Nontimber Forest Products: Their Role and Potential in the Ecology and Economy of the Inland Northwest US

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Currently several hundred species of plants, fungi, invertebrates, and mammals are harvested or hunted annually from America's public forests for either commercial, traditional, or personal use. Regulation is irregular, and many nontimber forest products (NTFPs) change hands as a cash commodity, on a per-pound or per-unit basis.

Valued on a per-acre basis, NTFP production equals or frequently far exceeds the value of the harvested timber, when calculated on a 100-year cutting cycle. Longer timber harvest cycles favor increased NTFP production in many cases, as do land treatments such as selection logging or strip logging over clear-cut logging.

From a socioeconomic perspective, the trade in wild mushrooms is a multimillion-dollar industry that provides a large number of jobs per pound of commodity. These seasonal jobs are created in poor, rural, and remote communities in which economic development projects typically flounder. The perishable nature of the fungi makes it a cash commodity, and this in turn attracts mushroom pickers who are often young, mobile, and economically disadvantaged.

NTFP development has been stymied for years by Forest Service accounting procedures which return all income from permit fees, etc., to the timber fund, which then allocates (or not) money for administering a commercial morel harvest or issuing salal or beargrass harvesting permits. This procedure has effectively stunted any meaningful management of these resources.

A realistic use of our forest resources requires first that these resources be identified. One of the challenges to using NTFRs is identifying the resource, whether it is (or is not) a foodstuff or medicine, or if it can be employed for some commercial purpose or for environmental remediation. This presentation will examine several species of fungi found in the intermountain west and the Pacific Northwest and address their current use and potential for economic or ecological development.

The following species and their potential or current use will be addressed: (1) Commercial food species: *Morchella* sp., *Tricholoma magnivelare* (Peck) Redhead, *Cantharellus* sp., *Boletus edulis* Bull.:Fr. group, *Pleurotus* sp.; (2) species with potential as commercial foodstuffs: *Russula xerampelina* (Schaeff.:Secr.)Fr. group, *Rozites caperata* (Pers.: Fr.) P.Karst., *Naematoloma* (*Hypholoma*) *capnoides* (Fr.:Fr.) P.Kumm., *Lyophyllum decastes* (Fr.) Singer group, *Coprinus comatus* (Mull.:Fr.) S.F.Gray, *Calvatia* sp.; (3) species with potential as food/commercial products: temper using *Coprinus*, *Lyophyllum decastes*, etc.; biopulp—delignifying wood using fungi instead of chemicals: specie of genera *Cerisporiopsis, Phlebia, and Hypodontia*, brown cuboidal rot—water storage/retrieval; (4) restoration and remediation using species: *Pleurotus* sp. in riparian areas, *Lyophyllum decastes* against knapweed infestations.

All the above species will be pictured and aspects of habitat and conditions discussed.