experienced declining proportions of the workforce for the last 100 years. The last 50 years saw a continued decline, starting at just over 3% of all workers in 1950 and stabilizing at a slightly lower level beginning in the 1970s. Then the trend line plunged downward again during the 1990s to open the 21st century with less than 1% of the workforce in extractive industries. These changes were accompanied by an absolute reduction in numbers of jobs, showing a 28% loss of about 15,000 workers during the 1990s alone. Still, many Upstate Metropolitan and rural counties find the extractive sector important for their local economies, for their communities’ character, and for an industrial base that processes its raw materials. Notably, in Rural Urban Suburban counties, land in agriculture increased by 2% in the 1990s, reversing previous downward trends. Likewise, Rural Suburban counties saw declines of only 3% in agricultural land in the 1990s compared with much greater losses from 1970 to 1990.

Increases in farm-size accompanied these trends over the last 50 years. Rural Suburban counties adjacent to Upstate Metropolitan counties had the largest average farm sizes. Located on rich agricultural soils along the New York State Thruway, Erie Barge Canal, and Hudson River valley, access to nearby metropolitan centers and superb transportation facilities offered ready markets for
their products. Although average farm size increased to slightly over 100 acres per farm, this number does not entirely reveal the scale of agriculture on commercial farms at the dawn of the 21st century. In 2000 over 8,000 farms were larger than 250 acres and almost 1,000 farms had more than 1,000 acres, thus demonstrating the scale and importance of these operations. Clearly, the trend is toward large-scale farming operations.

In contrast, farm product sales per acre were on a roller-coaster during the last 50 years. From 1950 to 1960 sales per acre increased, then slipped downward to where average sales per acre in 2000 were comparable only to 1950 levels in real dollar terms. In light of increasing costs of production, farm profitability is being squeezed incessantly.

Several bright spots in agriculture stood out during the 1990s. First, farmers in Rural-urban-suburban counties profited by producing commodities on good agricultural land because of the proximity to metropolitan-based demands for their products without extensive metropolitan pressures encroaching on their farm acreages. Thus, some farmers in Rural-urban-suburban counties used this urban-metropolitan strategy to increase their total dollar sales per acre, often by-passing the middle man by selling directly to consumers in an effort to increase profits. Second, although statistics on roadside stands, farmers markets, community-supported agriculture (CSAs), and organically produced food crops are not available for the entire fifty-year period, findings during the 1990s show that these forms of new agriculture expanded. Still, by 2000 the US Department of Agriculture reported that more organically produced food was sold in supermarkets than from roadside stands and farmers markets. These trends should be monitored and supported so that local agriculture can generate more income and employment for people throughout the state.

**Socioeconomic Attainment**

Working to get ahead has been a traditional hallmark of American society and in New York as well. Most people think in terms of education and income as primary among the achievement indicators for getting ahead.

**Education.** Without a doubt, education impacts people’s incomes as well as their general outlook on life. It unleashes people’s creativity as well as workers’ productivity and income potential. Thus, education contributes greatly to New York’s overall quality of life as well as its economy. During the last fifty years New Yorkers emphasized education through their substantial allocations of income for schools, colleges, and universities.

These investments paid off by attracting, preparing, and fortifying citizens for increased specialization and professionalism in the economy. Restructuring in manufacturing and greatly expanded professional and managerial staffs in all economic sectors required an educated population as well as a capacity for continuing education. The large farms described above also require specialized personnel and well-educated owners/managers. In 1950 all but one county type exhibited 12% of its population with some college level education; New York City Suburban counties had 20%. Aside from the flat trend-lines during the 1980s, in the 1990s educational levels climbed substantially so that by 2000 all counties had at least 40% of their populations with some college education, a significant achievement overall. Upstate Metropolitan counties had 53%, rivaling New York City’s suburbs with their 58%.
Income. Throughout this half-century, in real terms adjusted for inflation, New Yorkers experienced a steady increase in per capita income. Even in the 1990s, in spite of stagnation in creating new jobs during the economic restructurings and transitions, nearly all counties exhibited improved per capita incomes. In fact, during the 1990s per capita incomes in the 44 rural counties, starting from a lower base, rose at a slightly faster rate than those in New York’s 18 metropolitan counties. New York City boroughs and nearby suburban counties continued to rise in their per capita incomes during the 1990s also, but, for the first time in the half-century, at a slower pace than upstate rural counties, and slower than they did in previous decades.

Poverty. The proportion of families in poverty over the last half-century showed both positive and negative trends. In keeping with steadily rising per capita incomes, family poverty rates in the state fell from 20% of the population in 1950 to 12% in 2000, showing that the distribution of benefits from the state’s economic growth were shared throughout the society. Single-person households as well as those composed of two or more unmarried but related individuals also experienced rising incomes.

An oddity in this trend is the New York City boroughs. In 1960, the first year for publishing official poverty rates, these counties averaged 15% of their families in poverty, climbing to 22% by 1980, then slowly declining to about 19% by 2000, still two and half times the rates of the other counties which together ended the century with about 8% in poverty, and the highest family poverty rates in the state. The four rural county types started in 1960 with about 20% of their families in poverty, and ended in 2000 with 8% in poverty. Thus, Upstate Metropolitan and rural counties consistently showed marked and steady improvement in family poverty rates over this period.

The situation for children in poverty differs considerably from that of family poverty, and with more deleterious outcomes. From 1970 to 1980 the proportions of children age 18 or under living in poverty also experienced dramatic declines in Upstate Metropolitan and rural counties. From averages over 30% in 1970, upstate counties, including rural counties, averaged 14% of children in poverty in 1990, with 18% in Rural Periphery counties. But, in 1990, in the midst of continuing economic gains and declines in family poverty, poverty rates among children increased slightly in all county types except in New York City boroughs. The increase was only a percentage point or so, ending in 2000 with an average of 16% in poverty, but notable because of its contrast with other indicators of economic prosperity. New York City boroughs, the exception, had poverty rates of 37% among families with children age 18 or under in 1970, then declined to end in 2000 with rates of 27%, which were still the highest child poverty rates in the state and 60% higher than those of other counties. Part of the reason is seen in the changes in family structure.

The Family. In examining family structure, the focus shifts from indicators based on individuals in the general population to indicators based on households as units of comparison. The family is a key type of household discussed in this report; it is the fundamental reproductive, socialization, and economic unit of society. Two notable household trends over the last fifty years are: 1) the traditional family unit consisting of two married adults with one or more children age 18 or under has decreased from an average of 46% of all households in New York in 1960 to half of this, 23%, in 2000; and 2) single female-parent households were 9% of households in 1970, climbed to 18% by 1990, and then dropped dramatically to 7% in 2000.
By 2000, then, over three-quarters of New York’s households were non-traditional, yet 66% were families in the sense that these households consisted of two or more related individuals. Reasons for this shift are largely demographic, but one is policy-related. More couples are older, with children who have matured and left home, and more households are married individuals without children, single-parent, or non-married partners living together. Non-traditional two-parent households are due in part to the 1996 federal welfare-reform policy intervention that now permits unmarried parents to live together and still be eligible for social assistance, thus reducing percentages of single-parent households. Still, because they are not married, these dual-parent households increased the percentage of non-traditional households.

Trends in births to single women, however, continued upward, from 3% of births in 1960 to 33% in 2000. In contrast, births to teenagers, after rising from 1980 to 1990, reversed and declined in the 1990s, perhaps due to cultural changes and/or to social programs. Births to 10-14 year olds declined from a high in 1990 of 60 per 100,000 teenagers to 16 per 100,000 female teenagers in 2000, and for 15-17 year olds the rates declined from 2,330 per 100,000 in 1990 to 1,629 per 100,000 in 2000.

Other non-traditional households are those headed by divorced or separated individuals, as well as unmarried couples living together. Their trends also shifted during the last fifty years. The rates for divorced or separated individuals decreased from a post-world war high of 13% in 1950, to 5% in 1960, then rose steadily to 16% in 2000. In 2000, non-married two-parent households are recognized in the Census and represented slightly more than 5% of all households. Of these households, 88% are male-female households. During the 2000 Census a new category of household was also included, unmarried partner households of the same sex. Such partnerships are 12% of unmarried partner households in New York State and represent a baseline for future analysis.

On family well-being, the steady rates of children in poverty described above, and perhaps related to certain non-traditional households, are major social policy concerns. Being raised in poverty is not a solid foundation on which to build a child’s future and can be alleviated only by concerted individual and societal action.

One outcome of poverty, and closely related to the quality of and access to health care services, is infant mortality. Overall, optimistic and positive trends in infant mortality are presented in this report. Fifty years ago an average of between 22 and 30 infants out of every 1,000 born alive in New York state died in the first year of life. In 2000 the rate had been reduced by over two-thirds to a range between 5 to 10 infant deaths per 1,000. In Rural Periphery counties average rates were reduced by one-third while in Rural Urban counties rates were cut to one-fifth of their 1950 rates. Still, these steady improvements need to be monitored closely because in the 1990s certain upstate counties for the first time in fifty years saw their infant mortality rates increase. For instance, in Rural Periphery counties rates increased from 7.4 per 1000 live births to 10.1.

Health & Mortality. Along with family life and their children’s education, people identify their health as a major concern. The last fifty years saw dramatic improvements on most health-related indicators, as mortality rates for a variety of specific diseases plummeted. Statewide, death rates due to infant mortality, heart attacks, strokes, accidents, cirrhosis, suicides, and even homicides were all down dramatically. Such reduced mortality rates are in large part due to impressive innovations and improvements in the medical profession and health care systems, as well as to general public awareness and concern about health issues.
Among these improving trends, a disappointment stands out: deaths due to lung cancer. This indicator should have improved along with the others over the last 20-30 years due to better understanding of its causes, anti-smoking campaigns, increases in tobacco taxes, education, and environmental controls on air pollution. But, with two exceptions, trends in lung cancer mortality in most New York counties climbed to at least twice their 1950 rates, leveling off only in the 1990s. Perhaps the tide has shifted. By 2000, due to lower downstate rates, statewide rates averaged 73 deaths per 100,000 adults, but for upstate counties, both metropolitan and rural, rates clustered around an average of 94.5 deaths per 100,000 adults, 25% higher than the state average. New York City boroughs and suburbs saw their lung cancer mortality rates decline over the last 30 years so that in 2000 New York City boroughs’ rates were 55 per 100,000 adults and the nearby suburbs were 73 lung cancer deaths per 100,000 adults. Clearly, policy efforts to reduce lung cancer mortality in New York must continue in order to achieve further reductions in this indicator.

Alcohol abuse, as seen in rates for cirrhosis of the liver, is another policy concern. Although cirrhosis mortality peaked in the 1970s, rates in 2000 were only slightly lower than in 1950. Since deaths due to cirrhosis of the liver, as with lung cancer, reflect years of previous abuse, impacts noted in the 1970s resulted from habits in the 1950s and 1960s, and abuse in the 1970s was reflected in 1990s’ rates. Lower levels at the end of this half century then, show impacts from changes in lifestyles and education during the last 20 years. The problem of increasing rates of cirrhosis may be disappearing, but the educational efforts and policies that made the declining rates possible need to continue.

A particular policy concern is that, in rural counties during the 1990s, rates of strokes, lung cancer, cirrhosis, and accidental deaths did not decline much if at all, while downstate counties’ rates continued their downward path. Flattened or increasing mortality rates in rural counties in the 1990s were linked statistically, to stable or lower numbers of doctors per capita and associated health care services compared to metropolitan areas of the state.

Bright spots in the health indicators were the steady declines in most mortality rates in New York City boroughs and suburbs, the steadily large downward slopes in heart disease, the steady if slow declines in suicide rates and, since 1980, declining rates of homicides. All such indicators are testaments to breakthroughs in medical technologies, health care and public safety facilities, and dissemination of health care information throughout the populations of all counties.
APPENDIX C:

Upstate New York
Let’s Focus on Opportunities

Susan Christopherson
Department of City & Regional Planning
Cornell University
Up “state” - 14th largest in the US

A Different Approach

• Get a better grip on the sources of economic development problems
• Recognize and build on knowledge economy assets in health and education
• Build cooperation among upstate governments and civic organizations
• Rethink the policy agenda
Job Trends for Upstate Metros 1990-2003

**Total job growth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York State</td>
<td>+ 2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>- 1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upstate Big 6 metros (total)</td>
<td>+ 2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albany-Schenectady-Troy</td>
<td>+ 7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binghamton SMSA</td>
<td>- 5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo-Niagara Falls SMSA</td>
<td>- 0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester SMSA</td>
<td>+ 4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse SMSA</td>
<td>+ 0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utica-Rome SMSA</td>
<td>+ 2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>+ 18.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. B.L.S., establishment data, annual averages

Average Wage Per Job for Upstate MSAs 2000-2004

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
Get Out of the 1950s

- City/County conflicts, inter-jurisdictional competition among “shrinking cities”
- Upstate - downstate competition
- Poorly designed deregulation and subsidies that raise costs for consumers and small business
- Insufficient infrastructure investment to connect Upstate with US and global economies
- A dated self-image. Upstate is now a rapidly changing (international, “green”, innovative industries) region
Upstate Economy: More diversified

Emerging Upstate Industries

- Build on historical investments in engineering, skills & research
- Composed of Small & Medium not large firms
- Attract new workers and international firms
If Your Company Were to Create or Relocate Centers of Innovation, Which of the Following Elements Would Eliminate a Prospective Location?

- Small S&E Talent Pool: 55%
- Poor Communications Infrastructure: 55%
- Low Quality of Life: 46%
- Poor School System: 36%
- Lack of Financial Incentives: 19%


Key Dimensions of a Sustainable Upstate Economy:

- Intra-regional Cooperation Trumps Competition
- Long-term Planning Builds on Assets
- Policy Action at Federal and State to Affect Regional Capacity
- Horizontal Linkages Among Key Institutions

The Way Forward
• Don’t give up on manufacturing. We benefit from diversity.
• Leverage already-strong health and education sectors for economic development, supporting innovation and investments. Use our assets!
• Insist on local/town/county government consolidation and more regional cooperation.
• Demand a critical analysis of state economic development programs and a focus on building assets, workforce skills, and infrastructure. Support SMEs not just large firms.
• Promote a new image of upstate

Upstate New York
Let’s Focus on Opportunities
(for a change)

Susan Christopherson
Department of City & Regional Planning
Cornell University
APPENDIX D:

**Participant Evaluations of Listening Sessions**

The Listening Session evaluation comments were positive with respect to the diversity of opinions represented, the overall structure of activities, and the breadth of issues discussed. Participants expressed their appreciation for the “opportunity to be heard” in a “safe” space for discussion, and the fact that they were really listened to and not just talked at. A number of participants just wanted to simply say “thank you” for inviting them to be a part of this process.

Participants found the sessions valuable in terms of interacting and networking with a diversity of others in their region who all share a concern about “core issues” facing rural New York. The themes discussed at these sessions were very appropriate to regional concerns and allowed participants to benefit from exposure to the “quality and diversity of thinking around these issues.”

The breakout sessions were described as very effective for generating and collecting a lot of information within a short period of time. This small group format allowed each participant to “utilize the expertise of the broad spectrum of [other] participants.” Small groups allowed for “meaningful discussion,” and the idea that there were “no wrong answers” within this process encouraged open-minded participation and brought forth a great variety of creative suggestions. In fact, some participants expressed surprise at how much more lively and interesting the sessions were than what they had expected!

Through this format, participants were able to learn from one another, and were struck by common themes and a sense of shared awareness of issues, as well as by local differences throughout the region. As one participant stated, “The mixing of interest groups forced us to find words to describe what balances our interests, as we realize what conflicts.”

The overall format was consistently described as interactive and engaging, and the small group sessions allowed for “maximum input” from everyone. Participants were “energized” by the creativity of others, the sharing of success stories, and the fact that the format pushed them to look beyond the current situation towards “new thinking” about what a better scenario would be. One participant summarized the importance of the process by saying that it is “Empowering to community individuals to provide input into [the] legislative process.”

While participants reacted favorably to the diversity of attendees, they also emphasized the need to diversify outreach to include more community members. In order for this process to be truly effective, participants would have liked to have interacted with a more “full range of participants” at these sessions. Specifically mentioned as missing-but-necessary participants were members of other ethnic groups, educators, working land-owners and land-users, local business people, local government officials, and youth. It seems that participants enjoyed engaging with the diversity of opinion that was present, but wished there had been a greater diversity of types of people in attendance. As one participant stated, there is a need to “bring the listening session to the local level and give community members a chance to participate and have a voice.”

While participants were enthusiastic and energized throughout the process, some general comments reflected concern that momentum might stop after these regional listening sessions. Significant
emphasis was placed on the importance of continuing this vision process and the sharing of information. In order for truly effective change to result, they expressed a need to “challenge present and future participants to engage in dialogue and be committed to the process.”

The comments of one participant capture this overall sentiment regarding the Listening Sessions: “The promise is fabulous, but follow-through is absolutely necessary.” Overall, participants liked this “bottom-up” approach, and are hopeful that the process will translate into action. Many participants suggested that there is now an emerging need to focus on how to “take this beyond issue identification” and “move to action planning.”

Participants seem to feel that the Rural Vision Project and process represents a “significant and important project that can yield some helpful results” to the future of rural New York—but only if “[their] suggestions are given credibility.” In general, the comments thus suggest that this is a valuable process—leading one participant to comment that we should “do it more often—it’s good for us!”
APPENDIX E:

Metropolitan, Micropolitan, and Non-Core Based NYS Counties

The following are excerpts from a Research & Policy Brief by David L. Brown, John B. Cromartie & Laszlo J. Kulcsar describing the relatively new “micropolitan” and non-core based” county designation scheme. (http://rnyi.cornell.edu/community_and_economic_development/000178.php):

The ability to differentiate among non-metropolitan areas is important for a whole range of issues, not the least of which is a basic understanding of the process of metropolitanization, and of the diversity of social and economic roles that continue to be played by people and places that remain beyond the metropolitan periphery. The U.S. government has recently revised its classification system of metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, introducing the micropolitan concept. The purpose of this new measurement concept is to effectively differentiate the social and economic realities of places caught in between metropolitan areas and more traditionally conceptualized non-metropolitan areas.

With the new classification system, both metropolitan and non-metropolitan territory can be integrated with a population center. To this end, a core-based statistical system was instituted that established the micropolitan category as a means of distinguishing between non-metropolitan areas that contain a population core, and non-metropolitan areas that do not. Micropolitan areas are built around core settlement clusters of 10,000-49,999 persons, and included both core counties and outlying counties with high commuting to the core. Counties were retained as the basic geographic building block of metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in the new system. Of New York State’s 62 counties, 36 are metropolitan and 26 are non-metropolitan. Of the non-metropolitan counties, 15 are considered micropolitan and 11 are non-core-based.
NYS County Types

Legend
- Nonmetropolitan - noncore
- Nonmetropolitan - micro
- Metropolitan
APPENDIX F:

OTHER RURAL INITIATIVES

The NYS Rural Vision Project is not the first of its kind in NYS or elsewhere. At the federal and state level, efforts to improve conditions in rural America are on-going, varying in their participants, approach, and goals, but are generally aimed at improving the quality of life and economic conditions of rural places and people. Many of the identified issues and proposed solutions were similar to what was heard in the RVP listening sessions and often focused along similar thematic lines. The following are some examples of such initiatives, some federally based and others arising from the state and local levels.

Economic development

At the federal level, the second annual conference on rural policy matters in Kansas City in 2001, organized by the Center for the Study of Rural America, gathered rural leaders throughout the United States to identify, examine, and inform policy options for the most challenging problems facing rural communities. Participants agreed that critical components to ensuring growth and vitality include:

- Providing support for entrepreneurship
- Tapping digital technology
- Promoting and enabling equity capital
- Fostering cooperation between firms and communities
- Encouraging alliances in a more product oriented agriculture
- Helping rural communities benefit from their scenic amenities

The Rural Sociology Society supports these findings and includes the importance of investing in education and teaching financial literacy.

The conference also highlighted the importance of building on a community’s competitive advantage, relying on new investments, and finding innovative ways to finance the rural economy; supporting both economic and social capital. For these changes to take place, local government capacity must be sufficiently strong to ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place and assist in developing support networks, such as business clusters. The conference maintained that rural policy needs to shift away from a sector-based economy to one that is place-based and dependent on resources from within the community. Communities, they claim, much like businesses, must add value to survive through differentiating the quality of life they offer.

Agricultural Economic Development

Grow New York is an example of a state program helping rural communities build on their agricultural base to become or remain both economically and socially viable. According to the experience of Grow New York and research conducted by Cornell University\(^5\) successful agricultural initiatives cannot stand alone and must be included as part of the local comprehensive

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plan. Of primary importance to economic feasibility and sustainability of agri-business, are the creation of agricultural districts and establishment of Right to Farm laws. Implemented at the local level, these laws complement and increase the effectiveness of state-wide marketing, quality assurance, and other product-based support programs. The New Economic Handbook of 2006, stresses that local officials and the non-farming public must be educated about the economic, social and environmental challenges and benefits of local farming in order to improve decision-making throughout the planning and implementation process. Many programs, such as farmland protection, cannot be carried out without local support and participation.

Ontario County, for example, designated as one of New York’s best places to live, has deliberately used its scenic beauty and agricultural heritage to spur economic growth through tourism. Much of their success is credited to extraordinary cooperation among local officials and county residents; all of whom are dedicated to farmland preservation and uphold a shared vision despite sprawl pressures from Rochester.

Government

Devolution of policy decisions to the local level, as suggested by the Center for the Study of Rural America’s 2001 national conference, can help create synergies with entrepreneurs when local officials are empowered, educated, and act as key players. Devolution can also help forge new regional partnerships that support economic growth efforts through the implementation process and for sustainability into the future. Greater understanding of the environment, natural resources, and agriculture will lead to better land-use decision making by local officials.

Senator George H. Winner of the Legislative Commission on the Development of Rural Resources agrees with this assertion and highlights the importance of Bi-partisan cooperation. In addition, he sees as government’s role to ensure adequate internet connection and support networks in rural areas to assist in education, healthcare, business, industry, and local government functions.

Community Capacity

Programs aimed at building community capacity also emphasize the importance of regional coordination. The Vital Communities Initiative, for example, part of the New York State Rural Housing Coalition works to guide growth patterns in communities that allow localities to grow while keeping the character they value. Vital communities recommends building mix-use, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods that help increase diversity and promote community cohesion. The Finger Lakes Institute is an example of a program that works within a geographically bound region, mapping local resources to facilitate timber management; they design programs for public education and teacher training to enhance environmental curriculums throughout the region. FLI is also working to determine the potential of ecotourism to regional economic vitality.

Rural Schools and Youth

The Brookings Institute’s publication of a recent study on rural education, Upstate School Reform: The Challenge of Regional Geography, shows that while state funding for public schools appears to be rather equitable throughout the state of New York, lack of resources and greater structural and instructional demands in rural schools make it exceedingly difficult to attract and retain quality teachers; primary factors contributing to low testing performance and high drop-out rates. School
funding relies heavily on property taxes, in addition to state and local taxes. The relatively high taxes of rural districts with low population density and low property wealth places a great burden on communities that often also cope with job loss, population decline, and stagnant incomes. The Brookings Institute recommends that:

- State aid can be used to equalize the tax burden for school spending that is based on property tax.
- Appropriate incentives offered to teachers for better recruitment and retention, encourage relocation, and offer professional development.
- Organizational linkages and information flows among and between school districts (including BOCES, local and state government) must be improved to facilitate better data collection and preparation for program development and assessment.

During a Prairie Rural Action conference in Fargo, youth in rural communities explain that they look quality of life in their communities; they look for opportunities to run a business, live in a quality environment, and a diverse culture with many young people. They are not looking for city in the country, nor are they interested in simply following the jobs. Planners must listen to the desires of young people and give them opportunities at leadership. Again, entrepreneurial support and the creation of business clusters play a major role.

**Healthcare**

The Rural Families Speak Project, a collaborative university study between 14 states, concluded that access to preventative healthcare services is a key component to building social and human capital, fostering community stability and vitality. Looking at food security – a base-level measure of poverty, they concluded that poor mental, physical, oral health and lack of health insurance are key factors contributing to food insecurity among rural women, of which depression was a major factor. Therefore, they recommend that access to preventative healthcare services should be central to building growth capacity and ensuring food security in rural areas. Senator Winner also points to the shortage of volunteer emergency personnel and suggests that this should be addressed by providing appropriate incentives, such as tax breaks.

**Poverty**

Major challenges to reducing poverty in rural areas are the prevalence of low-paying service sector jobs, and devolution and deregulation of government, according to the Rural Sociology Society. Northern New York businesses, for example, pay 25% less than the state average to skilled workers in almost every field, creating a disincentive for workers, as well as college graduates from the numerous local universities, to stay. Locally owned businesses further struggle with NYS taxes, regulations, high energy costs, and distance from markets; limiting their competitiveness and ability to recruit talent from other regions. Moreover, the well-funded, well paying public sector attracts many talented individuals, essentially competing for talent with the private sector.

Another factor contributing to poverty is the decomposition of the family structure. This increases the burden of rural families, to mirror those of urban families, while local governments lack urban-style economies of scale in the provision of social services, ultimately, limiting access to needed support in rural areas. To overcome these challenges rural areas should, according the Rural sociology society:
• Come together in regional groups to share resources, staff, and combine the efforts of community-based, non-governmental organizations
• Promote family-friendly policies that would help balance long commutes with family obligations.
• Focus on increasing their tourist capacity and attracting high-end customers.
• Invest in companies that show national promise through loans, incubator services, and other incentives, rather than primarily supporting small business.

The Brookings Institute notes that cities and villages are losing jobs that are going to towns and highlight the importance of equalizing the tax burden and increasing competitiveness.
APPENDIX G:

FUTURE OF RURAL NY SEMINAR SERIES

During the Spring semester of 2006, researchers, policymakers, stakeholders, Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators, community organizers, private citizens, and students gathered on six occasions at Cornell University for panel discussions based on issues important to the future of rural New York State. The format of the Future of Rural New York Seminar Series was designed to encourage audience participation, to support engaged dialogue, and to strengthen the connection between Cornell's research and outreach efforts, and local, regional, and state-level policies, programs, and practitioners. Discussions have been lively, informative, and even controversial at times, as might be expected based on the subjects featured in the series. Topics included:

‘Effectiveness of Community Based Watershed Organizations’, 1/27/06
‘Transitioning to Renewable and Agricultural-based Products & Energy’, 2/3/06
‘Ag, Food, and Community Partnerships as a Model for Development’, 3/31/06
“Immigration in NYS: Trends & Policy Implications”, 4/14/06
‘Federal Energy Policy and Implications on NYS’, 4/18/06
‘Changing the Conversation about Higher Education’s Public Mission and Work’, 4/28/06

Perhaps the highest profile speaker to date was Congressman Maurice Hinchey, of NYS's 22nd Congressional District, who spoke about energy policy legislation he introduced in Washington this year. Congress’ highly charged debate over immigration policy reforms coincided perfectly with the seminar on “Immigration in NYS.” Regardless of topic, the goal of the series is to foster increased interaction between research, practice and policy, creating strong partnerships for future engaged work, thereby supporting the contemporary culture of Cornell’s Land Grant Mission. Information gathered at the seminars has informed the relevant policy theme areas within the Rural Vision Project.

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