USING FIA INVENTORY PLOT DATA TO ASSESS NTFP PRODUCTION POSSIBILITIES

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Abstract—The US Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program collects data on a wealth of variables related to trees and understory species in forests. Some of these trees and plants produce non-timber forest products (NTFPs; e.g., seeds, fruit, bark, sap, roots) that are harvested for their culinary and medicinal values. As example, the cones of *Pinus edulis* and *P. monophylla* are collected for the edible pine nuts. The bark of more than a dozen tree species that are inventoried by FIA is collected for medicinal, decorative, and construction purposes. Slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*) bark has been used for its medicinal values for more than a generation. However, despite widespread use of non-timber forest products, little quantitative information about abundance, distribution, and harvest is available to support sustainable management of NTFPs. This project examines the use of the FIA inventory database to assess the effectiveness of plot data to monitor and explain the situation regarding selected non-timber forest products. The focus is on using FIA data to assess for: (1) geographic distribution, (2) abundance (numbers of live trees), (3) applicable metrics (e.g., square feet of bark for trees from which bark is harvested), and (4) trends in abundance and spatial distribution over time. An in-depth analysis of slippery elm bark will be presented along with examples of metrics for quantifying other types of products including sap, nuts/fruit, and understory species.

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