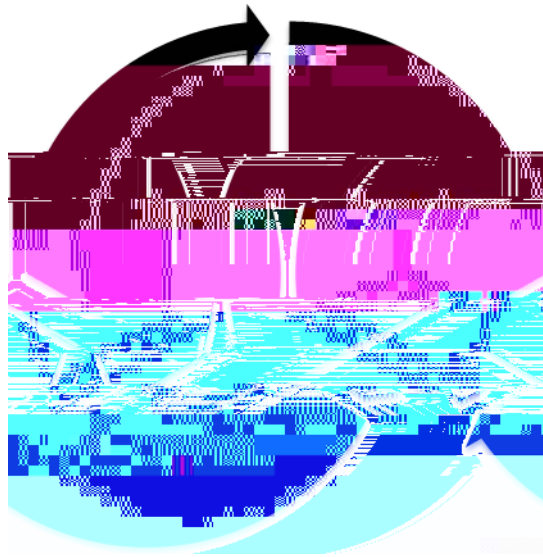


**Skidmore College  
Senior Capstone Project**

***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

**By:**  
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***5/7/10***

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## **Abstract**

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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





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 programs. Not only are t

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



## **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 boo

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 Mov

## **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 prog

## 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



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 6-site visit by a trained individual.



program jointly. The first step in the rating process is for all of the selected hotels to fill out the Green Leaf<sup>™</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:

<sup>™</sup> Answer questions with simple “yes/no” response;

<sup>™</sup> Check marks in appropriate boxes corresponding to affirmative statements; and

<sup>™</sup> Requests;R ‘ Tf jTJ 10.31ly ppr(r)3(k)-10(pe)4(nled [(R)2(r)3(onm-6(e7;)]TJ 14(c.06 A206 J 0.0 )]TJ

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

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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.

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 compan.

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**

<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 portf

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 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**

### *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 ever f.mseheing progr4(w)Out

- **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 P10(1)-1 Tf 0.0022(n)-10

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”imat

### ***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 is -4(u[(, )-14(ex)-14(t)-6(er)1(s)-1( t)-2(er)-1(ous)

## **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. ~~Anchor (1) 2 0 603 41 w 6.92 (106)-tJK~~



**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

### **Central Leatherstocking**

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

### **Finger Lakes**

<b>Business</b>	<b>Rooms</b>
Aurora Inn & E.B. Morgan House	17

### Long Island

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

### New York City

<b>Business</b>	<b>Rooms</b>
Grand Hyatt NY	1311
The Beekman Tower Hotel	168
Westin NY	863

<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 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
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