

# RURAL FUTURES



News of Interest about Rural New York FALL ISSUE 2009 NEWSLETTER

## Green Jobs – To Help Economy, Environment and Cut Energy Costs



On October 13, the Governor signed the Green Jobs Act (Chapter 487, Laws of 2009) sponsored by Senator Darrel Aubertine and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver. The bill creates a revolving loan fund for middle class homeowners and small business owners to weatherize their home or workplace. The loans cover the upfront costs of weatherization which will drastically reduce energy consumption and energy bills. Those homeowners

using the program repay the loan through automatic payments based on their energy savings; the loan repayments are built into their energy bills and once the weatherization loan is paid off, homeowners keep those energy savings.

Aside from reducing energy bills, this bill will create new “green collar jobs.” Using conservative estimates, between 5,000 and 15,000 new jobs will be created statewide. Nearly half of those jobs will be in Upstate New York. Additional jobs will be preserved by reducing energy costs for businesses. The Act will provide \$2 million – \$4 million for green job training throughout New York State to establish a green workforce. The program will be managed by NYSERDA which will join forces with the State Department of Labor to train workers.

The program will be funded from revenue from the sale of carbon emission credits (from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative); not State budget funds. In addition to a revolving loan program for weatherization, this law creates a worker training program ensuring sufficient workers, and a grants program for outreach, enrollment and related services. The \$112 million revolving loan fund will

provide loans of up to \$13,000 for homes and \$26,000 for businesses. At least 50% of the total must be dedicated to residential retrofits.

Senator Aubertine, Senate sponsor of the legislation, and Chair of the Rural Resources Commission, believes “This program will create jobs, save consumers on their energy bills and help get our economy back on track. The Green Jobs/ Green New York Act will encourage conservation, help people finance capital improvements on homes and small businesses and create jobs in the new economy. It’s a win-win for New York State, especially Upstate.”

Assemblyman David Koon, Vice Chair of the Rural Resources Commission and a co-sponsor on the legislation in the Assembly, shares this enthusiasm for a more energy efficient future for New York. Assemblyman Koon believes that upstate New York’s economic future hinges on the new “green collar” sector. “This legislation”, says Koon, “will also create thousands of green sector jobs and curtail emissions of greenhouse gases and harmful air contaminants, it’s a huge investment in the future of upstate New York.”

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

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## FARMS & FOOD



### BUY LOCAL INITIATIVES

Buying locally grown foods has become much more popular recently and with good reason: Purchasing locally grown produce and locally made consumer goods is a simple step we can all take to improve our local, regional and State economy. The Rural Resources Commission will continue working to highlight opportunities to support locally grown and produced commodities, and welcomes your input on innovative goods, services and practices that enhance the environment and economy of upstate New York.



### LOCAL FOOD GUIDES

Buy local initiatives are growing in strength across the State. In Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Lewis, Clinton, Essex, and Franklin Counties, the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program has compiled local food guides to direct customers to these farms. In other counties, including Oswego, Cornell Cooperative Extension has undertaken similar projects. Madison County hosted its second annual Buy Local Week, Aug. 17-23, to promote local agriculture and encourage consumers to do so year round.



### DID YOU KNOW?

**Eating local honey**—made by bees carrying around pollen from local plants—is thought to help with seasonal allergies. One theory is that the pollen bees carry while taking nectar from flowers gets into the honey and eating it can immunize you from the same pollens that trigger allergies when they are breathed in. So when selecting honey: to get the most benefit, look for honey from as close to home as possible.



### CHATHAM REAL FOOD MARKET

The Chatham Real Food Market is a community-owned cooperative promoting the products of Columbia County farms and kitchens. The objectives of the co-op are to strengthen rural community, develop food security, and help build a healthy local economy in the County by providing education about local agriculture, and promoting a localized food system. The Real Food Co-op started as a project of Community Agriculture of Columbia County, an educational non-profit organization dedicated to re-localizing our food system.

During the growing season, the Real Food Network collects information about produce availability and prices from local growers, collates it, and sends out a weekly "Fresh Fax" to the food services in schools and hospitals. It also facilitates ordering, pick-up, delivery, and invoicing. The project is funded, in part, by the NYS Department of Agriculture.

During the summer, in addition to selling locally grown produce, the Chatham Real Food Market hosts a variety of vendors on Friday nights who offer fully cooked, freshly prepared foods as well as full dinners. The Chatham Real Food Market is located in the Village of Chatham, NY, and can be found online at [www.realfoodnetwork.org](http://www.realfoodnetwork.org).



### NORTH COUNTRY FLOUR MILL

Despite the downturn in the State and national economy, new businesses are opening and flourishing in rural New York. North Country Farms is one example. North Country Farms, LLC of Watertown mills local wheat to sell as pancake and muffin mix. Using two big stones to grind local soft red winter wheat, the mill produces an all natural, unbleached stone-ground flour.

In the past year, North Country Farms has expanded its business from farmers' markets in Watertown, Carthage and Clayton to include outlets in the North Country including college dining halls, diners, as well as a number

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of Hannaford markets in the Syracuse, Utica and Albany areas. "Response to our product has been great," said Kevin Richardson, owner of North Country Farms. "If you buy North Country Farms pancake mix or muffin mix, you won't eat any other." North Country Farms can be found online at [www.ncfarms.net](http://www.ncfarms.net), or via email at [Richardson@ncfarms.net](mailto:Richardson@ncfarms.net).



President Barack Obama proclaimed the second week in October National School Lunch Week, calling on all Americans "to join the dedicated individuals who administer the National School Lunch Program in appropriate activities that support the health and well-being of our Nation's children."

The President's proclamation notes that "Every young American deserves access to a wholesome, nutritious lunch. These meals prevent hunger and give our children the energy and nourishment they need to grow into healthy, productive adults. Since 1946, the National School Lunch Program has helped to protect the health and well-being of our children by providing them with balanced, low-cost or free lunches throughout the school year."

The National School Lunch Program serves more than 31 million students every school day at over 100,000 schools across our Nation. For many children, school lunch is the most nutritious meal -- sometimes their only meal -- of the day. In New York State, 1.68 million school lunches are served every day.

Academic success requires hard work and concentration, and students distracted by hunger cannot match the focus of their peers. Poorly nourished students are also more likely to become ill, and miss class more frequently. During National School Lunch Week, we honor all those who make the National School Lunch Program possible, including government and school officials, food service professionals, farmers, and parents. By ensuring that every child, regardless of background or family income, is properly fed at school, we secure a brighter future for each of them and for America.



## Farm to You Fest!

In New York State, the Farm to School Program works to increase the quality, freshness and nutrition of meals provided by school cafeteria programs. A collaboration of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Farm to School Program, the New York State Education Department Child Nutrition Program and many dedicated partners on the New York Farm to School Coordinating Committee, the Farm to You Fest, "is an annual celebration of local food and agriculture" held in early October. During this festival, participating school meal menus highlight locally grown seasonal New York fruits and vegetables, classroom food tastings, and farms and farmers' markets field trips.

The mission of the Farm to School Program is to strengthen local agriculture, to improve student health, and to promote regional food systems awareness. For more information contact the Department of Agriculture and Markets Farm to School Program at (518) 485-7728, or [ann.mcmahon@agmkt.state.ny.us](mailto:ann.mcmahon@agmkt.state.ny.us).



## More Fresh Local Foods to Find Their Way to School

New York State Senator Darrel Aubertine and United States Senator Kirsten Gillibrand have succeeded in getting the USDA to relax its interpretation of "fresh" local foods. After a strong push from Senators Aubertine and Gillibrand, the United States Department of Agriculture has committed to changing its interpretation of what foods are minimally processed and eligible for use as snacks through the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables program in schools. This reversal means that simply slicing and bagging these fruits and vegetables for convenience will not prevent schools from choosing local farmers to provide the freshest, most nutritious foods for our school children. This is great news for New York State agriculture and for New York's School children.

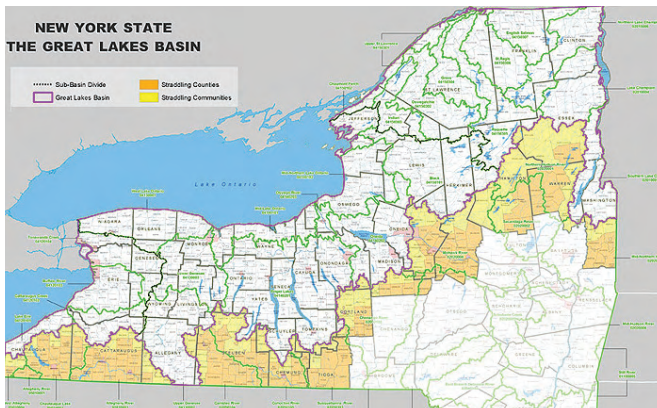
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## ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

### New York State is in the initial stages of implementing the Great Lakes St-Lawrence Basin Water Resources Compact

The Great Lakes Compact is the first enforceable water management regime governing water use throughout the Great Lakes Basin of all Great Lakes States. All eight states (Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, New York and Pennsylvania) passed identical legislation, which the U.S. Congress ratified and the President signed last year.

More than 48 percent of New York's land mass lies within the Great Lakes Basin. Provisions of the Compact will require water conservation measures, water permits, and special Compact review and approval for major new water uses. New water diversions out of the basin are prohibited with few exceptions.



"The Great Lakes Compact is essential to preserving New York State's water resources so that millions of people who rely on these waters for drinking water and their economic livelihood are protected in the future," Senator Darrel J. Aubertine said. "As the Senate's representative for the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Thousand Islands region, and part of Lake Ontario, I know this Compact will help ensure that the quality of life for those who depend on Great Lakes waters will not be jeopardized in the future."

"The Great Lakes are one of this State's, in fact one of the world's greatest natural resources," noted Assemblyman David Koon. "This Compact will protect against diversions to water-hungry regions of the world and is a tremendous step forward in protecting the health of the basin, and its residents."

The Compact is an historic agreement, designed to provide the Great Lakes States with the structure necessary to protect the waters of the Great Lakes for generations to come. Compact agreements can be viewed on the Council of Great Lakes Governors website at [www.cglg.org/projects/water/CompactImplementation.asp](http://www.cglg.org/projects/water/CompactImplementation.asp)

### Gas Drilling Moves Forward in New York

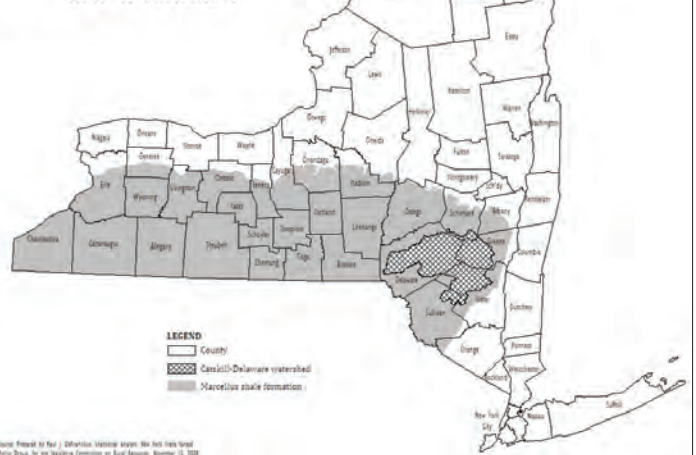
The DEC released its draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (SGEIS) for drilling and hydraulic fracturing to develop the Marcellus Shale. The Public comment period ends December 31, 2009.

The Marcellus Shale formation extends deep underground from Ohio and West Virginia northeast into Pennsylvania and southern New York. In the Finger Lakes area, the shale may be as deep as 7,000 feet or more below the ground surface.

The depth and tightness of the shale historically made gas exploration and extraction difficult and expensive, but advances in technology making gas removal economically feasible have increased interest significantly.

Geologists estimate that the Marcellus Shale formation contains between 168 trillion to 516 trillion cubic feet of

Extent of the Marcellus Shale in New York State



natural gas. New York State uses about 1.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas a year. It is not yet known how much gas will be commercially recoverable from the Marcellus in New York.

This fall, the Legislature held hearings and roundtables to solicit input on drilling in the Marcellus Shale and DEC's SGEIS, and DEC held a series of public comment sessions around the State. The SGEIS, and information on how to submit comments are available online at: [www.dec.ny.gov/energy/47553.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/47553.html).

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## New York State Bans Open Burning



As of October 14, 2009 open burning, including the use of burn barrels, is prohibited in New York State. There are several exceptions, which include:

- Campfires less than 3 feet in height and 4 feet in length, width or diameter are allowed;
- Ceremonial or celebratory bonfires are allowed;
- Small cooking fires are allowed;
- In towns with a population less than 20,000, tree limbs with leaves attached may be burned. The limbs must be less than 6 inches in diameter and 8 feet in length. Such burning is not allowed from March 16 through may 14 due to increased risk of wildfires.

When fires are allowed:

- Fires cannot be left unattended and must be fully extinguished;
- Only charcoal or clean, dry, untreated or unpainted wood can be burned.

**For more information, call your local DEC office, or visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/58519.html>**

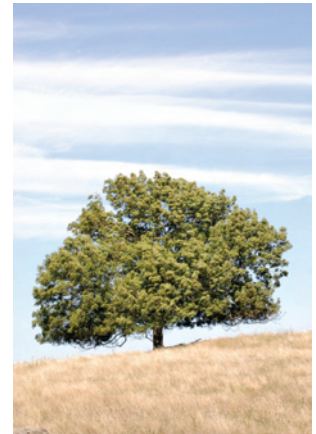
## Emerald Ash Borer Threatens New York's Ash Trees



The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a beetle native to Asia, has taken up residence in western New York. On June 17, 2009 the Emerald Ash Borer was confirmed at a site in Randolph in Cattaraugus County.

Believed to have arrived on wood packing material in cargo ships or airplanes, the EAB has killed more than 10 million ash trees in southeastern Michigan, and millions more in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin since its discovery in Michigan in 2002.

New York has more than 900 million ash trees, about 7 percent of all trees in the State, according to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. EAB larvae feed on the inner bark and phloem, compromising tree health. In addition to decimating the ash trees, an EAB infestation has potential to cost the timber industry \$25.1 billion nationally.



To help prevent the spread of the emerald ash borer, NYS implemented a quarantine in July, 2009 in all of Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties, prohibiting the movement of ash trees of any size, as well as any products made from or containing ash wood.

## DROP THAT FIREWOOD



**New York State Regulations prohibit** the import of firewood into New York unless it has been heat treated to kill pests and limits the transportation of untreated firewood to less than 50 miles from its source. All types of firewood can transport invasive pests including the emerald ash borer and the Asian Longhorned Beetle.

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## NEW TWIST ON INVASIVE PLANT CONTROL



Habitat destruction comes in second to invasive species as a cause of biodiversity loss. While many approaches have been tried to control invaders, there has been limited success – until now. Pilot “targeted grazing” projects, using goats, sheep and cows were used in New York’s Hudson Valley this summer to restore the natural habitats. Similar projects in North Carolina and out in the western part of the country have been used to control aggressive species like kudzu and leafy spurge.

Professor Gary Kleppel, Director of the Biodiversity Conservation and Policy Program at SUNY Albany and a team of students have been using targeted grazing to study the effectiveness of sheep and goats eating invasive plants to restore native plant communities in wetlands, woodlands, meadows and pastures. “It’s really not rocket science”, says Professor Kleppel, “If you put an herbivore and a plant together, something is going to get eaten.”

The team uses Intensive Rotational Grazing, which mimics the eating patterns of wild herbivores. Two to four times as many animals are used per acre as typical farm grazing and animals stay on an area for only two or three days. This past summer, pilot projects in the Hudson Valley targeted difficult to manage invasive plants, including purple loosestrife, reed canary grass, multiflora rose, mile-a-minute weed, stilt grass, deer tongue and garlic mustard.

Preliminary results seem promising. On a farm in Berne, NY, the purple loosestrife in experimental paddocks hasn’t bloomed for two seasons now, and there is evidence of an increase in biodiversity. At Glynwood Center, Boer goats have turned a thicket of multiflora rose into sticks, on their way to local eradication, and at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation, native grasses are popping up where only invasives used to grow.

The success of intensive rotational grazing pilots could have implications for not only for the restoration of native plant communities on our State’s rural landscapes, but may also provide opportunities for farmers and grazers to increase the availability of pastureland while doing their bit for the environment.

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- **NATIONALLY, INVASIVE SPECIES COST OVER \$137 BILLION A YEAR .**
  - **INVASIVE SPECIES IN NEW YORK INCLUDE THE ZEBRA MUSSEL, ROUND GOBY, SEA LAMPREY, CHINESE MITTEN CRAB, SNAKEHEAD FISH, DIDYMO, TENT CATERPILLAR, GYPSY MOTH ASIAN LONGHORN BEATLE, AND EMERALD ASH BORER, IN ADDITION TO NUMEROUS OTHER AQUATIC, ANIMAL AND INSECT INVADERS.**
  - **FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT THE NEW YORK STATE INVASIVE SPECIES CLEARINGHOUSE [HTTP://NYIS.INFO/DEFAULT.ASPX](http://nyis.info/default.aspx)**
  - **THE TOTAL COST OF INVASIVES TO NEW YORK STATE IS UNKNOWN, BUT THE COST TO CONTROL THE ASIAN LONG-HORNED BEETLE ALONE EXCEEDS \$22 MILLION ANNUALLY.**
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## RURAL HEALTH

### RURAL HEALTH NETWORK TO RECEIVE INCREASE IN PAYMENTS

Rural areas in New York have long struggled to keep adequate numbers of medical providers. One of the primary reasons is the low reimbursements from insurers and federal and state health programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. The Adirondacks have especially been hit hard with a loss of 20 primary care doctors, an 8 percent decline, from 2000 to 2005. According to the Center for Health Workforce Studies at the University at Albany the area has the worst doctor-to-patient ratio in the state.

According to the Albany Times Union, Adirondack doctors have struck a groundbreaking deal with six major insurance companies that have agreed to give North Country doctors extra payments in return for the doctors' agreement to adopt electronic records, set targets for improving the health of their patients, and reduce hospitalizations. Dr. John Rugge, CEO of Hudson Headwaters Health Network expects an additional \$8 million to \$10 million annually in revenue.

The Adirondack experiment, which may be the first of its kind in the nation, is called the Adirondack Regional Medical Home Pilot. The project, in Clinton, Essex, Franklin and Hamilton counties, includes 40 medical practices, over 120 doctors and six health insurers, including private and public plans.

**Participating providers:** CVPH Medical Center and physicians in the Plattsburgh area, Elizabethtown Community Hospital, Adirondack Medical Center, Trudeau Health System, Hudson Headwaters Health Network, Interlakes Health and the Smith House Health Care Center. CVPH, AMC and Hudson Headwaters have contributed \$7 million to help pay for the technology needs of doctors.

**Participating insurers:** Private - Empire Blue Cross, CDPHP, Fidelis Care, MVP Healthcare and United Healthcare. Public - Medicaid and the New York State Health Insurance Program, the plan that covers state and municipal workers. The state's contribution is \$3.2 million in additional reimbursements annually and \$10 million in grants for electronic record systems. Medicare, the federal program for the elderly, does not yet participate, but organizers believe it will.



## ENERGY/TECHNOLOGY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### FUEL OF THE FUTURE?

A discovery by scientists at Ohio University could bring hydrogen fuel cells into wide-spread use. The key is ammonia. Professor Geraldine Botte, a Chemical Engineering Professor at Ohio University, discovered that placing a nickel-based electrode in a pool of urine (ammonia) and applying a small electrical current produces hydrogen gas. Simply put, the process takes hydrogen from ammonia and sends it to a fuel cell. "One cow can provide enough energy to supply hot water for 19 houses," Ohio University professor Gerardine Botte said of the discovery. The scientists are hoping to make a commercial version of the technology available by next year. This technology could someday power road vehicles or even power homes.

([www.dsc.discovery.com](http://www.dsc.discovery.com))





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## ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS/WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE



The new Green Jobs/Green New York program highlighted on page one is only one component of New York's commitment to help residents effectively manage the impacts and expense posed by our environment. Because weatherization and residential energy improvement projects can be prohibitively expensive, New York State and the Federal Government have created programs to help families improve the energy efficiency of their homes. In addition to decreasing energy costs, weatherization reduces energy demands resulting in a more comfortable living space and increasing the value of a home.

### FEDERAL TAX INCENTIVES

**Federal Tax Incentives are available** for a variety of energy efficiency projects. Under Residential Energy Efficiency Incentives, the Federal Government will provide 30 percent of the cost of eligible improvements, with a \$1,500 limit for each home. New windows and doors, as well as home heating and cooling equipment are included in this program. Certain renewable power generation systems, including solar, geothermal and wind systems are also eligible for subsidies. Information on these programs is available online at [www.energytaxincentives.org](http://www.energytaxincentives.org). These programs are time sensitive, so do not hesitate to look into possible funding.

### THE NEW YORK STATE ENERGY RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (NYSERDA)

The New York State Energy Research Development Authority (NYSERDA) provides information and home energy assessments which are valuable in determining appropriate energy efficiency improvements, as well as various incentives for residential and commercial energy efficiency and green energy improvements. Information on the many programs available to homeowners, renters and businesses is available online at [www.getenergysmart.org](http://www.getenergysmart.org).

### NYS DIVISION OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY RENEWAL (DHCR) - WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Assists income-eligible families and individuals to reduce home heating and cooling costs by implementing energy efficiency measures including weather stripping, caulking, wall and ceiling insulation, heating system improvements or replacement, efficiency improvements in lighting, hot water tank and pipe insulation, and refrigerator replacements with highly efficient Energy Star rated units. Both single-family and multi-family buildings are eligible. According to DHCR, households generally realize cost savings in excess of 20 percent from home weatherization.

Local weatherization providers are available statewide. Households, including renters, with incomes at or below 60 percent of State median income are eligible for assistance, with priority given to senior citizens, families with children and persons with disabilities. The maximum amount of assistance is limited to \$4,500 per unit.



New York State's Weatherization Assistance Program is the largest residential energy conservation program in the country. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act increased funding for this program by \$394 million from the \$55 million provided in 2008, making it possible to provide assistance to 45,000 more New York State families over the next two years.

Affordable housing developers, property managers, and other housing and community development agencies are encouraged to contact their local weatherization provider for more information. More information is available by calling **866-ASK-DHCR (or 866-275-3427)**, or online at: <http://www.dhcr.state.ny.us/Programs/WeatherizationAssistance>.

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## WELLSVILLE UPGRADES FREE WI-FI



Across upstate New York, efforts are underway to provide and expand internet service. In Wellsville (population 5,200), free Wi-Fi access is being provided in the downtown area. The Computer Clinic, a local business, developed SkyStream Solar technology. They consulted community leaders on design and implementation and “lit up” the downtown in the spring of 2008; with a 50 percent increase in use in 2009.

SkyStream is solar powered, incorporating rechargeable batteries, and is said to be scalable to almost any area. The solar panels are built to last 25-30 years and can register a charge from moon light or street lights. By not relying on the power grid, SkyStream’s power system was designed to reduce infrastructure and maintenance costs. The network intelligence can be installed locally or managed remotely.

A self-contained mobile system was also developed for emergency responders. The portable unit can be set up and operational in only 30 minutes and has the ability to run without electrical power or battery recharge for three days. This could provide invaluable internet access during emergency situations. In the summer of 2009, a SkyStream mobile unit was used at rural outdoor events to provide Wi-Fi access for event organizers and vendors. Learn more at [www.skystreamsolar.com](http://www.skystreamsolar.com) or [www.wellsvilleareachamber.com](http://www.wellsvilleareachamber.com)

## STIMULUS DOLLARS FLOW TO RURAL COMMUNITIES



Bridge repair in Madrid NY. Photo courtesy of NYSDOT

The \$787 Billion federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), otherwise known as “the Stimulus Program”, is providing funding to State and local governments, individuals and not-for-profits to help communities survive and recover from the severe recession. Representing one of the largest

public works packages since the Great Depression, billions of dollars are being provided for improvements in education, health care, rural broadband, extended benefits for unemployed workers, water and transportation infrastructure and energy efficiency projects.

New York’s share of the Stimulus Program is more than \$26 billion, to be received over two years. This amount includes programs with direct quantifiable benefits for New York and our residents. Additional funding is available on a competitive basis nationwide. With billions of dollars in federal funding specifically targeted for rural communities, health clinics, roads, bridges, and schools, rural New Yorkers are already seeing benefits of investment in their future. Many grants have already been received, and more are available for communities, businesses and not-for-profit corporations under ARRA. While funding for some stimulus programs will continue through 2011, the goal is to get funds into communities as quickly as possible, often with grant applications due soon after they are announced. For the latest grants announcements visit: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

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## NY FACES MAJOR SHORTFALL FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING



A recent report by the NYS Comptroller's Office, *Cracks in the Foundation: Local Government Infrastructure and Capital Planning Needs*, shows that New York's local governments have been underfunding infrastructure for several decades. Recent studies show that investment of \$250 billion is needed just to maintain infrastructure across the State over the next 20 years; \$175 billion for transportation; \$36.2 billion for municipal wastewater; and \$38.7 billion for clean water infrastructure.

Local governments have tended to use capital funding for purposes such as municipal buildings and in public safety, instead of water, sewer and highway infrastructure. At

current spending rates, the Comptroller's Office believes that New York's local infrastructure may be underfunded by as much as \$80 billion. To reverse this trend, and avert catastrophe, it is essential to implement a sustained and coordinated commitment by federal, State and local governments to rebuilding and maintaining local infrastructure.

ARRA provided New York with significant funding for capital improvements, including about \$500 million for water and sewer systems and \$1.1 billion for roads and highways. This federal funding will free up future State and local funding for other projects, and provides an opportunity for a coordinated capital investment strategy to help grow the State's diverse regional economies.

Regional coordination could provide savings generated through economies of scale, expand capacity to manage complex building projects, maximize federal investments, and increase efficiency by avoiding the duplication of effort. A regional approach also lends itself to "smart growth" policies that help avoid sprawl and promote green, sustainable growth.

Revitalizing our local infrastructure offers tremendous opportunity to promote job growth while rebuilding and maintaining transportation systems, public utility networks and other local infrastructure that are critical to our economic future.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### HISTORIC REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT EXPECTED TO SPARK REDEVELOPMENT

Historic buildings throughout the State that have fallen into disrepair may have a new lease on life with a new law establishing the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (Chapter 239, Laws of 2009). Sponsored by Senator David J. Valesky, a member of the Rural Resources Commission, and supported

by Commission members in both houses, this new law sets up a nationally competitive rehabilitation and preservation program that will help owners and communities seeking to renovate historic buildings.

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"This program has the potential to transform the economic landscape of Upstate New York at a time when we need it most," Senator Valesky, Vice President Pro-Tempore of the State Senate, said. "Investment in our urban cores and villages will stimulate the kind of economic activity necessary to rebuild the Upstate economy, brick by brick."

The program is designed to attract new investment, businesses, and jobs at a time when State legislators are working to get our economy back on track. The legislation increases the value of tax credits available to developers and investors for residential and commercial properties with funds targeted to "distressed" areas.

"This legislation opens up new opportunities to create jobs while restoring historic buildings," said Senator Darrel J. Aubertine, Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. "Along with other incentives for historic preservation, this tax credit will help to attract new business and investment to rebuild our economy and improve our communities."

Virtually every community across the State can benefit from revitalizing vacant, underutilized and deteriorating historic buildings. This legislation gives New York State one of the

most productive and cost-effective redevelopment programs in the country. The program:

- Raises the value of the tax credit from \$100,000 to \$5 million on commercial property; the residential credit value will increase from \$25,000 to \$50,000.
- Targets "distressed" areas, defined as being located within a Census tract identified at or below 100 percent of the median family income.
- Increases the percentage of rehabilitation costs which can be claimed for the credit, from 6 percent to 20 percent.
- Allows tax credits to be transferred, making it easier to attract investors and out-of-state financing for in-state rehabilitation projects.

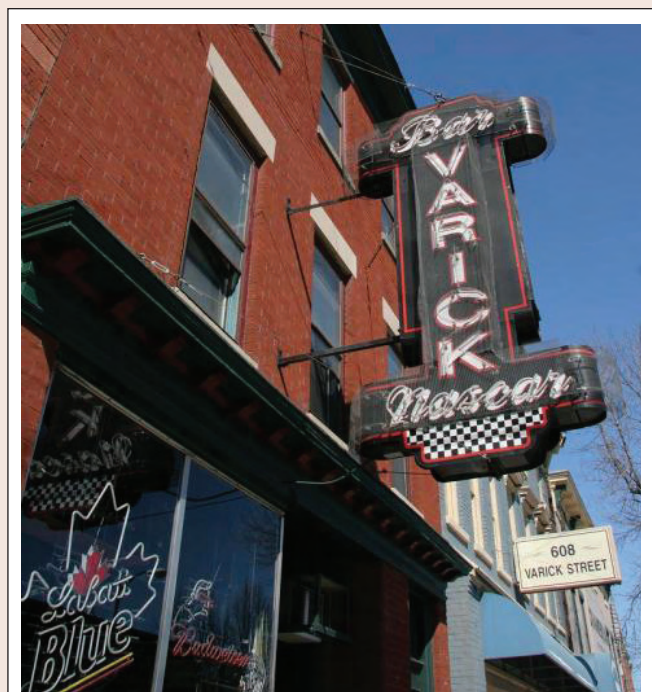
Nationally, historic rehabilitation tax credits have proven to be one of the most successful policy tools in economic and community development. In Rhode Island the historic rehabilitation tax credit program is hailed as the most effective economic redevelopment program in State history; it has generated \$795.25 million in new economic activity (\$5.47 million per \$1 million in credits) and has created more than 11,000 new jobs so far.

## "MAIN STREET" DEVELOPMENT: DOWNTOWN GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR UPSTATE MUNICIPALITIES

Since 2004, the New York Main Street program has provided close to \$50 million in funding for façade renovations, interior building renovations, the creation of downtown anchors, and streetscape enhancements.

This year, New York State lawmakers passed legislation (Chapter 389, Laws of 2009) to strengthen the program, and make it more effective by expanding eligibility to allow local governments to participate in the program, increasing awards up to \$500,000, and authorizing awardees to spend up to 7.5 percent of the award for administration and planning.

"Strengthening the successful Main Street program will help to jump-start new projects to bring people and businesses back to our upstate city and village centers, and help them to become the economic engines they once were," said Senator David J. Valesky, Vice President Pro-Tempore of the Senate, Rural Resources Commission member, and Senate sponsor of this legislation.

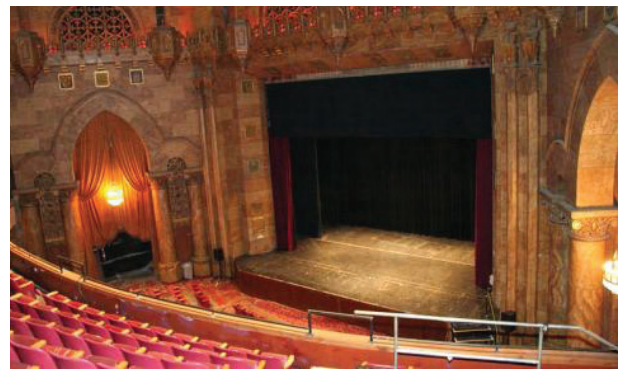


In the city of Utica, Oneida County, the bars, stores and restaurants along Varick Street will be part of improvements funded by a \$200,000 New York Main Street grant.

# RURAL FUTURES

In Ithaca, Main Street funds were used to restore the State Theatre, which now draws visitors to downtown. In Corning, a \$100,000 New York Main Street Anchor Grant was used to turn a former retail space into a theater, providing downtown with a cultural anchor. In the village of Carthage, \$425,075 was awarded this year for projects that include improvements to 11 apartments, eight commercial properties, and seven façades.

For program guidelines and more information on how to apply for Main Street revitalization funding—including downloadable forms and a place to sign up for email alerts on upcoming workshops—go to [www.nymainstreet.org](http://www.nymainstreet.org), or call the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal in Albany at (518) 474-2057.



**The State Theatre in Ithaca**  
Photos: [www.nymainstreet.org](http://www.nymainstreet.org)

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATION – 2009

#### **S.6030/A.0938 – Health Care Extender**

Chapter 240, Laws of 2009

Allows for extension of a parent's health care insurance for unmarried children up to age 29, regardless of dependency status. According to the governor's office, 31 percent of uninsured New Yorkers are under the age of 29.

#### **S.5471/A.8400 – COBRA extender**

Chapter 236, Laws of 2009

Extends ability to continue health insurance coverage from 18 to 36 months for the unemployed who worked at businesses with less than 20 employees.

#### **S.4110/A.8273 – Unemployment Extender**

Chapter 35, Laws of 2009

Allows the State to use Federal funds to provide an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits to approximately 120,000 New Yorkers who are out of work.

#### **S.04330A/A.7742A – Wood Products Development Council**

Chapter 325, Laws of 2009

This Rural Resources Commission bill creates a Wood Products Development Council to work closely with the Department of Agriculture and Markets to help improve New York's wood products industry.

#### **S.5661/A.8501 – Local Government Consolidation**

Chapter 174, Laws of 2009

Empowers citizens, local officials and counties to reorganize establishes: uniform, user-friendly procedures for local government entities to consolidate or dissolve.

#### **S.6031/A.9039 – Power for Jobs**

Chapter 217, Laws of 2009

Extends the Power for Jobs and Energy Cost Savings Benefit Programs through May 15, 2010 and requires reports on the performance of the programs and energy audits to develop the basis for a long-term low cost power program.

#### **S.5732/A.8643 — Energy conservation and efficiency projects - UDC.**

Chapter 406, Laws of 2009

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided new tax credit bonds that will provide interest-free financing for clean energy projects. In New York State, the Urban Development Corporation would implement the funding, but this legislation was required to make energy conservation and efficiency projects eligible for funding under its programs.

#### **S.5888/A.8901 Green Jobs/ Green NY**

Chapter 487, Laws of 2009

Establishes the Green Jobs-Green New York Act, to promote energy efficiency, energy conservation and the installation of clean energy technologies, to reduce energy consumption and costs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support sustainable community development and create green jobs.

### OTHER LEGISLATION OF INTEREST

#### **S.2813-A/A.6694-B – North Country Power Authority (Aubertine/Russell)**

This bill would establish the North Country Power Authority to provide electric power services to designated municipalities in St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties.

Passed Senate/Assembly Ways & Means

#### **S.1839/A.7743 – Elder Prescription Insurance Coverage Eligibility**

This bill attempts to lessen the harsh economic impact prescription drug prices have on senior citizens by increasing income eligibility levels in the EPIC program to \$50,000 for individuals and \$75,000 for married couples.

Passed Senate/Assembly Aging

# RURAL FUTURES

## GRANTS

**Community Action Grants – AAUW** (the American Association of University Women) is providing one-and two-year grants to individuals, AAUW branches and state organizations, and local nonprofit organizations for innovative programs or non-degree research projects that promote education and equity for women and girls. Special consideration given to projects focused on K-12 and community college girls' and science, technology, engineering or math for women. One-year grants will provide seed money for new projects. Two-year grants provide start-up funds for longer-term programs. Grants will range from \$2,000-\$10,000.

**Application deadline is January 15, 2010.**

For more information, call (319 337-1716, or email [aauw@act.org](mailto:aauw@act.org))

## CONFERENCES/MEETINGS/MORE

### AGRICULTURE EVENTS GIVE FARMERS A VOTE



Agriculture is New York State's number one industry and must be part of our plans to emerge stronger from the recent economic downturn. Agriculture in New York State is a multi-billion dollar industry that supports hundreds of thousands of jobs beyond those on the farms. These small to mid-sized businesses make up the backbone of our State's economy

supporting jobs in sales, machinery, banking, insurance, tourism, retail and many other sectors of the State's economy. This fall, Senator Darrel Aubertine, as Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, hosted a series of roundtables with farmers, processors, and academics interested in protecting and growing New York's agriculture industry. The Senator conducted tours and roundtables from September through December in Suffolk, Chautauqua, Madison, Oswego, Tompkins, Wyoming and St. Lawrence Counties. These events have covered a variety of topics, including agriculture employment, standards of food quality and safety, farm labor legislation, the credit crunch, education of the non-farm community, CAFOs, food imports, and needed changes in net metering and renewable energy.

Senator Aubertine held a public hearing in Watertown on November 19. The input gathered in these meetings and the hearing will be used to better address the needs and concerns of farmers, agribusinesses and all associated with our agriculture industry.

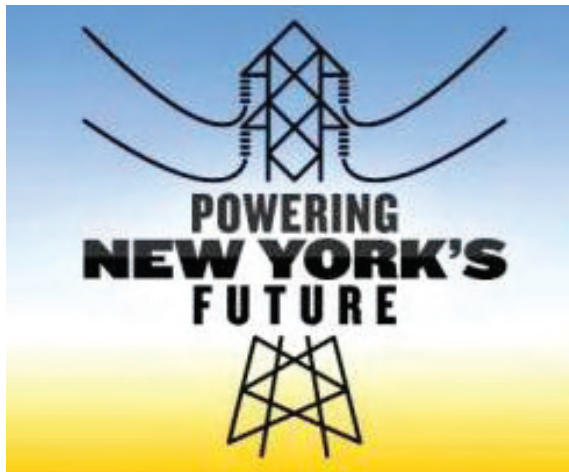
### Hope for the Hungry

Help spread hope by making a food or monetary donation to a local food bank, or by volunteering in your community. Also, if you need help,

- Check out the **Food Bank Association of NYS** to find a Food Bank in your region  
<http://www.foodbankassocnys.org/find-food-bank.cfm> or
- Go to the **Emergency Food Program Directory** that allows you to find a food program in your area using your county or zip code (outside of New York City only).  
[http://www.hungeractionnys.org/FP\\_search.php](http://www.hungeractionnys.org/FP_search.php)

NYS Farmers have donated more to food banks and emergency feeding programs than anywhere else in the Country. Together we can help to end hunger.

# RURAL FUTURES



## POWERING NEW YORK'S FUTURE

The New York State Senate and Assembly Energy Committees have hosted a series of roundtables this fall along with a pair of public hearings to collect input from businesses, trade groups and the public on the State's low cost power for economic development programs to help shape future legislation.

Run by the Chairs of the two Energy Committees, Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine and Assemblyman Kevin Cahill, these legislative meetings have included leadership from the Committees on Authorities and Commissions and Economic Development. The intent is to use the input collected to determine how to best use the resources of the New York Power Authority to keep hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers employed and provide much needed new jobs. Several of the key programs, most notably Power For Jobs, are set to expire in May of 2010.

The Powering New York's Future initiative started with a roundtable in Buffalo and a public hearing in the City of Niagara Falls in late September. Since then, roundtables have been held in Uniondale, Oswego, Kingston and Syracuse. A final roundtable is planned in Massena and a concluding public hearing will be held in Albany. For more information on these events, contact Richard Berkley, Director of the Senate Energy Committee at (518) 455-2761.

## FALL WEBINAR FROM AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST

American Farmland Trust is hosting a fall webinar series to help New York communities tackle tough challenges faced in protecting farmland and strengthening the viability of local farms. This free workshop will begin at noon on:

- December 17 – Implementing Your Town's Farmland Protection Plan

To register, go to [www.farmland.org/newyork](http://www.farmland.org/newyork) or for more information contact Judy Wright at [jlw4220@yahoo.com](mailto:jlw4220@yahoo.com).

## ASK THE EXPERT

The New York State Consumer Protection Board (CPB) has partnered with the New York State Builders Association (NYSBA), offering consumers professional advice on home improvement and repair projects via their new website [http://www.nysconsumer.gov/ask\\_the\\_expert.htm](http://www.nysconsumer.gov/ask_the_expert.htm). This website is for homeowners who are considering a project but have not begun work or hired a contractor, or are faced with rectifying problematic work.

Consumers can browse through previously answered consumer questions, or if a question and answer relevant to your situation is not available, a new question can be submitted. (Logo courtesy of NYSCPB).



## SEND US YOUR PHOTOS OF RURAL NEW YORK!

**The Rural Resources Commission is seeking digital photographs of rural New York to use in future editions of Rural Futures.**

Scenic vistas, downtown, technology development, school spirit, etc. Original photographs only, non-copyrighted material. No guarantee of publication, but send us your Rural New York favorites, and if used, we will do our best to attribute the photographs to the correct photographer! Send digital photographs to: [ruralres@senate.state.ny.us](mailto:ruralres@senate.state.ny.us).

Please be sure to compress or zip all photo files prior to sending.

