

Community Assistantship Program

Southeast Minnesota Resource Mapping Survey

The Community Assistantship Program is made possible by the generous support of the McKnight Foundation, the Otto Bremer Foundation, the Southern Initiative Fund, the Initiative Foundation, the Southwest Minnesota Foundation, the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, and the West Central Initiative Fund. Within the University of Minnesota, support is provided by Central Administration, the Rural Development Council, the College of Human Ecology, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the College of Natural Resources, the College of Education and Human Development, the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, the College of Liberal Arts, the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, the Carlson School of Management, the Center for Small Towns, the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, and the five Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships.

Southeast Minnesota Resource Mapping Survey

Conducted on behalf of
Experiment in Rural Cooperation

Prepared by
Kari Droubie, Undergraduate Research Assistant,
University of Minnesota
August 1999

CAP Report 005

CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION

**Center for Urban and Regional Affairs
University of Minnesota
330 Humphrey Center**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the cooperation of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the University of Minnesota President's Rural Development Council.

The Department of Natural Resources, through the work of Ron Sushak in the Saint Paul office, provided on-going consultation in developing the survey instrument, collecting the data, tabulating the data, and analyzing the data and, through the support of Sally Farrell in the Rochester DNR district office, compiled and organized the data base/mailing list.

Thanks to the efforts of Roger Steinberg at the University of Minnesota Extension Service in the Rochester District Office and Carla Carlson at the University of Minnesota Rural Development Council, the Experiment in Rural Cooperation was able to arrange for a half-time intern, through the Community Assistantship Program, who played a key role in undertaking and completing the research.

The resource mapping was guided by a task force of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation that included Larry Gates as chair and Jeff Gorfine, and Naomi Fruechte as members.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
i. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
<u>Introduction</u>	
<u>Observations</u>	
<u>Data Highlights</u>	
ii. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.....	11
<u>Purpose Statement</u>	
<u>Methodology</u>	
<u>Data Tables</u>	
iii. RESPONDENTS SUMMARY COMMENTS.....	24
iv. OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSETS IDENTIFIED.....	29
v. APPENDIX.....	31
<u>Experiment in Rural Cooperation Brochure</u>	32
<u>Survey Instrument</u>	34
<u>Letters to Respondent Organizations</u>	38
<u>Letter of Invitation to Follow-up Community Forums</u>	44
<u>Community Forums Notes</u>	46

i. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Experiment in Rural Cooperation is a regional agricultural and natural resources sustainable development partnership created by the Minnesota Legislature and managed through the University of Minnesota. Other partnerships have been established in central and northeast Minnesota. Two to three additional partnerships were funded by the 1999 Legislature.

The Experiment in Rural Cooperation is a citizen tool to broaden and deepen the land-grant mission of the University of Minnesota. The Experiment promotes University based research, outreach and education in southeast Minnesota. The region includes the counties of Wabasha, Winona, and Houston; most of Fillmore, Goodhue, and Olmsted counties; and the northeast corners of Mower and Dodge counties. This geographic area is the ecological system that encompasses the geography of the Rochester plateau and the Mississippi River Blufflands.

The Experiment in Rural Cooperation supports local projects and businesses in agriculture and natural resources, including farming, tourism and forestry. Its goal is to foster a homegrown economy that will support self-reliant communities and a healthy natural environment in southeast Minnesota.

The board of directors of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation is comprised of 16 citizens representing a variety of business, civic, agriculture and natural resources interests from the region as well as University of Minnesota faculty. The Experiment is about active citizenship. The board believes that common-sense research and problem solving, using the vast array of resources available through the University of Minnesota, will open up possibilities for a strong and sustainable future in southeast Minnesota.

The Experiment in Rural Cooperation undertook this region-wide resource mapping survey in March, 1999. The purpose of the survey is to aggregate information on issues, assets, and priorities and to initiate a conversation with the citizen leadership of southeast Minnesota. The survey also provides a way to examine possible roles the Experiment in Rural Cooperation might play and prospective contributions it might make in southeast Minnesota.

In the fall of 1999, the board of directors of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation intends to fund the first round of projects. The results of this survey point to a course of action that will shape the work of the Experiment and strengthen the link between the University and the state's rural citizenry. The aim is for the partnership to define issues through community

discussions, and to establish a base of long-term sustainable action at the local level for agriculture and natural resources opportunities.

431 individuals, representing all kinds of public and private organizations in the region, were mailed the research questionnaire. The questionnaire return rate was nearly 60%, a very high response considering the questionnaire was four pages in length, included 6 open-ended questions, and had room for additional comments on eight other questions. Completing the questionnaire took up to 30 minutes.

The board of directors of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation believes that the rural landscape of productive farms, hillside forests, small towns, and clear streams can sustain a way of life cherished by the citizens of southeast Minnesota. A more aggressive application of University of Minnesota resources focusing on sustainable development opportunities presents an exciting opportunity as the region moves into the new century.

These are difficult times in rural Minnesota from an economic standpoint. The Experiment during its brief existence, however, has experienced a wealth of positive and engaging responses in its discussions with the broader community and the University of Minnesota.

The Experiment will sponsor and support targeted projects in agriculture and natural resources to enhance the social, economic, and environmental objectives of the citizens of southeast Minnesota. Annually, the partnership receives \$200,000 through the University of Minnesota to allocate among potential projects and to cover its operating costs.

Observations

The survey results demonstrate a healthy sense of optimism about the future of southeast Minnesota. Only 14% of the respondents believe that the quality of life will deteriorate. In the open-ended comments and the identification of the regional assets, a strong base of support and renewal emerges. Only 9% of the organizations surveyed say they are in decline. 50% have sufficient resources to carry out their agendas and 70% have sufficient information to pursue their missions. Most of the comments in response to the open-ended questions are positive. The citizenry of southeast Minnesota is optimistic about the future and prepared to confront the presenting problems. Although frustrations were noted, the tone of the responses is upbeat.

The programmatic focus that takes shape in reviewing the data suggests the Experiment in Rural Cooperation spend its resources and energy on the future of farming and agriculture, enhancing the environment and natural resources base, reinvigorating small town life and main street commerce, supporting a genuine rural way of life, figuring out new strategies to boost the

local economy and economic development that makes sense for the region, and addressing escalating land values and land-use issues.

Taxes do not show up as a major concern. Tourism is not, as some expected, a controversial issue. Although a number of those responding are tourism proponents, tourism is not viewed as central to the region's future. At the same time, few argue against its value to the area economy.

The responses show a commitment to a way of life that has been the historic basis for the region's well-being. There is little sense of giving into negative forces that have impinged on the region's economic, social and environmental assets. Rather, there is a strong sense of the need to renew and adapt ... preserving the best of what's made southeast Minnesota vital over the years.

The role of the new Experiment in Rural Cooperation is seen as best focusing on funding, education and research and supporting small businesses, local enterprises in food, farming and natural resources, and alternative projects. There is little support for advocacy and cutting edge or blockbuster projects.

The value of the University and its role is an open field based on the responses. Only a small number of respondents write off the University's contribution as being of little value. 55% say the University of Minnesota can make a significant and practical contribution locally. Less than 10% say the University will not make a contribution. 35% aren't sure how this will work.

Many respondents identify instances of the University making a contribution in the past. The vast majority of cases fell into the education or information services categories. Only 8% identify involvement through project funding. This presents a new opportunity given the Experiment's role in providing project funding. The Experiment can provide a service here based on the respondents ideas about where it should focus resources ... funding, education, research, planning, marketing, agricultural diversification and grant writing are rated more or less as equal priorities for University involvement.

Nearly a quarter of those responding are not familiar with the concept of sustainable development. Although many are familiar with the term, most find it confusing, a double-edge sword, and in need of apolitical clarification. The good news is that almost no one is opposed to the notion. The people are committed to a thriving future for the region and are against depleting its natural, economic and social assets. 40% of the respondents view the concept of sustainable development as good in its fundamentals; an equal proportion think the concept, although good, has negative overtones and is confusing. 9% of the respondents dislike the term though they support the concept. 1% of the respondents reject the concept.

Based on the findings, some amount of education or development work has to be accomplished in addressing sustainable development in the region.

One of the reasons for the generally positive responses to the questionnaires has to do with the contributions of the organizations surveyed. Many specific instances are noted where alternative strategies or new enterprises are underway.

Nearly 100 additional agencies or resource organizations are identified as regional assets by the respondents - above and beyond those organizations included in the resource mapping survey mailing. This represents a significant bank of resources on which to draw. There is a strong dynamic that mixes the organization and agency resource base in southeast Minnesota. There are many linkages identified among the organizations albeit some confusion over which organizations carry what roles or responsibilities.

The motivation among the survey group is high. Nearly half of the respondents show an interest in being contacted by phone directly as a result of the questionnaire and nearly 75% of the respondents say they wish to attend a follow-up meeting. Four community forums are being held in the summer of 1999 to respond to this unexpected level of interest. Thirteen percent of the participants added additional comments on the questionnaires; considering the length of time to complete the questionnaire, this is particularly noteworthy.

Although the nation may be entering the electronic information age, an important dynamic in southeast Minnesota is face-to-face contact. Meetings are the primary way that the organizations communicate among members and meetings are top-ranked as a source for obtaining information. For a citizen agenda to be viable in the region, considerable person-to-person spade work has to be undertaken to engage organizations, agricultural and natural resources interests, and individuals in a dialogue devoted to the linkage between the University of Minnesota and rural citizenry. A University of Minnesota outreach strategy implemented through the Experiment in Rural Cooperation, will necessarily have to take the time to develop the relationships requisite to successfully shaping and launching projects.

Confusion surrounding various organizational roles, the University of Minnesota, the term sustainable development, and the way resource agencies work together must be addressed. One role the Experiment in Rural Cooperation might play effectively is that of the "matchmaker" in linking up programs and issues and opportunities. The proliferation of projects and independent initiatives is substantial. The capacity of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation to define its role and set its agenda is contingent on clarifying these interrelationships and working within them.

Data Highlights

1. A total of 431 questionnaires were mailed out with a total of 253 returned yielding a 59% rate of return.
2. The breakdown in type of organization responding is as follows: Government-58%; Non-profit-20%; Public-13%; Private-7%.
3. Number of organization members: 1 to 5 members-30%; 6 to 100 members-37%; above 100 members-33%.
4. Number of staff members: 1 to 4 members-28%; 5 members-23%; 6 to 15 members-23%; over 15 members-26%.
5. A total of 77% of the organizations work within the region; 10% of the organizations responding have a national scope.
6. Regular meetings are a major source of communication for 84% of the respondents.
7. The top five areas of organization involvement are as follows: Land use-58%; Government programs-54%; Environment-47%; Agriculture-47%; Public policy-47%.
8. 85% of the organizations have been in existence for over 10 years; 5% for 6-10 years; 8% for 1-5 years; and 2% for less than 1 year.
9. Organizations having adequate resources to achieve their purpose: yes-47%; no-39%; unsure or don't know-14%.
10. Organizations having sufficient information to achieve their purpose: yes-69%; no-15%; unsure or don't know-16%.
11. A total of 59% of the organizations are staying the same size; 30% are growing; 9% are shrinking; and 2% just started up.
12. The areas that these organizations see as most important to southeast Minnesota's future are as follows: Agriculture-74%; Natural resources- 57%; Small town life-56%; Rural living-55%; Economic development-55%.
13. The top two sources of information for these organizations by an overwhelming margin are Government agencies-52% and Meetings-41%.

14. Organizations that think University of Minnesota (or other educational) resources can make a significant and practical contribution: yes-55%; no-9%; don't know-36%.
15. Respondants had a chance to list three instances where the University of Minnesota (or other educational institution) has contributed to the activities or work of an organization. Some answers fell into the same category more than once. Out of 131 responses to question 13, 136% of the responses fell in the Education/Information category; 34% fell in the Research assistance/Intern category; and 8% fell in the Funding category.
16. There was a rather even distribution as to which areas the Experiment in Rural Cooperation should focus in supporting the priorities of these organizations. They are as follows in descending order: Funding-26%; Education-20%; Research-19%; Information-18%; Planning-16%; Marketing-15%; Agricultural diversification-15%; and Grant writing-14%.
17. There is a sense of optimism in regards to the future quality of life in southeast Minnesota: 33% of the organizations said the quality of life will improve; 37% said it will stay the same; 14% said it will deteriorate; and 16% are unsure.
18. The most valuable contributions the Experiment in Rural Cooperation might make in facilitating other organizations work are ranked as follows: Sponsoring alternative projects-38%; Supporting small businesses....-38%; Making existing support programs/services more accessible-28%; Conducting applied research....-20%; Supporting cutting-edge research....-15%; Playing the developer role....-15%; Undertaking a few blockbuster projects....-13%; Undertaking experimental projects....-12%; Other-7%.
19. Issues of highest importance from the organization's perspective are: The weakening ag economy-69%; Loss of family farms-57%; Environmental deterioration-53%; Loss of main street businesses-48%; and Increasing land values by outsiders-47%.
20. Issues of least importance from the organization's perspective are: Racial or ethnic tensions-29%; Tourism pressures-23%; and Limited access to health care-22%.

21. Things about southeast Minnesota most important to the organizations are environmental/natural resource issues, agriculture/farming issues, economic issues, quality of life, and land use/urban sprawl issues.
22. Things about southeast Minnesota most troubling to organizations are land use/urban sprawl issues, agriculture/farming issues, infrastructure, government regulations/issues, and taxes.
23. Familiarity with the term sustainable development: Very familiar-34%; Somewhat familiar-42%; Not familiar-24%.
24. Reaction to the term sustainable development: No reaction-16%; Good concept -40%; Good concept with negative overtones-17%; Confusing concept-21%; Support concept but dislike term-9%; Reject concept-1%; Other-10%.
25. Out of 231 respondents, 48% showed an interest in being contacted by phone for further discussion about the questionnaire.
26. A total of 71% of respondents showed interest in attending a meeting to further discuss the issues raised in the questionnaire.
27. Some form of additional comments were included in 13% of the returned questionnaires.

ii. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Purpose Statement

The goal of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation - as a citizen-led partnership with the University of Minnesota - is to foster a homegrown economy in southeast Minnesota that will support self-reliant communities and a healthy natural environment. The Experiment to succeed must be shaped by a strong citizen voice.

The purpose of the Resource Mapping questionnaire is to obtain a citizen voice as well as initiate further communication between the Experiment in Rural Cooperation and the citizens of the region. It is anticipated that partnerships in areas of sustainable development, specifically agriculture and natural resources, including farming, tourism and forestry, will be formed in this process to address the priorities of southeast Minnesota.

Methodology

The Experiment in Rural Cooperation sent out questionnaires to 431 organizations in southeast Minnesota judged to be concerned about agriculture, natural resources and related issues. This region includes the counties of Wabasha, Winona, and Houston; most of Fillmore, Goodhue, and Olmsted counties; and small parts of Mower and Dodge counties. The term "organization" includes programs, associations, businesses, non-profits, governmental agencies/bodies, clubs, special initiatives, etc..

An introductory letter and brochure were mailed out March 31, 1999, to familiarize the organizations with the work of the Experiment. On April 8, 1999, a letter and four page survey, with twenty-five questions, were sent to these organizations. The twenty-five questions were prepared by the board members to provide information to proceed with initial project identification. Subsequent mailings included the following; the first reminder letter mailed on April 15, 1999, followed by a re-mail of the questionnaire April 22, 1999. The last reminder letter, sent May 4, 1999, included another brochure as well. Lastly, a letter was mailed May 28, 1999, inviting all survey participants to attend one of four community forums. Copies of this material can be found in the appendix.

As of June 1, 1999 a total of 253 questionnaires had been returned yielding a response rate of 59%. Although the survey was four pages in length, took up to a half-hour to complete, included six open-ended questions and room for additional comments on eight other questions, this was an excellent response.

Based on the returned questionnaires, the surveyed organizations in southeast Minnesota and the Experiment in Rural Cooperation are tackling similar issues and working towards common goals. Although most people are aware of the concept of sustainable development and feel it is a good concept, several respondents pointed out the need to clarify the concept and better educate the public of its meaning. The concept of sustainable development is particularly important to the work of the Experiment, since it is the basis of support for building a homegrown economy in the region.

Data Tables

Frequency refers to the number of organizations that responded in a particular category. Please note that organizations did not answer every question. Therefore, percentages are based on individual frequencies and the total number of organizations that responded to a particular question, not the total number of returned questionnaires. This is referred to as a valid percent.

Out of the 41% of organizations that did not respond to the questionnaire approximately 47% were government, 30% non-profit, 16% public, and 7% private.

Question 2: The following is a summarized list of the purpose of the 239 organizations that responded to this question.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Government Services	110	46.0
Education Services	38	15.9
Environment/Natural Resources Services	32	13.4
Agriculture/Farming Services	25	10.5
Planning/Economic Development Services	18	7.5
Tourism/Recreation Services	9	3.8
Historic/Cultural Preservation & Community Services	7	2.9

The organizations were given a choice of five specific classifications.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Government	137	57.8
Non-profit	47	19.8
Public	32	13.5
Private	16	6.8
Other	5	2.1

Number of members belonging to organizations living in the region.

Number of persons	Frequency	Percent
1-5 members	40	30.5
6-100 members	48	36.6
above 100 members	43	32.8

Number of staff working for organizations in the region.

Number of persons	Frequency	Percent
1-4 staff	40	27.6
5 staff	33	22.8
6-15 staff	33	22.8
above 15 staff	39	26.9

Question 3: Geographic area covered by the organizations surveyed.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Within the region	183	76.3
National	24	10.0
Most/all of region	18	7.5
Statewide	14	5.8
Other	1	0.4

Question 4: Ways in which organizations communicate with an average of 2.7 responses per questionnaire.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Regular meetings	198	83.9
Newsletter	116	49.2
Special programs	85	36.0
Regular mailings	82	34.7
Web site	63	26.7
Special reports	50	21.2
Other	46	19.5*

*This category consists of a variety of different responses, the most prominent being newspapers and news releases.

Question 5: Areas of involvement for organizations surveyed with an average of 5.5 responses per questionnaire.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Land use	137	57.6
Government programs	129	54.2
Environment	120	50.4
Agriculture	112	47.1
Public policy	111	46.6
Education	102	42.9
Natural resources	92	38.7
Conservation	91	38.2
Information & referral	86	36.1
Community & family	82	34.5
Grants	71	29.8
Lobbying	58	24.4
Tourism	58	24.4
Research	44	18.5
Other	13	5.5
Religion	8	3.4

Question 6: Years the organizations have been in existence.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Over 10 years	205	85.4
1-5 years	18	7.5
6-10 years	13	5.4
Less than 1 year	4	1.7

Question 7: The organizations response to having adequate resources to achieve its purpose.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Yes	110	47.2
No	91	39.1
Don't know	32	13.7

Question 8: The organizations response to having sufficient information to achieve its purpose.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Yes	164	69.2
Don't know	38	16.0
No	35	14.8

Question 9: Size of the organization over the last several years.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Staying the same	139	58.9
Growing	71	30.1
Shrinking	21	8.9
Just started up	5	2.1

Question 10: Areas seen as most important to southeast Minnesota's future with an average of 4.1 responses per questionnaire.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Agriculture	175	73.5
Natural resources	135	56.7
Small town life	132	55.5
Rural living	131	55.0
Economic development	130	54.6
Tourism	78	32.8
Wildlife	76	31.9
Forestry	75	31.5
Other	33	13.9

Question 11: Sources providing essential information to the organizations with an average of 2.0 responses per questionnaire.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Government agencies	124	52.3
Meetings	98	41.4
Newspapers/magazines	45	19.0
Elected officials	42	17.7
Conferences	35	14.8
Higher ed institutions	25	10.5
U of M Extension	24	10.1
Other	23	9.7*
Internet	20	8.4
Family, neighbors, friends	16	6.8
Private companies	7	3.0
Local organizations, etc	5	2.1
Television	4	1.7
Libraries	1	0.4

*This category consists of a variety of different responses.

Question 12: University of Minnesota (or other educational) resources can make a significant and practical contribution to organizations.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Yes	129	55.1
Don't know	84	35.9
No	21	9.0

Question 13: Instances where the University of Minnesota (or other educational institution) has contributed to the activities or work of an organization were grouped into three major categories with an average of 1.8 responses per questionnaire.

Category	Frequency	Percent*
Education/Information Services	178	135.9
Project funding	11	8.4
Research assistance/ Interns	44	33.6

*Only 131 organizations answered this question, with some answers falling in a category more than once explaining the large percentage in the first category.

Question 14: Suggested areas where the Experiment in Rural Cooperation might focus in supporting the priorities of the organizations.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Funding	57	26.0
Education	43	19.6
Research	41	18.7
Information	40	18.3
Planning	35	16.0
Agricultural diversification	33	15.1
Marketing	33	15.1
Grant writing	31	14.2
Integrating existing resources	25	11.4
Cutting red tape	23	10.5
Agricultural production	19	8.7
Intern support	10	4.6
Showcase regions assets	10	4.6
Other	10	4.6
Advocacy	8	3.7

Question 15: Assessment of the future quality of life in southeast Minnesota.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Stay the same	86	37.2
Improve	77	33.3
Don't know	36	15.6
Deteriorate	32	13.9

Question 16: Suggested contributions the Experiment in Rural Cooperation might make in facilitating the work or purpose of organizations with an average of 1.8 responses per questionnaire.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Sponsoring alternative projects	82	38.0
Supporting small businesses, etc.	82	38.0
Existing programs/services		
more access/integrated	60	27.8
Applied research in ag & natural resources practices	44	20.4
Cutting-edge research on ag & natural resources issues	32	14.8
Developer role in new projects/ programs	32	14.8
Undertaking a few blockbuster projects	27	12.5
Experimental projects holding promise for breakthroughs	25	11.6
Other	16	7.4

Question 17: The following is a list of issues that were rated on the basis of importance from the perspective of each organization. They are arranged in order of highest importance to least importance.

Weakening agricultural economy

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	160	69.3
Medium importance	59	25.5
Low importance	10	4.3
No importance	2	.9

Loss of family farms

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	130	56.5
Medium importance	73	31.7
Low importance	23	10.0
No importance	4	1.7

Environmental deterioration

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	123	53.0
Medium importance	78	33.6
Low importance	28	12.1
No importance	3	1.3

Loss of main street businesses

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	109	47.6
Medium importance	75	32.8
Low importance	28	12.2
No importance	17	7.4

Increasing land values by outsiders

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	110	47.2
Medium importance	70	30.0
Low importance	42	18.0
No importance	11	4.7

Loss of young adults from the region

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	83	36.6
Medium importance	105	46.2
Low importance	30	13.2
No importance	9	4.0

Deterioration of rural infrastructure

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	88	38.8
Medium importance	83	36.6
Low importance	43	18.9
No importance	13	5.7

Deteriorating economic conditions

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	57	25.4
Medium importance	103	46.0
Low importance	47	21.0
No importance	17	7.6

Increasing land use restrictions

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	87	39.0
Medium importance	72	32.3
Low importance	51	22.9
No importance	13	5.8

Breakdown in community values

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	69	30.5
Medium importance	87	38.5
Low importance	52	23.0
No importance	18	8.0

Loss of farmer independence

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	72	32.0
Medium importance	78	34.7
Low importance	60	26.6
No importance	15	6.7

Increasing and/or unfair taxes

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	76	33.3
Medium importance	76	33.3
Low importance	57	25.0
No importance	19	8.4

Crime and drugs

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	60	26.5
Medium importance	82	36.3
Low importance	55	24.4
No importance	29	12.8

Aging population needs going unmet

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	48	21.4
Medium importance	88	39.3
Low importance	67	29.9
No importance	21	9.4

Not enough qualified workers

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	63	28.0
Medium importance	70	31.1
Low importance	65	28.9
No importance	27	12.0

Barriers to attracting new business development

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	50	22.2
Medium importance	83	36.9
Low importance	70	31.1
No importance	22	9.8

Limited educational opportunities for children

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	39	17.4
Medium importance	87	38.9
Low importance	78	34.8
No importance	20	8.9

Lack of adequate housing

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	55	24.0
Medium importance	62	27.1
Low importance	84	36.7
No importance	28	12.2

Not enough good jobs available

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	40	17.7
Medium importance	75	33.2
Low importance	78	34.5
No importance	33	14.6

Tourism pressures

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	32	14.4
Medium importance	55	24.8
Low importance	85	38.3
No importance	50	22.5

Limited access to health care

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	17	7.5
Medium importance	65	28.8
Low importance	95	42.0
No importance	49	21.7

Racial or ethnic tensions

Options	Frequency	Percent
High importance	20	9.0
Medium importance	46	20.6
Low importance	93	41.7
No importance	64	28.7

Question 18: Things about southeast Minnesota most important to the organizations, grouped into sixteen categories including an "other" category for miscellaneous responses. There was an average of 2.7 responses per questionnaire.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Environment/Natural resource issues	81	41.5
Agriculture/Farming issues	69	35.4
Economic issues	62	31.8
Quality of Life	45	23.1
Land use/Urban sprawl	43	22.1
Other	40	20.5*
Infrastructure	30	15.4
Community values/Issues	22	11.3
Water quality	21	10.8
Taxes	20	10.3
Government regulations/Issues	19	9.7
Education	18	9.2
Jobs/Job base	15	7.7
Changes in Population	14	7.2
Tourism	13	6.7
Housing	6	3.1

*This category consists of several different answers in which not any one answer significantly stands out.

Question 19: Things about southeast Minnesota most troubling to the organizations, grouped into sixteen categories including an "other" category for miscellaneous responses. There was an average of 2.5 responses per questionnaire.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Land use/Urban sprawl	71	37.6
Agriculture/Farming issues	69	36.5
Other	57	30.2*
Economic issues	44	23.3
Government regulations/ Issues	39	20.6
Taxes	38	20.1
Environment/Natural resource issues	36	19.0
Community values/Issues	23	12.2
Infrastructure	19	10.1
Changes in Population	18	9.5
Jobs/Job base	15	7.9
Housing	14	7.4
Water quality	12	6.3
Quality of life	8	4.2
Education	6	3.2
Tourism	3	1.6

*This category consists of several different answers in which not any one answer significantly stands out.

Question 20: Refer to section iv. Other Organizations and Assets Identified.

Question 21: Familiarity with the term sustainable development.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Somewhat familiar	95	41.7
Very familiar	78	34.2
Not familiar	55	24.1

Question 22: General reaction to the term sustainable development with an average of 1.1 responses per questionnaire.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Good concept	91	39.9
Confusing concept	48	21.1
Good concept with negative overtones	38	16.7
No reaction	37	16.2
Other	22	9.6*
Support concept, dislike term	20	8.8
Reject concept	3	1.3

*This category represents a variety of comments that were made regarding sustainable development.

Question 23: Organizations interested in further contact by phone.

Options	Frequency	Percent
No	120	51.9
Maybe	72	31.2
Yes	39	16.9

Question 24: Organizations interested in attending a meeting to further discuss the issues raised in the survey.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Maybe	101	43.9
No	68	29.6
Yes	61	26.5

Question 25: Thirteen percent of respondents enclosed some form of additional comments.

iii. RESPONDENTS SUMMARY COMMENTS

"The fact of a deepening farm crisis lends urgency to the discussion. The conventional bureaucratic response to crisis is to effect control. What we hope for and work for is a process of local initiatives which can serve to deflect state and federal attempts to mandate "reform". (Houston resident)

"I look forward to learning more about your program. Thank you." (Plainview area resident)

"We would like to work with you on researching market and customer base in southeast Minnesota for potential development of a production/marketing cooperative." (Pine Island area business man)

"I would like to see your mission statement – those problems you have indicated as agriculture and all others should be reevaluated!" (Preston area leader)

"If you could do just one thing that would define your success, I would suggest you recreate the rural/urban paradigm so that the "just – say – no – to- Rochester" political perspective is changed to "China – out – your – back – door". (Rochester public servant)

"If we can get rid of the 1000 cow dairies". (Township official responding to his assessment of the future of southeast Minnesota)

"We need to enlarge the concept of sustainable development through education and application." (Township official)

"We all need to teach the meaning of sustainable development!" (Public purpose non-profit leader)

"I believe your purpose is to leverage, or entice, the University to serve our needs, as identified by us. . . about turning the University away from its service to industrial agriculture and towards sustainable agriculture." (Fillmore County public affairs professional)

"The consumers have to spend or invest their money so that the farmer isn't in poverty. World markets have to be a two way street." (Farm Bureau officer)

"The USSR destroyed agriculture, then transportation, then itself. Hormel, IBP, Land O' Lakes, Tyson's, etc. Farm Credit Board of Cooperatives are examples of people who care about dividends and are in complete control of the company, not quality or quantity of producers and do not care about source of the company's products." (Farm Bureau officer)

"I am concerned. More education and commitment to non-toxic resources, organic foods and all venues including schools . . . use of natural resources as tourism and economic sources needs to be adopted." (Rochester environmental activist)

"The "natural step" is a project already in place in the United States. It needs to be amplified." (Rochester activist)

"There could be a number of ways you could help us. . . If your organization would be able to give us some grant money for newsletters, flyers, phone calls, rent, travel expenses, etc. . . a few hundred to several hundred dollars would go a long way. We are also looking for someone with deep pockets who would be willing to give us a no interest loan that we could use for a revolving loan fund. . .any help – large or small – would be appreciated." (Winona county farmer involved in cooperative)

"It depends upon what we and our customers are able to do." (Assessment of the future of southeast Minnesota from DNR official)

"Tough to give an opinion without a definition (sustainable development) ... could mean many things." (Rochester natural resources professional)

"Rural America has mainly one problem. . .poor commodity prices." (National Farmers Organization representative)

"A good concept in theory, but in reality will probably fail." (Rochester sportsman in response to the concept of sustainable development)

"We do not have to renew anything . . .just stop increasing the cost of living at all levels and southeast Minnesota will do just fine" (Township official from Wabasha County)

"Many misuse term "development" when they mean "growth"; also growth of throughput (material) isn't sustainable at some point!" (Fillmore County resident in response to sustainable development term)

"Good "outsider" organization with "good ideas and concepts" telling locals what and how to do things. Local areas need resources to help them

bootstrap themselves using citizen participation not simply a hearing or a vote." (Sustainability advocate from Fillmore County)

"My value is in more open space and fewer people – therefore with population rise and sprawl, the quality of life can only go down in my view. Many others would disagree based on different values applied to the same trends." (Educator from Goodhue County)

"This concept (sustainable development) needs to be better understood and more clearly defined." (Rochester PCA staff person)

"Urban sprawl and factory farming are the major issues." (Rochester environmentalist)

"Development in official context and in our materialistic spirituality always seems to become destructive." (Organic cooperative owner in Wabasha County speaking about sustainable development)

"Can it be done?" (Township clerk in response to sustainable development concept)

"Too many" (county Farmers Union official responding to the number of organizations "renewing the countryside")

"I am not sure what you mean" (City Clerk from Goodhue County responding to the sustainable development question)

"Sustainable development in what time frame? 100 years, 10,000 years? Organic vegetable farming as we practice it, is hardly sustainable." (Organic farmer from Houston County)

"As long as industrial consumption continues unchecked, our region's quality of life will decline." (Sportsman from the Twin Cities)

"The term (sustainable development) reflects an optimism about the future and a sense of taking control of farms to ensure a healthy future." (Water Resources Specialist from Winona County)

"A good concept (sustainable development), but I want to know more." (Township clerk)

"A good concept (sustainable development) that needs to be explained." (project director from Houston County)

"Noble purpose (sustainable development) but gives an "apathetic" view of development. . . that is, lets just wait for development to happen." (Fillmore County municipal administrator)

"Please send me more info!" (Ag teacher)

"A confusing concept (sustainable development) . . . need more info." (Staff for area Congressman)

"The most important issue to southeast Minnesota's future is family farming versus corporate farming." (Fillmore County township clerk)

"I don't have the foggiest idea of what you are doing or why I have been asked to fill out this questionnaire." (rural tourism organization)

"Rural area needs are not heard." (Elementary school principal)

"Consider having someone at one of our board meetings!" (Goodhue County Chamber of Commerce officer)

"The affluent educated professionals from the Twin Cities are buying up farms etc. to have this "country home" in this once beautiful bluff country."
(environmentalist from Winona)

"Because legislation will run the farmer out and too many people will move in with no place to grow food and then what will they eat?" (Winona County town board representative)

"Not sure of the implications of what it (sustainable development) really means." (Winona county resident)

"A good concept but too encompassing (sustainable development)."
(conservationist)

"The quality of life will change due to the growth in Rochester." (Rochester professional planner)

"Sustainable development is often too narrowly interpreted." (Foundation officer)

"We need to develop leaders and empower citizens with knowledge and skills to help shape the future." (Wabasha county farmer and farm organizational leader)

"Help the agricultural producers realize the power of their production . . . to become a force in the marketplace rather than a victim. The Experiment in

Rural Cooperation has some potential. I see a lot of good names on the list (Board of Directors). Hopefully something will develop out of it. A concern I have is that I have seen a lot of projects of this type in our community over the last 20 years. Usually they last a year or two, provide a few people with jobs, make them feel good but accomplish very little." (Winona county farmer)

"I don't believe it (sustainable development) is possible in its purest sense."
(Rochester based environmental group officer)

"I . . . am most interested in what will bring the most tax dollars." (Township board officer in Goodhue County)

"Extension Service already uses private citizens on the board . . . this project appears to be a duplication. (Mower County Commissioner)

"We do not need more government telling us what to do. The common visions plan was very clear that no one is in agreement on development practices." (Winona County township board officer)

"The quality of life in southeast Minnesota will improve in some ways (more trails and parks) and deteriorate in some ways (more development)."
(Goodhue County watershed activist)

"Our concerns in a small town are drainage problems, water leaks, fire department updating, fire department equipment and water freezing under the streets. Good concept (sustainable development) if it happens without negative effects." (City clerk in Winona County)

"We have a responsibility to the future." (Houston County municipal official speaking about sustainable development)

"Because I have learned more in the last year my reaction (to sustainable development) is favorable. It used to carry a definition that was much different." (Extension educator in southeast Minnesota)

iv. OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSETS IDENTIFIED

The following is a index of projects, businesses, individuals/groups, and programs that were listed as providing creative approaches to agriculture and natural resources practices and have potential for renewing the countryside in southeast Minnesota. These assets were in addition to the list of organizations receiving the survey questionnaire.

AURI- Agriculture Utilization Research Institute
CSA Farms
Southeastern Minnesota Development Corporation
Pheasants Forever
Ducks Unlimited
Minnesota Land Trust
Environmental Assurance Programs
Quality Pork Assurance Programs
Public Works Department
Sustainable Farming Association
Minnesota Sustainable Communities Network
Whole Farm Planning
MISA
SEED- Sustainable Energy for Economic Development
Nature Center areas (Kenyon & Wanamingo)
Agriculture Magnet School
Eagle Wings Consulting - Larry Granger; out of Bloomington, MN
Minnesota Planning Association - Bob Grahaw; out of Albert Lea
FFA- Young farmers program
MDA - Energy & Sustainable Agriculture Program
USDA - SARE & Rural Development Office
USFS - RDTF - Rural Development Through Forestry
Value Added Products Exposition
On-Farm Forest Utilization Demonstration Project (Multi-Agency effort)
LSP Grazers Groups
Prairie Groups (MN & WI- promote development)
Small Business Administration
Sustainable Agriculture Low Interest Loans
Young Farmer Loan Program
Reinvest in Minnesota Program
Conservation Fund
Minnesota State Parks Council
Collective Bargaining for Family Farming
CRP Program
Winona Area Joint Coordination Committee
County Citizens Planning Commissions/Boards

Blandin Community Investment Partnership
Center for School Change
The Land Institute
Center for Urban & Rural Affairs (U of M)
Farm Management Education Center
Development Corporation of Austin
Organic Marketing Coops
MDA - Minnesota Grown Program
Shade tree Programs/Direct seeding programs: ASCS/SES
Green Thumb
Highway Clean-ups
MN Forestry Association & LCMR - State cost-share program
RDA
Midwest Bio-Ag
Eco-min Fertilizer- Andrew Werden; Galesville, WI
Winona and Rochester Farmers' Market Association
Blufflands 2000
1000 Friends of Minnesota
Apple Blossom Drive Coalition
Southeast Minnesota Water Resources Board
River Friendly Farmers Program
Oak Savannah Project
Mississippi Valley Partners
Mississippi River Revival
Oxbow Park Initiatives
Minnesota Office of Tourism
Common Vision Project
Eagle Interpretive Center Project
Niman Meats
Prairie Farmer Coop
Grass based dairies
Pasture Farrowing/Grazing
Minnesota Deer Hunters Association
Minnesota Water Fowl Association
Developers/Contractors
Big Woods Project
10 Year Program
IFP
Alcorn Clean Fuels
Country Heritage Adventures
United Packaging of Peterson
Woodchips for landscaping/turkey bedding - out of Preston

v. APPENDIX

Experiment in Rural Cooperation Brochure

Survey Instrument

Letters to Respondent Organization

Letter of Invitation to Follow-up Community Forums

Community Forums Notes

A Regional Agricultural
and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development
Partnership

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA

Experiment in Rural Cooperation

Common Sense Research and Problem Solving

The Experiment in Rural Cooperation is governed by a citizens' board of directors representing a broad array of interests.

Mel Baughman, University of Minnesota

Donna Christison, Plainview

Carolyn Dingfelder, Rollingstone

Shaomi Fruechte, Caledonia

Larry Gates, Kellogg

Judy Gilow, Winona

Jeff Gorfine, Rochester

Dean Harrington, Plainview

Gary Holthaus, Red Wing

David Klinski, Caledonia

Ralph Lentz, Lake City

Roger Moon, University of Minnesota

Toni Smith, Wabasha

Robert Solum, Spring Grove

John Torgrimson, Preston

Tim Wagar, Rochester

Nancy West, Lewiston

*A Regional Agricultural
and Natural Resources*

A Regional Agricultural
and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development
Partnership

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA

Experiment in Rural Cooperation

Common Sense Research and Problem Solving

For more information:

Dick Broecker

Executive Director

Experiment in Rural Cooperation

University Center Rochester

University of Minnesota

SE District Office

863 30th Avenue SE

Rochester, MN 55904-4911

email dbroecker@visi.com

phone: 507 280 2863

fax: 507 208 2872

A PARTNERSHIP WITH ...

College of Agricultural, Food, and
Environmental Sciences

University of Minnesota Extension Service

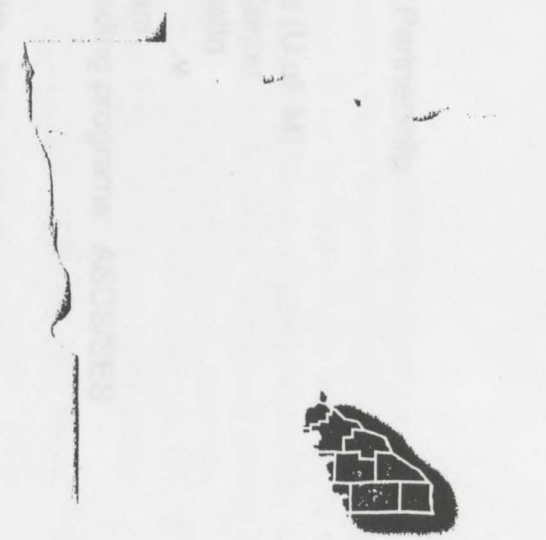
College of Natural Resources

A Regional Agricultural
and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development
Partnership

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA

Experiment in Rural Cooperation

Common Sense Research and Problem Solving



A PARTNERSHIP WITH ...

College of Agricultural, Food, and
Environmental Sciences

University of Minnesota Extension Service

College of Natural Resources

*A Regional Agricultural
and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development
Partnership*

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA

Experiment in Rural Cooperation

Common Sense Research and Problem Solving

The Experiment in
Rural Cooperation is
one of three

Regional Agricultural and Natural
Resources Sustainable
Development Partnerships created
by the Minnesota Legislature in
1997 and facilitated through the
University of Minnesota. In
addition to the partnership in
southeast Minnesota, others have
been established in the central
and northeast regions of the
state. Future partnerships are
anticipated in other regions.

What is the Experiment?

The Experiment in Rural Cooperation is a partnership between citizens and the University of Minnesota. It will focus on the agricultural and natural resources unique to the geography of the Rochester Plateau and the Mississippi River Blufflands. This region includes the counties of Wabasha, Winona, and Houston; most of Fillmore, Goodhue, and Olmsted counties; and small parts of Mower and Dodge counties.

The Experiment will support and sponsor targeted projects in agriculture and natural resources, including tourism and forestry, to enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of southeast Minnesota. Annually, the partnerships receive \$200,000 each through the University of Minnesota to allocate among potential projects, with particular attention focusing on ways to strengthen the link between the University and the priorities of the state's rural citizenry. The aim is for the partnerships to be citizen-driven, to define issues through community discussions and to establish a base of long-term, sustainable action at the local level.

In 1999, its first full year of operation, the Experiment in Rural Cooperation is conducting a needs and resources mapping survey within the region as a first step to identify targeted projects or programs. The initial grants or loans will be made available in the latter part of the year.

Why is the Experiment needed?

In order for small towns and the countryside to survive, they must work together to solve problems by using resources in the most effective and efficient way possible. The Experiment will work as a facilitator in bringing resources to bear on solving rural problems.

Made up of rural citizens, the Experiment will work to form a partnership of people and organizations. The Experiment believes strongly in active citizenship.

The University of Minnesota has an obligation to Minnesotans to provide direct citizen access to the University's research, education and outreach capabilities. The Experiment will work as a bridge between the University and the state's citizens. The Experiment is dedicated to strengthening the University of Minnesota's mission as a land grant institution.

The Experiment will work toward development that addresses the community, economic and environmental needs of the people of southeast Minnesota. The Experiment is governed by the ethic of sustainability.

The Experiment will direct its research, educational and outreach dollars toward meeting local, regional and state-wide needs. The Experiment will support practical research and education in agriculture, natural resources, forestry and tourism.

Experiment in Rural Cooperation

Please return the filled-out questionnaire in the stamped envelope within one week. Thank you for your cooperation. Responses will not be identified with your or your organization's name. The term "organization" includes programs, associations, businesses, non-profits, governmental agencies/bodies, clubs, special initiatives, etc..

1. Your Name: _____
Organization's name: _____
Organization's address: _____

Organization's telephone number: _____
Email, if available: _____
Your position or title: _____

2. Briefly state the purpose of your organization: _____

Specify: Public Governmental Private Non-profit
 Other (explain): _____

- Number of members in your organization in the region (southeast Minnesota): _____
Number of staff working for your organization in the region: _____

3. Geographic area covered by your organization (check all that apply):
 Within the region Most or all of the region Statewide National
 Other (specify): _____

4. Way(s) in which your organization communicates (check all that apply):
 Newsletter Web site Regular meetings
 Regular mailings Special reports Special programs
 Other (specify): _____

5. Area(s) of your organization's involvement (check all that apply)
 Land use Agriculture Natural resources
 Tourism Education Community and family
 Environment Grants Public policy
 Religion Research Information and referral
 Government programs Conservation Lobbying
 Other (specify): _____

6. Years your organization has been in existence (check one):
 Less than 1 year 1-5 years 6-10 years over 10 years

7. Does your organization have adequate resources to achieve its purpose?
 Yes No Unsure or don't know

8. Does your organization have sufficient information to achieve its purpose?
 Yes No Unsure or don't know
9. Over the last several years, has your organization been (check one)?
 Growing Shrinking Staying about the same Just started up
10. Areas your organization sees as most important to southeast Minnesota's future (check all that apply):
 Agriculture Forestry
 Tourism Natural resources Wildlife
 Small town life Rural living Economic development
 Other (specify): _____
11. Sources providing essential information to your organization (check **only top two**):
 Newspapers or magazines Television
 Government agencies University of Minnesota Extension Service
 Meetings Conferences
 Internet or Web Libraries
 Elected officials Private companies
 Family, neighbors, friends Local organizations, churches, civic groups
 Higher education institutions Talk radio or radio
 Other (specify): _____
12. Do you think that University of Minnesota (or other educational) resources can make a significant and practical contribution to your organization:
 Yes No Don't know or unsure
13. Identify instances where the University of Minnesota (or other educational institution) has contributed to your organization's activities or work:
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
14. Areas where the Experiment in Rural Cooperation might focus in supporting the priorities of your organization (check **only top two**)
 Research Integrating or synthesizing existing resources
 Funding Agricultural production
 Marketing issues Information
 Agricultural diversification Advocacy
 Cutting red tape Grant writing
 Planning Student or student intern support
 Education Showcasing the region's assets
 Other (specify:) _____
15. In the long haul, what is your assessment of the future of southeast Minnesota?
 The quality of life will improve The quality of life will deteriorate
 The quality of life will stay about the same Unsure or don't know

16. The most valuable contributions the Experiment in Rural Cooperation might make in facilitating your organization's work or purpose (check **only top two**):
- Sponsoring alternative projects in agriculture, natural resources, forestry, tourism, and the like
 - Making existing support programs/services more accessible and better integrated
 - Supporting cutting-edge research on agriculture and natural resources issues
 - Supporting small businesses, agricultural or food ventures, and special initiatives
 - Playing the developer role in launching new projects or programs
 - Undertaking a few blockbuster projects around which the region could rally (for example, a new and major economic development strategy)
 - Undertaking experimental projects holding promise for significant breakthroughs
 - Conducting applied research in agriculture and natural resources practices
 - Other (specify:)

17. From your organization's perspective, rate these concerns (circle **one** for each):
 1 high Importance, 2 medium importance, 3 low importance, 4 no importance

	high import.	medium import.	low import.	no import.
Weakening agricultural economy _____	1	2	3	4
Loss of main street businesses _____	1	2	3	4
Departure of young adults from the region _____	1	2	3	4
Environmental deterioration (water, forests, soil, etc.) _____	1	2	3	4
Increasing land use restrictions _____	1	2	3	4
Land value pressures caused by demand from outsiders moving into the area _____	1	2	3	4
Loss of family farms _____	1	2	3	4
Aging population needs going unmet _____	1	2	3	4
Barriers to attracting new business development _____	1	2	3	4
Lack of adequate housing _____	1	2	3	4
Not enough good jobs available _____	1	2	3	4
Not enough qualified workers available _____	1	2	3	4
Tourism pressures _____	1	2	3	4
Increasing and/or unfair taxes _____	1	2	3	4
Loss of farmers' independence _____	1	2	3	4
Deterioration of rural infrastructure roads, bridges, sewers, telecommunications, etc. _____	1	2	3	4
Breakdown in community values _____	1	2	3	4
Crime and drugs _____	1	2	3	4
Deteriorating economic conditions _____	1	2	3	4
Limited educational opportunities for children _____	1	2	3	4
Racial or ethnic tensions _____	1	2	3	4
Limited access to health care services _____	1	2	3	4
Others not on this list (please identify) _____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

18. The **three** things about southeast Minnesota most important to your organization:
- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
19. The **three** things about southeast Minnesota most troubling to your organization:
- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
20. What projects, businesses, individuals/groups, or programs is your organization aware of that provide creative approaches to agriculture and natural resources practices and have potential for renewing the countryside in southeast Minnesota?
- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____
21. The term sustainable development refers to practices or that can be maintained over time without depleting the base resources required for ongoing development in the future. Please indicate your familiarity with the term (check one):
- Very familiar Somewhat familiar Not familiar
22. In general, what is your reaction to the term sustainable development (check as many as you wish)?
- No reaction
- A good concept
- A good concept but clouded with negative overtones
- A confusing concept
- A concept I support though I am uncomfortable with the term
- A concept I reject
- Other (specify) _____
23. Would you like to be contacted by telephone to talk about the Experiment in Rural Cooperation or the issues raised in this survey?
- Yes No Maybe
24. Would you be interested in attending a meeting to further discuss the issues raised in this survey?
- Yes No Maybe
25. If you wish, please include additional comments on a separate sheet of paper and return it with the questionnaire. Thanks for your help.

EXPERIMENT IN RURAL COOPERATION

COMMON SENSE RESEARCH AND PROBLEM SOLVING

A Partnership with the University of Minnesota in Southeast Minnesota

*A Regional Agricultural and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development Partnership*

*University Center Rochester
University of Minnesota
SE District Office
863 - 30th Avenue SE
Rochester, MN 55904-4911*

*507-280-2863
Fax: 507-280-2872*

March 31, 1999

Dear Friend of Southeast Minnesota's Future:

Enclosed is a brochure on the Experiment in Rural Cooperation, a citizen-led partnership with the University of Minnesota.

The Experiment promotes University of Minnesota-based research, outreach and education in southeast Minnesota. It supports local projects and businesses in agriculture and natural resources, including tourism and forestry. The goal is to foster a homegrown economy that will support self-reliant communities and a healthy natural environment in our region.

In about a week, you will receive a questionnaire to be filled out and returned. We are asking for your opinion on how the Experiment in Rural Cooperation might best play an effective role in southeast Minnesota.

The questionnaire information is critical to allocating funds made available through the Minnesota Legislature and the University of Minnesota. The key to success is a strong, clear voice from southeast Minnesota in making the University as valuable as possible for practical purposes.

This letter is being sent to government officials, non-profit groups, civic organizations, conservation and natural resource groups, churches, farm and agricultural organizations, post secondary educational institutions, charitable interests, and individual citizens. If you think a particular group may be inadvertently omitted, let us know.

If you have questions, contact any board member or our executive director Dick Broeker at 651-222-8852. Thank you.

Sincerely: Judy Gilow Jeff Gorfine Dean Harrington John Torgrimson
 Winona Rochester Plainview Preston

The Executive Committee on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation

EXPERIMENT IN RURAL COOPERATION

COMMON SENSE RESEARCH AND PROBLEM SOLVING

A Partnership with the University of Minnesota in Southeast Minnesota

*A Regional Agricultural and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development Partnership*

*University Center Rochester
University of Minnesota
SE District Office
863 - 30th Avenue SE
Rochester, MN 55904-4911*

*507-280-2863
Fax: 507-280-2872*

April 8, 1999

Dear Friend of Southeast Minnesota's Future:

You recently received a brochure on the Experiment in Rural Cooperation, a University of Minnesota partnership with the citizens of southeast Minnesota (all of Houston, Wabasha and Winona Counties; most of Fillmore, Goodhue and Olmsted Counties; and portions of Mower and Dodge Counties). We need your help with the enclosed questionnaire. It won't take much of your time. This information is critical to how we will allocate funds made available through the Minnesota Legislature.

Within the next few days, please complete the questionnaire and return it in the stamped return envelope. If another person in your organization, program or business is in a better position to fill out the questionnaire, please quickly pass it on. The results will help us understand, in specifics, how the Experiment can best play an effective role. The key is making the University as valuable as possible in our region through a strong, clear southeast Minnesota voice.

The Experiment promotes University of Minnesota-based research, outreach and education in southeast Minnesota. It supports local projects and businesses in agriculture and natural resources, including tourism and forestry. The goal is to foster a homegrown economy that will support self-reliant communities and a healthy natural environment in our region.

If you prefer to complete the survey by phone or wish to talk it over first, please call the Experiment's executive director Dick Broeker at 651-222 8852 (email <dbroeker@visi.com>) or drop him a note and send it back in the enclosed return envelope.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely: Naomi Fruechte
Caledonia

Larry Gates
Kellogg

Jeff Gorfine
Rochester

The Resource Mapping Committee for the Experiment in Rural Cooperation's Board of Directors

EXPERIMENT IN RURAL COOPERATION

COMMON SENSE RESEARCH AND PROBLEM SOLVING

A Partnership with the University of Minnesota in Southeast Minnesota

*A Regional Agricultural and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development Partnership*

*University Center Rochester
University of Minnesota
SE District Office
863 - 30th Avenue SE
Rochester, MN 55904-4911*

*507-280-2863
Fax: 507-280-2872*

April 15, 1999

Dear Friend of Southeast Minnesota's Future:

If you already have returned the questionnaire sent to you about a week ago, thank you. If you have not had the time to do so, we would very much appreciate you completing and returning the questionnaire over the next few days.

You are among a select group of leaders and experts whose advice is being sought to identify issues in agriculture and natural resources, including tourism and forestry. Southeast Minnesota's people rely heavily on agriculture and natural resources to support the economy. But some question whether our rural landscape of productive farms, hillside forests, and clear streams can sustain the communities and lifestyle that many of us cherish.

The goal of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation - as a citizen-led partnership with the University of Minnesota - is to foster a homegrown economy in southeast Minnesota that will support self-reliant communities and a healthy natural environment. The Experiment must be shaped by a strong citizen voice. This is why your opinions are important.

You and your organization's name will not be identified with your responses to the questions. If there is someone else in your organization in a better position to fill out the questionnaire, please pass it on to that person now.

Thanks for your help on this. If you wish to talk about the survey, please call or email me. If I'm not in, I or Kari Droubie will get back to you quickly.

Sincerely,



Dick Broeker
Executive Director

651-222-8852 (or email dbroeker@visi.com)

EXPERIMENT IN RURAL COOPERATION

COMMON SENSE RESEARCH AND PROBLEM SOLVING

A Partnership with the University of Minnesota in Southeast Minnesota

*A Regional Agricultural and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development Partnership*

*University Center Rochester
University of Minnesota
SE District Office
863 - 30th Avenue SE
Rochester, MN 55904-4911*

*507-280-2863
Fax: 507-280-2872*

April 22, 1999

Dear Friend of Southeast Minnesota's Future:

Please forgive my persistence, but enclosed is a fresh copy of the questionnaire mailed to you two weeks ago. If our paths have crossed in the mail, thank you for your time and please disregard this letter.

This is a busy time of the year with filing taxes, getting into the fields and maybe, for the fortunate, even taking a little spring break. That being said, let me urge you to complete and return the questionnaire. It won't take much of your time and the results are critical to making decisions about where and how to apply University of Minnesota resources to support agricultural and natural resources ventures in southeast Minnesota.

The Minnesota Legislature appropriated funds to support the work of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation. During a time of troubling concerns over the future of rural Minnesota, this project opens a new door that could significantly strengthen this region's homegrown economy. It cannot be done without your help. The Experiment is directed by a citizen board of directors from our area and is undertaking this survey before setting its priorities. With a strong, clear voice from leaders and organizational interests, the Experiment's board can do a much better job.

Again, thanks for your time. Another stamped, pre-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Please call or email me if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Dick Broeker
Executive Director

(651) 222 8852 or dbroeker@visi.com

EXPERIMENT IN RURAL COOPERATION

COMMON SENSE RESEARCH AND PROBLEM SOLVING

A Partnership with the University of Minnesota in Southeast Minnesota

*A Regional Agricultural and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development Partnership*

*University Center Rochester
University of Minnesota
SE District Office
863 - 30th Avenue SE
Rochester, MN 55904-4911*

*507-280-2863
Fax: 507-280-2872*

April 22, 1999

Dear Friend of Southeast Minnesota's Future:

Enclosed is a questionnaire and brochure on the Experiment in Rural Cooperation, a citizen-led partnership with the University of Minnesota. The Experiment promotes University of Minnesota-based research, outreach and education in southeast Minnesota. It supports local projects and businesses in agriculture and natural resources, including tourism and forestry. The goal is to foster a homegrown economy that will support self-reliant communities and a healthy natural environment in our region.

You are among a select group of leaders and experts whose advice is being sought. Southeast Minnesota's people rely heavily on agriculture and natural resources to support the economy. But, some question whether our rural landscape of productive farms, hillside forests, and clear streams can sustain the communities and lifestyle that many of us cherish.

You and your organization's name will not be identified with your responses to the questions. If there is someone else in your organization in a better position to fill out the questionnaire, please pass it on to that person now.

The questionnaire information is critical to allocating funds made available through the Minnesota Legislature and the University of Minnesota. The key to success is a strong, clear voice from southeast Minnesota in making University resources as valuable as possible for regional priorities. We need your help with the enclosed questionnaire. It won't take much of your time. Within the next few days, please complete the questionnaire and return it in the stamped return envelope.

If you have questions, call the Experiment's executive director Dick Broeker at 651-222 8852 (or email <dbroeker@visi.com>). Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely: Judy Gilow Jeff Gorfine Dean Harrington John Torgrimson
 Winona Rochester Plainview Preston

The Executive Committee on behalf of the Experiment in Rural Cooperation's Board of Directors

EXPERIMENT IN RURAL COOPERATION

COMMON SENSE RESEARCH AND PROBLEM SOLVING

A Partnership with the University of Minnesota in Southeast Minnesota

*A Regional Agricultural and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development Partnership*

*University Center Rochester
University of Minnesota
SE District Office
863 - 30th Avenue SE
Rochester, MN 55904-4911*

*507-280-2863
Fax: 507-280-2872*

May 4, 1999

Dear Friend of Southeast Minnesota's Future:

This is our last mailing to those southeast Minnesota leaders who were sent our questionnaire. If you have questions about what we are doing and who we are, another introductory brochure is enclosed. If you already have returned the questionnaire, we very much appreciate your cooperation.

We encourage you to call our executive director, Dick Broeker, at 651 222 8852 or to talk to any of us if you have questions about the questionnaire or about our program.

The reason we are pushing hard for the return of the questionnaires is simple. As a University of Minnesota program, we will only succeed to the extent we have a clear understanding of what is on the minds of the lead groups and organizations in our region. We are ready to go to work on sustainable agricultural and natural resources opportunities but we need your advice before we make project decisions.

These are difficult times in rural Minnesota. For a century and a half, our great land grant University has made many contributions to our communities. With the establishment of this program, we have another excellent opportunity to put the University to work on our behalf. Please join us in setting a citizen-University partnership agenda that will take us into the next century.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Experiment in Rural Cooperation Board of Directors

Mel Baughman (University of Minnesota)
Toni Smith (Wabasha)
David Klinski (Caledonia)
Caroline Dingfelder (Rollingstone)
Roger Moon (University of Minnesota)
Tim Wagar (Rochester)

Larry Gates (Kellogg)
Donna Christison (Plainview)
Robert Solum (Spring Grove)
Ralph Lentz (Lake City)
Naomi Fruechte (Caledonia)

Gary Holthaus (Red Wing)
Judy Gilow (Winona)
Jeff Gorfine (Rochester)
John Torgrimson (Preston)
Dean Harrington (Plainview)

EXPERIMENT IN RURAL COOPERATION

COMMON SENSE RESEARCH AND PROBLEM SOLVING

A Partnership with the University of Minnesota in Southeast Minnesota

*A Regional Agricultural and Natural Resources
Sustainable Development Partnership*

*University Center Rochester
University of Minnesota
SE District Office
863 - 30th Avenue SE
Rochester, MN 55904-4911*

May 28, 1999

*507-280-2863
Fax: 507-280-2872*

You are invited to a community forum on our recent research on southeast Minnesota's future. Your opinions on local priorities are critical. We will be distributing information about how to apply for project funds through the Experiment in Rural Cooperation. Also, please invite others you know who may be interested in attending any of the four forums:

- Tuesday, June 15: 7 p.m. in Lanesboro at the Sons of Norway Hall on Parkway Avenue next to Sylvan Park - John Torgrimson, host
- Wednesday, June 30: 7 p.m. in Lake City City Hall (205 W. Center Street) - Dean Harrington, host
- Tuesday, July 13: 7 p.m. Caledonia City Hall (231 E. Main St.) - Jeff Gorfine, host
- Monday, July 26: 7 p.m. St. Charles City Hall (830 Whitewater Ave.) - Judy Gilow, host

Our aim is to promote University of Minnesota-based research, outreach and education in southeast Minnesota. The Experiment in Rural Cooperation - as a citizen-led partnership with the University of Minnesota - supports local projects and businesses in agriculture and natural resources, including farming, forestry and tourism.

We believe our rural landscape of productive farms, hillside forests, small towns, and clear streams can sustain a way of life that many of us cherish. Now, we have another excellent opportunity to put the University to work on our behalf.

Please return the enclosed, stamped post card. If you have questions, ask any of us or call our staff person, Dick Broeker, at (651) 345-4336 (email dbroeker@rconnect.com). We hope to see you at one of the forums ... and a special thank you to those who completed the returned survey questionnaires - we had a terrific response.

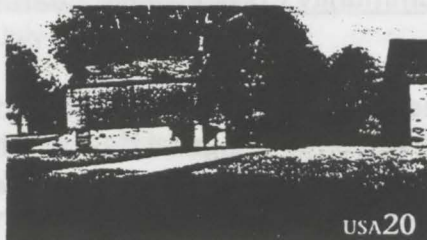
Sincerely,

Experiment in Rural Cooperation Board of Directors

Mel Baughman (University of Minnesota)
Toni Smith (Wabasha)
David Klinski (Caledonia)
Caroline Dingfelder (Rollingstone)
Roger Moon (University of Minnesota)
Dean Harrington (Plainview)

Larry Gates (Kellogg)
Donna Christison (Plainview)
Robert Solum (Spring Grove)
Ralph Lentz (Lake City)
Naomi Fruechte (Caledonia)

Gary Holthaus (Red Wing)
Judy Gilow (Winona)
Jeff Gorfine (Rochester)
John Torgrimson (Preston)
Tim Wagar (Rochester)



**Experiment in Rural Cooperation
c/o Dick Broeker
RR 3, Box 1861
Lake City, MN 55041**

Please check the forum(s) you think you will attend.

- Tuesday, June 15 at 7 p.m. in Lanesboro
- Wednesday, June 30 at 7 p.m. in Lake City
- Tuesday, July 13 at 7 p.m. in Caledonia
- Monday, July 26 at 7 p.m. in St. Charles

- I'm unable to attend. Keep me on your list.
- I'm not interested in the Experiment's work.

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Thanks for returning this card ...

Community Forum Notes

The survey results demonstrated the importance of face-to-face meetings in the region and a great deal of interest in talking more about the Experiment in Rural Cooperation's program. Hence, four community forums were scheduled in June and July upon completion of the draft survey report.

About 100 people attended the four forums. The following notes are not all-inclusive but provide a taste of the discussions that occurred among citizens, board members and staff at the forums. Each forum lasted from 2 to 3 hours.

- St. Charles – July 26, 1999
- Caledonia – July 13, 1999
- Lake City – June 30, 1999
- Lanesboro – June 15, 1999

Experiment in Rural Cooperation
St. Charles Community Forum July 26, 1999
Important issues raised at meeting
(Kari Droubie/ July 27, 1999)

- * A participant raised the issue of not being able to compete with large companies because it is not cost effective.
- * Another participant questioned the use of the term sustainability. He defines sustainability in terms of energy output and feels that industrial agriculture is not sustainable in the least. The calories of energy input is much higher than the return and yet "we" continue to support industrial agriculture. Dick commented that it is difficult to sustain economically within the realm of industrial agriculture.
- * Someone brought up the need to change the focus of the University's research to address the needs of southeast Minnesota. He also mentioned that people in southeast Minnesota need to reevaluate what they want. He feels that business people in the region want a catch phrase but every example shows what they want and what they are attaining are opposite.
- * Deon from MISA commented that the Experiment may lead to some of the University connections that the region needs even if they can only find parts of the University to help.
- * Both Robert Solum and Jeff Gorfine agree that the University wants to get back to its land grant roots and help develop a structure that is conducive to that type of outreach.
- * A participant suggested that it does not pay to be negative and that there is no hope if you do not look for solutions. However, without the right people in a few positions, the connection with the University will not work.
- * One participant brought up the problem of getting information from University researchers out to the public at a grass roots level.
- * Bill brought up the issue of meaningful research. He has taken some of the short courses the University offers that focus on experimental projects. However, these projects are not applicable in the region and have no public purpose.
- * After looking over the project application process, one participant sees a lot of fences being put up. In his opinion you need a staff in order to put

together the needed proposal. Although he has a few project ideas, he does not have the time or resources to apply. He was also interested to know if it is possible to approach outside organizations in the partnership process. He also asked how the Experiment plans to bring together politicians and researchers.

- * Larry, one of the participants, asked how people will know when the Experiment is successful. Another participant responded by saying people will know the Experiment has been successful when University resources have been increased.
- * Toni explained that the funds available to the Experiment, that can be used to leverage faculty time, is the difference between the Extension Service and the Experiment in Rural Cooperation.
- * Jeff reinforced the need to use practical, common sense research to accomplish goals that have been established by the citizens.
- * Roger Lenzmeier with the RC&D has a project idea in mind that would consist of finding out how to get ASHTO certification in order to implement Timber Bridge Technology in the rural area. This would allow counties and townships to utilize local timber to address a growing infrastructure needs.
- * Dick commented that this is very much a project idea and is similar to the wind tunnel issue that would allow farmers to sell back access power.
- * Bill asked if he could call Toni Smith, at the Extension Service, to get area demographic information or if she knew who he could contact. The answer was yes and she also suggested contacting MN Planning for information as well.
- * A participant was interested in the Experiments willingness to pass on projects to other organizations, such as the RC&D, that they are unable to partner with. Both Toni and Dick felt that would be the natural thing to do but added the need for continued communication. Deon added that this is one way the Experiment can double its impact while saving its resources.
- * A representative of the Pine Island group mentioned that members representing various organizations was planning to meet in Chatfield to figure out a way to coordinate the application process. Their goal is to be clear about who wants to work together and find a way to make their food project applicable to other groups in the region who have similar questions.

Experiment in Rural Cooperation
Caledonia Community Forum July 13, 1999
Important issues raised at meeting
(Kari Droubie/ July 14,1999)

- * Bernie Buehler mentioned the idea of putting rental housing on farms as a way to give more people a farm experience and also gain extra income.
- * In response to Dicks comments about the importance of marketing products a community member agreed that having a marketing "label" and regional slogan is important for an export market. Another participant added that regional product identification can be useful in product marketing. An example that he used was for Minnesota bass wood that other areas of the state find useful.
- * Robert Solum and Jeff Gorfine spoke of bringing the University back to southeast Minnesota and reaching past political boundaries.
- * Vernen Fruechte raised the issue of local labels creating a controversy in local super markets due to a conflict of interest, specifically in the case of selling beef products.
- * Vernen also mentioned that an electronic ear tag devise, still in experimental stages, will help track where animal products are coming from and who is using illegal chemicals in raising livestock.
- * Bernie Buehler raised the issue of fewer apple wholesale houses due to chain stores and added that it is difficult for a smaller producer to break into the market.
- * Vergil Johnson commented on the cold water fish market in the area that is facing regulation problems with the DNR. He feels that all the key ingredients are there for the market but it is facing too many restrictions to be successful.
- * Bernie Buehler commented on the labor shortage issue due to younger people leaving.
- * Vergil Johnson raised the importance of having value-added products. He added the producers need to have enough quality product when consumers demand it.

- * In response to Dicks comments about a growing demand for local products Vernen brought up the issue of the lack of packing facilities. In less people can find a way to process and package food locally, products have to be sent out of state.
- * Vernen then questioned the issue of laws and regulations surrounding processing and packaging. Jeff added that laws around co-ops need to be researched.
- * Vergil brought up the point that higher animal concentrations means more land in pasture, which leads to less soil erosion. Unfortunately, Naomie commented that in reality livestock is dropping and more corn and beans are being planted.
- * Vernen added that corn and bean producers receive more subsidy's than meet. Therefore you increase erosion and introduce more chemicals into the soil.
- * Someone said farmers in the area are less dependent on subsidies.
- * Vergil brought up the need for independent farmers to become more inter-dependent in order to survive, Stanley Marushef agreed that history needs to repeat itself.
- * Vergil Johnson also commented that the University has grown away from the area and mentioned that this process needs to continue even after the legislature funding is gone. He also stated that Omaha Steaks has great marketing ideas and is doing well.
- * Vernen raised the issue of large companies coming in and underselling the smaller producers. Dick added that the big companies are now moving in on the organic food market because of its popularity.
- * Vergil questioned where and how we find the answers now that we have outlined the problems. Stanley commented that the Experiment is the solution.
- * Robert discussed a study that MISA is going to conduct that addresses the laws surrounding large companies contracting local growers to try new products. They would like to find a way to even out the risk that a farmer has to take compared to the large company.
- * Ann asked what is the next step that needs to take place.

- * Vernen asked about the large amount of wood in the area and Dick referred him to the Hiawatha Sustainable Wood Co-op.
- * Vergil added that basic marketing studies can be done with almost any project.
- * Stanley added that he buys wood from farmers and small saw mills and gives them premium prices. His question is how does he expand his market.
- * Vergil suggested internet marketing and finding out who needs the kind of wood that he has.

Experiment in Rural Cooperation
Lake City Community Forum June 30, 1999
Important issues raised at meeting
(Kari Droubie/ July 1, 1999)

- * A participant asked how the organization came into being.
- * A member of the Pine Island group raised the question of financing. He feels that they are in a great location and have a great opportunity with their location off of Highway 52 to tap into the local food market. They are lacking the resources to confirm their assumptions of marketability.
- * Abraham Algadi added that his group has a part of the solution but they need help in validating their theory that there is a pool of independent marketers that could offer shelf space to independent producers.
- * Abraham Algadi also raised the issue that although the Pine Island group is looking at one specific distribution point for their food venture, they could be an example for the entire region.
- * A participant also raised the issue of reviving processing and packaging plants that have been closed and bringing those jobs back to the area.
- * Dick asked why people see this area as a region.
- * Bill Beckman raised the issue of what constitutes a project. He is interested in doing a survey of alternative crops with one farmer and questions whether or not that would be considered a project that could partner with the Experiment. This brings up the public purpose issue.
- * Bill then asked who from Agronomy is involved in the Experiment. The panel then explained that the Experiment can help advocate for University time and that it is important to frame questions accordingly to bring potential projects into a larger perspective.
- * A participant asked how to make initial contacts and find more services that are available.
- * Someone asked how the Experiment will treat single-food projects.
- * Ken Flies spoke about his experience working with master level students on a regional bike trail system.

- * Dick ecknowledged that this is a learn as you go process for the board and that mistakes will be made along the way. Tony also mentioned that this is a different way of working and it is important for the board to be involved in the community as well as the projects in order to learn about the projects.
- * Gary said he wants to know as much about the projects as possible and that it will take time for the Experiment to get a flow down.
- * Jeff Gates asked what the "funding of capital" ment. He asked that it be explained and wanted to know if that included funding for research capital and/or operating funds.
- * A participant raised the issue of University Professors who had project ideas. She wanted to know if they were specifically looking for funds.
- * Someone brought up the issue of the geographical political function.
- * Abraham Algadi commented that this should be about sustainability and not necessarily about money. Social and environmental capital are important factors in building community that must not be forgotten.
- * A participant inquired about the board member list and was interested in how many members were involved in farming.

**Experiment in Rural Cooperation
Community Forum Lanesboro June 15, 1999
Important issues raised at meeting
(Revised 6/29/99)**

- * The question was raised as to what was the typical kind of organization that was surveyed. Dick referred to number two and seven under data highlights as a reference to the types of organizations surveyed.
- * A question was asked as to who from environmental services is involved with the experiment considering 74% of the organizations felt Agriculture was important to southeast Minnesota's future. Dick stated that in general the entire University is involved in the project but the direct ties are Roger Moon and Mel Baughman, the Extension Service staff, and the Statewide Coordinating Committee.
- * A local business owner raised the issue of so few private businesses being involved in the survey. Dick explained that this is the weakest part of the list and asked for suggestions.
- * The issue was brought up regarding the importance of tourism and the fact that the survey did not convey this importance. It was also noted that Lanesboro did a tourism survey in the area that can be made available to the Experiment.
- * Loni Kemp raised the issue of sustainable development and setting an agenda to enhance the quality of life. She also mentioned that the Experiment could provide a vision as to how institutional change can play an expanded role in the community.
- * The issue was raised about zoning and the unsuccessful Common Vision program. This issue could use more attention as well as leadership and it would be nice to take advantage of University resources regarding this issue according to the speaker.
- * Someone commented that the de-emphasis on agriculture has resulted in an emphasis on tourism. Therefore, if there was enough farming you would not need tourism, it just fills the holes left behind from the loss of farming .
- * Dick was asked to identify which counties are included in the Experiments work because someone from the Dodge County planning group is interested in further involvement.

- * The issue of watershed-based land management was raised. There is a possibility that polluted water from the Mississippi watershed in southeast Minnesota is killing birds in Louisiana.
- * The issue of watershed-based land management led to a discussion of the need to reconfigure watershed districts and improve conservation efforts for soil and water as well as stream banks.
- * Someone commented that the woods project was a good idea and that grass management is also a good idea.
- * Nancy Bratrud commented that, with the help of the University, it is possible to invest in tourism, agriculture (which is the most renewable wealth), and conservation so as to begin to produce food that is consumed locally and allow others to see the beauty of the area.
- * The question of "who" can form a partnership was asked and whether or not an individual can form a partnership if they have a good idea.
- * Someone asked if matching funds were required.
- * Steve asked if the process was open enough and if the people with ideas would have the initiative to engage with people that could provide needed information.
- * Dean gave the background of the local equity project in response to a question about money issues.
- * When talking about the "Equity Capital" project, someone asked that **intergenerational transfer** be explained in more detail.
- * Susan commented on a study that she had seen and added that as farmers increase the amount of interest they receive they experience a loss in the amount of subsidy they can receive.
- * Someone asked who's debt was going to be financed.
- * The issue was raised regarding the amount of food that could be grown for human consumption if we did not base production on how much money we could make.
- * Someone offered that farmers should farm for raising food not for making money.
- * The issue of whether or not funds could be used to buy equipment was brought up.

- * The issues of where the funding was coming from as well as how much in comparison to the amount given to a group in Crookston were also brought up in the discussion.
- * Loni Kemp brought up the idea that the area is looking for grounded solutions and not one particular "silver bullet."
- * A participant criticized the AURI program.