

Skidmore College  
Senior Capstone Project

**The “Greens” are Checking In:**



Assessing the relationship between  
the New York State Green Hotel Partnership and Audubon International  
&  
Their role in developing Eco-Tourism across New York State

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## **Abstract**

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New York has identified a national shift in the hospitality and tourism industry to more environmentally friendly business practices, saving both operating costs and natural resources.

To promote this development, New York has established the Green Hotel Certification Pilot Program. Under this program, hoteliers are encouraged to incorporate environmentally friendly practices into their operations and achieve a NY State-recognized green certification. Audubon

International was selected to be the independent third-party evaluator for green lodging certification. This program is part of a larger initiative to market and promote ecotourism within the state of NY. This project provides an in-depth analysis of the Green Hotel Certification Pilot

Program.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

The tourism sector has become valued and esteemed for the very real impact it has on people and communities across the globe. From Sidney to Singapore, St. Vincent to Strasbourg, Salvador to Saratoga Springs, tourism has become a vital source of identity, employment and income for numerous communities. The industry is arguably the largest in the world; it represents approximately 10 percent of total global gross domestic production (GDP) and stimulates 10 percent of global employment, and it's growing rapidly. In 2009, almost a billion people travelled internationally and this figure is projected to reach 1.6 billion by 2010 (UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, 2009). While the industry is quickly expanding, the adverse environmental and social effects of tourism have become obvious. Many of these impacts are linked with the construction of general infrastructure such as roads and airports, and of tourism facilities, including: resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses and marinas. Shortsighted tourism development can lead to deforestation, pollution and altered ecosystems in host communities, and also threaten their native identity and culture. As many of the worlds' places are being loved to death, the environmental and cultural resources on which tourism depends are being threatened.

In recognition of the negative impacts of tourism development, the concept of Sustainable Tourism was presented at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Following the 1992 Summit, the "Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry – Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development" was published wherein the WTO defined that, "sustainable tourism

development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future” (Weaver, 2006). The concept quickly impacted consumer markets, especially for consumers who make purchasing decisions that support their values, often referred to as Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) consumers. These consumers express their concern for environmental, social and economic justice issues partly through their purchase decisions and their support of socially responsible businesses (LOHAS Online, 2009). According to The Natural Marketing Institute (NMI), 23 percent of all American adults could be classified as LOHAS consumers, and the group is expanding. The \$355 billion market segment is expected to grow to \$425 billion in three years and \$845 billion by 2015 (2009). This demographic is generally composed of a relatively upscale and/or well-educated population segment. The social structure and internalized values of LOHAS consumers make them an attractive consumer to target because they are considered to be early adopters, influential over friends and family, less price-sensitive, and more brand loyal (Cohen, 2007).

Companies are increasingly realizing that the LOHAS target market represents a huge profit arena. Business leaders are now focusing on the “triple bottom line” with social and environmental factors being added to the traditional economic baseline for measuring performance: “a positive triple bottom line means a net improvement in conservation of the natural environment, social benefit for local communities, profits for shareholders, and gain for national or regional economies” (Buckley, 2003). Thus, the benchmark for measuring success has been redefined. This has had a significant impact on the \$140.6 billion United States hotel industry (AH&A Lodging Institute, 2008). For American lodging facilities, it is important to make decisions that consider their economic, environmental and social impact in order to capture the growing LOHAS audience. Although sustainable businesses represent only a small

percentage of the national business community, this percentage is a fast-growing segment of the national marketplace (Green Lodging News, 2008). By implementing sustainable practices into corporate operations, business professionals can address both the rising cost of energy and growing environmental and social concerns.

The demand for sustainable practices has caused a major increase in the number of hoteliers that are working towards greening their hotel practices. These include, voluntarily publishing sustainability reports and undergoing audits by certification programs which grant a seal of approval for demonstrated environmentally or socially sound practices. Not only do these labels serve as useful marketing tools, but they can motivate the industry to develop more environmentally-friendly products. They can also help consumers make more informed travel choices. The first-ever globally relevant sustainable criterion was announced last fall by the United Nations Foundation (UNF) in collaboration with the Rainforest Alliance, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The standards were developed by the Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, a new coalition of 27 organizations that includes tourism leaders from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Over the course of 15 months, UNF and partner organizations consulted with environmental specialists and the tourism industry, and reviewed over 60 existing certification and voluntary sets of criteria already being implemented around the globe. In all, more than 4,500 criteria were analyzed and more than 80,000 people were invited to comment on the resulting criteria, which led to the creation of a number of new sustainable tourism certification schemes (United Nations Environmental Program, 2009).

Nationally, the trend toward eco-conscious travel is pushing stakeholders in the hospitality industry to pursue official certification programs. The American Automobile

Association (AAA) has added an "eco" icon to its 2010 Tour Books for hotels, motels, and other lodging facilities. The AAA Eco Program identifies and promotes AAA-approved lodgings that are official members of certification programs. Not only are travelers shifting towards a shade of green, but so are federal, state and local governments. According to Ray Hobbs, a certified auditor for Green Global International and an advisor for EcoRooms & EcoSuites', "In the hospitality industry, we're seeing a wave of new government mandates stating that employees can only stay in or host meetings in green hotels" (Sustainable Travel International, 2009). For example, in 2007, the Governor of Florida Charlie Crist signed an executive order requiring that all state meetings and conventions be held in certified green facilities whenever possible. After Crist made this authorization, hoteliers across the state rushed to earn green certification for their properties to attract state business (Hospitality Trends, 2007). Florida is not alone: twenty-three states have developed some form of statewide green hotel certification program, and that number is expanding rapidly.<sup>1</sup>

New York is among the states that have adopted a government based certification program. New York's Green Certification Pilot Program was announced by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to establish comprehensive sustainability guidelines tailored specifically for the hotel industry. Under this program, hoteliers are encouraged to incorporate sustainable practices into their operations and achieve a NYS-recognized certification. The program is part of a larger initiative to support and market eco-tourism throughout New York, highlighting unique natural areas within the state as tourism destinations, connecting travelers to

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, the following states offered a green lodging certification program: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

environmentally conscious businesses and assisting businesses to go green. According to Governor David A. Paterson:

Green tourism is good for our economy and good for our environment. The new Green Lodging Certification Program will certify and assist New York's hoteliers in the transition to environmental sustainability, helping them remain competitive and protect our environment at the same time (2007).

The goal of the program is to identify the most reputable businesses and provide direction by offering approaches for hotel owners and managers to reduce environmental impacts and costs of operation.

Forty-three hotels and inns—spread across the eleven tourism regions of New York—are the first to sign on for the certification process. To evaluate the performance of selected hotels, the state of New York has formed a partnership with Audubon International. Under Audubon's Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program, certification candidates are evaluated in four categories: energy efficiency, environmental management, pollution prevention and resource conservation. After auditing these four Green Leaf credentials, a rating system for quality is used to assign hotels one to five green leaves based on its environmental performance. Overall, The Green Leaf program combines environmental education with best management practices to help managers and operators in the accommodation industry (Audubon Society International, 2009).

The Capital Region of NY, one of the eleven tourism hubs in the State, had five hotels selected as Pilot Members (DEC, 2009). Three of these hotels were located in Saratoga Springs: the Saratoga Farmstead Bed and Breakfast, the Gideon Putnam, and the Hyatt Place. For the purpose of this report, these three hotels are assessed to develop a location based case study. As Saratoga Springs is a major tourist destination in the State, these hotels provide insight into the potential benefits of the program and the challenges it faces.



## **Saratoga Springs**

Saratoga Springs is an affluent city in upstate New York, located north of Albany in the foothills of the Adirondacks. The city is one of the oldest tourist destinations in the United States and is home to a booming summer tourist season, which offers a wide variety of hotels, bed & breakfasts and inns. The city's major attractions include: horse racing, performing arts, natural springs, golf courses, museums, a historic battlefield, and boutiques cater to a wide demographic of visitors throughout the year. In the city of Saratoga Springs, there are over 30 lodging options with a total of 1,719 hotel rooms, which does not include the neighboring cities of Malta, Ballston Spa, Glens Falls, and Wilton (Saratoga Convention and Tourism Bureau, 2009). The high density of hotels within the city offers Saratoga Springs numerous opportunities to move forward with the green hospitality initiative.

## **Tourism in Saratoga Springs**

The City of Saratoga has demonstrated a progressive environmental disposition, making businesses more prone to embrace the green hotel revolution. Within the last few years, a variety of environmental initiatives have cultivated in Saratoga. The magazine "EcoLocal" is published monthly, enabling members of the community to stay engaged with the environmental movement on both a local and national level. To promote sustainable businesses, the Saratoga Local Living Guide endorses ecologically friendly establishments by offering discounts to local stores and restaurants. The city has an impressive public transportation system and a "Bicycle Benefits" program that offers discounts to community members who bike to work. The city has also demonstrated interest in green building by renovating The City Hall to improve the insulation system to reduce heat lost during the winter (Sierra Club, 2009). The city-based environmental group "Sustainable Saratoga" has set forth a number of goals, many of which

could apply to greening the hotel industry, such as: sustainable economic development; recycling, waste and composting; and energy efficiency and resources (Levesque, 2009). Having officially joined the Cool Cities Movement, the city is increasing efforts to mobilize community support around environmental issues. Business owners in the downtown area will be asked to make a commitment to improve their level of sustainability. While those that have agreed so far are restaurants- Uncommon Grounds, Esperanto, and Virgils House- they will provide examples for all other businesses in the community (Skidmore College, 2009).

In September of 2009, the Saratoga Farmstead Bed and Breakfast, the Gideon Putnam, and the Hyatt Place were recognized by the New York State Green Hotel Pilot Program. As these hotels can now proudly market their certification, they have an opportunity to attract the growing LOHAS market sector. These operators are among the 43 businesses in the “Freshman Class” of the Pilot Program and are setting a precedent for other hotels in the industry to follow. In consideration of the major impacts of tourism on a city, along with the rapid growth of the LOHAS consumer group, the greening of businesses in the accommodation industry may have a tremendous impact on the future of the Saratoga Springs.

## **Chapter II: Methods**

In order to assess the Green Hotel Certification Program, personal interviews were used to examine the inner workings of the program. The interviewees included government agencies, Audubon International, and businesses within the hospitality industry. These organizations are all connected through a unique partnership that can guide the hospitality industry to become more environmentally friendly.

### **National Trends**

To assess national trends, the newly established LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) consumer will be examined in relation to the hospitality industry. This group represents approximately 400 million people and is part of a much larger movement towards environmentally conscious practices. In addition, we will look at “green” certification programs around the country that have been put in place to influence environmental changes in the hospitality industry. These include programs such as Green Seal, Green Key and Eco Rooms and Suites. These programs provide an example of the economic and environmental benefits of responding to a shift in consumer behavior in the lodging industry. Examining the growth of hotel certification programs provides a background and means of comparison when looking at the changes made by New York. Also, across the country other states have begun to implement certification programs to achieve a more environmentally based hospitality industry. A combination of consumers’ behavior changing and other states becoming involved in the eco-tourism movement puts pressures on New York to change its behavior.

## State Changes

To assess the actions taken by New York State, we examined the newly created Green Hotel Certification Program and the organizations involved that make up the Green Hospitality and Tourism Partnership (Figure 4), which include:

- New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association
- New York State Pollution Prevention Institute
- Department of Environmental Conservation
- I Love New York
- Audubon International

To acquire this information, we used a collection of interviews and an extensive document review of media related to the pilot program. The individuals interviewed include:

- Ashley Wilson: NYSDEC Pollution and Prevention
- Fredrick M. Realbuto: Director of New York State Operations-Audubon International
- Kevin Fletcher: Executive Director-Audubon International

We also interviewed representatives from the Crowne Plaza in Albany and the Golden Arrow in Lake Placid because they are two of the first hotels that become members of Audubon International's Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program. These interviews provided insight into the history of the program and what changes it has motivated. The representatives interviewed include:

- Gary Shipley: Head Engineer of the Crowne Plaza, Albany, NY
- Jen Holdereid: Owner/General Manager of the Golden Arrow, Lake Placid, NY

## **Local Impacts**

The City of Saratoga Springs is a major tourist destination in New York, thus the local hotels that are initiating changes have an opportunity to exhibit their improvements. The Saratoga Springs Chamber of Commerce website was used to access tourist data, providing information to show the role of tourism in Saratoga Springs. To gain insight on the potential influence of this program on tourism in Saratoga Springs, the Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce, Greg Dixon, was interviewed.

To assess the benefits, drawbacks, and motivations for members of the Green Hotel Pilot Program, interviews were conducted with representatives from each of the three hotels located in Saratoga Springs that were selected to participate in this program, including:

- The Saratoga Farmstead Bed & Breakfast
  - Rosemary Ditora, Co-owner
- The Gideon Putnam
  - Jim Thompson: Director of Facilities
- The Hyatt Place
  - Courtney Wylie: Assistant General Manager.

Ultimately, assessing national trends, state changes and local impacts facilitated a comprehensive assessment of the Green Hotel Certification Pilot Program.

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### **Chapter III: The Green Hotel Certification Pilot Program**

The New York State Green Hospitality and Tourism Initiative was established in the fall of 2007 to promote “green tourism” in the state of New York. Under this initiative, hoteliers and restaurateurs are encouraged to incorporate environmentally friendly practices into their operations.<sup>2</sup> To coordinate both assistance and resources for businesses, a unique collection of state agencies, industry associations, and academia formed the New York State Green Hospitality & Tourism Partnership (NYSGHTP). The newly created NYSGHTP selected Audubon International's Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program for hotels to be the independent third-party evaluator for its green lodging certification. This program is part of a larger State initiative to support and market sustainable tourism. Using the eleven New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association's (NYSHTA) tourism regions, the DEC selected 43 green hotel pilot program members. These hotels were rated by Audubon International and required to sign a pledge that they would serve as “green ambassadors” for the pilot program. Ultimately, the goal of the partnership and the pilot program is to demonstrate the process and benefits of developing environmental friendly practices within the hospitality industry.

#### **Creation of the New York State Green Hospitality & Tourism Partnership (NYSGHTP)**

##### ***Golden Arrow Influence***

In 2005, the owner of the Golden Arrow Hotel, Jen Holderied, began looking for a new way to differentiate her resort from the competition. Inspired by her surroundings in Lake Placid, Holderied believed that implementing sustainable business practices provided an ideal way for the Golden Arrow to distinguish itself. As Holeried explained, “the whole concept of getting

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<sup>2</sup> Green certification is defined as “a process by which an authorized body evaluates and recognizes either an individual or an organization as meeting pre-determined requirements or criteria for environmental performance. These criteria generally focus on a business's carbon footprint, waste generation, conservation and/or appropriate use of natural resources” (DEC, 2010).

back to nature and getting outside and really preserving the resources is kind of in your face here and what a great differentiator, the green movement” (2010). While Holderied was enthusiastic about greening her resort, few resources that provided assistance and recommendations for proper business practices were available. As she struggled to find the means to move forward with environmental initiatives, the DEC Division Director of Environmental Permits, Jeff Sama, happened to stay at the Golden Arrow. Holderied took this opportunity to inform him of her concerns and suggested that resources become available for hoteliers looking to green their operations. “Sama took to the idea like crazy,” she explained, “without him there is no way this would be alive right now” (Holderied, 2010). Recognizing that “the Golden Arrow’s commitment to green eco tourism provided the inspiration needed to help motivate to improve the environmental quality of New York State,” Sama spearheaded an initiative to establish a program for businesses looking to reduce their environmental footprint (Sama, 2010). Sama’s efforts made headway within the DEC, becoming the driving force behind the formation of the New York State Green Hospitality & Tourism Partnership (NYSGHTP).

### ***Complex Partnership***

In the fall of 2007, the NYS Green Hospitality & Tourism Partnership (NYSGHTP) was formed to encourage hoteliers and restaurateurs to develop sustainable practices. The unique partnership includes a variety of state agencies, industry associations, and academia that provide resources relevant to the hospitality sector. To establish working relationships, the DEC held closed-door meetings where all participants were present. According to a DEC representative, “when you are offering up New York State hotels and restaurants, that is an incredible audience to solicit business from, so we encouraged the trade associations and the certification programs to really try and reach some agreements” (Wilson, 2010).

The agencies involved in the partnership recognized that a third-party certification program was necessary to legitimize the pilot program, as the state of NY did not have all the resources necessary to start a program. To move forward, the DEC began to search for programs that met the needs of the State, such as comprehensive and geographically relevant criteria. After analyzing a number of third-party certification programs, Audubon International and Green Seal were the final contestants remaining for the State's consideration. Audubon's Green Leaf Eco-Rating program differentiated itself from Green Seal because it is a rating system rather than a certification program. The Green Seal certification program is "intended to capture the top 15 or 20% of environmental performers," while Audubon International's Green Leaf Eco-Rating System recognizes all hotels working to reduce their environmental performance (Wilson, 2010). Moreover, the prices of the Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program are much more competitive than Green Seal's certification program. Thus, the DEC selected Audubon International as the third-party verifier for the certification system.

### ***Audubon Rating Process***

The Audubon Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program was launched in Canada in 1998 to meet the lodging industry's desire to provide quality guest services, while minimizing its impact on the environment. The Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program identifies and rewards lodging facilities that are environmental leaders throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. The program uses a standardized checklist for evaluating environmental performance, includes environmental education and hands-on staff assistance, and requires a site visit by a trained individual to verify eco-rated practices.

Properties are rated on a scale of 1 to 5 Green Leafs, with five being the highest score. Audubon International and Greenleaf Environmental Communications, Inc. administer the



program jointly. The first step in the rating process is for all of the selected hotels to fill out the Green Leaf<sup>TM</sup> Survey. An excerpt from the *Before You Begin* section of the survey states that the Green Leaf survey is a comprehensive list of the ideal environmental practices for hospitality facilities. A hotel receives its rating based on how many of the practices are currently in place.

The survey is straightforward, requesting information in the following manner:

- ❖ Answer questions with simple “yes/no” response;
- ❖ Check marks in appropriate boxes corresponding to affirmative statements; and
- ❖ Requests for examples or quantitative estimates

Hotels had the ability to say not applicable on the survey when questions did not pertain to their property. This created a fair scoring system that covered all areas, while allowing properties to exempt from questions that did not pertain to them without compromising the legitimacy of their score. After completing the survey, it is sent to Kevin Gallagher at GreenLeaf<sup>TM</sup> Environmental Communications Inc. in Ottawa, Canada to score the surveys. Once a hotel receives their score, that score is correlated to a (1-5) Green Leaf<sup>TM</sup> rating. To estimate the total score, there are four scoring sections that are analyzed and averaged together, which are:

- ❖ Energy Efficiency
- ❖ Resource Conservation
- ❖ Pollution Prevention
- ❖ Environmental Management

Within each of the four sections, Audubon provides current performance highlights along with recommendations for improvement. After a hotel receives their score, a site verifier from Audubon visits the hotel to assess and confirm the survey answers. The site verifier enables Audubon to confirm that the survey is in fact reflecting the environmental practices of the hotel, which

decreases the margin of error of the hotel not filling out the survey correctly. According to Jen Holderied, the site verifiers, “are basically coming to double check and make sure that you are doing what you actually say you’re doing and then also to answer any questions that you have” (Holderied, 2010). For the pilot program, the Pollution Prevention Institute (P2I) employees at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and Fred Realbuto of Audubon performed site verifications based on the locations of the hotels to eliminate excessive driving. Following a visit from the site verifier, the hotels have a better idea of how to move their hotel forward as an ambassador for environmental management practices.

### ***Grant Creation & Promotion of Environmental Hospitality***

The working relationship that developed between Audubon and NYSHTA moved the program further towards its goal of greening the hotel industry across the State; however the pricing aspect was still a major challenge. As NYSHTA represents 70% of the hoteliers in New York, Audubon was now working with a wide range of hotel sizes. To meet the needs of the wide the diversity of hotels that the NYSHTA represents, Audubon adopted a new pricing scheme. While Audubon had previously charged a per-room price to rate hotels, now hotels were grouped into five size categories and charged a price according to their category. According to Kevin Fletcher, the Executive Director of Audubon, “After working with NYSHTA it made sense to have 5 clusters of pricing and make it simpler, and based on their endorsement we gave them another percentage cut off of the price” (Fletcher, 2010). After the pricing scheme was negotiated between NYSHTA and Audubon, the DEC announced that a grant had come through the Pollution Prevention Institute to subsidize the program fee. According to Anahita Williamson, director of the P2I:

The Green Hotel pilot program will assist lodging properties in reducing their environmental footprint, decreasing overhead costs and improve their overall competitiveness. P2I is proud to

assist the NYSDEC in this effort, which will ultimately enhance New York's lodging industry, reduce pollution and improve environmental quality throughout the state (2009).

The subsidized fee provided a major incentive for hotels to participate in the Pilot program. The grant stipulated that in the first year of the program the 43 pilot hotels would pay half of their cluster price and the P2I would pay the other half (Fletcher, 2010).<sup>3</sup>

### ***Green Hotel Pilot Program Selection Process***

After the pricing scheme was negotiated, the Partnership moved forward with selecting hotels to participate in the program. Properties of different sizes, organization, and structure that were engaging in environmental practices or were eager to improve their environmental performance were invited to apply for membership. By representing a heterogeneous variety of properties, any business in the industry looking to reduce its environmental footprint could identify a comparable hotel and refer to it as a mentor. To ensure that the cost would not intimidate small or financially constrained hoteliers from participating, the DEC sent out invitations stating that the program fee would be subsidized. NYSHTA was instrumental in raising awareness about the program and passing out invitations to its members.

To ensure that the entire spectrum of the industry was represented, the hotels were divided into four different class sizes. One hotel of each class size was selected in each of the eleven tourism promotion districts in NY, totaling forty-three hotels.<sup>4</sup> The selected hotels signed a pledge that they would be an ambassador to the rest of the industry and when possible make their hotel available to other hoteliers who are looking for more information. According to Commissioner Grannis:

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<sup>3</sup> While the grant provided a major incentive for hotels to apply for membership in Audubon's GreenLeaf program, the DEC did not exclusively endorse Audubon, allowing for other certification programs to be recognized and marketed by the state in the future.

<sup>4</sup> Originally 44 hoteliers were involved, but one hotel dropped out for personal reasons.

The Green Lodging program recognizes hoteliers' environmental best practices. Whether they have been incorporating green practices for years or are just starting out, hotels and inns of any size can participate in this program. Technical support and marketing assistance are available to help them. The bottom line is that environmentally sound management practices lead to greater profitability, keeping New York's businesses competitive and saving jobs (2010).

## **Chapter IV: Selected Hotels in Saratoga Springs**

Among the forty-three members of the “Freshman Class,” three hotels were located in Saratoga Springs. These hotels included The Gideon Putnam, Hyatt Place and Saratoga Farmstead Bed & Breakfast (Figure 4).

### **The Gideon Putnam**

The Gideon Putnam Hotel was constructed in the 1930’s as part of a state funded project creating the Saratoga Spa State Park. Commonly referred to as the “Jewel of Saratoga,” the Gideon Putnam is listed in the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s guide to Historic Hotels of America. The hotel’s setting, the 2,200 acre Saratoga Spa State Park, is designated a National Historic Landmark (Gideon Putnam Website, 2010).

Delaware North Companies is the current steward of the Gideon Putnam Resort, responsible for office staff, accounting, sales, front desk, human resources, food and beverage, banquet, set up, and maintenance. Delaware North is a company with more than \$2 billion in annual revenue. The company’s Parks & Resorts division came into existence in 1992 following a successful bid for the largest contract in the U.S. National Park Service: Yosemite National Park (Gideon Putnam Website, 2010).

### ***Environmental Stewardship***

*“We believe in protecting the special places we operate in, celebrating the beauty of our national treasures and ensuring that the generations that follow us have an opportunity to experience the world the way we do today.”—Delaware North Companies*

A sense of environmental stewardship has been a part of Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts culture since 1999, when the company established a formal environmental management system, GreenPath. At that time, Delaware North was the first hospitality company to have an environmental system registered to the criteria developed by the International

Organization for Standardization.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, the ISO has established rigorous standards for environmental management known as ISO 14001. These standards provide Delaware North with the guidance necessary to reduce its environmental footprint and to improve environmental performance. GreenPath was developed based on ISO 14001 standard. This formal, documented, comprehensive Environmental Management System (EMS) has specific requirements and provides flexibility so that it can be adopted anywhere.

The Gideon's GreenPath, or environmental stewardship program, has housekeepers in the 120-room hotel using "green alternatives" to standard cleaning chemicals and collecting plastic bottles from rooms in a fledgling recycling effort, said the Gideon Putnam's Tim Smith (2010). The employees are members of a Green Team and meet monthly to discuss ways to cut back on water and energy use, limit the generation of waste and cut back on the amount of materials used to keep operations going. Efforts like switching to more efficient light bulbs, installing automatic light switch sensors and using low-flow water valves have made an impact so far. According to Smith, the Gideon has "seen a 20 percent reduction in our overall utility use in the last year," as the result of tracking the property's energy use and making adjustments (Business Review, 2010). For the Gideon Putnam, membership in the Green Hotel Pilot Program provides an opportunity to be recognized for the efforts they are currently involved in under the Green Path program. As facilities director Jim Thompson observed, "It's good to get credit for something that you are already doing already" (2010).

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### **The Hyatt Place Saratoga/ Malta**

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<sup>5</sup> Derived from the Greek word isos, meaning "equal", ISO develops international standards for a variety of industries.

The Hyatt Place Saratoga/ Malta hotel in Malta is a branch of the international hospitality company Hyatt Hotels Corporation. As of December 31, 2009, Hyatt Hotels Corporation's worldwide portfolio consisted of 424 branded properties. As the Hyatt Place is "designed for the busy lifestyle of today's multi-tasking business traveler," the hotel attracts business travelers and serves small corporate meetings (Hyatt, 2010).

***Environmental Stewardship:***

*"We believe that environmental stewardship is a responsibility that all of us share. By fostering a spirit of collaboration, innovation, and community focus, we engage and motivate our colleagues around the world with tools and programs that inspire action at the local level." –Hyatt Corporations International*

Hyatt developed a global sustainability program, Hyatt Earth, to make a long-term commitment to reduce its environmental footprint through measurable action. The Hyatt Earth program aims to reduce the Hyatt Corporation's environmental footprint by the following initiatives:

- An enterprise-wide, web-based system to track carbon emissions, water and energy consumption, and waste for all full-service Hyatt hotels.
- A global environmental training program. Interactive workshops provide employees with six hours of training that raises awareness and provides practical tools to reduce waste, emissions, and resource consumption.
- Sustainable Design and Construction standards for new and existing buildings.
- A global communication hub to encourage collaboration and the sharing of sustainable best practices in hotels world-wide.
- Hyatt Earth Guidelines and Best Practices designed for every department.

(Hyatt, 2010)

The Hyatt cited three major incentives driving its involvement with the Green Pilot Program. First, the company has a strong ethical commitment to reducing their environmental

footprint. Secondly, Hyatt recognized that there are many cost saving incentives based on how far they take the program. And finally, the Hyatt believes that there is a major opportunity to market their membership in this program to differentiate the business and make money in the future.

### **The Saratoga Farmstead**

Originally a farm that was built in the late 1700's, this property is now being operated as a Bed & Breakfast Inn. Mariana DiToro and Rosemary Jensen are currently operating the property as it begins its next metamorphosis, with plans that include restoring the carriage house, finding a unique use for the twin silos, turning the antique stone barn into a workshop and using the acreage for organic gardening, bird watching and growing native wildflowers.

### ***Environmental Stewardship:***

*“Our place kind of runs on old fashioned values: good food, cleanliness, and being good to the earth.... I think it would bring people in of the Woodstock generation.”*

*-Saratoga Farmstead Bed & Breakfast*

Environmental stewardship is a major component of the culture and mission of the Saratoga Farmstead Bed and Breakfast. The Farmstead has many environmental practices in place, such as composting, recycling, and growing organic gardens among other things.

According to owner Rosemary Jenesen, “we are children of the 1970s, and we run our business in a way that is true to our personal values” (2010). The Farmstead has plans to reduce their environmental footprint, including the application of solar panels on the back of the house or constructing horizontal windmills on the silos. The owners of the Farmstead appreciate being



recognized for what they were already doing and have plans to market their membership in the future.

## **Green Hotel Pilot Program: Benefits for Participants**

### ***Awareness***

Two of the hotels interviewed for this study, the Golden Arrow and the Crowne Plaza, have been involved with Audubon's Green Leaf Program since 2005 and 2008, respectfully. Each of these frontrunners has moved forward with recommendations provided by Audubon in an effort to improve their green leaf score, demonstrating the potential of this program to influence hoteliers. The Golden Arrow has moved from 3 to 5 green leaves since 2005. Similarly, the Crowne Plaza has implemented an environmental management program to raise their score. The experiences of the Golden Arrow and the Crowne Plaza provide evidence that hotels involved in this program will follow Audubon's recommendations. As the hotels in the Freshman Class have received Audubon's recommendation report, hotel managers now have the information necessary to improve their environmental performance.

### ***Cost Savings***

Audubon's Green Leaf Rating report includes recommendations of both low-cost and capital intensive investments hoteliers can make that will generate cost savings. For example, the report recommended affordable, easy changes such as switching to fluorescent light bulbs and low flow shower heads. The report also provided instructions on more capital intensive, long-term projects such as implementing solar panels. By moving forward with the recommendations put forward in Audubon's report, whether small-scale or long-term, hoteliers can expect to save money through energy efficiency and conservation.

*Energy Efficiency & Conservation:* By upgrading to energy efficient models when replacing equipment and building envelope, hotels can save a significant amount of energy. For example, last year Marriott International replaced a total of 450,000 incandescent light bulbs in its 2,900 properties with compact fluorescents and saved 65 percent on overall lighting costs and energy usage in guestrooms (Green Seal, 2010).

*Conservation of Fresh Water Resources:* Businesses can replace faucets, toilets and showerheads with low-flow alternatives, offer towel and linen reuse option to guests, and move forward with other initiatives aimed at water conservation to reduce expenses. For example, the Doubletree Portland replaced 300 older toilets with 1.6 gallons per flush models, yielding an approximate annual savings of 308,000 gallons of water and \$1,163 dollars (Doubletree Portland Website, 2010).

### ***Marketing***

*Large Scale Benefits:* The Department of Economic Development is spearheading a new I Heart Green NY campaign to promote green hotels. The marketing campaign assigns a green heart to the hotels that scored at least three green leaves in their Audubon rating. These properties are being promoted on the “I Love Green NY” website and through green vacation itineraries. The AAA 2010 TourBook editions are also marketing certified properties by including an “eco” icon to indicate properties that promote environmental and energy conservation. The “eco” option will also be included as an advanced search option in AAA’s hotels section on its Web site. In addition, the State of New York is increasingly hosting green conventions and meetings in facilities that are green certified (Wilson, 2010).

*Small Scale Benefits:* Audubon’s green certification label may appear on the property in common areas, administrative areas, and guest areas, and on promotional material. In addition, the hotels involved are being marketed by the news media and Chambers of Commerce in many towns. In the case of Saratoga, articles appeared in both the *Saratogian* and the *Times Union*

newspapers. In effect, certification provides a way for hotels to differentiate themselves and attract consumers who are looking to support environmentally responsible businesses, such as the LOHAS group (Chapter 1).

## **Chapter V: Green Certification Pilot Program Benefits for New York State Green Hospitality & Tourism Partnership & Audubon International**

### ***Establish Green Benchmarking***

The hotels in the “Freshman Class” serve as the ambassadors of the Green Certification Pilot Program, setting a precedent in the hotel industry for other properties to follow. According to the President of New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association Daniel C. Murphy, “the partnerships that will be formed between our hoteliers and Audubon GreenLeaf during this project will have a long-lasting impact on New York State’s green movement and serve as a shining example for how New York State hotels can become more environmentally friendly” (2010). The standards set by the Freshman Class will potentially motivate other businesses in the industry to incorporate sustainable practices into their operations so as not to fall behind the curve.

### ***Boost the Tourism Sector’s Economic and Environmental Performance***

The Pilot Program is a unique combination of state agencies, business associations, and environmental organizations that specialize in different areas, because so many different actors are involved, the chain of command is in place. In effect, this will boost the tourism sector’s economic and environmental performance by facilitating green supply chain research, promoting incentive and assistance programs, and supporting workforce training and education for all hoteliers involved. According to Commissioner Grannis, “technical support and marketing assistance are available to help them. The bottom line is that environmentally sound management practices lead to greater profitability, keeping New York’s businesses competitive and saving jobs” (2010). Thus, the Partnership will help to keep the tourism industry in NY ahead of the curve.

### ***Stewardship of NYS Natural Resources***

The education, awareness, and initiatives the Pilot Program will inspire facilitate the DEC's mission to "conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well-being" (DEC, 2010). Each member of the freshman class signed a pledge that they would be ambassadors in the program, therefore committing to reduce their environmental footprint. The hotels interviewed in this research confirmed that they would go forward with environmental initiatives recommended by Audubon. According to Empire State Development Corp. chairman Dennis M. Mullen. "The Green Lodging program will take it a step further, ultimately saving money and jobs, while protecting our most valuable resources and securing a healthier, more environmentally friendly future—a true win-win for everyone" (2010). By moving forward with initiatives to minimize waste and develop environmentally sensitive purchasing policies, hoteliers can make a significant difference.

- ***Waste Minimization***

By offering recycling for guests and staff, establishing compost programs, using refillable amenity dispensers, avoiding single-use products, purchasing in bulk, and taking other initiatives to reduce waste, hoteliers can significantly reduce their environmental footprint. In the case of the Hilton San Francisco, a composting program was implemented in 2002 that reduced the number of dumpsters needing to be emptied from seven a week to just two each week (Green Seal, 2010).

- *Environmentally Sensitive Purchasing*

Through initiatives such as purchasing materials with recycled content, buying low VOC products, using durable goods, and supporting suppliers that are environmentally responsible, hotels can significantly mitigate the pressure they put on natural resources. For example, a 300-room hotel switching to a bath tissue with 100% post-consumer content would save approximately 4 tons of virgin paper, 48 trees, 16,400 kwh of electricity, 28,000 gallons of water and 240 pounds of air pollutants annually (Green Seal, 2010).

### ***Marketing – I Love Green NY***

In recognition of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, Empire State Development unveiled a new “green heart” in its famous I LOVE NEW YORK logo as part of an initiative to promote and market eco-tourism in the state of NY. The State’s new eco-initiatives and long term sustainability goals show a true commitment to greener travel. According to Governor Patterson, “the concept of greening our society was created by challenging the conventional wisdom that economics and environmentalism did not mix. Now, as we nurture the eco-certified industry through the Green Heart NY Initiative, we can serve as a national model for environmental management and green tourism, attracting increased revenue from travelers and creating tens of thousands of tourism-related jobs” (The Beat, 2010).

The Green Heart NY initiative includes the promotion of green-certified restaurants and hotels, as well as the State’s parks, beaches, waterways and mountains. I LOVE NEW YORK has selected ten must-see iconic green travel destinations for 2010 within the State’s 11 tourism regions. These destinations are being promoted on the new I Love Green NY website and in the State’s tourism collateral. The itineraries promoting the green travel destinations market the hotels that that received at least three green leaves in their green leaf rating. The I Heart Green

NY campaign has the potential to draw visitors to areas in NY that may not have considered visiting in the absence of the Green label (The Beat, 2010).

### **Green Hotel Certification Program Benefits: Audubon International**

#### ***Fulfill mission and vision as non-profit***

As a non-profit environmental education organization, Audubon International envisions “communities becoming more sustainable through good stewardship of the natural environment where people live, work, and recreate” (Audubon International, 2010). By providing educational resources to hoteliers, Audubon has a tremendous opportunity to stimulate change in the NY hospitality industry. As Jen Holderied explained, “the tourism industry is in a unique position to influence and educate a large number of people about the importance of living gently on the Earth.... imagine if every hotel in New York State had a green program and a percentage of their guests went home and made a small change in their lives. The effects could be tremendous” (2010). By providing the educating hoteliers on sustainable practices, Audubon may have far reaching effects on people and communities. Thus, this program facilitates Audubon International’s goal to protect and sustain land, water, wildlife, and natural resources. According to Kevin Fletcher, executive director of Audubon International, “every person, every organization, and every community—from New York City to the High Peaks to the Finger Lakes—has a role to play in fostering a more sustainable future and a healthier natural environment. We’re proud to be helping the hotel and lodging sector throughout New York State play its role to become better stewards of the environment” (2010)

### ***Membership retention in Audubon's Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program***

By selecting Audubon International as the third-party certifier, the DEC officially recognized the non-profits Green Leaf Certification program. The grant provided by the Pollution Prevention Institute provided an incentive for the hotels to become involved with Audubon, enabling Audubon to establish relationships with several hotels. In effect, this was a major endorsement for Audubon and increased participation in Audubon's Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program. Each of the five participants interviewed emphasized their intention to stay with the program in the future. It can be expected that the relationships that Audubon established with hotels through the Pilot program will provide Audubon with a market for its Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program in the future.



## **Chapter VI: Challenges and Recommendations for the Green Hotel Certification Program**

### ***The Green Hospitality and Tourism Partnership***

To justify budget expenses, the Pollution Prevention Institute demands clear metrics to evaluate the programs that they are investing in. According to Fletcher, “the Pollution Prevention Institute does voluntary programs, so they have to justify their existence and their budget and the way that they do that is by having very clear metrics of how their programs and what they are spending their money on is leading towards environmental improvement” (Fletcher, 2010).

Because the Pollution Prevention Institute presented a grant to subsidize the cost for Pilot members to participate in this program, they are looking for clear metrics that indicate change. Therefore, there is pressure on Audubon International to circulate another survey and perform another audit next year to gauge changes. However, as a non-profit organization Audubon does not have the capital to cover the hard costs of re-rating hotels and performing site visits. With little money in the budget, it is difficult to meet the DEC’s request to generate verifiable metrics of change or improvement over time. In addition, many of the recommendations Audubon provides hoteliers are long term and are capital intensive, such as getting new equipment. Therefore, their effects will not be realized in the short term. These factors make it difficult for Audubon to meet the DEC’s improvement goals. It is only possible to analyze the future intentions of hotels through a front end snapshot.

### ***Participating Hotels***

Many of the hotels involved in the program are constrained by external factors, such as obligations to their parent company. Hotels such as the Hyatt often lack the flexibility to do things because they do not have the red tape of corporate structure. While small facilities have more flexibility to make changes, their environmental impact is very small. According to Kevin

Fletcher, “with a B & B you are talking about 5 people. The [hotels] that we want a big hit, in terms of use less energy less water are the biggest hotels you can get. It is the corp. policies I think are the biggest impediment too these larger facilities taking a step forward” (2010).

Similarly, external factors such as the historical society can inhibit hoteliers from going forward with environmental initiatives. For example, the Gideon Putnam is listed in the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s guide to Historic Hotels of America and consequently must adhere to its obligations to the Historical Society. Therefore, there are numerous regulations and restrictions that the Gideon must abide by, such as preserving the windows to maintain their historic qualities despite their energy inefficiency.

### ***Comprehensive Challenge for Participants in the Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program***

While the grant money provided by the Pollution Prevention Institute provided an incentive for hoteliers to become involved in Audubon’s Green Leaf Program, there is danger in the grant money because hotel’s that are accustomed to the low price may not renew it at the regular cost. Kevin Fletcher warns that, “there is a little bit of danger involved in that because once you give someone something for free are they going to renew it?” (2010). Without the grant money, the fee to participate in the program may be prohibitive. Prospective participants may not be inclined to join the Green Hotel Certification program, while existing participants may not be willing to pay a higher fee for membership in the future.

## **Recommendations**

### ***Chamber of Commerce Relationship***

Overall, the goal of the green hotel partnership is to create a shift within the hospitality industry and move NY towards environmental hospitality. To achieve this goal, it is important for the Partnership to reach out to local communities within the state to solicit interest in the green movement. This can be achieved by working with various Chamber of Commerce's within the 11 tourism hubs of NY. According to Kevin Fletcher, "the Chamber of Commerce is an interesting organization because of the numerous connections that it has. A chamber represents the local businesses; they are the community development organization for a number of communities because most communities do not have a department of economic development" (2010). Working through the Chamber of Commerce will provide the Partnership with a medium to influence local businesses and communities. According to Fletcher, "the chamber is a doorway, which means there are 5000 doorways that I can go and get 10 million businesses rather than knock on each one of their doors individually" (Fletcher, 2010). Moreover, this relationship could provide Chamber's with an opportunity to brand their community and market it as an environmental tourist destination, attracting environmental conscious tourists.

### ***Create a Forum***

The Green Hotel Certification Program has established the certified hotels as ambassadors for environmental hotel practices in NY. This entails providing assistance and education to other hotels in New York State that want to improve their environmental impacts. To accomplish this, a forum should be created that would allow hotels to communicate with one another and spread ideas. This would provide hotels a personal resource for deciphering the management practices that have been tested and are proven to work. Such a forum would help the program grow and become more efficient because time is not wasted looking for various resources.

### ***Government Mandate***

In 2007, Florida's Governor Charlie Crist signed legislation mandating that all Government events and meetings must take place in green certified facilities. With the stroke of a pen, Governor Crist sparked a surge of hoteliers hurrying to achieve green certification for their properties, and in turn gain a competitive advantage to earn state business. The State agencies involved in the Green Hospitality and Tourism Partnership could lobby for similar legislation to motivate more hoteliers to join the Green Hotel Certification Program.

### ***Survey: Social Responsibility***

While Audubon's survey and recommendations report provides a comprehensive synopsis of a hotel's environmental status, issues such as local purchasing are overlooked. To account for this, a category of social responsibility could be added to Audubon's report as a fifth category.

**Data Tables & Figures**

**NY's Certified Green Hotels "The Freshman Class"**

**Adirondack**

<b>Business</b>	<b>Rooms</b>
Elk Lake Lodge	25
Holiday Inn	102
Shaheen's Motel	31
Silver Bay YMCA of the Adirondacks	345

**Buffalo**

<b>Business</b>	<b>Rooms</b>
Adam's Mark Hotel	486
Asa Ransom House	10
Days Inn of Batavia	103
Super 8 of Batavia	54

**Capital-Saratoga**

<b>Business</b>	<b>Rooms</b>
74 State	73
Crowne Plaza Albany	384
Gideon Putnam	120
Hyatt Place Saratoga/ Malta	120
Saratoga Farmstead Bed & Breakfast	7

**Catskills**

<b>Business</b>	<b>Rooms</b>
Glens Falls House	50
The Fairlawn Inn	9

### Central Leatherstocking

Business	Rooms
Amsterdam Castle	3
Berry Hill Gardens Bed & Breakfast	8
Holiday Inn Utica	100
The Otesaga Resort Hotel	135

### Finger Lakes

Business	Rooms
Aurora Inn & E.B. Morgan House	17
Bed & Breakfast Wellington	5
Bristol Harbour Resort	31
La Tourelle Resort & Spa	55
Radisson Hotel CorNing	177
RIT Inn & Conference Center	304
Sheraton Syracuse University Hotel & Conference Center	236
Turtle Dreams	10

### Hudson Valley

Business	Rooms
Bear Mountain Inn	64
Fox Hill Bed & Breakfast	3
Mohonk Mountain House	265
Ritze-Carlton Westchester	146
Tarrytown House Estate & Conference Center	212
The Rhinecliff	9

### Long Island

Business	Rooms
Gurney's Inn Resort & Spa	109 rooms
The Stirling House Bed & Breakfast	3

### New York City

Business	Rooms
Grand Hyatt NY	1311
The Beekman Tower Hotel	168
Westin NY	863

### Thousand Islands

Business	Rooms
Best Western Carriage House Inn	160
Capt. Thomson's Resort	68
White Pillars Lodging	16

*Figure 1: The 43 Pilot Hotels within the 10 NYSHTA tourism hubs*

### Eco-Rating Membership Fees for NYSHTA Members

	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III	Tier IV	Tier V
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<b>Year</b>	<b>Rooms: 1-50</b>	<b>Rooms: 51-100</b>	<b>Rooms: 101-200</b>	<b>Rooms: 201-500</b>	<b>Rooms: 501+</b>
<b>1</b>	\$350	\$480	\$600	\$800	\$1250
<b>2</b>	\$175	\$240	\$300	\$400	\$625
<b>3</b>	\$175	\$240	\$300	\$400	\$625

*Figure 2: The Audubon five tier rating system created through the agreement with NYSHTA*

### **The Green Hotel Pilot Members in Saratoga Springs**

*Figure 3: Hotel classifications for the three hotels selected in Saratoga Springs*

<b>Program Member</b>	<b>Rating</b> (Green Leaves)	<b>Size</b> (Rooms)	<b>Category of Hotel</b>	<b>Initial Involvement with Program</b>
Gideon Putnam	3	120	Contracted concessioner, Delaware North Companies Parks and Resorts, has provided lodging, dining and services for two years.	Contacted by NYSHTA
Saratoga Farmstead	3	7	Small-Business, owned and operated by Mariana DiToro and Rosemary Jensen	Contacted by Saratoga Springs Chamber of Commerce
The Hyatt Place	3	120	A branch of Hyatt Hotels Corporations. The chain includes 424 Branded Properties	Discovered and signed up for

### **The New York State Green Hotel Partnership**



Government Agency	Role Within the Partnership
Department of Environmental Conservation	Chair of the partnership, based out of the Small Business & Pollution Prevention Department
Governor's Office	Created initiative to position the NYS Hospitality industry as more environmentally friendly
Hospitality and Tourism Association	Contacted members that were selected, represent 70% of hotels
Restaurant Association	Already have a Green Restaurant Certification Program in place, offered advice from experience
Department of Economic Development-I Love NY Program	I Love Green New York marketing campaign, Greenest New Yorker Contest
Department of Agriculture and Markets	Potential to become involved with more local purchasing
Department of Labor	N/A
Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation	N/A
Energy Research & Development Authority	N/A
Pollution Prevention Institute	Has contract with Audubon and developed grant to finance the pilot program

Figure 4: The New York State Agencies that make up the NYS working group

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