

## A PROGRAM OF GLYNWOOD CENTER

The Countryside Exchange brings together international teams of volunteer professionals to work with communities on their most important issues. The Exchange is a catalyst. It uses a visit by an objective team of “outsiders” to identify a wide range of potential solutions, create diverse coalitions, spur the emergence of new leaders and inspire collaborative action. The community also benefits from new ideas, networks and information that it can use to help shape its future.

Since 1987, 101 communities in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Japan have hosted a Countryside Exchange. Over 750 professionals from England, Scotland, Wales, the United States, Canada, Japan, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia have participated as team members.

### Table of Contents

How Does the Exchange Work?

Community Description

The Local Organizing Committee

A Sample Itinerary

The Team

The Report

ISSUE ONE: Expanding Opportunities for Rural Tourism in the Hudson Valley

ISSUE TWO: Marketing Hudson River Valley Products

ISSUE THREE: Educating the Public

ISSUE FOUR: Developing a Strategy for Implementation

[How Does the Exchange Work? Top of Page](#)

Communities are selected to participate in the Countryside Exchange through a competitive application process. Applications are evaluated based on such criteria as the depth of interest within the community, existing leadership and leadership skills and the strength and diversity of community members supporting the application. Applicants must also demonstrate flexibility, a willingness to learn new skills and processes, show commitment to working as a team and to developing a community based implementation strategy after the Exchange.

Once a community is selected, a Local Organizing Committee (LOC) is formed. The LOC is crucial to the success of the Exchange and must include a representative cross section of the community – business owners, farmers, developers, elected officials, conservationists and “average citizens.” The LOC identifies and refines the questions that the Exchange team will address. It also plans the Exchange week itinerary, takes care of logistics and handles publicity. After the Exchange, the LOC helps initiate implementation efforts.

The Exchange Team

Glynwood Center draws upon its extensive international network to form teams consisting of six to eight experienced professionals. Each team is international and interdisciplinary in its makeup. Team members are selected by matching a candidate's expertise with the issues identified by the community. In order to ensure that teams are objective, participants must have had no previous connection to the host community.

The team spends a very intense week in the community. A full itinerary of issue oriented roundtables, presentations, tours, panel discussions and community gatherings gives the team an opportunity to speak with many residents, officials and organizations. The week culminates with the team presenting its observations and ideas at a public forum. A summary report is also published to assist the community with implementation.

### Implementation

After the Exchange week, the team report is distributed throughout the community as a first step toward developing an implementation strategy. Most Exchange reports include some forty recommendations and determining priorities is one of the most important tasks facing the community. In late April, Glynwood Center will host an implementation meeting to prioritize and begin work on the recommendations contained in this report. Glynwood maintains contact with its "Family of Exchange Communities" through its web site, [www.glynwood.org](http://www.glynwood.org), Update Newsletter, database and ongoing personal contact.

### The Results

Just as communities vary, so do the results of each Exchange. Some team recommendations may be broad, others very specific. Some may be small-scale projects that can be implemented quickly. Others may be larger, requiring a policy change, a significant philosophical shift – and time. In some cases, the Exchange may trigger a change that the community widely acknowledged was needed. The report may articulate an issue that leads to community discussion and an alternate solution. What most Exchange communities share in common is that the new and strengthened partnerships, expanded leadership base and collaborative action cultivated through the Exchange pay dividends long into the future.

The Agri-tourism Exchange in the Hudson River Valley, New York

### Community Description Top of Page

The Hudson River Valley extends for 150 miles from Troy, just north of Albany, to Yonkers, New York. It includes 10 counties, 4 million acres of land and is home to 2.5 million residents.

During the last decade, the Hudson River Valley has received significant national recognition for its scenic, cultural and natural resources. This recognition is evidenced by the Valley's designation as both an American Heritage River and a National Heritage Area. The National Trust for Historic Preservation also designated the Valley one of its "Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places" and

American Farmland Trust ranked the Hudson Valley 10th on its list of the most threatened agricultural regions in the country.

But this nationally recognized landscape of the Hudson Valley is being transformed. Sprawling development patterns threaten the quality of life in the region and challenge its leaders and residents to develop a more sustainable path for the future. Today, state agencies and non-profits work together with local leaders in an effort to find a balance between meeting economic development needs and protection of cultural and natural resources. But the landscape memorialized by the Hudson River painters continues to change dramatically.

Many of the most scenic vistas in the region are at risk of being destroyed. These vistas show the pastoral views of the Hudson Valley – its dairies, livestock operations, crop rows, horse farms and vineyards. Most are the product of small and medium sized farms which are threatened by rising taxes and reduced revenues and vulnerable to the siren song of development. Keeping these farms in business will help the Valley protect its scenic and natural beauty, but also its food source, which in these uncertain times is more important than ever.

One approach to generating additional revenue for farmers is through agri-tourism. Tourism is already one of the top industries in the Valley and the implementation of the National Heritage management plan is certain to increase the number of visitors to the region. Helping farmers capture some of this revenue can mean the difference between keeping farming alive in the Valley or losing even more of our cultural heritage to development.

The Local Organizing Committee Top of Page

Glynwood Center, which served as the coordinator for the Hudson Valley Agri-tourism Exchange, is a non-profit organization, located in the Hudson Valley (Cold Spring, New York) that helps communities address change in ways that conserve local culture and natural resources, while strengthening economic well-being. Glynwood Center does this by gathering, developing, testing and sharing ideas and initiatives from the US and abroad. Since 1991, Glynwood Center has been the lead organizer of the Countryside Exchange in North America.

Because much of Glynwood Center's work is in small and rural communities, agriculture is a primary focus of its efforts. Last year, Glynwood's staff began to wonder if perhaps the Countryside Exchange program might be a way to help the region and its farmers identify strategies to enhance farm profitability. After initially discussing the idea with various stakeholders in the region, Glynwood Center joined with a variety of farmers, organizations, non-profit organizations, agency representatives and academic institutions to form a Local Organizing Committee (LOC) and prepare for this Exchange. The following individuals and organizations were members of the LOC and donated staff time and/or financial resources to help make this Exchange happen:

Sherry Alpern, New York Farms    Jesse Bontecou, Rally Farms  
Janet Crawshaw, Valley Table Magazine    Jayne Daly, Glynwood Center

Bob Elliott, HV Tourism Development Council    Marisa Frederick, Valley Table Magazine  
 Mark Greenan, Hudson Mohawk RC&D    Mike Hagerty, Harlem Valley Partnership  
 Joe Heller, Lower Hudson RC&D    Karen Heroy, HV Tourism Devel. Council  
 Ed Hoxsie, Dutchess Co. Soil & Water Bd.    Virginia Kasinki, Glynwood Center  
 Barbara Kendall, Greenway Conservancy    Carmella Mantello, Greenway Comm. Council  
 Steven McKay, Cornell Co-op Extension    Seth McKee, Scenic Hudson  
 Donna Murray, Ren. Co. Eco. Dev. & Plng    Chris Pryslopski, Hudson Valley Institute  
 Elizabeth Ryan, Breezy Hill Orchards    Holly Sullivan, Greenway Comm. Council  
 Mike Turton, Hudson Valley Ag Partnership    Vincent Tamagna, Lower Hudson RC&D  
 Mary Kay Vrba, Dutchess Co. Tourism    Gary Valen, Glynwood Center

Through a series of discussions, the LOC identified the following questions that the Exchange team was asked to address:

1. Can agri-tourism help sustain farming in the Hudson Valley?
  1. How can farmers work with tours and tourists and make money from agri-tourism?
  2. How can we develop tours that support tourists' interests while also respecting the farmers and their businesses?
  3. Can the benefits of agri-tourism be shared between the small farms that have retail venues and are set up to work with tourists and the large farms that maintain the landscape which attracts tourists, but don't have similar tourist/retail operations?
2. How can we create effective labels, brands and markets that support the use of local products?
  1. What type of a theme or brand would be most appropriate for the Hudson Valley?
  2. How can we improve labeling of local products and ensure that a regional brand supports quality?
  3. How can we educate the public about where food comes from?
  4. What are we selling (food, landscape, experience) and how can we develop an effective regional marketing strategy?
  5. How can we further promote the use of local products?
  6. What opportunities are there for value-added products?
  7. What opportunities are there for new farmers looking to get into the agri-tourism business?

The LOC also worked diligently to prepare an itinerary for the team's visit that would provide them with the information needed to answer these challenging questions. During the Exchange week, the team traveled to Orange, Ulster, Greene, Rensselaer, Columbia, Dutchess and Putnam Counties. They attended five roundtables, each with a different focus, but each of which brought together people with different viewpoints: farmers, state, county and local agency representatives, non-profits, elected officials and residents of the Valley. The team asked questions and listened closely to people's opinions and

concerns. When they weren't in the van on a tour, or in a meeting, they worked together at Glynwood Center, identifying other information needs and conducting research and telephone interviews to gather more facts and figures.

#### Exchange Week Itinerary– A Sampling of Meetings [Top of Page](#)

Friday, March 7th:

Morning Tour of Ulster County, stops in New Paltz and at Wallkill Valley View Farms

1:30 – 4:30 p.m. Roundtable Discussion: Agritourism in the Hudson Valley – What's working and what isn't? Location: Goold Orchards, Castleton, NY

Saturday, March 8th:

Morning Tour of the Black Dirt Region (Orange County), meeting with farmers; Lunch at Quaker Creek, Warwick, NY

4:30 – 9:00 p.m. Roundtable Discussion followed by Dinner: Labeling, Marketing and Branding – Selling on and off the Farm– What's been tried in the Valley and has it worked? Location: Breezy Hill Orchard, Staatsburg, NY

Sunday, March 9th:

Morning Tour of the Harlem Valley; stops at Listening Rock Farm and Webetuck Crafts Village

4:30 – 6:00 p.m. Roundtable Discussion: What are the opportunities for Agri-tourism in the Harlem Valley? Location: Amenia Town Hall, Amenia, New York

Monday, March 10th:

Morning Tour of Dutchess and Columbia Counties; stops at Rally Farms and Coon Brothers Dairy

1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Lunch and Roundtable discussion: Large Landowners and Agri-tourism: Can large landowners who don't have retail businesses benefit from agri-tourism? Location: USDA Service Center, Millbrook, NY

Tuesday, March 11th:

Morning Tour of Cultural Sites along the Hudson; lunch at Wilderstein

2:30 – 4:30 p.m. Roundtable Discussion: Connecting Cultural and Agri-tourism Sites and the Need for a Coordinated Management Structure – a facilitated discussion with representatives from federal, state and local government agencies that deal with tourism and farming as well as private tourism agencies. Location: Historic Senate House, Kingston, New York.

#### The Hudson River Valley Countryside Exchange Team [Top of Page](#)

Carl Bendelow is Manager of the Farm Tourism Project for the Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency in North West England. He has been very involved with helping farmers diversify into tourism since the Foot and Mouth Disease epidemic of 2000. His previous post, as Manager of the Farm Tourism Project for the regional tourist board, involved similar work, delivering advice to 700 farm businesses.

Mark Linder is a consultant based in Northern California. He is currently working with the Green Valley Alliance in the Sacramento Valley to keep farmers and ranchers on the land and conserve open space for future generations. He is also working with the California Department of Education to increase the availability of fruits, vegetables, nuts and other commodities in California schools. Mark is a co-founder of Agriculture in the Classroom and Food, Land & People. He is a

fifth generation farmer from Iowa and is currently marketing his farm's beef in major urban areas of the United States, including Los Angeles and San Francisco, California.

Rob Macklin is Head of Agriculture for the National Trust in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Trust owns over 700 farms that are managed to conserve precious landscapes and still be economically viable. His principal duties involve developing the Trust's agricultural policy, particularly on sustainable farming and local food economies. Rob provides key advice on agricultural issues. He has had direct involvement with farm produce marketing initiatives based on such aspects as local distinctiveness and is currently helping to establish pilot projects to develop a range of products from National Trust farms.

William John Newton-Jones (John) is Managing Director of the Snowdonia Cheese Company and Executive Chairman of Farmworld based in North Wales. In 1990 he diversified his family's farm business into a recreation and education based visitor center. In 1999, he established the Snowdonia Cheese Company with 80 dairy farmers across North Wales, which has become an award winning premier food product in the UK market. He has considerable experience advising regional and national government on commercial and consumer issues.

Piet Rombouts is a consultant on regional renewal strategies with ZLTO Organization (Southern Farmers Union) in the Netherlands. He has extensive experience working with farmers, environmental organizations and volunteers integrating agri-tourism with cultural heritage and community development objectives. He is currently working on five regional initiatives which focus on connecting producers more closely with consumers.

Paulo Valadas de Castro works for the Ministry of Agriculture and is the Head of the Planning Department for a region in the northwest of Portugal. Earlier in his career, Paulo was responsible for coordinating the training services for technicians and farmers and for the regional research and demonstration stations for wine, fruit and horticultural crops. He has worked extensively on the development of sustainable activities in cultural landscapes and has lectured at both the national and international level.

Pam Warhurst is Deputy Chair of the Countryside Agency, which is responsible for advising Government and taking action on the environmental, economic and social well being of the English countryside. For the past four years, she was also a Board Member of Yorkshire Forward Regional Development Agency, an economic development body encompassing a large part of Northern England with a population of approximately 5 million. Earlier in her career Pam was Leader of a Metropolitan Council with a population of nearly 200,000 people and was Chair of a Healthcare Trust.

The Hudson River Valley Countryside Exchange Team Report

Approach Top of Page

The Countryside Exchange Team was asked to address a number of specific questions regarding the potential for agri-tourism in the Hudson Valley and the

opportunities for marketing local products. The team has addressed these issues within the following categories: Expanding Agri-tourism Opportunities; Marketing Hudson Valley Products and Educating the Public. The team has also provided a framework for implementation that embraces the wider economic and strategic mechanisms needed to ensure a comprehensive approach.

The team has not allocated responsibility for implementation of their recommendations to specific organizations. This approach is intentional. Having met with a broad cross-section of interests in the Valley, the team hopes that its recommendations might be considered and undertaken by various groups and recognizes that many of the ideas which follow will require collaborations between agencies, non-profits, farmers and community representatives.

## Introduction

The beautiful and diverse Hudson River Valley, with its scenic vistas, biodiversity and historic heritage, is a unique asset for both its residents and society at large. The environmental attributes of the region – clean air, water and abundant wildlife – which result in large measure from the presence of farming in the Hudson River Valley, provide value far greater than can be calculated simply in terms of the region's agricultural output or its value as real estate.

Farmers have managed this landscape for decades and created a countryside which underpins the wider economy in two ways: as a backdrop within which businesses can prosper and as a resource for accommodating a wide range of rural tourism activities. In the opinion of the team, much can be realized by being more creative in supporting the farming and food industries.

While the report provides more specific recommendations, the following five points capture the essential components that must be considered as organizations, individuals and government agencies consider how to move forward to support farming and retain farmland in the Hudson River Valley:

1. Agri-tourism must be seen as one piece of a larger puzzle – one way to diversify income for some farmers. The team recognizes that there are enormous pressures for urbanization of land in the region and that agri-tourism alone cannot turn the tide. However, agri-tourism can significantly contribute to rural economies – especially farming, which is essential to retaining an open landscape in the Hudson River Valley. There are many opportunities for farmers to diversify their income whether it is on the farm – through agri-tourism – or by selling local products to residents and visitors to the region. What is needed is a coherent marketing strategy that cross-references tourism and other products from the region.

2. Agri-tourism must be considered in a broader context, as part of a rural tourism strategy. To date, agri-tourism has been narrowly defined. It currently includes a mix of farmers' markets, pick-your-own operations, day trips to the farm, and activities such as hunting and fishing. It could support a much broader range of economic activity, linking farmers to opportunities within the cultural heritage sector, forestry, and the townships themselves. There is a wealth of cultural, recreational and other resources in the Hudson River Valley

that can be connected together so that each sector benefits financially from its link with the others. Providing these connections will also allow agri-tourism to become part of a four season tourism initiative and not just a harvest time activity.

3. Rural tourism provides a broader context for collaboration and encourages partnerships between agencies, townships and farmers. There is a tremendous need for better understanding among local officials and community residents regarding agricultural diversification efforts. Many farmers are doing very creative work, but need financial, technical, marketing and research assistance, as well as more supportive local zoning. There is a need to foster local and regional strategic partnerships such as the Northern Dutchess Alliance and the Harlem Valley Partnership, which demonstrate a “top down” commitment in support of “bottom up” initiatives.

4. Educating the public about where their food comes from and what it means to be a farmer is an essential part of keeping agricultural lands in production. Agri-tourism can serve as the gateway through which urban residents access a far greater understanding of rural life. Additionally, many farmers who say they aren't interested in agri-tourism are already deeply involved in providing educational opportunities to school groups and the public. In many regions of the United States and internationally, this educational component is at the heart of agri-tourism and farmers are compensated for their time.

5. Time is of the essence. Residents, organizations, local governments, agencies and farmers in the Hudson River Valley must begin to immediately address these issues. The land trust movement is strong, but the pressure to develop the land is increasing. Land trusts should aggressively increase memberships in order to purchase development rights and/or buy particularly valuable land. But PDR is not enough; communities must also get involved and while “home rule” may present many challenges to coordinated planning, unless communities begin to work regionally and collaboratively, all may soon be lost.

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again ... who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt

Oct 27, 1858 – Jan 6, 1919

ISSUE ONE: Expanding Opportunities for Rural Tourism in the Hudson Valley Top of Page

OBSERVATIONS:

Farmers play a key role in maintaining the scenic quality of the Hudson Valley's landscape. However, farming is in a very difficult economic situation. While farmers are searching for new sources of income and desperately trying to find

ways to make ends meet, there is also tremendous pressure to develop farmland for residential housing.

It is clear that the Hudson River Valley has physical and cultural attributes that are highly desirable for tourism. Farmers hope that agri-tourism attractions can be linked with existing tourist sites, but until now they have not been successful in connecting their businesses with the cultural heritage movement.

Creating a vital agri-tourism industry in the Hudson River Valley will be dependent on and must be linked with other rural tourism activities. Beyond the farm gate, cultural and historical heritage, forestry and environmental stewardship can all be packaged to attract a variety of tourists to the region and promote longer stays.

The potential for agri-tourism is far greater than just entertainment, although this aspect shouldn't be dismissed. Many of the farms that are already involved in agri-tourism are engaged with educational tours, pick-your-own, events, etc. These activities, however, are largely being used for direct marketing of local products rather than as income-generating tourism.

Most of the agri-tourism farms that the team visited are the result of enthusiasm and hard work on the part of individual farmers. These farmers are pioneers who have learned to diversify in order to supplement their income stream. It is typical for pioneers to be strong and independent. Often, this results in a lack of cooperation among them. However, they all expressed a serious need for technical, financial and promotional support.

Many large landowners also expressed an interest in considering agri-tourism as an additional income source. Their interest was mostly focused on larger enterprises such as hunting or equestrian pursuits. In the UK, the large farmers who choose to participate in rural tourism tend to operate these "add-ons" as separate businesses. An equestrian yard, for example, might provide additional income, but be run separately from the regular business of the farm. Alternatively, some land could be rented out, providing rental income, but minimum disturbance to the commercial farming business. Large estates that run commercial shoots (hunting) rarely rely on the farm manager, as he most often will not have the time or expertise necessary. Dividing the responsibilities within families is also common, rather than hiring someone from the outside to manage the rural tourism initiative. While agri-tourism may only provide a small piece of the answer for these farmers, it may make the difference between keeping the land in agriculture and selling it for development.

A region which supports rural tourism also indirectly supports the large landowners, even those who do not sell any products or services locally. Rural tourism educates the public about agriculture and food and an educated public is essential for any policy reform, whether that is to reduce the tax burden or raise money for purchase of development rights.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- \* Develop a market base for agri-tourism in the Hudson River Valley:
  - o Identify the needs and desires of consumers who are currently visiting the Hudson River Valley, as well as potential visitors from nearby areas such as New York City.
  - o Target audiences that are interested in sustainable agriculture such as members of the Slow Food movement; members of CSAs (community supported agriculture); customers of farmers' markets; second home owners, etc.
  - o Second home owners are also a potential tourist market as they already spend their weekends and leisure time in the Valley.
- \* Work with the Chambers of Commerce or similar organizations to reach a wider audience.
- \* Farmers involved in agri-tourism should work with tour operators and other organizations to promote their products.
- \* Develop a much closer association between the Hudson River Valley historic sites and other rural tourism sectors. Support the recommendations in the National Heritage Area Management Plan.
- \* Expand opportunities for farmers to participate in agri-tourism:
  - o There are many activities and packages that farmers could offer tourists on and off the farm that could generate income including:
    - + Hunting
    - + Fishing
    - + Trekking
    - + Cycling
    - + Kayaking
    - + Canoeing
    - + Rail Trail
    - + Guided hikes
    - + Orchard blossom tours
    - + Wine Trails Care farms (handicapped, elderly)
    - + Education
    - + Spice and condiment farms
    - + Historical farms
    - + Old breeding and old cultures
    - + Painting and artist retreats
    - + Bring your own horse
    - + Leisure resorts with swimming pools
    - + Camping
- \* Investigate changing local regulations to permit on farm accommodation. With a handful of exceptions, it is not possible to stay on a farm or in a lodge in order to enjoy outdoor activities "at the doorstep". Instead, it is usual to stay in hotels or Bed and Breakfast accommodation in towns.
- \* Encourage the creation of accommodations associated with tourist activities, e.g. fishing lodges, "Bring your own horse" equestrian accommodations (a growing sector in the UK), or camping.
- \* Traffic and visitor flow should be carefully considered so that farmers can be sure to minimize disruption to their neighbors and adjoining premises.
- \* Consider ways to attract "non-drivers" by improving access to farms through use of public transportation including trains and buses.

\* Seek to address liability concerns of farmers providing overnight accommodations by researching similar enterprises such as B&B organizations, youth camps, etc.

ISSUE TWO: Marketing Hudson River Valley Products Top of Page

BRANDING

OBSERVATIONS:

During the team's discussions with farmers, branding seemed to cause more confusion than any other issue. Farmers expressed a strong desire for something that would identify "local/regional" produce in order to gain commercial advantage. Yet farmers' opinions varied regarding the value of established initiatives such as I Love NY and Hudson Valley Harvest, as well as more recent brands such as Pride of New York. There was debate regarding the desirability of the Hudson Valley Harvest brand.

Despite significant resources being spent on branding – particularly the Pride of New York initiative, there appeared to be little buy-in from producers. However, the team believes that the Pride of New York logo has had the most impact of any that they encountered, unmistakably linking the State with a farm landscape. While the I Love NY brand is more widely recognized, it is not associated with food.

The most important benefit of successful branding is product recognition and the consumer confidence associated with it – origin, value, traceability and quality assurance. The team noticed that there are no clear assurance standards in operation with the existing brand schemes and there is no obvious mechanism to demonstrate traceability of produce.

Some businesses have developed effective in-house brands. Two examples include Ronnybrook, which has readily identifiable packaging and De Bucks sod farm with the slogan "De Bucks de best". While many farmers seemed inclined to rely on their own individual brands, others are happy to use both their own and an umbrella brand on their labeling. It was interesting to note that many businesses do not actively invest in marketing.

There are many opportunities for large landowners (wholesale producers) to take advantage of the use of branding and name recognition to sell regionally, potentially for a higher price, especially if the product is better. On two separate occasions, the team was served Washington State apples that came with pre-purchased lunches. These apples did not taste very good, especially when compared with New York apples, which the team purchased at Goold Orchards.

Before a regional brand can "take hold", there is a need to bring together the 10 counties of the Hudson River Valley, to create a sense of identity. The team identified some common attributes that the 10 counties share and which make the Hudson Valley unique: the Hudson River itself, and the historic context of

the area including the farmed landscape known as “the breadbasket of New York.”

Because the Hudson River Valley provides a quality and distinct environment, rural tourism businesses can promote the region as one that will deliver a unique experience. Some places, such as the Napa Valley, already have a brand image that is derived from their local landscapes and other features such as vernacular architecture and the production of good wine and food. There is great potential for the Hudson River Valley to develop a similar, but unique brand image.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- \* Develop a brand for the Hudson River Valley that is based on the unique themes of cultural and landscape heritage and the Hudson River itself. The brand should be used to market agri-tourism in the region in addition to local products.

- \* Any Hudson River Valley brand should be developed in such a way that it can be sub-branded to county or farm level, but associated with wider initiatives – especially Pride of New York, wherever appropriate.

- \* Engage producers and consumers when developing existing and new brands.

- \* Identify an appropriate agency to independently check producers and suppliers to demonstrate traceability of produce and ensure the integrity of the brand. For example, in the United Kingdom, “Freedom Foods” is an accreditation body, working to defined standards for animal husbandry. “Freedom Foods” producers are associated with strong customer confidence.

- \* Agree on the tactical use of existing logos. For example, Pride of New York could usefully endorse a suppliers’ directory for restaurants in New York City (which could and should include Hudson River Valley produce). Being associated with an umbrella brand does not mean that every item needs to be labeled as such, merely linked with it. For example, a producer can market his product in a directory that promotes a given brand or logo, but the logo itself does not need to physically appear on each item. More specific brands such as Hudson Valley Harvest are more relevant to promote products from within the Hudson River Valley region.

- \* Consider refreshing the Hudson Valley Harvest logo, but only with wide consensus from producers concerned. Ensure that adequate funding is available to promote the brand widely.

- \* Identify customer base and type. Markets are dynamic, so review research periodically.

- \* Through market research, establish and confirm that the brand is relevant and meaningful to the customer.

- \* Develop a marketing training program for producers, delivered through workshops and training sessions at the local level.

- \* Entrepreneurial farmers should consider forming a co-operative or commercial company to create their own brand or marketing strategy.

#### ENCOURAGING FURTHER PRODUCTION AND PROMOTION OF LOCAL PRODUCTS

## OBSERVATIONS:

The team was exposed to a wide variety of farms across the Hudson River Valley, from orchards, vineyards, soft fruit and vegetables to commodity crops, grass, livestock and dairy. While there are approximately 2,500 farmed holdings in the Hudson River Valley, it is worth noting the recent innovation of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) where consumers pay for their produce in advance, and collect it throughout the season directly from the farm. Since the first CSA in 1996, there are now 30 CSAs in the Hudson Valley, and this looks likely to increase.

New York is one of the top dairy producing states in the US and one of the country's premium sources of quality hardwoods. The region is increasingly gaining a reputation for wines and organic produce. Additionally, the Hudson River Valley is noted as home to exceptional orchards.

Overall, the level of direct marketing encountered by the team was very impressive. The extent of pick-your-own, farmers' markets and direct sales is well established, yet it was felt that a degree of organization and collaboration would improve the market share.

The team was also impressed with the very high quality meat processing company in Warwick that makes specialty meats and sausages. They were a little disappointed to hear that the business purchased its pork from Pennsylvania and not from the Hudson River Valley.

Most people agreed that regional marketing of products and tourism was a good idea, but some struggled to identify with the Hudson River Valley region, particularly if by virtue of their geographic location they felt more closely associated with other areas, such as Connecticut or the Catskill Mountains. For example, some farmers who live in the Catskills region (itself a well recognized area) were not convinced that the Hudson River Valley was the best region for them to be associated with.

Within the Hudson River Valley, there are some good examples of cooperative marketing of attractions such as the Warwick Tourism Guide, which makes excellent connections across all business sectors, from conventional tourism to historical features, food and land use. Warwick encompasses a geographic area spanning several hamlets, all of which are included in the guide.

The following is a list of a wide range of products that could be made available or promoted collectively in the Hudson River Valley. While many of these are already well established, they are worth noting for completeness.

- \* Organic produce
- \* Farm stands
- \* Local farmers markets
- \* Greenmarket in NYC
- \* Community Supported Agriculture
- \* Pick-Your-Own

- \* Farm Shops
- \* Food Co-ops
- \* Slow Food
- \* Regional Farm Food
- \* Farm Restaurants
- \* Farm B&Bs
- \* Highly Trained Chefs
- \* Culinary Institute of America
- \* Food and Beverages Institute
- \* Farm Education Center
- \* Cider processing
- \* Wineries
- \* Bakeries
- \* Cheese manufacturing
- \* Milk processing plants
- \* Maize fields
- \* Petting zoos
- \* Forestry/hardwood
- \* Leather, fleeces, woollen goods

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- \* Develop publicity campaigns for Hudson River Valley products. Ensure that a consistent message about the Hudson River Valley is publicized and associated on literature and media.
- \* Link Hudson River Valley products to the region's landscapes and heritage, and also to statewide campaigns – such as Pride of New York.
- \* Form partnerships with associations that promote healthy food including membership groups such as the American Heart Association and businesses, such as hospitals.
- \* Encourage retail establishments to purchase as much food and drink as possible from New York State and Hudson River Valley producers.
- \* Encourage use of Hudson River Valley produce within public institutions such as schools, military bases, hotels, etc.
- \* Set up and improve existing local supply chains, depots, slaughter houses and butcheries to enable retail and catering outlets to easily purchase local products.
- \* Encourage large landowners that are producing beef, dairy and grain to make their products available locally.
- \* Organize food competitions for producers that coincide with agricultural shows, food fairs, restaurants, etc.
- \* Increase promotion by the media, (e.g., brochures, events, videos, internet, radio) cross referencing to allied tourism activities within and even adjacent to the Hudson River Valley.
- \* Publicize the quality of the products from the Hudson River Valley.

#### ISSUE THREE: Educating the Public Top of Page

#### OBSERVATIONS:

There is a general lack of understanding and appreciation for the historic and current role that agriculture plays in the Hudson Valley. One reason is that many citizens think agriculture is “big business” with a high smell factor. However, in the Hudson River Valley, agriculture is still largely a family based enterprise. Many organizations and individuals expressed the growing need to educate people of all ages and walks of life about food and agriculture.

At the same time that there is a lack of appreciation and awareness about farming, there is a strong desire from the people who live in the Valley to keep the landscape in agricultural production.

The team met several farmers who volunteer their time to host educational field trips on their farms and spend time going into classrooms to talk about agriculture. The team was impressed with their enthusiasm in supporting educational programs. Farmers and agri-tourism leaders have exciting opportunities to coordinate educational programs that focus on food, agriculture and natural resources in the Hudson River Valley Region.

A coordinated county and regional strategy, based on expanded partnerships and dialogue between farmers, educators, business and community leaders, would attract financial resources to expand current and develop new education and leadership programs.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- \* Education and leadership development programs that focus on food and agriculture should be expanded as quickly as possible throughout the Hudson River Valley.

- \* Organize a Hudson River Valley education and leadership development meeting with farm and agri-tourism representatives from each county. Invite national and state agricultural and natural resources education leaders, as well as representatives from the New York Departments of Agriculture, Education and Economic Development. Share and discuss the results of the county survey.

- \* Conduct a survey to identify existing educational programs in each county of the Hudson River Valley. Gather information on current activities and anticipated outcomes.

- \* Identify and adapt successful educational programs in the areas of teacher training, student programs, resource material, learning centers and public awareness.

- \* Wherever possible utilize existing learning centers, including youth camps, university farms and agricultural and environmental education sites, to expand the opportunities for children and adults to learn about food and agriculture. Representatives from these learning centers should meet frequently to share ideas and coordinate activities.

- \* Develop a public education program utilizing local and regional media including community newspapers, radio (public service announcements) and television.

- \* Create video programs similar to “A Comprehensive Open Space Plan for Warwick” to be shared with communities and counties throughout the Hudson

River Valley. These videos could also be used by the tourist industry, especially on bus tours of the Hudson River Valley.

- \* Develop an educational curriculum that focuses on the history of agriculture in the Hudson River Valley.

- \* Organize an annual Agricultural Education Summit to review and develop county and regional educational and leadership programs and prepare a multi-year budget that includes funds to employ staff and support local and regional activities.

- \* Engage people with influence to bring about change and assist in expanding support for education and leadership development programs in the Hudson River Valley.

- \* Foster dialogue and mutual respect across rural and urban communities.

ISSUE FOUR: Developing a Strategy for Implementation:  
The Hudson River Valley Declaration Top of Page

OBSERVATIONS:

The European Federation of Natural and National Parks (EUROPARC) has developed a methodology for involving all parties in a participative approach to address the impact of tourism on the “protected areas” of Europe. These areas, designated in recognition of their important natural and cultural resources, are similar to the US National Heritage Areas in that they are primarily composed of private land and encompass communities.

After a pilot program in the late 1990s involving ten parks in six countries, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas was formally launched and is now being implemented by more than 13 European national and natural parks.

The Charter’s approach recognizes the need to protect not only the environment within parks but also the economic viability of the communities. It also recognizes the tension between the desire for economic development and the potential impact that development, including increased tourism, may have on the heritage sought to be preserved.

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is a method for implementing sustainable rural tourism principles that:

- \* helps the local community, including public and private stakeholders, define a sustainable rural tourism strategy; and

- \* provides a quality label (a brand or logo) to highlight improvements made by individual businesses and by public and private stakeholders.

This requires working in partnership, with all interests at the table, to prepare and implement a strategy to address key issues.

The team suggests blending together this European model with American practices. It offers the following process as a way to involve the local

communities, as well as public and private stakeholders, in the Hudson River Valley in defining a sustainable rural tourism strategy.

New York State's home rule approach does not encourage regional strategic thinking. Yet there is a clear need for a regional approach since many problems are common throughout the region (sprawling development, farmers abandoning agriculture, zoning challenges, etc) and more importantly, there is a need for integrated solutions.

Adopting the European approach will provide the following benefits:

- \* Developing partnerships at regional and local levels;
- \* Monitoring the benefits of rural tourism;
- \* Improving community awareness;
- \* Increasing opportunities for raising funds;
- \* Providing new commercial opportunities;
- \* Enhancing professionalism and operations of tourism ventures;
- \* Improving the quality of the rural tourism experience;
- \* Increasing customer satisfaction; and
- \* Developing a marketing brand that is used throughout the Hudson River Valley.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

\* Those who are concerned about the heritage, culture, agriculture and quality of life in the Hudson River Valley should adopt the Hudson River Valley Declaration which sets forth the following principles:

1. The Hudson River Valley is a part of the United States heritage that should be preserved for, and enjoyed by, all generations.
2. There is a need to develop and manage rural tourism in the Hudson River Valley in a sustainable way, which recognizes the needs of farmers, local residents and businesses, visitors and the environment.
3. Sustainable Rural Tourism Strategy and Action Plans for the Hudson River Valley should be prepared and implemented.
4. Everyone who is engaged in the development and management of rural tourism in the Hudson Valley should be involved in developing the Strategy.
5. The Rural Tourism Strategy will be designed to provide visitors with a high quality experience in all aspects of their visit.
6. Rural tourism projects should be encouraged throughout the Hudson River Valley.
7. Hudson River Valley rural tourism products should enable visitors to discover and understand the richness of the region.
8. All communications should promote the special qualities of the Hudson River Valley.
9. There is a need to increase awareness about the Hudson River Valley and its sustainability issues throughout the region.
10. Rural tourism should support and not reduce the quality of life of the local residents.
11. Rural tourism should protect and enhance the area's natural, cultural and working landscape heritage.

12. Rural tourism should provide benefits to the local economy and strengthen the region's communities.

\* The signers of the Declaration (which should include representatives from the various levels of government in the region including federal, state and local, non-profit organizations, representatives of the rural tourism industry and other local stakeholders) should create the Hudson River Valley Forum, an informal voluntary organization. The Exchange Local Organizing Committee, which is broad-based, could serve as the initial membership of the Forum. This approach is advantageous because the LOC members are already thinking regionally and have been working well together. Eventually it can enlarge to include representatives from other sectors such as B&Bs, outdoor activities, tour operators, etc.

\* The members of the Forum should create a Support Team (Committee) for the Forum that is charged with implementing the Declaration and the subsequent actions approved by the Forum members. The Support Team may be composed of staff from participating organizations if separately funded staff is not available.

\* The Forum should assess the level of current and potential rural tourism activity and define a Strategy Plan at the regional level, encompassing objectives for the development and management of rural tourism, including:

1. conservation and enhancement of the environment and heritage;
2. economic and social development;
3. preservation and improvement of the quality of life of local residents;

and

4. visitor management and enhancement of the quality of rural tourism.

\* The Forum should then write an Action Plan designed to implement the Strategy Plan, to establish the parties and the resources each will commit, the timetable for implementation and the monitoring procedures. The Action Plan would also identify the priority areas with the most potential for being designated as local Rural Tourism Development Project areas. The identification of these local project areas will be an ongoing process, depending upon the interest of the local communities and the availability of funding.

\* The regional strategic thinking would be implemented by local action through Rural Tourism Development Project Areas. These areas may be communities identified in the regional Strategic and Action Plans or communities that decide to begin implementing the Declaration's principles before the Strategic and Action Plans are approved by the Forum. Likely candidates are the communities that have participated in the Countryside Exchange (Northern Dutchess; Southern Ulster; Warwick; Harlem Valley). They have a local network, experience working together and have started to take action.

o All local projects should create a Local Forum involving local government representatives, non-profits and rural tourism and other stakeholders. The Local Forum should agree to work with the Hudson River Valley Forum, its Support Team and the designated Project Manager to implement the Hudson River Valley Declaration. The Local Forum should involve the local community in the Rural Tourism Development Project and promote it more widely.

- \* The HRV Forum should identify Project Managers for each of the Rural Tourism Development Project areas who will be responsible for technical assistance in the Project area including;
  - o Facilitating the creation of Local Forums and providing initial management.
  - o Providing business development to individual businesses, helping them to improve their performance and also encouraging farmers to diversify into new tourism businesses in a professional manner.
  - o Developing targeted marketing for the brand and individual businesses.
  - o Presenting Rural Tourism Development Project proposals to the Hudson River Valley Forum to obtain support.
  - o The Project Manager will also help create subbrands around geographical locations or product types; contribute to a regional newsletter; help establish new businesses; arrange training meetings; recruit local producers and operators to attend the HRV Forum meetings; encourage businesses to participate in the brand; and work in partnership with other Project Managers.

- \* There is a clear need to begin working at both the regional and local levels. Having a regional Strategic and Action Plan can really make a difference in supporting local action. The team believes that the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Management Plan is the best starting point the Forum can have. It needs to develop more of a focus on rural tourism, but it already has a clear boundary that is recognized by all and has the support of the Hudson River Valley communities.

- \* To start the formation of Local Rural Tourism Development Project areas, why not give them the chance to host a Countryside Exchange as a starting point to involve the local community? It seems to be effective in mobilizing the other communities in the Valley.

- \* To enhance the pilot Rural Tourism Development Projects areas, it is very important to provide an overseas experience (introduction to the development of new products, integrated approach, better marketing, etc.) to enrich the Local Forums' view and experience.

- \* To finance the Hudson River Valley Declaration, the broad composition of the LOC and, hopefully, of the Forum will attract a range of funding from agencies, government, private sector and not-for-profit organizations. This way the funds that may already be available at the LOC level will act as a kind of seed funding.

- \* In developing a brand for the Hudson River Valley, if the forum chooses to approach it as a marketing/promotional strategy, rather than as a quality assurance device, then everyone who signs onto the Hudson River Valley Declaration could promote their products through the brand, even if just through the statement "I have signed the HRV Declaration."

## Moving Forward

The team wishes the Local Organizing Committee and everyone in the Hudson River Valley success in moving forward with their efforts to protect this special part of America. The team is eager to continue its support – even from abroad (and California). While emails are always welcome, consider arranging a teleconference call with the team in six months or so to report on your efforts

and seek additional guidance. Perhaps you could invite the team back to visit when you have some projects on the ground? Perhaps you could come to Europe to learn more about how rural tourism is developed in England, Portugal and the Netherlands? Good luck and stay in touch!

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again ... who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt  
Oct 27, 1858 – Jan 6, 1919