



Driftless Food Systems Convention

March 18, 2010 – Prairie du Chien, WI

The Southeast Minnesota Foodshed Planning Initiative

Erin Meier, Executive Director

University of Minnesota SE Regional Sustainable Development Partnership

The Experiment in Rural Cooperation





SE MN LF Roundtable – March 2008

How do we...

- develop sustainable producer profit & economic benefits to rural communities?
- expand & improve systems for distribution & production?
- strengthen links btw farmers-consumers-retailers?
- increase the # of consumers purchasing local foods?
- ensure that local foods are affordable & accessible to low income people?
- create supportive tax & zoning policies?
- identify strategic investments to make?
- map & analyze the current situation & develop future scenarios?





Original RFP approach

- Scope – to encourage novel approaches of bringing the analytical strength of the University of Minnesota to bear on regional food systems planning
- Outcomes – interdisciplinary analyses around these questions...
 - How food self-sufficient are we?
 - What are the possibilities for food production to meet the economic, social, environmental & nutritional needs of the citizens?
 - What are the incentives & opportunities needed to reach some level of food self-sufficiency?





SE MN Foodshed Planning Initiative – Structure

- Erin Meier, Principal Investigator, as Director of UM SERSDP/ERC
- \$126K UM SERSDP/ERC allocation (MN state -UM -MN Ag Exp Station)
- \$13K internal match via student internship programs & assistantships
- No other administrative staff at present, but in process of bringing on...





SE MN Foodshed Planning Initiative - Structure

- Process/Knowledge Facilitator
 - Cross-disciplinary team discussions, input-output data flow
 - SE community steering committee/learning circle
 - Framework for documentation, evaluation, analysis
 - Next-steps, opportunities, external funding
 - Partnerships with other regional projects
- Project Coordinator
 - Communications hub
 - Meeting/events planning
 - Assist with knowledge/process mgmt & pursuing opportunities
 - Begin to develop multi-sector/audience dissemination platforms





SE MN Foodshed Planning Initiative - Components

Regional Steering Committee & Study Circle

To increase understanding & capacity for planning-based approaches to infrastructure change and to provide ongoing feedback to research partners

Program/Policy Review (done) & Analysis (to come)

To provide a clear sense of options to pursue: what programs & policies around the country are addressing critical aspects of regionalizing foodsheds?

Production assessment

What is produced & processed?

Where & how is it processed, distributed & sold?





SE MN Foodshed Planning Initiative – Components

Ethnography & mixed-methods research

To increase mutual understanding about how people value “local” food and to identify how these values relate to food & agriculture practices & to goals & constraints that people in the region identify in relation to their food needs

Cultural evaluation of producers/consumers & neo-regional dietary design

To identify “food system” attitudes & beliefs of consumers & producers & to identify culturally-appropriate, nutritionally-adequate “ideal” food plates for the region

Foodshed Analysis

To illustrate potential agricultural & land use systems





SE MN Foodshed Planning Initiative - Components

Economic Modeling

Phase 1 – To define baseline consumer food & grocery demand

Mapping, Illustration & Report Design

Formative & Summative Evaluation (just starting)

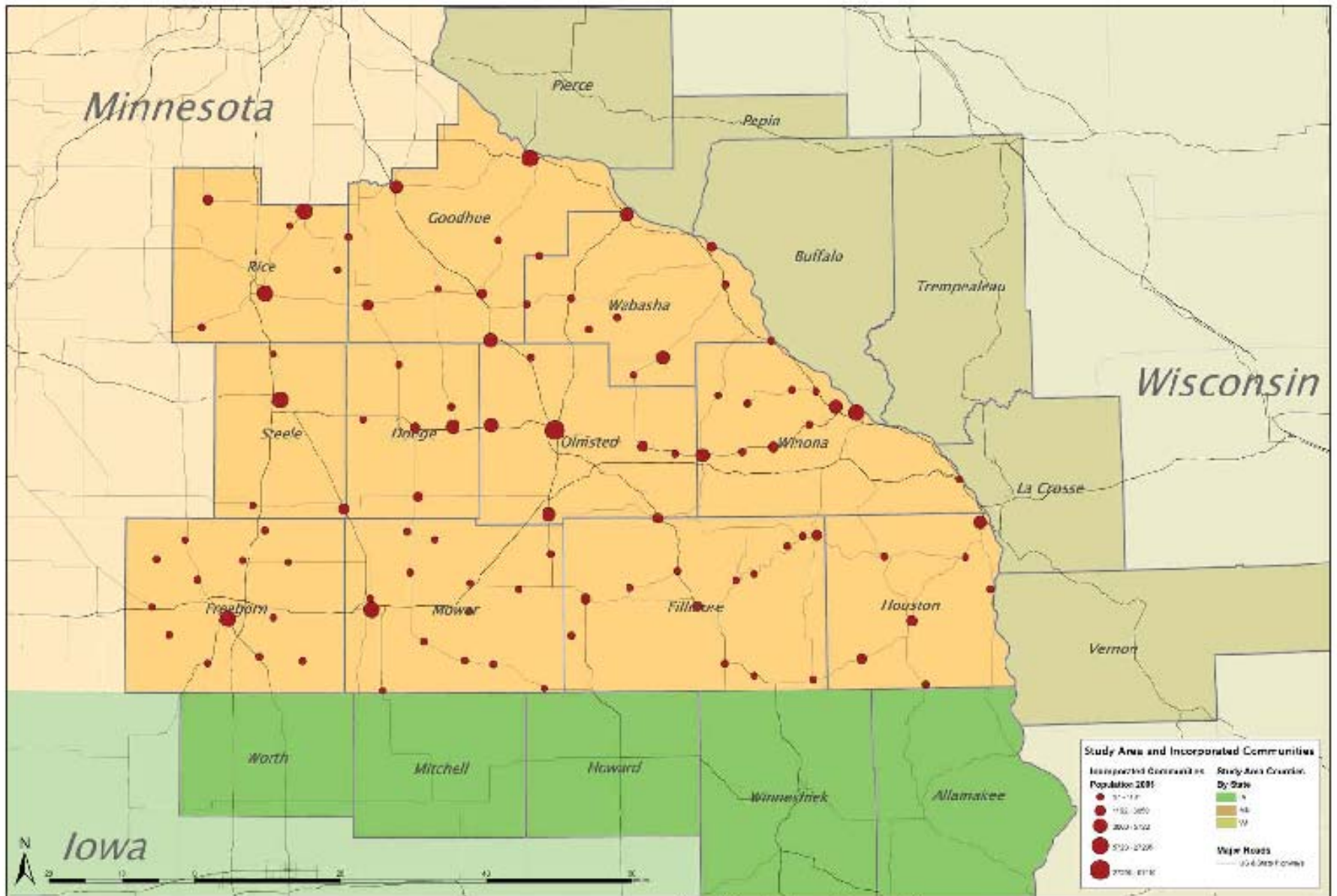
Scale-Appropriate Trial Projects (to come)

To take action defined by local needs & informed by research outcomes

Distribution Route Modeling (to come)

To analyze proposed models for regional aggregation & distribution routes





Study Area and Incorporated Communities
 -- SE MN Foodshed Planning Initiative

Project Developed and Sponsored By:
 SF MN Regional Sustainable Development Partnership
 The Experiment in Rural Cooperation
 University of Minnesota



Center for Rural Design, University of Minnesota



SE MN Foodshed Planning Initiative - Questions

- How do we communicate & manage information between components?
- How do we approach each component in a timely way so they feed into one another – results from one become data input for another?
- This may have come from community but how is it collaborative research? How do we tie those community connections into the research process in real time?
- Shouldn't the work be driven by desired policy outcomes OR do the research findings paired with on-the-ground needs define policy objectives?





SE MN Foodshed Planning Initiative - Questions

- What about evaluation? How do we document our multi-disciplinary, community-university process?
- How do we track & follow-up on the new models & creative approaches that this is breeding?
- What are our education & outreach goals?
- How do we ID diverse perspectives & values & how do they inform the research?
- What kind of organizational structure is needed to support all of this?





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