



# Rural Futures

Winter Issue 2008/2009

## News of Interest about Rural New York

### Rural Economic Development

**M**uch of this issue of *Rural Futures* is devoted to rural economic development. Sound economic development is a key to enhanced quality of life, the attainment of community development goals, and to stemming population loss experienced by many of our rural communities. See the *Rural Resources Commission map on Population Change by County on Page 4*. We start out with, "What Works for Small Businesses", a state and local government reference guide of proven practices for assisting small businesses. The report was compiled by the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. The committee contacted every state in the country in search of programs, policies, and initiatives that have proven successful in encouraging and supporting entrepreneurial, small business development. A special section is included in the report for "Rural Business Development", which lists ten successful programs. A brief description of each program is below. Download the report from <http://sbc.senate.gov/What%20Works%20for%20Small%20Businesses%20September%202008.pdf>. The *Rural Business Development* section is Pages 156-167.

**Connecticut Grown Program.** Established in 1986 to increase the demand for Connecticut products within and outside the region. Visit <http://www.ctipa.org/>.

**Idaho Rural Initiative.** Established in 2001 to provide funding and technical assistance to diversify local economies and build stronger communities. Visit <http://business.idaho.gov/>.

**Illinois Community and Business Roundtable.** Established in 2005 to share information with companies and community leaders about key subjects impacting economic development in the six-county region. Contact Paul Faraci at e-mail: [paul.faraci@illinois.gov](mailto:paul.faraci@illinois.gov).

**Illinois U.S. Route 24 Logistics Corridor.** Established in 2004 to provide marketing and business attraction activities for rail-related transportation and logistics businesses along the Route 34 corridor. Visit <http://www.us34.com/>.

**NetWork Kansas.** Established in 2006, the NetWork Kansas portal enables entrepreneurs and small business owners to connect with more than 400 resource partners throughout the state. Visit <http://www.network-kansas.com/>.

**Minnesota Job Opportunity Building Zone (JOBZ) Initiative.** Established in 2004 to stimulate economic development activity by providing local and state tax exemptions to companies that start up or expand in targeted areas. Visit <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/>.

**North Carolina Building Reuse and Restoration Grants.** Established in 2004 to spur economic activity and job creation by assisting in the productive reuse of vacant buildings in small towns. Visit <http://ncruralcenter.org/>.

**North Carolina Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship.** Established in 2003 to stimulate and support the development of micro, small, and medium-size enterprises in North Carolina's 85 rural counties. Visit <http://ncruralcenter.org/>.

**Oklahoma Site Certification Program: Site Ready.** Established in 2002 to capitalize on economic development opportunities and to prepare communities to accommodate new business prospects. Visit <http://www.okcommerce.gov/>.

**Pick Tennessee Products.** Established in the early 1990s to help consumers identify and choose Tennessee produced and processed agricultural products. Visit <http://picktnproducts.org/>.

*Read on for more on rural economic development.*

A Publication of the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources  
Chaired by Senator George H. Winner, Jr.

The NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources is a joint bipartisan agency of the state legislature. Senate and Assembly members include:

## Senate Members:

George H. Winogr, Jr.,  
Chairman

Mary Lou Rath  
William T. Stachowski  
David J. Vallesky

Executive Director:  
Ronald C. Brach

Editor/Graphic Design:  
Kathleen K. Carroll

Tel.: (518) 455-2544  
Fax: (518) 426-6960  
Email: ruralrzs@senate.state.ny.us

Web site:  
[www.senate.state.ny.us](http://www.senate.state.ny.us)

## Assembly Members:

David Roon,  
Vice-Chairman

Barbara S. Lifton  
James Bacallus  
Daniel J. Burling

Assembly:  
Christina Williams  
Senior Policy Analyst

Tel.: (518) 455-3999  
Fax: (518) 455-4175

Web site:  
[www.assembly.state.ny.us](http://www.assembly.state.ny.us)

## Four Tenets for Rural Economic Development

**L**ike urban America, rural communities across the country are clamoring for development strategies that create jobs, businesses, and community wealth. For this reason, the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire has released *Measures and Methods: Four Tenets for Rural Economic Development*. The report offers four tenets for rethinking methods and measures that promote effective economic development in the twenty-first century.

### The four tenets are:

- Innovation is key to driving growth and prosperity in today's global economy;
- Significant capital investments are required to put innovations to use;
- Development efforts must seek to protect valuable natural assets; and
- Development is a "contact sport," best pursued through dense networks of personal contacts.



The report notes that for any rural area to compete in the global economy, its development methods must address innovation, investments, connections, and preservation. And efforts must reflect the demands of the new economy—jobs, wealth, and prosperity built on innovations and investments — while valuing community connections and efforts to nurture the natural environment.

Rural America must depend on its old firms to do new things in new ways; its workers and entrepreneurs to capitalize on their knowledge, creativity, and skills; its educational institutions to teach 21st century skills; and its residents to access new technology. The report states that, "The competitive advantage (or disadvantage) of rural America will rest on its ability to drive innovations through talent and technology."

## Rural Economic Development Success Stories

*From across Rural America that were included in “Measures and Methods”*

### Rugby, North Dakota

Rugby’s economy, based in agriculture and the government sector, struggled throughout the 1980s and 1990s, failing to generate new jobs. The Rugby Jobs Development Authority stepped in and learned that many residents had limited experience with computers. To correct this, the job development authority partnered with the Center for Technology and Business (CTB) in 1999. CTB created a low-cost computer training program and trained local residents, who then taught the courses in their hometown (a “train-the-trainers” approach). Costs to participants range from \$30 to \$60 per course, though students unable to pay are subsidized. Course revenues cover textbooks and teacher pay and courses are held in donated meeting space at the local hospital. In the past six years, more than 400 residents, or about one-third of Rugby’s labor force, have completed the program. The result has been significant. Several new businesses have chosen to settle in Rugby due to their technology proficient workforce.

### Tyron, North Carolina

Tyron, a small, rural town lacked sufficient broadband bandwidth to compete in today’s global economy; so they chose to create a faster Internet service themselves. The town created a premium seven-mile fiber optic network for their residents, schools and businesses. E-Polk has continued to operate as an all-volunteer staff and board; allowing consumers to receive services at the lowest possible price. E-Polk was awarded a combined \$1,040,000 in grants in 2006 to connect a neighboring county to the network.

### Ord, Nebraska

Ord, a small, rural city partnered with the county and the chamber of commerce, to establish an interlocal agreement whereby each entity committed to work together and to share the costs of and revenues from community and economic development. In addition, residents passed a one-cent local option sales tax for economic development. Revenue from this tax was used for business loans and other incentives. The community also established a community endowment and a founders’ club. Momentum for building the endowment was generated by an initial \$1.2 million gift from a pair of local residents. These efforts resulted in an increase in retail sales; an increase in personal income; a per capita income increase; 3 new businesses; and much more!

### Cape Charles, Virginia

Cape Charles’s success story is different from most. Their strategy linked environmental protection with economic development. One element of this strategy was to develop an eco-friendly industrial park. The 31,000 square foot manufacturing/office building featured solar panels, protected wetlands, low-energy light and water fixtures, and native landscaping. In addition, an innovative water recycling system protected local water resources. The system recycles water from each company and redistributes it to businesses. Dubbed the Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park (STIP), the park secured \$8 million from private companies locating there and created more than 65 new jobs. Unfortunately, due to a rigorous list of sustainability criteria for businesses operating in the park, some of the businesses have since closed. However, county officials and the chamber of commerce remain optimistic and are talking with a nearby community college about locating in the unused space.

### Helena–West Helena, Arkansas

Two cities in Arkansas, Helena and West Helena, became a single, consolidated town in 2005, now referred to as Helena–West Helena. Helena today is the county seat for one of the poorest counties in Arkansas, with a poverty rate of 30 percent and an unemployment rate approaching 15 percent. Phillips County ranks last in the state in virtually every indicator of economic and social well-being. Nearly 40 percent of its residents lack high school degrees, and the county leads the nation in out-of-wedlock births. To improve the county’s ranking, Southern Financial Partners and the Walton Family Foundation initiated the Delta Bridge Project, a countywide, comprehensive, intensive, and long-term effort to bring all community- and economic-development entities under a single umbrella. Over an 18-month period in 2003–2004, 300 residents participated in more than 500 meetings to develop the Strategic Community Plan for Phillips County. The plan includes 46 strategic goals (e.g., expand the Delta Arkansas Health Education Center to allow for greater impact and improved health education and awareness) and more than 200 action steps (e.g., expand physical facilities at the Delta health center). The Delta Bridge Project has been a driving force for economic development in Helena–West Helena.

Download “Measures and Methods” from <http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/PB-Brown-Graham-Measures08.pdf>.

*See the News in Brief section on page 11 for successful economic development stories in rural New York state.*



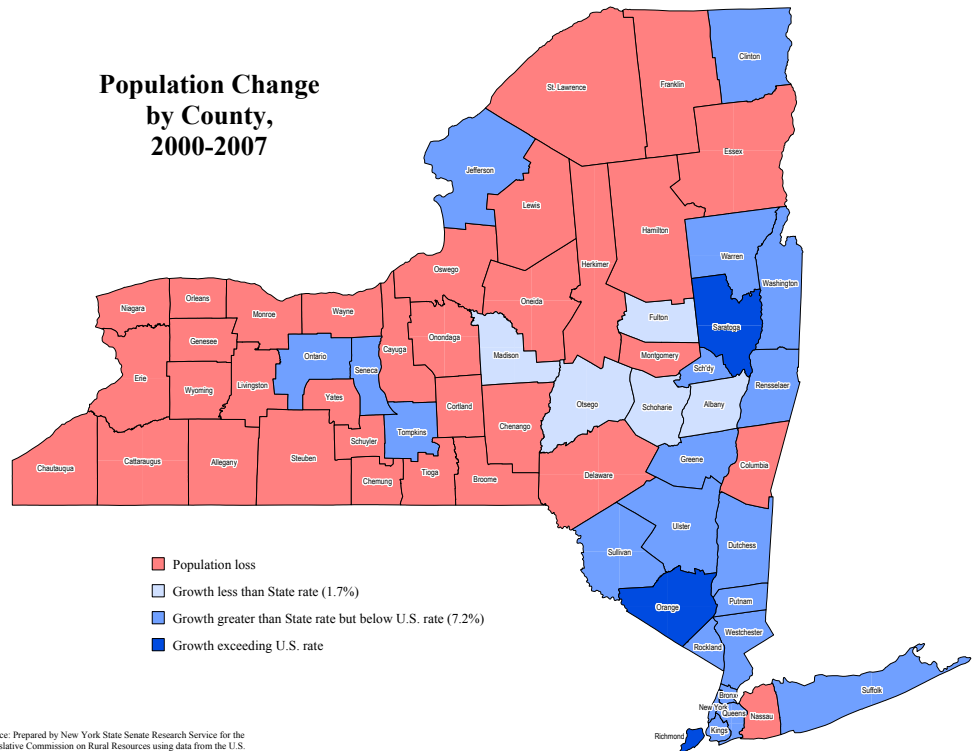
## Economic Development in Rural Areas

**I**mmigrants may play an important part in economic development in rural areas. According to the US Small Business Administration, immigrants account for 16.7 percent of all new business owners in the United States. And in California, immigrant business owners account for one-quarter of all business income. The small town of Schuyler in northeast Nebraska, population 5,000, saw an accelerated influx of immigrants in the mid-90s. Today, half of Schuyler's downtown businesses are owned by Hispanics who opened new stores in old, abandoned businesses. Young Hispanics and their families have reversed Schuyler's dwindling population trends and now account for 50% of the population. Research has found that Hispanic entrepreneurs nurture their employees with financial literacy education, and Hispanics are hard working. States with the heaviest immigrant-owned businesses include California, Florida, Hawaii, New Jersey and New York.

In other studies by Cornell researchers, rural New York is also shown to be experiencing growth in immigrant populations. Most recently, Professors Max J. Pfeffer and Pilar A. Parra of Cornell University authored "*Community Response to Immigrants in new Destinations*." Download it from <http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/>



**Population Change  
by County,  
2000-2007**



Source: Prepared by New York State Senate Research Service for the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division (March 20, 2008), July 2008.

*The above map was produced by Senate Research Service at the request of the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. The data is based on US Census population estimates as of March 2007. It is meant to raise awareness and promote action to stem the loss of more people.*

**A**ccording to a report released last fall, "*Grey Gold: Do Older In-Migrants Benefit Rural Communities?*", the answer to that question is YES! The report from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire shows that rural areas are getting more than their share of new residents over age 60. Cornell University researchers Nina Glasgow and David Brown found that, "Almost 10 percent of Americans aged 60+ migrated between counties during 1995 to 2000, with a disproportionate share moving to rural communities." And, the older in-movers are active in a wide range of social, civic, religious, and service organizations, and they are especially likely to volunteer. The report notes that older in-migration to rural areas will persist into the future, as baby boomers approach retirement age. Non-metropolitan areas have experienced net in-migration at ages 60+ during three of the last five decades, with the rate of in-migration at these ages being particularly high during the rural growth decades of the 1970s and 1990s. *Note: Glasgow is a senior research associate in the Department of Development Sociology at Cornell University, and Brown is a professor of development sociology, a director of the university's Community and Rural Development Institute and associate director of the Cornell Population Program.* Download the report from <http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/PB-Glasgow-Brown-GreyGold.pdf>. The Rural Resources Commission, along with Ithaca College sponsored a Rural Aging Summit in the fall of 2007. From that summit, the Commission developed two pieces of legislation addressing New York's aging rural citizens. The first, the Rural Communities Elder Citizens Act (S.7125/A.10202) would establish integration and coordination services for elderly in rural areas. And the second, the Long Term Care Worker Training Program (S.7304-A/A.10465-A) would set up a training program to improve the quality of services provided to New York's elders. Download either bill from <http://www.senate.state.ny.us/>.

## Consolidation vs. Local Control

**N**ationwide and in New York, school districts and local governments are experimenting with sharing services and considering consolidation.

Last year, the Maine legislature approved a law to force each school district to include at least 2,500 students, except in isolated areas, where the minimum will be 1,000. Districts that don't meet those requirements will have to consolidate or face cuts in state aid. The goal is to reduce Maine's 290 school administrative units to 80 or fewer. Nebraska and Arkansas have approved school district merger plans, but only after years of contentious debate.

In Indiana, lawmakers approved property tax cuts and caps last year that force local governments to change the way they do business. The legislature also eliminated most of the state's elected township property assessors, shifting their responsibilities to counties. A bipartisan commission was established last December to restructure local government. Under the plan, school districts with fewer than 2,000 students would be required to consolidate. The number of library districts would be cut to 92 in order to mirror county lines. Most dramatically, the township governments — which currently provide fire and EMS services and assistance for the poor — would be done away with entirely.

New York has been struggling with the issue of consolidation for years, as well. The state has several layers of local government — city, county, town and village governments, school districts, and special districts. And each type of government is covered by different state laws. Not to mention, these units vary dramatically in size, structure, function, and finance. For example, the Town of Hempstead on Long Island, has a population of more than 750,000. If it were a city, it would have the 15th largest population in the country, ahead of Boston, Seattle, Denver and Washington, D.C. In an effort to address these inconsistent layers of government, New York began operating a program, a few years back, that offers grants and technical assistance for municipalities that are willing to collaborate with each other. Last year, the state handed out nearly \$14 million in grants to fund everything from the joint purchase of street sweeping machines to studies of outright consolidation between a town and city. New York is now evaluating whether grants that were approved in past years have had their intended effects — whether they cut costs and improved efficiency. Officials hope that if there are demonstrated benefits to collaboration, more municipalities will want to participate. New York's softer approach has risen to the forefront as a model for other states to follow. For more information on New York's consolidation efforts, visit the NYS Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness [http://www.nyslocalgov.org/local\\_initiatives\\_county.asp](http://www.nyslocalgov.org/local_initiatives_county.asp) and the Department of State's web site at <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/>.



The Village of Lake George (Warren County) is considering consolidating with the Town.

The Village of Lake George (Warren County) is considering consolidating with the Town.

One thing is clear, state and local government officials need to join forces to make shared services and consolidation work. Read Josh Goodman's full article for *Governing Magazine* (November 2008) at <http://www.governing.com/articles/0811consol.htm>.

## Universal Broadband Advances

Things are looking up for broadband in rural areas. A National Broadband Strategy Symposium was held in Washington, D.C. late last year to develop strategies to roll out broadband nationwide. Two ideas which have been circulating for years are coming to fruition.

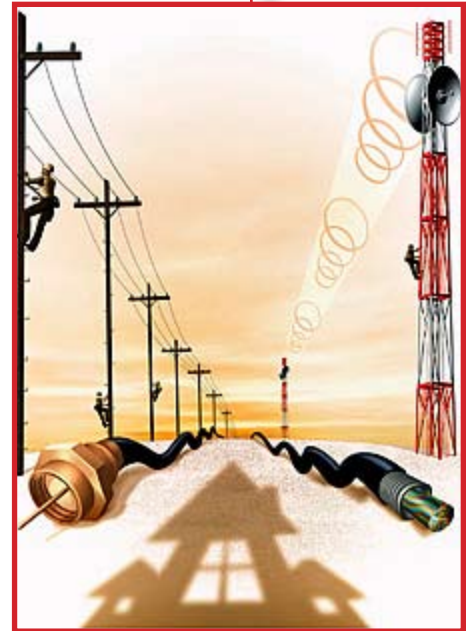
First, the FCC approved a change late last year to allow unused television frequencies to be used to provide Internet services. This change is a great leap forward in bringing low cost, high speed Internet and new wireless devices to rural areas. Since 2004, the FCC has been studying whether the frequencies between television channels — the white spaces — could be used by other devices, particularly because digital signals are less prone to interference. The FCC performed two sets of tests that showed some potential for disruption on frequencies, but the FCC is confident that such interference can be mitigated through tight regulation of new devices. The new frequencies could be a boon for rural areas because its high-powered, low-frequency waves can travel through trees, buildings and other rough terrain. Devices using the spectrum are expected to be on the market within a year to 18 months; they include portable communications gadgets as well as in-home electronics that carry a video signal from a computer or recording device to a television. This is a significant step toward ushering in a new technology that allows for major investments in innovative wireless broadband.



Secondly, IBM recently announced that the company is leading a \$9.6 million Broadband over Power Line (BPL) project targeting rural communities across seven states and including a half dozen rural electric cooperatives. The goal is to bring advanced Internet connectivity to millions of Americans who currently can't access wireless or WiFi networking options. BPL technology has been around for over a decade, but interference issues stalled expansion. However, IBM, the International Broadband Electric Communications (IBEC) and the United Telecom Council (UTC) are not deterred by the slow start. The three players believe that the rural market and the electric cooperative space are ripe with promise. Rural areas desperately need broadband technology and BPL is cheaper and more viable when used in the right place.

*Note: There are currently 900 rural electric cooperatives nationwide, representing 12 percent of the U.S. population and 45 percent of the total electric national grid. BPL could bring broadband to 50 million Americans who currently have no access.* Learn more at <http://www.ibec.net/>.

And the above developments are just in time. Lack of access to broadband is influencing the real estate market. Homes that have broadband are winning out over more remote ones that don't. Areas with better and faster broadband are becoming more desirable than ones with slower access. Experts believe that over time, the lack of universal broadband, could pull people from the countryside toward cities and suburbs. On the federal level, the FCC is considering using the Universal Service Fund, which subsidizes phone service in rural areas, to promote broadband coverage as well.



*Note: In Finland, remote and sparsely populated areas must be guaranteed reasonably-priced fixed-line broadband connections, according to the top civil servant at Finland's Ministry of Transport and Communications.*





## Rural Broadband Success Stories

### *Delhi, New York*

**D**elaware County, nestled within the Catskill Mountains, is leading the way in providing information technology in a rural region. With help from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and other partners, they created the Delhi CyberCommunity, a network providing wireless broadband Internet access to a number of local public and nonprofit agencies. A grant from ARC covered installation costs and network access. Motorola donated access points to create its Canopy system network. The Center for Appalachian Network Access, based at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Computer Science in Pittsburgh, donated additional access points to permit 360-degree coverage. Microsoft donated \$25,000 in software for use by participating agencies. SUNY Delhi faculty and staff oversaw the project, and students majoring in electrical construction did the actual installation of access points on the college roof and at user sites. This project was a true public-private partnership. To build the CyberCommunity network, technicians mounted a half-dozen radio communication network access points on the roof of the tallest building in Delaware County (a seven-story tower located high on the hillside campus of SUNY Delhi). Each access point can send and receive radio signals to any point on the compass within about three miles, covering the small valley. In February 2007, the



Delaware County eCenter opened, supported by a grant from ARC. The eCenter includes a business incubator with room for six or more small firms, a computer lab open to the community, and office space for the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, which manages the facility. The eCenter has two tenants. One is IndiePay, a New York City-based company that provides payroll services to film production companies. The other is the Learning Lab, which provides tutoring for students of high school age and younger, both face-to-face and online. The new eCenter will also house a water quality testing laboratory, the first project to be established under the umbrella of the Center of Excellence in Watershed Applications and Technology-Based Economic Revitalization, a joint partnership between SUNY Delhi and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse. The lab, which will meet the certification standards of the NYS Department of Health under the Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program, will provide water testing facilities that are currently not available locally. O'Connor Hospital, a 23-bed critical access hospital on a hillside facing the SUNY Delhi campus, has benefitted from the network as well. The hospital uses laptops with wireless network cards installed, to give patients the ability to check their email from their bedsides. Learn more at <http://www.dcecenter.com/>.

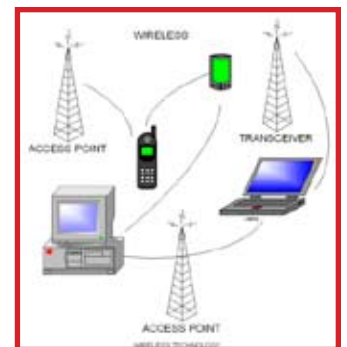
### *Ten Sleep, Wyoming*

**T**en Sleep, a rural town in Wyoming, population 350, is becoming a high-tech hub. Thanks to fiber-optic cable installed throughout town in 2006 by Tri County Telephone, the telecom cooperative that serves the Ten Sleep area. The Wyoming Technology Business Center at the University of Wyoming is also responsible for the least populated state's success. The fastest growing high-tech company in Ten Sleep, Eleutian Technology, hires people in towns across northern Wyoming to teach English to Koreans of all ages using Skype, a free online calling and person-to-person video service. The two-year old company has close to 300 teachers hooked up to more than 15,000 students in Korea, offering one-on-one and group teachings. Eleutian isn't the only company harnessing the Internet from the distant ranges of Wyoming. More and more companies are recognizing the advantages of doing business in "connected" remote areas. Learn more about Eleutian at <http://www.eleutian.com/>. Also, visit the Wyoming Technology Business Center's web site at <http://www.uwyo.edu/WTBC/>.



### *Superior, Arizona*

**U**nlimited high-speed Internet access is a reality in yet another remote, rural town. Residents of Superior, a rural town in Arizona gained broadband connectivity in 2007 for \$29.99 a month thanks to WI-VOD, a company that specializes in providing broadband in rural communities. Superior got its broadband through grants and loans from public and private groups totaling \$340,000. Of that, \$270,000 came from USDA Rural Development. Superior provided a \$25,000 grant, and the business community provided \$10,000 in matching funds. WI-VOD has placed 13 access points around Superior. WI-VOD hopes to extend service to other rural communities. Learn more at <http://www.wi-vod.com/>.



## Shipping on the Erie Canal is Up!

The Erie Canal was the Internet of its day... spreading cargo, people, and ideas around the world. Completed in 1825, the Erie Canal flows 338 miles across upstate New York, between Waterford in the east (Saratoga County) and Tonawanda in the west (Erie County). Today, the canal still remains the most fuel-efficient way to ship goods between the East Coast and the upper Midwest. One gallon of diesel pulls one ton of cargo 59 miles by truck, 202 miles by train and 514 miles by canal barge. A single barge can carry 3,000 tons, enough to replace 100 trucks.

Aside from fuel efficiency, the canal is attractive for oversized cargo that is difficult to transport by rail or roadway. And after decades of decline, commercial shipping is slowly returning to the Erie Canal. The number of shipments rose to 58 this year from 16 during last year's season, which lasts from May 1 to November 15. One shipment, this year, included \$8.5 million worth of generators and turbines removed from the former Nestle chocolate plant in Fulton (Oswego County). The cargo, bound for Pakistan, could have been sent through the St. Lawrence Seaway, but using the canal helped avoid additional fees and a longer trip. The canal is a shortcut from the western part of the state and mid-west to the Atlantic Ocean.



Two new energy businesses see a future in the Erie Canal. An old building on the shores of the Oswego River in Fulton (Oswego County), has been converted into the Northeast Biofuels plant. The site will also include a carbon dioxide recovery plant. And, Auburn Biodiesel converted an old factory located on the canal in Montezuma (Cayuga County) into a biodiesel plant. The owner is hoping to bring soybeans in by barge and use the canal to ship finished product to New York City. Not to mention, a specialty manufacturer of concrete reinforcing steel, Dimension Fabricators Inc. in Schenectady, installed a concrete loading platform and crane to enable the shipping of goods on the Erie Canal, which coincides with the Mohawk River as it passes by the plant. However, opportunities to use the canal are limited because the dimensions of many shipments don't fit within narrow canal locks. Still, the company likes having the option. Other business owners along the Erie Canal are exploring new ways to put the waterway to use, as well. Several commercial towing companies serve the New York State Canal System. Visit the web site for a list. Shippers can obtain a registration permit for a tug and barge fleet for \$750 per navigation season by calling (518) 471-5016. Learn more at <http://www.nyscanals.gov/>.

### *Lakes to Locks Passage*

Thirty-two Lakes to Locks Passage kiosks are planned to make visitors stop and explore designated "waypoint communities" along Lake Champlain from Whitehall to Rouses Point. To date, 10 are installed, and 22 more are scheduled to be completed in 2009 for the Champlain Quadricentennial. Lakes to Locks Passage is designated as an All-American Road in America's Byways and is dedicated to appreciation and revitalization of the natural, cultural, recreational and historic assets of the communities along the interconnected waterway of the upper Hudson River, Champlain Canal, Lake George and Lake Champlain in New York state. Over the past several years, the passage has brought millions of dollars in National Scenic Byways grant money to the communities along the byway; as well as, \$76,000 in federal grant money to develop and start the Ambassadors Program, recruiting, training and retaining the staff and volunteers at the designated Heritage Centers and byway destinations. Each kiosk costs about \$7,500. Some of the other waypoint communities that will get kiosks in time for the quadricentennial are Chazy, Crown Point, Elizabethtown, Essex, Keeseville, Plattsburgh, Rouses Point, Ticonderoga, Peru, Westport and Willsboro. Learn more at <http://www.lakestolocks.com/>.





## States are taking action to address climate-change

**N**ationwide, states are taking action to address climate-change and protect their natural resources. Hopefully, such measures will serve to set the precedent for a meaningful nationwide carbon-control system that can be advanced nationwide.

California leads the way among the states in setting major carbon-reduction goals. Most recently, the state passed a new law to cut emissions by rewarding cities and counties that fashion their development rules to limit carbon dioxide-spawning urban sprawl.

New York led Northeast states in establishing the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) — the first multi-state, market-based plan to reduce emissions from power plants. Ten states participate in RGGI: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. These pioneering states are implementing the first mandatory cap-and-trade program in the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Learn more at <http://www.rggi.org/states>. And the Western Climate Initiative — Arizona, California, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington — will soon launch a cap-and-trade system that embraces manufacturing and vehicles as well as power plants.

Wisconsin has created an Initiative on Climate Change Impacts (WICCI) to assess climate change impacts on specific natural resources, ecosystems and regions, as well as industry, agriculture, tourism, and human health in Wisconsin. An important outcome of these assessments is to develop adaptation strategies that can be implemented by businesses, farmers, public health officials, municipalities, resource managers and other stakeholders. Visit <http://www.wicci.wisc.edu/>.

Virginia's Governor has established a Commission on Climate Change. Maine has created the Climate Change Institute. Learn more at <http://climatechange.umaine.edu/Research/MaineClimate/index.html>.

The new governor of Delaware, Jack Markell, is pushing a "climate prosperity strategy" that would make carbon-dioxide reductions central to Delaware's entire economic-development efforts. Goals include creating a "green" supply chain for the state's businesses, training a "green work force" for massive energy-efficiency modernization of households and businesses, and promoting such industries as electric cars.

Not to mention, there's significant action at the city level. First, there's the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Cities are also moving forward with ambitious agendas of their own. Namely, New York City's PlanNYC, Portland, Ore., Seattle, Minneapolis, Boston and Denver have created plans. Chicago unveiled a broad climate action plan late last year, a road map of 29 actions to curb greenhouse emissions in areas from an updated energy building code to pushing public transit. And regional planners are working to guide growth into city and town centers and protect open space and farmland, promoting walking and biking. And in Northern California, the mayors of San Jose, San Francisco, and Oakland have forged with business and civic leaders to create the Bay Area Climate Change Compact with goals ranging from 20,000 "green collar" jobs to big boosts for renewable energy.



**I**n upstate New York, a two-day conference was held last fall in the Adirondacks to respond to the effects of climate-change. The three top priorities garnered from the conference include: an Energy Smart Initiative which will retrofit residences in 26 communities; development of a new web site — [www.adkcap.org](http://www.adkcap.org) — to educate the public on the effects of climate-change on the Adirondacks; and formation of a steering committee to write the draft Adirondack Climate Action Plan.

Unfortunately, because of plummeting stock market valuations, power companies across the United States are slashing capital budget and canceling projects for clean electricity. *Stay tuned!*

The International Energy Agency (IEA) believes that through a rapid expansion of low-carbon energy sources, the world can increase energy efficiency savings and decrease global greenhouse gas emissions. Learn more at the World Energy Outlook web site at <http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/>.

## Matchmaker

*Vermont has entered into matchmaking.* “Matchmaker” was an event held in late October in which farmers were placed together for 10 minutes at a time with buyers from super-market chains, restaurants, food cooperatives and colleges in hopes of forging new partnerships benefiting growers and retailers. The event was organized by the state Agency of Agriculture to help link sellers of local products with buyers that didn’t know how to find them. Matchmaker was created as an efficient method to exchange information. Organized like a speed dating event, the farmers got 10 minutes each with individual buyers, to pitch what they grow and hear the needs of supermarkets, food cooperatives and colleges. The daylong event included workshops on distribution options, systems for tracking sales and preseason planning. The event helped answer questions about what products farmers have, if they use a distributor or sell their products directly. For sellers, they learned what quantities are needed, where, and in what form. For example, a representative from Middlebury College was at the event looking for locally-raised oats for the school’s homemade granola. The college already buys artisan cheeses, milk, ice cream, apples, and other produce from Vermont farms and is open to buying more. Learn more at <http://www.vermontagriculture.com/buylocal/marketing/matchmaker/index.html>.

## Virtual Farmer’s Market

*The Environmental Finance Center (EFC)* at Syracuse University recently launched NYFoodTrader.org, a virtual farmers’ market connecting New York buyers and sellers with local food and other farmers’ market type items. The web site is modeled after Maryland’s successful website Foodtrader.org, which was launched last summer and now has roughly 500 registered users. The site is an online venue for letting the general public know when food is harvested, how much food is available, and where that food can be purchased outside of local farmers markets. With NYFoodtrader.org, farmers can create an instantaneous listing that will identify the description, quantity, price, and location of their items. Consumers can search listings within specific categories and communicate directly with the farmer to buy the food at the farm, at a farmers market, or at another prearranged location. Note: Users cannot purchase items directly through the site; they must contact the producer who posted the item to work out pricing and delivery. Currently, the site is designed for New York producers and consumers only; anyone outside the state is unable to create an account. However, anyone can visit the site, click on listings, and view listing details and producer contact information. The site is monitored and maintained by the EFC staff. Visit <http://nyfoodtrader.org>.

## Suburban down-state counties “Buy Local”!

*Rockland County* is thoroughly suburban, but about a third of the county remains open land, much of it parkland, and about 20 percent is prime farmland not under cultivation. Last year, a Rockland County couple interested in organic/biodynamic farming began growing crops on their six-acre property, which used to be an apple orchard -- Camp Hill Farm is a one-acre plot with two feet deep beds, aerated, irrigated, composted and tended for organic/biodynamic farming. The couple grows tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, carrots, beans, brussel sprouts, fennel and peas — over 30,000 pounds this year. Most of their produce is sold to one Manhattan restaurant, Palma in Greenwich Village; to the local food co-op; and to neighbors who participate in a community-supported agriculture program and pay \$50 each week seasonally for a bushel basket of produce. The interest the farm received from residents wanting locally grown foods was far beyond their undertaking. Thus, the Rockland Farm Alliance was born to bring back local farming to Rockland County. 230 people showed up for the group’s first open meeting last month. Learn more at <http://www.rocklandfarmalliance.org/>. And Westchester County is home to the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, a farm, a kitchen, a classroom—an exhibit, a laboratory, a campus. The mission of this nonprofit, member-driven collaboration is to celebrate, teach and advance community-based food production and enjoyment, from farm, to classroom, to table. The Center sponsored a Young Farmers Conference, “Reviving the Culture of Agriculture” late last year. Learn more at <http://www.stonebarnscenter.org/>. Also, many Long Island farms have partnered with the Long Island City Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). The CSA is working in partnership with the Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS) and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger to provide affordable, fresh produce, specifically targeting low-income families as members to offer them viable, flexible payment options, that are fair and appropriate for farmers. The Long Island City CSA supports local farmers who use eco-friendly growing practices which are safer for farm workers, the environment, and people eating the food. The Long Island farms have developed a winter CSA to satisfy residents’ appetite for locally grown crops year-round. Winter CSA members have almost tripled since last year. Learn more at <http://liccsa.wetpaint.com/>.



## Finger Lakes Dexter Creamery

*The Finger Lakes Dexter Creamery* has an interesting beginning. In 1999 Rose Marie Belforti and her husband purchased a 12 acre farm in Ledyard (Cayuga County) and acquired a little dun heifer from a distant neighbor. That one cow grew into a small herd and evolved into a business plan for a small-scale cheese company. In 2006, the farmstead cheese plant became certified and started producing the first known commercially available kefir cheese cultured with authentic living kefir grains. This unique cheese is made even more novel by its main ingredient: the rich, creamy milk from her small herd of rare heritage Dexter cattle. Also in 2006, the creamery received a SARE grant to fund the transformation of a home recipe for an aged raw milk kefir cheese to a commercial standard. Kefir grains have beneficial probiotic organisms. Ms. Belforti worked with the Cornell University Food Processing and Development Laboratory to create, record and document the kefir cheese recipe, which was completed in the summer of 2007. The Dexter Cattle provide a thick, creamy, butterfat rich milk. To see a step-by-step documentation of the creation of Kefir cheese, visit the SARE final report at: [www.sare.org/reporting/report\\_viewer.asp?pn=FNE06-595&ry=2006&rf=1](http://www.sare.org/reporting/report_viewer.asp?pn=FNE06-595&ry=2006&rf=1). To learn more about Finger Lakes Dexter Creamery, visit their website at [www.kefircheese.com](http://www.kefircheese.com).

## Saratoga Cheese Corp.

*A \$40 million specialty cheese manufacturing plant* is also planned for Cayuga County. The plant, which is still in the early design stage, is projected to generate \$120 million in yearly revenue. It will employ 77 full-time workers at an average wage of \$45,000 a year plus benefits. The Saratoga Cheese Corp. plant will be located in the Aurelius Business Park. The company plans to buy local milk to produce specialty cheeses like feta, fresh mozzarella, Muenster, havarti and Hispanic varieties and sell the cheeses in big city markets, such as Boston, Montreal and New York City. Operations are expected to start in 2010.

## Fage USA

*The total US yogurt market* is estimated at a little over \$3 billion annually. Although only enjoying 1.5 percent of that \$3 billion annual market share, the Fage USA Greek-style yogurt factory in rural Johnstown (Fulton County) is thriving. The highly-automated factory opened last spring and now employs 110 people. The plant supplies the entire United States. If Fage's yogurt continues to gain market share in the US, the company may build more plants. Visit <http://www.fageusa.com>.

## New Business

*A student loan collection company* with operations in California and Louisiana plans to open a third location in rural Geneseo (Livingston Co.) early next year. Construction started in the fall on Coast Professional Inc.'s 4,100-square-foot call center. The company, founded in 1976, plans to employ 30 in Geneseo by spring 2009 and has committed to New York state that it will employ 100 there within three years. According to the state Labor Department, collection agencies employ 400 in the Rochester metropolitan statistical area of Monroe, Livingston, Ontario, Wayne and Orleans counties.

## SpiceCSM

*SpiceCSM, is a new venture expected to bring 16 to 20 high-paying jobs to rural Potsdam (St. Lawrence Co.).* The company will produce call-center-management computer programs that will be customizable to any company's needs. The Seaway Private Equity Corp. committed \$1 million to SpiceCSM through funds secured from the New York Power Authority. The company will utilize the OpenSource/Software-as-a-Service Cloud business model — meaning some of its computer programs will be available for free online and some will be developed for a fee — which accounts for the fastest growing segment of the software industry. SpiceCSM's program makes it easier for call-center employees to work from home offices. *Note: SpiceCSM is a spin-off of Fused Solutions, another internet-based company in the North Country.* Visit <http://www.spicecsm.com/> and <http://www.fusedsolutions.com/>.

## Wanted Manufacturing Employees

*Sixteen hundred manufacturing businesses reside in the nine counties (Monroe, Genesee, Livingston, Ontario, Orleans, Wayne, Wyoming, Seneca and Yates) that surround the Rochester region.*

The average employee at these companies makes more than \$57,000 a year, or about \$28 per hour, not including benefits. And the vast majority of positions require a two-year degree or less. The problem, firms are hiring, but no one seems to want a job. A study by Rochester Institute of Technology's Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies found that area manufacturers have an average of 4.7 work force vacancies. Despite steadily climbing unemployment in the Rochester region, there are thousands of manufacturing positions that employers need to fill. In 2000, 76 students graduated from Monroe Community College's Machining and Tooling Program; but by 2007, there were 27 graduates. To stem this problem, a group of businesses have joined forces to create the Finger Lakes Advanced Manufacturers' Enterprise (FAME), with a goal of getting more students into manufacturing fields. The group spreads awareness among students, teachers and guidance counselors in an effort to raise enrollment in vocational programs, two-year technical colleges, and adult Board of Cooperative Educational Services programs. FAME companies are willing to provide formal on-the-job training and some will pay for college machining courses for their employees. And the salaries are decent — average manufacturing salaries are topped by only two other industries: utilities and finance. A new FAME program called the First Lego League, reaches out to middle schoolers to build functional robots out of Lego building blocks. FAME's approach: *Enlighten manufacturers about their responsibilities and encourage teachers and administrators to reach out to their students.* Learn more at <http://www.fingerlakesworks.com>.





## Catskill Watershed Corporation

*The Catskill Watershed Corporation* located in Margaretville in Delaware County is helping small entrepreneurs produce locally crafted, artisanal beverages by providing them with low-interest loans. In Windham, the Cave Mountain Brew Pub opened in September offering half a dozen ales and beers brewed on the premises. And in Walton, the Delaware Phoenix distillery awaits final government approval for a complex herbal liqueur. Learn more at <http://www.cwconline.org/>.

## Scenic Byway for Route 28

*The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development* based in Arkville (Delaware County) wants to share the secrets to the best places for hiking, fishing, and boating in the region. They envision information distributed by local businesses along Route 28 and interpretive signage to help enrich a visitor's experience to the Catskill Region. Seven communities along Route 28 (a major artery through the area from the Hudson Valley) are working together to implement corridor plans and explore the creation of a Scenic Byway for Route 28. The communities received \$500,000 in Smart Growth funding from the Department of State to enhance their hamlets and improve connections to the Catskill Forest Preserve. The Catskill Center is also encouraged by Vermont's effort to utilize private lands to support outdoor recreation where more than 40 private landowners along Kingdom Trails in Vermont have created over 100 miles of mountain biking trails. And, now, proposed changes in rules governing public access to 14,000 acres in the Catskills could succeed in successfully opening up land tracts for recreational use. New York City has recently revisited its recreational rules and regulations to allow more access areas to hunt, fish, hike, and trap without the requirement of an access permit, hunting tag, or vehicle tag. *Note: Many snowmobile and hiking trails in the Catskill Mountain region are on private lands.* Learn more at <http://www.catskillcenter.org/center/center.html>.



## Tourism spending Up for New York

*Tourism spending in New York* has experienced exceptional growth for four consecutive years. Last year, visitors spent \$51 billion in the local economy, according to a recent study commissioned by the Department of Economic Development's Division of Tourism. Tourism supported 672,000 jobs, or 6 percent of all employment during 2007, with a total associated income of \$26 billion. Plus, tourism generated \$6.8 billion in state and local taxes. The state is continuing to work to revitalize the "I LOVE NY" brand campaign. With the weakness in the US dollar compared to other currencies, New York saw a 15 percent jump in overseas visitor spending in 2007 while Canadian spending rose 11 percent – totaling nearly \$14.4 billion in international visitor spending. The increase in tourism spending is especially significant in today's tough fiscal climate as it is essential to the overall economic health and vitality of New York that the tourism industry remains highly competitive. New York's unique cultural, natural resources, and entertainment offerings are varied and vast enough to fit into any vacation budget. For information on vacation options in the state, visit [www.ILoveNY.com](http://www.ILoveNY.com).



## Walk the Villages

*"Walk the Villages"* is a program started by Senator Mary Lou Rath in 2005 as a wellness initiative in Western New York. The purpose of the program is to get people exercising and moving to promote a healthy lifestyle, while promoting intercommunity visitation and access to neighborhoods and businesses. Thousands have taken part in the program to date. Participants visit area businesses, historic sites, and cultural venues, collecting stamps along the way that make them eligible for prizes donated by the local businesses. The program includes nearly two dozen communities in five counties and runs annually from June through October. The program continues to grow each year and is worthy of replication. Learn more at <http://www.walkthevillages.com/>.



## Westport Central School Recognized

*Westport Central School (Essex County) Teacher Adam Facticeau* has developed a rigorous program of study for high-school students in the areas of business and marketing. And that has helped earn the upstate, rural school's Business Department recognition from the Business Teachers Association of New York State. The department was also honored for its innovative courses, teaching strategies and creative learning experiences that prepare students for success in college and future employment in the global economy. Among the activities Facticeau has instituted is a Future Business Leaders of America Club, which is in its second year, and has 13 members. Another program venture is the creation of a school Web site, which includes board meetings, sports, music and other activities. It is edited by students, assisted by Facticeau. The group also has worked on a town Web site to promote business and tourism. The business program at Westport Central School has grown significantly over the years; adding three new courses: business of music, sports marketing, and web design. Learn more at <http://westportoces.org/>.

## New York State Center for Rural Schools

*The New York State Center for Rural Schools was established by Chapter 616 of the Laws of 2008*, which was introduced by the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources and sponsored by Senator George H. Winner, Jr. (R-C, Elmira) and Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (D-Ithaca). The Center combines outreach and research to serve rural schools. The center's function will be an extension of the New York Rural Education Advisory Committee, a committee which works to raise the level of education for rural communities in New York. The center will be housed at Cornell University and Professor John W. Sipple will serve as director. A series of talks were sponsored by the NYS Center for Rural Schools in November and December. We'll keep you informed of future developments. Visit [www.education.cornell.edu/cals/education/center-for-rural-schools.cfm](http://www.education.cornell.edu/cals/education/center-for-rural-schools.cfm).



## Healthy Kids

*Healthy Kids, Healthy New York After-School Initiative* is a new program aimed at fighting childhood obesity in New York's schools by providing after-school programs with guidelines to help children develop healthy habits. The guidelines include teaching kids about nutritional food options, increasing physical activity, and limiting the amount of time spent in front of a television or a computer. A toolkit will be distributed to after-school programs throughout the school year. Licensed after-school providers that implement the guidelines can apply to receive formal recognition from the Governor's Office in the spring. More information about the guidelines and toolkit can be found on the Department of Health's web site ([www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov)) and NYSHEPA's website ([www.nyshepa.org](http://www.nyshepa.org)).



## Welcome to our Learning Community

*The Byron Bergen Central School District* in rural Genesee County has developed a CD for parents of newborns to guide them in promoting early literacy and math development skills. Production of the CD was made possible by a mini-grant from the NYS Rural Education Advisory Committee (REAC). Loren A. Penman directed the production of the CD. The Welcome to our Learning Community CD is available by contacting Larry Kiley, Executive Director of the Rural Schools Association at Tel. 607.255.8056 or e-mail: [lak35@cornell.edu](mailto:lak35@cornell.edu) or Jay Boak, Chairman of REAC at Tel. 315.779.7012 or e-mail: [jboak@mail.boces.com](mailto:jboak@mail.boces.com).

## Reducing High School Dropout Rate

*New approaches are being considered to stem the nation's high school dropout rate.* Career technical education, early college high schools, and after-hours high schools are some of the options states are examining to increase the value of their high school diploma. Employers complain that today's graduates lack the ability to solve problems creatively, communicate well, and interpret and evaluate information. The high school career academy found in many states is succeeding in preparing kids for both college and work. Some 2,500 exist across the country. The academies blend regular academic content with career-related studies, including mentoring and internships, similar to many BOCES programs in New York. Check out the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL's) web site <http://www.ncsl.org/magazine/> for research on high school graduation rates, dropouts, and state-by-state report cards.

## Northern Forest

*The forestry industry and tourism infrastructure in the Northern Forest* region has been on the decline for a number of years; not to mention that ever-increasing energy costs and new demands on natural resources are greatly impacting the region. The region extends from Maine's border with New Brunswick



through New Hampshire, Vermont, and 14 upstate New York counties from Lake Champlain to the eastern shore of Lake Ontario -- covering about 30 million acres in all. A strategy for sustainable development in the Northern Forest region is being advanced by a committee representing the four states. The Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative was created by the region's governors to reinvigorate the rural economies of the Northern Forest. The strategy lays out three long-term goals: 1) protect and enhance the region's assets by investing in its people, communities, infrastructure and natural resource base; 2) expand enterprise by encouraging work force, entrepreneurial and business development; and 3) coordinate as a region to adapt to change by understanding and advocating for regional interests and priorities. It is expected that businesses, community organizations and governments at all levels will use the strategy to encourage economic development in the region. Learn more at <http://www.northernforest.org/economic-strategy.shtml>. See the Publications section on Page 19 for two Special Reports on Agriculture and Creative Economy published by the Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative.

## Marcellus Shale Update

*Recent studies hold that the Marcellus shale region of the Appalachians* has the potential to yield enough natural gas to meet the entire nation's needs for at least 14 years -- making it the biggest gas field in the United States. Penn State University scientists estimate that 363 trillion cubic feet of natural could be recovered over the next few decades from the 31-million acre core area of the Marcellus shale region, which includes south central New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and eastern Ohio. In New York, the Department of Environmental Conservation is not issuing permits for the type of horizontal drilling and hydrofracturing needed to tap the Marcellus shale until it completes an updated environmental review, which is expected to be completed by next summer. Meanwhile, drilling permits have been issued in neighboring Pennsylvania.



## COE in Water

*The Center of Excellence in Watershed Applications and Technology-Based Economic Revitalization*, otherwise known as COE in WATER, is a partnership that combines the expertise of SUNY Delhi and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse. SUNY Delhi was recently awarded a \$75,000 legislative grant through State Senator John Bonacic (R-Delhi) to advance the COE in WATER's subsurface disposal/irrigation project. The grant will assist with the environmental review process and initial construction, which is designed to provide the Village of Delhi's (Delaware County) wastewater treatment plant with additional capacity by taking 200,000 gallons of treated effluent per day from the plant to be used as a sustainable irrigation source for the college golf course, which is used as a training laboratory by the college's turf and golf course management program. Learn more at <http://www.delhi.edu/community/coe/>.

## Water Discovery Center

*The Water Discovery Center (WDC)* is a proposed museum and educational facility intended to communicate the necessity, complexity and wonder of fresh water on earth. The center is expected to serve as a bridge, connecting the Upstate water-providing communities to the Downstate water-consuming public. The WDC will include interactive exhibits, a theater, classrooms, conference facilities, a gallery and rooftop garden. The center's location is planned for Big Indian (Ulster County) and is not expected to open until 2012. Follow their progress at <http://www.waterdiscoverycenter.org/>.

## Watershed Forestry Institute

*For the past ten years*, 20 teachers from the Catskill/Delaware/Croton watersheds and New York City have gathered for four days during the summer months to attend a FREE workshop sponsored by the Catskill Forest Association (CFA). The Watershed Forestry Institute for Teachers (WFIT) offers teachers the chance to learn about watersheds, water quality monitoring, forestry, tree identification, the NYC water supply system, and the history of the Catskill Mountains and the NYC Watershed. Besides the hands-on knowledge they gain, the teachers receive curricula tailored to meet NYS Learning Standards and reference materials covering each of the topics to share with their students. Not to mention, they receive more than 30 hours of In-service credits and a \$200 stipend. For more information contact: Julia Goren, Regional Educator, The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, (845) 586-2611 or e-mail: [jgoren@catskillcenter.org](mailto:jgoren@catskillcenter.org). Also, visit <http://www.catskillcenter.org/summer.html>.



## Farmworker Housing

*More farmers in New York* will be able to obtain low-cost loans to build or rehabilitate housing for their workers, thanks to a \$2 million increase in funding for the state's Farmworker Housing loan program. The program, administered by DHCR, provides no-interest loans of up to \$100,000 to farmers who can demonstrate a need to improve or construct farmworker housing. The program was created in 1995 as a \$2 million revolving loan fund, used to provide loans for housing for seasonal farmworkers. In 2004 the program was expanded to include dairy farms with year-round farmworkers. Funding for the revolving loan fund was also increased to \$7 million at that time. Learn more at <http://www.dhcr.state.ny.us/Programs/FarmworkerHousing/>.



## Make Home Improvements Easy

*Do-it-yourself clubs* are forming around the country as homeowners try to make improvements on a tight budget. The clubs provide additional labor and know-how when homeowners tackle big projects. The clubs, generally created by friends or neighbors, vary in how they are organized. Some have strict rules requiring attendance at every get-together; while others operate less formally and may only involve participants sending an e-mail requesting help with an upcoming job. Participants claim they get to know people better, and the club creates a sense of community. *Note: The concept is modeled after Amish barn raisings.* Following are tips for homeowners creating a DIY club: 1) Put notices on bulletin boards at hardware stores, clubs, churches, etc., and on a DIY-related Web site to find members. E-mail neighborhood associations and contact the local preservation society to see if a club already exists; 2) Once a club is created, determine what type of projects the group is willing to tackle. Establish a schedule for work days and set rules for attendance; 3) Create a list of tools and equipment owned by members; 4) Develop a plan for child care if necessary; and 5) Hold annual meetings dedicated to discussing ways to improve the club. *Note: Make sure to consult a lawyer regarding liability issues.*



## Blueprint for property tax relief

*The Commission on Property Tax Relief* presented its final report to Governor David A. Paterson December 1, 2008. Aimed at addressing the ever increasing growth in school taxes, the Commission's report contains 32 recommendations to reduce costs for local school districts and provide relief to New York's taxpayers; including a property tax cap and several proposals to rein in school districts' costs. Also included in those recommendations are consolidation measures, mandate relief, mayoral control of school districts in the "Big Four" cities, and a STAR "circuit breaker provision to cap the proportion of personal income paid in school property taxes." *The Commission recognizes that rural school districts have unique characteristics and warrant special consideration and has included a special section on Rural School Districts.* It held 14 public meetings, received formal testimony from hundreds of individuals, received 45 white papers from outside parties, prepared 24 major working papers, conducted nine regional roundtables and held numerous informal and formal meetings with subject experts, elected officials, stakeholders and members of the public. More information about the Commission is available online at [www.cptr.state.ny.us](http://www.cptr.state.ny.us). *Note: New York has the highest local taxes in the nation – 78 percent above the national average, with property tax levies rising at more than twice the rate of inflation and salary growth. Outside of New York City, property taxes account for 75 percent of the local tax burden, and eight of the top ten counties with the highest tax rates in the nation are in Upstate New York.*



## Health Care Industry Boom

*The health care industry has jumped 40 percent from 1992 to 2007 pumping out 4.5 million new jobs.* And with aging baby boomers that growth is expected to continue. The health care industry has had a surprising effect on the manufacturing sector as well, where old industrial cities have shifted production to supply the growing biomedical device companies. In addition, the health care industry is somewhat insulated from economic downturns – people get sick and need health care – regardless if they have the ability to pay for it. Health care costs continue to climb, as our nation struggles to figure out how to pay for and keep the system going.

## Home Care Expansion

*Home care is one of the fastest-growing areas of the health care industry nationwide* because it's less expensive than nursing homes and people prefer to stay in their homes or other non-institutional settings if possible. But low pay (hovering around minimum wage) and lack of benefits create shortages and high turnover, compromising home care. Not to mention, there is no career ladder. While the pay for home health care workers is often menial, the work is anything but. And in rural areas, the price of gas to travel to patients' homes, which workers often must pay themselves has escalated. A typical day begins with the worker arriving at a client's home, helping him or her out of bed, changing linen and sometimes bathing, grooming and dressing a sick or infirm client. Aides also cook meals (sometimes feeding the client), remind clients to take medications (they can't administer medication), as well as clean, wash clothes, shop for groceries and make trips to the pharmacy. Unless such workplace, career and reimbursement issues are addressed, the difficulty of recruiting and retaining home care workers will only intensify, and seriously hamper efforts to deinstitutionalize long term care. The Rural Resources Commission sponsored a bill in 2008, S.7304-A/A.10465-A, which would establish a long-term care worker training program to improve the quality of services provided to New York's elderly. The bill passed in one house before the close of the legislative session.

## CHAMP

*Curricula for Homecare Advances in Management and Practice (CHAMP)* has partnered with the Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) to offer its Geriatric Medication Management course to Medicare-certified home care agencies in New York starting in March 2009. All home care agencies in New York, regardless of ownership type, are welcome to register. This class is being funded in part by a grant from the NYS Health Foundation. Register for this course at <http://www.champ-program.org/>.

## MOLST

*Honoring patient preferences is a critical element in providing quality end-of-life care.* To enable physicians and other health care providers to discuss and convey a patient's wishes regarding cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and life-sustaining treatment, the state Department of Health has approved a physician order form, the Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (MOLST), that can be used statewide by health care providers and facilities as the legal equivalent of an inpatient Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) form. MOLST was created by the Community-wide End of Life Palliative Care Initiative to provide a single document that would function as an actionable medical order and could transition with a patient through all health care settings. It is intended that the form will be transported with the patient between different health care settings in order that their wishes for life-sustaining treatment and CPR will be clearly indicated. Copies of the MOLST and supplemental documentation forms can be downloaded from [http://www.health.state.ny.us/professionals/patients/patient\\_rights/molst/](http://www.health.state.ny.us/professionals/patients/patient_rights/molst/). Also visit the Compassion and Support at the end of life web site at <http://www.compassionandsupport.org/>. Call 1-585.238.4514.

## Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin

*A while back we did a story on the Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin (FHCW).* A recent survey of FHCW members found that more than two-thirds of members reported improved benefits available to them through FHCW compared to the insurance plan they had previously. And, 51.3 percent reported that their health insurance premiums were reduced under FHCW, while another 30.4 percent reported no change in premium. Access to preventive health services improved for FHCW members as well. Nearly 26 percent of respondents reported their prior coverage excluded coverage for preventive care, while another 37.5 percent said this coverage applied to their deductible. The cooperative will be adding dental care as a benefit available to members in 2009. Learn more at <http://www.farmershealthcooperative.com/>.

## Rural Preparedness Training

*The state of Pennsylvania has developed a Rural Preparedness Training program* to prepare rural populations for possible disasters in their communities. To assure continuity with the integrated emergency management system, the University of Pittsburgh is providing in-person, county-level training to hospitals, voluntary services organizations, EMTs, fire, and police in Pennsylvania's 48 rural counties. Learn more at <http://www.prepare.pitt.edu/rural.htm>.





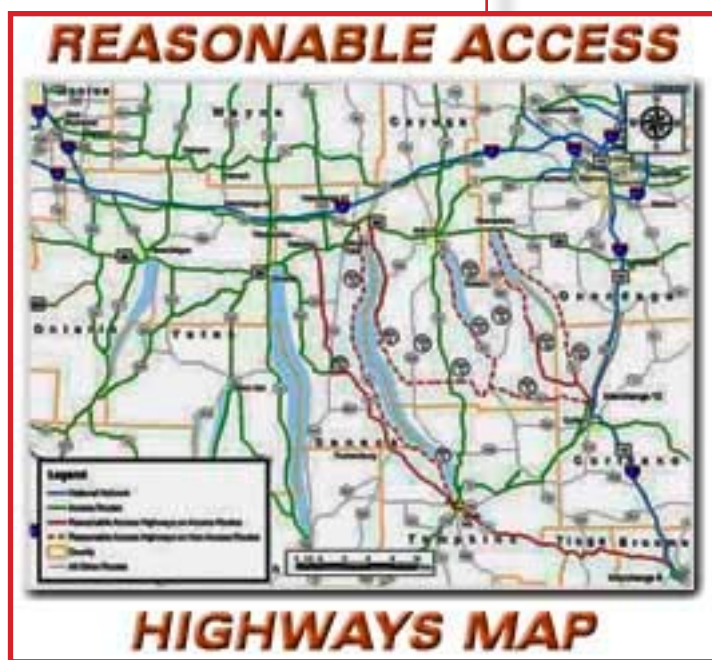
## Reasonable Access Highways

The NYS Department of Transportation developed a revised draft regulation to restrict large trucks on certain state highways after extensive engineering analysis and considering hundreds of comments received from the public, elected officials, industry groups, the business community — including the agricultural sector, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The revised draft regulation designates seven specific state highways, as “Reasonable Access Highways” — restricting access by large trucks. The regulation allows exemptions for large trucks to travel these state highways if they provide exclusive access to local facilities for food, fuel, service or rest, or for merchandise pick up and delivery or if alternative routes are unavailable due to weather conditions, highway closures or other emergencies. It also provides exemptions that would allow trucks to use a Reasonable Access Highway if it reduces trip length by 25 miles or more compared to the Interstate highway alternative. The list of state highways where large through-trucks would be excluded was compiled from an ongoing study of truck travel statewide. More than 60 routes were identified by the public, elected officials and NYSDOT and were analyzed as part of the study. The seven Reasonable Access Highways were identified and designated on the basis of safety and engineering analysis and will be identified by road signs. It also establishes penalties tied to Section 1110 of the State Vehicle and Traffic Law.



### The seven Reasonable Access Highways are:

- N.Y. Route 41 between U.S. Route 11 in the Village of Homer, Cortland County, and U.S. Route 20 in the Village of Skaneateles, Onondaga County;
- N.Y. Route 41A between N.Y. Route 41 in the Town of Homer, Cortland County, and U.S. Route 20 in the Village of Skaneateles, Onondaga County;
- N.Y. Route 90 between U.S. Route 11 in the Village of Homer, Cortland County, and U.S. Route 20 in the Town of Montezuma, Cayuga County;
- N.Y. Route 38 between N.Y. Route 90 in the Town of Locke, Cayuga County, and the southern Auburn city line, Cayuga County;
- N.Y. Route 79 between U.S. Route 11 in the Town of Lisle, Broome County, and the eastern Ithaca City line, Tompkins County;
- N.Y. Route 89 between the western Ithaca City line, Tompkins County, and U.S. Route 20 in the Town of Seneca Falls, Seneca County; and
- N.Y. Route 96 between the western Ithaca City line, Tompkins County, and N.Y. Route 414 in the Town of Ovid, Seneca County, and between N.Y. Route 414 in the Town Romulus, Seneca County, and U.S. Route 20 in the Village of Waterloo, Seneca County.



Download the truck regulations from <https://www.nysdot.gov/programs/truckpolicy/draft-truck-regulation>.



## Employee Benefit Costs

*New data from the State Comptroller's Office* show dramatic increases in employee benefit costs. The 2008 Annual Report on Local Governments found that employee benefits accounted for 14.6 percent of total expenditures for counties, cities, towns, and villages in 2006 and that state and local governments spend nearly double on benefits for their workers compared to private-sector employers. Download the report from <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/datanstat/annreport/08annreport.pdf>. Recognizing this trend toward ever increasing employee benefit costs, the Rural Resources Commission introduced legislation in 2008 to make public the benefits payable to elected officials in addition to the salary received by such elected officials. The bill (S.7063/A.10171) was sponsored by Senator George H. Winner, Jr. (R-C, Elmira) and Assemblyman David Koon (D-I, Fairport). The bill did pass one house before the legislature recessed in 2008.



## Cooperative Wind Associations

*Land developers are descending upon southeastern Wyoming in hopes of harnessing the area's whipping winds.* And neighbors are joining together to pool their wind-rich land in hopes of bargaining collectively for a better price. Eight Wyoming cooperative wind associations have been developed, with three more in the process. Similar groups are popping up in Colorado, Montana and New Mexico. Such cooperative wind associations are protecting land owners from wind developers offering unfavorable individual deals. The financial arrangements of each cooperative wind association are unique, but in the case of one energy association, 55 percent of the total annual royalties is to be distributed among the landowners who have turbines on their properties, with the rest distributed among all association members, both those with turbines and those without. In early 2007, the price discussed was a per-acre payment of about \$2.50, a year later; the suggested price per acre has nearly doubled. From early 2007 to late 2008, the potential marketability of wind power in southeastern Wyoming was enhanced as plans for construction of the Wyoming-Colorado Intertie, a privately financed electric transmission line, became firmer and Xcel Energy showed an interest in buying the renewable energy. The developers hope to supply Wyoming wind power to markets like California, which intends to have one-third of its power from renewable sources by 2020.

## Wind for Schools

*More than 80 schools across the United States have installed some type of wind power,* according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, a wind technology center located in Colorado. But those numbers could be increasing. A new program called Wind for Schools is looking to bring smaller turbines to six states: Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota. The program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy's Wind Powering America program, is the first to use smaller turbines, with a mission of educating students and the community about wind power. The goal is to add wind turbines at about five schools per year in each state, for a total of about 30 per year overall. The turbines are projected to produce around 3,000 to 4,000 kilowatt hours per year, which provides only a fraction of a school's electric needs. The price of a wind turbine will be about \$6,000 in out-of-pocket costs, according to a Department of Energy project summary. State grants may cover some of that cost, and many project participants donate their time. Curriculum guides for grade levels kindergarten through 12 are part of the program. The goal of the curriculum is to help train workers for the growing wind industry. Note: Wind energy provided less than 1% of the US's electricity at the end of 2006, but is expected to provide 20% of the nation's electricity by 2030. Learn more at <http://www.windpoweringamerica.gov/schools.asp>. If successful, Wind for Schools will be offered in additional states in the future.



## Publications:

*Survival of Rural America. Small Victories and Better Harvests.* By Richard E. Wood. 2008; University Press of Kansas. Purchase from <http://www.amazon.com> for \$27.96.

*The Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative Agricultural Sector Analysis.* Evaluates agricultural issues, trends, opportunities and challenges across Northern Forest Region. And the Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative Creative Economy Analysis. Examines how the creative economy became a powerful driver in the region's rural economy and the various ways the four states utilize this powerful tool. Both reports were published by Ph.D. candidate and consulting community planning advisor, Ann Ruzow Holland of Willsboro (Essex County). Best management practice databases accompany both analyses and are available online at: <http://www.northernforest.org/sci-documents-research.shtml>. For more information contact: the Author: Ann Ruzow Holland, Community Planning Advisor, 135 Sabousin Road, Willsboro, New York 12996; E-mail: [aholland@willex.com](mailto:aholland@willex.com); or the Project Manager: Joe Short, Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative Northern Forest Center PO Box 210, Concord, New Hampshire 03302; E-mail: [jshort@northernforest.org](mailto:jshort@northernforest.org)

*Report on the June 23, 2008 Medicaid Provider Symposium.* Sponsored by the American Dental Association. Download the pdf from <http://www.medicaidental.org/Docs/MedicaidSymposiumFinalReport.pdf>.

*Consolidating Police Services in Whitestown, NY (Oneida County).* Options for the Future. Download from [http://www.cgr.org/reports/07\\_R-544\\_ConsolidatingPoliceSrvsWhites-town.pdf](http://www.cgr.org/reports/07_R-544_ConsolidatingPoliceSrvsWhites-town.pdf).

*Delivering Care Anytime, Anywhere: Telehealth Alters the Medical Ecosystem.* California HealthCare Foundation. November 2008. Download from <http://www.chcf.org/topics/view.cfm?itemid=133787>.

## Grants:

*Rural Access to Emergency Devices Grant Program (RAED).* Sponsored by the federal Office of Rural Health Policy, the purpose of the RAED grant program is to purchase automated external defibrillators(AED) and to provide defibrillator and basic life support training in AED usage through the American Heart Association, the Red Cross, or other nationally recognized training courses. Deadline: February 4. Visit [http://www.raconline.org/funding/funding\\_details.php?funding\\_id=59](http://www.raconline.org/funding/funding_details.php?funding_id=59).

*Biorefinery Assistance Program (BAP).* Authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 a.k.a. the Farm Bill, it is designed to promote the development of new and emerging technologies for the production of advanced biofuels. BAP provides loan guarantees for the development, construction and retrofitting of viable commercial-scale biorefineries. The maximum loan guarantee is \$250 million per project. Completed applications must be submitted to the USDA Rural Development National Office, Energy Branch, Attention: Biorefinery Assistance Program, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, STOP 3225, Washington, DC, 20250-3225, between March 1, 2009, and April 30, 2009. Visit the USDA Rural Development's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

*William Randolph Hearst Foundations Health Grants.* Supporting programs that seek to improve and assure access to quality health care for underserved populations in urban and rural areas. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. Visit <http://www.hearstfdn.org/> to learn more.

## Web sites:

*The Empire Page*, an online news source covering state government, has developed a section called "*Improving New York*". The page provides a forum for discussion on how to improve various aspects of state and local government. Visit <http://www.empirepage.com/INY>.

*The Safe Drinking Water Trust* web site is sponsored by the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP). Helps small water systems prioritize, finance and begin capital improvement projects. Visit <http://www.watertrust.org/>.

## Meetings:

*January 15th - 16th. New York State Travel & Vacation Association (NYSTVA) 2009 Rural Tourism Conference.* Location: Holiday Inn Batavia (Genesee County) Learn more at <http://www.nyrruraltourism.org>.

*January 28. Saratoga County Planning and Zoning Conference.* The Saratoga Hilton. Call 518.884.4705 or e-mail: [mvalentine@saratoga-countyny.gov](mailto:mvalentine@saratoga-countyny.gov) to register.

*January 31st. Profits from Pastures: Genetic Selection, Management and Marketing for Grass-fed Beef in the Northeast.* The Century House, Latham, NY (Albany County). Speakers include: Kit Pharo, Dr. Allen Williams, Bill Hodge, and Kathleen Harris. Learn more at the Northeast Organic Farmers Association's web site at <http://nofany.org/index.html>.



## Model Local Laws

*Below is a list of Model Local Laws developed by the Rural Resource Commission.* The Commission is interested in developing a guide to provide contact information to assist local municipal officials with adopting such model local laws. If your municipality has adopted any of the local laws listed below and you'd like to be a part of the guide, please contact Laura Barber at the Commission at 518.455.2544 or E-mail: [ruralres@senate.state.ny.us](mailto:ruralres@senate.state.ny.us). Let us know which model local law your municipality has adopted and when and provide us with some contact information to include in the guide.



- *Appointment of Alternate Members to Municipal Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeal*
- *Boundary Line Adjustments: A Local Guide*
- *Classification, Maintenance, Rehabilitation of Rural County and Town Roads*
- *Notice of Public Hearing to Adjacent Municipality when Proposed Land Use Actions are within 500 Feet of Such Municipality*
- *Planned Unit Development*
- *Promoting Intermunicipal Cooperation for Shared Highway Services*
- *To Clearly Establish the Filing Requirements for Administrative Actions of Municipal Zoning Offices*
- *Using Civil Penalties as an Alternative Method for Enforcing Municipal Land use Regulations*
- *Using Mediation in the Resolution of Municipal Land Use Disputes*
- *Whereby a Municipality Provides a Building Inspector/Zoning or Code Enforcement Officer for Another Municipality*

**NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources**  
**Legislative Office Building**  
**Albany, NY 12247**

PRSRT STD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
New York  
Senate