Non-timber Forest Product Development in British Columbia’s Community Forests and Small Woodlands: Constraints and Potential Solutions
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Emily Jane Davis
The British Columbia Inter-agency Non-timber Forest Resources (IANTFR) Committee was established in January 2006 to facilitate a co-ordinated approach to non-timber forest resource management in the province. The Ministry of Forests and Range and Ministry of Agriculture and Lands co-chair the IANTFR Committee. Other government partners include or have included what are now the Ministry of Small Business, Technology and Economic Development, the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, and the Ministry of Community and Rural Development (names of some Ministries have changed since 2006). Representatives from the First Nations Forestry Council and the First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative have participated in committee meetings. The Centre for Livelihoods and Ecology (formerly the Centre for Non-Timber Resources) at Royal Roads University provides expert advice and support services to the Committee. The Ministry of Forests and Range also contributes to the Committee by providing staff time and expertise, and resources to produce publications.

The goals of the Committee are (1) to improve communication and co-ordination across the provincial government, and (2) to advise government on issues related to non-timber forest resource management in British Columbia. The IANTFR Committee members have produced a communication strategy that includes the production of publications designed to improve awareness about non-timber forest resources so that they are managed appropriately.

A series of Land Management Handbooks on this theme has been co-published by the Ministry of Forests and Range and the Centre for Livelihoods and Ecology at Royal Roads University. Documents as yet unpublished can be found at www.royalroads.ca/cle.

- **Understanding Non-timber Forest Products Activity on the Land Base** by Gerrard Olivotto, 2009 (LMH 62)
- **Non-timber Forest Products, Tourism, and Small-scale Forestry: Income Opportunities and Constraints** by Darcy Mitchell, 2009 (LMH 63)
- **Compatible Management of Timber and Pine Mushrooms** by Shannon Berch and Marty Kranabetter, 2010 (LMH 64)
- **Non-timber Forest Product Development in British Columbia’s Community Forests and Small Woodlands: Constraints and Potential Solutions** by Emily Jane Davis, 2011 (LMH 67)
- **Managed Access to Non-timber Forest Products on Private Land and Eligible Tenures** by Wendy Cocksedge, Emily Keller, Art Mercer, and Grace Wang
- **Creating a Regional Profile for Non-timber Forest Products** by Wendy Cocksedge, Tom Hobby, Kathi Zimmerman, Dan Adamson, Russell Collier, and Emily Keller
- **What about the Berries? Managing for Understorey Species** by Wendy Cocksedge and Michael Keefer

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This series of guidebooks developed out of a survey conducted by the Centre for Livelihoods and Ecology (CLE) in 2006, in which a wide range of participants in the forestry sector provided their views on the opportunities for, and barriers to, compatible management (Cocksedge et al. 2010). Compatible management is the practice of managing forests for both timber and non-timber values, including non-timber forest products (NTFPs) (Titus et al. 2004). Incorporating non-timber forest products within forest management can provide social, ecological, and financial benefits for the land managers and for the surrounding communities and ecosystems. The purpose of the guidebook series is to provide a concise overview of the key issues and concerns for each topic, and to suggest resources that can help forest managers overcome some of the barriers to compatible management that they have identified.

This guide summarizes the expertise and concerns of a group of community forest managers and small woodland managers (e.g., woodlot licence holders) in British Columbia who are interested in issues of non-timber forest product management and development. Community forests have been described as “small tenures with big expectations” (Ambus et al. 2007). The Community Forest Agreement Regulation (CFA) allows management for a range of community objectives, including and extending beyond timber values (Cathro et al. 2007). NTFP harvesting within community forest licences may fit well within these goals, but most community forests have yet to develop a cohesive strategy for managing non-timber values. In 2007, Davis conducted a survey on behalf of CLE to obtain input from community forest managers and woodlot licence holders on the constraints and opportunities associated with NTFP harvesting. The survey consisted of targeted, non-random interviews and was designed to be exploratory in nature.

Appendix 2 provides an example of selected responses. This guide describes the experiences and issues that survey respondents reported, and provides some useful resources for managers interested in pursuing NTFP utilization. The constraints and potential solutions in this guide were developed largely through discussions with, and research on, community forests, with input from woodlot licence holders. We anticipate that the lessons learned, however, are relevant to all small woodlands owners or licence holders.

1.1 The Role of British Columbia’s Aboriginal Peoples

It is essential to preface this guide with central consideration of the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and non-timber forest resources. The lives and cultures of Aboriginal peoples remain highly dependent upon access to a healthy and diverse array of forest resources. The connection of Aboriginal peoples to the land is a fundamental aspect of their identity. Sincere respect for this unique relationship must be the building block for any dialogues or projects regarding NTFPs. This includes a commitment to valuing and protecting cultural diversity, knowledge, and protocols. Community forestry is seen by many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities as an ideal place to build these commitments. It can offer a tool for rural communities to regain control of their forest lands and to address their socio-economic and environmental well-being.

With a purpose to create a forum for respectful, two-way dialogue, and to build shared understanding and rapport between Aboriginal peoples and community forest organizations, the British Columbia Community Forest Association (BCCFA), First Nations Forestry Council (FNFC), and Forum for Research and Extension in Natural Resources

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1 For full text of the survey questionnaire, see Appendix 1.
2 This report uses “NTFP” to refer to all uses (cultural, subsistence, recreational, and commercial). Other terms used to describe non-timber resources include cultural-use species, botanical forest products, and understorey species. In the U.S., they are called special forest products. There is much overlap between uses and concepts, but the term “NTFP” is generally meant to refer to the plants and fungi rather than to the developed “product.”
FORREX organized a two-day dialogue session in January 2009. This session, which provided an opportunity for listening and sharing, highlighted how Aboriginal peoples' need to reconnect to their lands may be met through community forestry. A central concern of representatives from the FNFC is about the future of NTFPs, which have been negatively affected by timber activities and by a lack of regulation for their harvesting and use. The BCCFA recognizes that Aboriginal rights and title should be the first consideration when working with NTFPs on community forest land. The FNFC advocates short- and long-term policy changes that will provide specific Aboriginal research funding, area-based tenure for NTFPs, and a future regulatory regime based on access and benefit sharing. For more information on this dialogue, please visit www.bccfa.ca/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=21:1st-nations-dialogue&Itemid=7.

1.2 Who Should Read This Guide?

Community Forest Managers and Community Forest Licence Applicants
This guide provides resources that address specific issues that community forest managers raised during the survey.

Managers of Other Small Area-based Forestry Operations
While some of the constraints described in this guide are unique to community forestry, the recommendations and resources listed are relevant to other groups or individuals who practice small-scale forestry in British Columbia, and to Aboriginal resource planners.

Researchers, Harvesters, and Lifelong Learners
The information in this guide may be useful for harvesters and members of communities who wish to help the managers of community forests or other small woodlands to engage in NTFP activities.

1.3 Contents of This Guide

This guide includes:

- a summary of current constraints that community forest and small woodland managers have noted in relation to NTFP development. These include:
  - lack of clarity regarding Aboriginal rights
  - lack of regulatory clarity
  - uncertainty regarding liability and insurance
  - need to determine an appropriate role for community forests
  - capacity for initiating NTFP development projects
  - ecological resource constraints and access
  - market development of specific products
  - lack of awareness of new information and research
- some suggestions for integrating on-the-ground experience and recent research;
- links to public sector funding and information resources;
- links to existing NTFP industry information sources;
- a snapshot of NTFP initiatives currently under way in British Columbia community forests and small woodlands; and
- the 2007 survey questionnaire and selected responses.

Additional information on initiating NTFP development and management in community forests is given in A Guide to the Assessment of Non-timber Forest developed by the BCCFA. The guide is available to BCCFA members. Associate membership in the BCCFA is available to individuals and organizations that support the vision, mission, purposes, and guiding principles of the Association. For more information, see www.bccfa.ca/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=91:a-guide-to-the-assessment-of-non-timber-forest-products.

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3 The BCCFA does not represent all community forests in British Columbia, nor does the FNFC represent all First Nations. However, both organizations support a collaborative dialogue due to the potential of CFA to provide a range of opportunities for First Nations communities.

4 Given that community forests range greatly in size, population (served), Allowable Annual Cut, financial circumstances, biogeographical location, and possible ecological inventory of NTFP species, many of the issues raised may be crucial to one region yet less pressing in another (see Ambus et al. 2007, Table 1).

5 A partial survey was also conducted with woodlot licence holders. While there are significant differences in management challenges for community forests and small woodlot licence holders, resources are relevant for both.
2.1 Identified Constraint 1: Lack of Clarity

Surrounding Cultural Use, Rights, and Title Negotiation

Aboriginal groups such as the First Nations Forestry Council are advocating for short- and long-term access to NTFPs and regulatory goals regarding their harvest and use. However, while these goals are being negotiated, NTFP harvest and use is ongoing. Some possible solutions or movement toward these goals can be made by building local relationships. Existing levels of awareness and collaboration on community forest lands vary. During the survey, community forest respondents noted that local Aboriginal groups often conduct most of the NTFP harvest in community forests. Some respondents noted that there has been some level of communication between harvesters and the community forest, such as First Nation or band members expressing concern about knowledge loss, habitat loss due to logging and other activities, and over-harvesting. For example, in some instances, Aboriginal peoples are concerned that revealing the location of certain species or sharing traditional ecological knowledge could lead to their knowledge being stolen and/or used out of context by others. Community forest and small woodland managers may be able to respond to these concerns. For example, in at least one community forest, projects with NTFPs were specifically limited to NTFPs that are not used by the local band, out of respect for the band’s use of those resources. Other respondents expressed their need for increased dialogue to lower barriers and establish clearer communications. First Nations rights and access is a very important and complex issue, and we do not attempt to address the full depth of this topic within this guide. Instead, this section provides suggestions that may assist with communication and interim steps, as well as build awareness and trust between all parties.

2.1.1 Potential Solutions for Constraint 1

Consult with the local/regional First Nation(s) or band(s) Meaningful consultation implies developing plans and priorities collaboratively, with input from the beginning from both the community forest and the Aboriginal group.

Explore local interest and capacity A community forest needs to assess its priorities and capacity as an organization before undertaking work with NTFPs. Most community forest managers are already aware of NTFPs in their regions but have yet to decide what role they may play in managing NTFPs alongside timber objectives. A special meeting dedicated to open discussion of NTFP potential can be the first step. A good place to start may be with those who are already harvesting NTFPs in the region or who have expressed interest in doing so.

Enhance intercultural collaboration through ongoing dialogue It is especially important to include all stakeholders, including Aboriginal groups in the area, in NTFP discussions and when developing management plans that affect NTFPs. Awareness of traditional use is central to NTFP planning (Cocksedge [editor] 2006), and it is essential to clarify the location and extent of traditional use territories even when it may appear that no one is “using” an area.

The level of collaboration that a First Nation/ band has experienced with other organizations can vary greatly. The Nuu-chah-nulth, for example, have a “standards for research” protocol as well as a Research Council Ethics Committee and a contact person at their Tribal Council. In other instances, the relationship is far less formal and regulated, but the need to protect and respect the knowledge and culture of all parties involved still remains. There is no single rule or standard for developing alliances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups regarding NTFP resource use, yet it is universally important to demonstrate respect and a willingness to communicate meaningfully and clearly. This may entail extra work in scheduling meetings, arranging appropriate facilitation, making space for informal as well as formal conversations, understanding that relationship-building can take time, travelling to a meeting place that is considered best by the First Nation or band, or establishing measures to ensure that all decisions are made transparently and cooperatively.

Resources for building contacts and examples of developed protocols for cross-cultural communications are listed below. Although these protocols should not be seen as applicable to all peoples and
situations, they offer good examples of how to work across cultures with respect and consideration.

Resources for building contacts

- The First Nations Forestry Council provides support to British Columbia First Nations on forestry-related issues. It has also participated in dialogue about community forestry and NTFPs with the BCCFA and FORREX. It is recommended that any community forest working with NTFPs consult with the BCCFA and the FNFC as a primary step. Their website is www.fnforestrycouncil.ca.
- The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation offers an annual online guide to Aboriginal organizations. It is based on the most current data available. However, participation is voluntary, and since not all organizations can be found there, local research may be necessary. Their website is www.gov.bc.ca/arr/services/guide.html.
- You can also find important background information on the treaty process and other matters at the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation website: www.gov.bc.ca/arr/.

Resources for developing protocols

- Protocols & Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context was developed by the University of Victoria, Faculty of Human and Social Development (2003): www.hsd.uvic.ca/policies/documents/igovprotocol.pdf.
- Standard of Conduct for Research in Northern Barkley and Clayoquot Sound Communities was developed by the Clayoquot Alliance for Research, Education and Training (CLARET), a partnership between the University of Victoria and the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (2005): www.clayoquotbiosphere.org/documents/science/CLARET_StdConV1.1_05.pdf.

2.2 Identified Constraint 2: Lack of Regulatory Clarity

Most NTFPs are not regulated in British Columbia. Currently, only Community Forest Agreements, First Nations Woodland Tenures, and First Nations Interim Agreements address NTFPs. These tenure holders may manage for NTFPs, yet there is no exclusivity (Tedder et al. 2002; Ambus et al. 2007), and there are no guidelines for how the management might be organized and carried out. There is no mention of NTFPs within woodlot licences.

The licensing process for the Community Forest Agreements supports the concept of local economic diversification through development of multiple compatible forest values. Section 43.3c of the Forest Act states that “community forests may harvest, manage, and collect fee for botanical non-timber forest products.” However, the granting of a CFA does not automatically give a community forest rights regarding NTFPs. Exclusive rights are granted for timber but there is no exclusivity for NTFP harvesting, and community forests cannot ask for the power to restrict access to Crown land (R. Greschner, Senior Timber Tenures Forester, Ministry of Forests and Range, pers. comm., 2008). The lack of ability to control access makes it difficult to invest in, or even manage, these species. Additionally, requirements for safety and insurance for commercial harvesters within Crown tenures are unclear. These issues of liability are discussed under Constraint 3.

2.2.1 Potential Solutions for Constraint 2

Find resources for navigating regulatory uncertainty

The Centre for Livelihoods and Ecology (CLE) maintains a list of law and policy resources for understanding the regulations regarding NTFPs in British Columbia and other provinces. These documents provide legal guidelines for the harvesting, processing, and selling of craft products, edible products, floral and greenery products, medicinal and pharmaceutical products, or whole plant extraction. The list is online at cle.royalroads.ca/law-policy-compendium.

The BCCFA website provides updates on news that is relevant to NTFPs in community forests, and information on related workshops or resources that have been developed in partnership with the CLE. See www.bccfa.ca. The Federation of BC Woodlot Associations also hosts information on agroforestry on their website, www.woodlot.bc.ca.

Consult with your provincial organization and government

If NTFP development is a goal of your community forest, consult the BCCFA and the appropriate contacts within the Ministry of Forests and Range as the CFA application is developed. Since
the rights to manage for NTFPs are not automatic, ensure that permission and guidelines are obtained prior to producing any plans or programs for NTFP harvesting.

2.3 Identified Constraint 3: Uncertainty Regarding Liability and Insurance

If a community forest officially sends harvesters onto the land or directly employs them, it could be liable for worker safety. On the other hand, harvester access to Crown lands cannot be restricted or controlled; therefore, harvesters are considered to be independent workers. The technicalities of a formal employer-employee relationship are complicated but significant. If harvesters register with WorkSafe BC, premiums for ‘wild plant harvesting’ are 1.8% of payroll (see Rates on www.worksafebc.ca under Agriculture CU 701027). If a harvester does not register with WorkSafe BC but is then injured while harvesting on community forest land, they are not entitled to make a claim to WorkSafe BC. Buyers of NTFPs do not serve as employers.

A community forest cannot be held liable for harvester injuries even if it provides maps and other information. If a community forest directly employs harvesters and pays them for their work, then an employer-employee relationship exists, and the CFA would be liable for any work-related injuries. As such, a community forest would need a group policy.

Group policies still require a single person or business entity to be identified as the employer, and the number of employees also has to be identified. There is also the option of a partnership policy, wherein each participant pays an equal premium and no individual is responsible as employer. However, the cost of this type of premium is identical to the high cost of an individual premium. Finally, if a community forest wishes to pursue a group policy for harvesters, the obligations and cost of that policy will depend on whether or not the community forest is structured as an incorporated company (corporation).

2.3.1 Potential Solutions for Constraint 3

Clarity and Openness with the Community Forest Whenever possible, discuss any NTFP plans openly and transparently with the community forest members and the community. If working with interested harvesters, clarify the implications of holding an individual premium.

Contact WorkSafe BC and other resources Prior to any involvement with NTFP harvesting, even if the involvement is restricted to the distribution of maps, consultation with a WorkSafe BC representative may help clarify the rights and responsibilities of a community forest organization and a harvester.

WorkSafe BC’s website is www.worksafebc.com/default.asp. Questions from employers and small businesses can be addressed by calling (toll-free) 1 888 922-2768.

The BC Forest Safety Council may also be a source of information on how NTFP harvesting activities can interact with timber operations. NTFP harvesters should follow all safety guidelines for using forest land, and should stay away from active logging areas and use roads wisely.

The website is www.bcforestsafe.org/.

2.4 Identified Constraint 4: Determining an Appropriate Role for a Community Forest

Timber operations remain the primary priority and source of income for community forests. Several survey respondents noted that the economic value of NTFP development is still unproven and that economic concerns limit current capacity. Therefore, further investment in NTFPs may be minimal until more data and resources are available. The synergies between managing for NTFPs and other values, such as cultural use, biodiversity, or wildlife, are still unclear or unknown by most resource managers.

Respondents noted that appropriate roles for their community forests in promoting the NTFP sector still need to be determined. A community forest may choose to facilitate the harvest of NTFPs on its lands by other groups or individuals, or it may pursue a more active business plan based in the community forest. Other priorities such as timber harvest may lead a community forest to take a more limited role in NTFP development. As one respondent stated:

*We would rather facilitate NTFP operations than be intimately involved in them. We may take an active*
role in certain aspects of management (perhaps something like modified silvicultural practices) but would prefer to help other groups develop sustainable NTFP operations.

Conversely, the presence of other pressures on the forest, such as mountain pine beetle infestation, may produce more dialogue around alternative resources such as NTFPs. Community forest respondents from interior and northern regions consistently indicated their desire to learn more about NTFPs as directly related to the impacts of beetle infestation on their land base.

2.4.1 Potential Solutions for Constraint 4

Explores local interest in NTFP activities See resources under Identified Constraint 1.

Decide on the scale of NTFP involvement that is appropriate for your community forest The degree of involvement with NTFP development that is feasible for a particular community forest may be anything from passive support and facilitation to active engagement. However, this role also needs to be determined through collaboration with local Aboriginal groups. No matter where a forest is on the spectrum of compatible management, steps can be taken towards supporting economic diversification through the harvesting of NTFPs if all stakeholders agree to that goal (Cocksedge et al. 2010). Depending on a community forest’s priorities and resources as an organization, and on the desires of local Aboriginal organizations, the community forest may choose to:

- provide maps and information about access, when asked
- keep the community informed about changes to NTFP policy and research
- host or organize a community discussion with Aboriginal groups about traditional uses of NTFPs
- communicate with other community organizations about NTFP harvesting and management
- communicate with harvesters about retrieving native plants prior to road building
- make “best practices” and safety modules, workshops, and other information available
- use revenue to co-ordinate/support a certified community kitchen that can be used for NTFP processing
- hold a call for proposals and fund local NTFP projects
- promote safety by notifying harvesters about when and where logging will take place
- post “enter/harvest at your own risk” warnings at access points
- make NTFP sector development a formal part of an annual plan
- assign responsibility for NTFP planning and make it part of a job description
- collate species inventories
- create a long-term “cycle” plan of NTFPs that may be harvested sustainably at different stages of succession
- provide for group safety through insurance and/or possible regulation/licensing
- market products with community forest, or local, wild branding

2.5 Identified Constraint 5: Capacity for Initiating Non-timber Forest Product Development Projects

As community forests attempt to cope with multiple priorities, they commonly experience financial difficulties that restrict their ability to take on new initiatives. Community forests indicated that they may wish to learn more about the possible costs and benefits of NTFP development, but do not have the resources to conduct the necessary ecological inventories or do research to quantify NTFP interest in their communities. Inconsistency of project-to-project funding for conducting an appropriate cost/benefit analysis of local NTFP development, and/or a lack of knowledge about where to look for funding sources, are also issues. Respondents noted that even when funds are obtained, they may be minimal or run out before the project is completed.

Community forests also have commitments to promote local capacity. Respondents acknowledged that activities such as marketing analysis may require outside expertise, but there is uncertainty about who to contact or how to afford these services. Inexpensive “in-house” solutions are preferable, and the community forest mandate includes supporting regional expertise. However, community forests typically have a small staff with many responsibilities, and volunteer time and energy is central to their growth and development. It may be difficult to begin or expand initiatives when so much reliance is placed on unpaid labour.
2.5.1 Potential Solutions for Constraint 5

*Expand searches for financial support* Some possibilities for expanding funding support include:

- taking training on proposal/grant writing
- encouraging university researchers to conduct projects on community forest lands
- seeking funding for broader concerns such as mountain pine beetle or community economic development initiatives, where new money may be available. For example, Western Economic Diversification Canada has funded numerous community capacity projects in British Columbia (www.wd.gc.ca/eng/16.asp).

2.6 Identified Constraint 6: Ecological resource Constraints and Access

Community forests in different ecological regions said they may have challenges in developing the NTFP sector in their areas because they do not have quantities of species that are currently of commercial interest. In addition, lack of roads and trails in remote areas may limit access for identification of species and future harvesting. Some community forests have significant numbers of commercially valuable species, such as pine mushroom or salal, and have already encountered issues of “poor practices” and over-harvesting in areas close to the rural-urban interface. These examples of constraints and access may be overlapping; therefore, attention to multiple issues in the community forest is required.

2.6.1 Potential Solutions for Constraint 6

*Develop an accurate picture of NTFP resources in the forest* Most community forest managers are aware of the species found in their area. In some cases, the managers have conducted surveys of species and recorded field notes on their location and abundance. For example, if a mushroom area is known, walking visits of the site can help assess its potential.

To understand the habitat potential for identified NTFP species, see other guides in this series, including:

- Compatible Management of Timber and Pine Mushrooms
- Creating a Regional Profile for Non-Timber Forest Products
- What about the Berries? Managing for Understorey Species

It is also possible to develop an initial understanding of habitat potential for various NTFPs by using available conventional maps and data.

- The British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range, Research Branch has produced a Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification (BEC) program, which provides biogeoclimatic zone maps and field guides for each forest region. The website is www.for.gov.bc.ca/hre/becweb/
- Once the BEC zones and subzones have been identified within a region, it is possible to obtain a list of key understorey vegetation species and their relative abundance through the regional field guides. The field guides are available at www.for.gov.bc.ca/hre/becweb/resources/classificationreports/index.html

- Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping (TEM) and Predictive Ecosystem Mapping (PEM) can be queried for selected NTFPs since some are indicator species. More information on this mapping, including data access, can be found at www.env.gov.bc.ca/ecology/tem.
- Depending on the level of detail desired, initial overviews of predicted habitat can be obtained from the sources mentioned above and from open-source GIS software options such as Quantum GIS and Saga GIS. However, for more reliable estimates of presence and abundance of the species within your area, a GIS technician can use attribute tables, starting with the ecosystem data but also including other known attributes such as forest cover, elevation, proximity to access, etc. Table 1 provides an example of a query.

Ecosystem mapping can aid in predicting where to find a species; however, it cannot predict resource quality and usability. Inventories of high-quality areas (such as productive berry patches) are necessary to adequately assess available abundance. Therefore, a community forest might also consider conducting an ecological inventory specific to NTFPs, or to incorporate NTFPs in other inventories by recording

6 See Appendix 3 for NTFP species and related activities that are currently under way in British Columbia’s community forests.
their cover and quality ratings. Methods for including quality ratings, and criteria for rating quality for a number of NTFP species, can be found on the CLE website (www.royalroads.ca/cle), and in selected regional forest guides.

The Forest Analysis and Inventory Branch of the Ministry of Forests and Range maintains a list of forest vegetation inventory projects, including resources and downloads for software, and standards and procedures. The website is www.for.gov.bc.ca/hts/inventory.

Forestry regimes are changing in order to deal with problems. For example, mountain pine beetle infestation is causing concern over how the resulting devastation will affect the quantity and quality of NTFPs over time. Research organizations may already be compiling ecological research data on NTFP species and successional responses to such stressors. Community forests should familiarize themselves with any resources available through the BCCFA, CLE, and other organizations, and maintain a current list of who is compiling data and what data are available.

**Assess issues related to road access/remoteness**

Many community forests have a relatively large land area and few roads or access points, which may limit NTFP harvesting potential in their area. Making maps of roads and trails in the community forest publicly available is helpful for understanding public access. But access points often affect traditional harvesting grounds. However, if the community and local Aboriginal groups are in agreement, development of new trails that offer both recreation use and new access points for NTFP harvesting in select areas can be considered. Due to liability issues noted in Identified Constraints 1 and 2, a “harvest at your own risk” sign could be posted at these access points.

**Poor harvesting practices**

Too much access to community forest land can also create issues. A given community forest may already have been subjected to unsustainable harvesting practices. This can have an impact on forest health as well as Aboriginal peoples’ dependence on NTFPs. For example, the stripping of white pines for boughs has damaged timber in some regions; this presents a challenge for both tenure holders and the Ministry of Forests and Range. There currently is no mechanism for enforcement of best practices with regards to harvesting or for controlling access to community forest land. Community forests that have already been affected by these issues may wish to share their experiences and solutions at the BCCFA Annual General Meeting, or with the Ministry of Forests and Range. Any economically based harvesting practices should be co-ordinated with local Aboriginal groups to prevent damage to their traditional resources.

- The CLE offers a guidebook that includes best practices for coastal harvesting and reviews some how-to’s of harvesting, handling, and marketing NTFPs. A Harvester’s Handbook: a guide to commercial non-timber forest products in British Columbia (Coastal Edition) is available on the CLE’s website http://cle.royalroads.ca/node/100.

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**TABLE 1 Example of GIS query for black huckleberry (Vaccinium membranaceum) predicted habitat in the Fort St. James area**
2.7 Identified Constraint 7: Understanding Marketing for Specific Products

In order to commercially develop a specific product, discussions must be held with Aboriginal groups, an inventory must be done to quantify the product’s saleable value on the land base, a business plan must be developed, and a market must be identified. A business development plan can help assess a number of costs and benefits, provide a basis for an inventory, and outline market considerations. Appendices 4 and 5 provide information on business plan development and NTFP buyers. Prior to the development of a business plan, interested parties in community forests can conduct research and network with knowledgeable individuals to better understand how different types of NTFPs are marketed commercially, if a market exists for a product, and/or how to create a market.

The following are general categories of NTFPs that are typically marketed commercially in Canada (Gagne 2004):

- food products (e.g., mushrooms, berries, roots, fiddleheads)
- health products (e.g., herbs for tinctures, bark, fungi)
- floral greens (e.g., salal, sword fern, Oregon grape, mosses)
- essential oils (e.g., from cedar boughs or herbs)
- arts (e.g., various woods for crafts, wreaths)
- native whole-plant landscaping (e.g., ferns)

It is important to note that some NTFPs may be considered “special crops,” which are subject to policies under the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. According to the Ministry, “these special crops are typically on small acreage (owned or leased) and often involve adding value. They are mainly organic by choice, but may also be organic by default as in most cases no pesticides are registered in relation to their growth. Special crops fall into non-traditional use areas such as aromatherapy, essential oils, herbal medicines, nutraceuticals, functional foods, fibre, floriculture, craft products and specialty oils. There is generally no marketing structure in place to support their development.”

Special crops may be:

- wildcrafted products gleaned entirely from forests or grasslands,
- developed in an agroforestry setting in which a combination of trees and other crops are grown together, or
- entirely field cultivated, with the grower providing all the inputs.

2.7.1 Potential Solutions for Constrain 7

Build and acquire entrepreneurial expertise

- Ask another community forest or small-scale forestry organization for advice on business development for non-timber resources, and compare experiences.
- Collaboration with other community forests or woodlots occurs at the provincial level, but alliances can be developed at regional and issue-based levels as well. For example, community forests in coastal ecosystems may want to meet to discuss issues related to salal and mushroom harvesting. Community forests in the Interior have uniquely regional opportunities and challenges due to the forest ecology of the region. Also, issues of remoteness and access are more common in the Interior than on the Coast. Community forests might consider networking for berry production and implementing regional branding of berry products as a marketing strategy; branding of “community” products may also be an option.
- Host or speak with an entrepreneur in the NTFP sector. For example, community forests in coastal regions may want to contact some established floral greens industry stakeholders who work with salal, or who use white pine, balsam, and cedar boughs for essential oils and decorative wreaths. Contact information for businesses and buyers can be found in the Buy BCwild guide: http://buybcwild.com/buy-bcwild-directory.
- Many NTFP producers also attend the Buy BCwild trade shows, which are good places to meet people and see types of products that are being made. Although everyone’s business approach is different, many recommend trying out a product with friends and family, and trying a product at local venues, such as craft fairs and farmers’

7 For more information, see BC Specialty Crops Industry Overview, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands: www.agf.gov.bc.ca/speccrop/overview.htm.
markets, before preparing it for a broader market (see Appendix 5 for examples).

- Look to established NTFP associations for collaboration and support, and consider contacting other associations that are emerging across the province. Examples are:
  - Sapsuckers: an informal group of Vancouver Island maple syrup producers. For more information, contact Gary Backlund at backlundg@shaw.ca.
  - Kootenays Forest Innovation Society: an emerging organization that focuses on the many issues of NTFP development in the Kootenays. For more information, contact Tyson Ehlers: (tel) 250-226-7213 or (email) tysig@uniserve.com.
  - Matsiman: a website for all things mushroom. For more information, see www.matsiman.com/
  - Certified Organic Associations of BC: an umbrella organization for certified organic food producers. For more information, see www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/

Research background on desired category of NTFP

The CLE has published a number of guides and law and policy papers pertaining to specific categories of NTFPs as listed above. These include the following:

- Adding Value to Wild Foods: a Handbook for Entrepreneurs
- Adding Value to Floral Greens
- Good Practices for Plant Identification for the Herbal Industry
- Development of Good Wildcrafting Practices and Wildcrafter Certification for Medicinal Plants
- Law & Policy Compendium (See British Columbia sections on craft products, edible products, floral and greenery products, medicinal and pharmaceutical products, and whole plant extraction)

See http://cle.royalroads.ca/publications.

Obtain information on small business management
See Appendix 4.

Research possible buyers for products
See Appendix 5.

2.8 Identified Constraint 8: Lack of Awareness of New Information and Research

The volume and range of research on NTFPs continues to grow. While this research could be of enormous practical use to community forest managers, there is a lack of readily available information for resource managers, and thus a limited capacity for NTFPs to be integrated into community forest management. Furthermore, there currently is no NTFP research funding designated for Aboriginal organizations.

2.8.1 Potential Solutions for Constraint 8

The Centre for Livelihoods and Ecology

The CLE website contains updated publications, news of research, professional development modules, and community toolkits, as well as a calendar of events and the Buy BCwild trade show: http://cle.royalroads.ca/home.

Provincial government

The Ministry of Forests and Range’s website contains NTFP news and resources: www.for.gov.bc.ca/hre/ntfp/.


Provincial organizations

Organizations such as BCCFA and FBCWA hold information on NTFPs and agroforestry on their websites: www.bccfa.ca and www.woodlot.bc.ca.
The following section refers primarily to woodlots, although all of the information in this guide may apply to many types and sizes of woodlands, including private lands.

The large number of woodlots, their diversity, and their organizational structure distinguish woodlot forestry from the community forest context. There are also other important differences with regards to compatible management initiatives:

- For most operators, woodlots are a secondary source of income.
- While community forests are managed by various community-based organizations, individuals or families manage most woodlots (Titus et al. 2004).
- Woodlots have typically been small, ranging from 400 to 600 ha, with an average Allowable Annual Cut of 500 m$^3$. Recent policy changes have increased woodlot size to 800–1200 ha. This new scale will have implications for future management opportunities (Ambus et al. 2007).
- Currently, woodlots are organized into a number of associations, which are collectively known as the Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations.

Further research and collaborative efforts are needed to better understand the issues particular to woodlot management and NTFPs. As part of this report, we conducted a partial survey with woodlot managers. Although limited in scope, this survey revealed minimal participation by woodlot managers in the NTFP sector.

All woodlot managers who are interested in the NTFP sector are encouraged to liaise with one another at broader organizational levels, such as the Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations, and with research groups, such as the CLE, to maintain up-to-date knowledge about resources such as training, publications, and professional development opportunities.

### LITERATURE CITED


**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Professional development modules:**

- Professional development training modules are available through the Centre for Livelihoods and Ecology. The modules provide distance training options on compatible management for individuals and organizations such as forestry professionals, resource managers, academics, and private landowners.


**Website: [www.royalroads.ca/cle](http://www.royalroads.ca/cle)**

This website provides access to a broad range of NTFP-related information and is a “one-stop” website for resource managers and others seeking information on NTFPs. Along with downloadable documents, the website hosts searchable databases, including an NTFP bibliography, “Who’s Who,” and NTFP case studies.
Fifteen community forest managers in areas holding operating or probationary Community Forest Agreements (CFAs) were contacted by email with the assistance of British Columbia Community Forest Association (BCCFA) Extension Coordinator, Susan Mulkey. Ten managers completed the survey via phone or email. All were interested in the potential of non-timber forest product (NTFP) development in community forestry. The managers also raised many important considerations and concerns regarding future NTFP planning, as outlined below.

The goals of the survey were to:

- gather a baseline of the understanding that community forest managers have about the perception of NTFPs, both generally in the province and specifically within their boundaries.
- compile and analyze the contexts, experiences, and issues in each of the 15 community forests.
- identify the main concerns expressed by the survey participants and offer strategies for overcoming each constraint. The intent was to create strategies that can be used by resource managers, future community forest applicants, researchers, etc.

Survey #1: NTFPs in your community forest
Project Yo8-2021: Timber/NTFP compatible management extension
Case Study: Opportunities and constraints in community forests and woodlots

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Some questions may pertain to areas in which you do not have direct experience; you may leave these blank if you are unsure of a response.

1. Past and Present Experience with NTFPs
   1.1 To your knowledge, are NTFPs in your community forest being harvested for commercial purposes now? If so, which ones?
   1.2 Are any NTFPs harvested for non-commercial purposes (recreational, household use)? If so, which ones? Who harvests these products?
   1.3 Were there different NTFP harvesting patterns in the past? Why did they change?
   1.4 To what extent is this harvesting conducted by First Nations members in the area?
   1.4.1 Have First Nations people expressed interest in exploring more NTFP/cultural use opportunities?
   1.4.2 Have First Nations people expressed concern with regards to NTFPs? (e.g., loss of knowledge about plants with new generations and change; violation of traditional rights to harvest in certain areas).
   1.5 Does anyone request assistance for harvesting, such as maps, information, loans, etc.?
   1.6 When it comes to NTFPs in your community forest, who is most involved with this in your community (Harvesters? Forest managers? First Nations? Buyers? Researchers? Berry pickers?). How does the community forest interact with these groups now?
   1.7 On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being no involvement and 10 being very central involvement, how involved would you say that your community forest is overall in working with NTFPs? Explain.
   1.8 Have you ever attended a workshop, conference, or any other type of meeting related to NTFPs in relation to your work with the community forest? If so, when, and what did you learn from those experiences? What do you want to learn?
   1.9 Would you say that there is an interest in your community forest in making NTFPs part of your workplans in the future?
   1.9.1 If no—Why is there little or no interest? (e.g., area does not really have NTFPs; community forest has other more pressing goals and/or financial constraints; community forest does not see a need for incorporating NTFPs)
into their plans; it does not seem as if there is enough knowledge or resources to make NTFPs part of the community forest; fear that important cultural knowledge will be stolen and used out of its contexts by others).

1.9.2 If yes—What kinds of discussion, if any, have taken place in your community forest about the harvesting of NTFPs? For example, has the subject come up at meetings? Is there any mention of NTFPs in any of your workplans?

1.10 For those interested in doing more with NTFPs:

1.10.1 What specifically do you see as the obstacles to working with NTFPs in your community forest? (e.g., is it more low commercial value or lack of knowledge of the resource or markets?)

1.10.2 What would be most useful to help expand the NTFP activities? Try to be specific; for example, if you listed “lack of training” in the above question, try to describe the style of training and mode of delivery that would be most useful to your community forest users in particular (would they be interested in attending a workshop organized by the BCCFA, or would they prefer to have training in their community? Would most interested participants be new harvesters or more experienced harvesters looking to expand their knowledge and the tools available to them?)

2 Ecology and Known Inventories

2.1 To your knowledge, what types of inventories are present in the community forest area (e.g., PEM/TEM, VRI, Trim, etc.), and how recent/relevant/accessible are they? Who uses them and for what purpose?

2.1.1 Has any other ecological modelling been done in your area? If so, when were these conducted, by whom, and for what purpose?

2.2 Has any modelling been conducted with the goal of identifying NTFPs in your area?

3 Economic Activities

3.1 If possible, please describe the main types of employment held by people in the community forest area—in general in the region. Aside from forestry-related employment, what are other sources of income? Are there any people who supplement their income with activities such as berry picking or other side NTFP work? Please be specific and list any examples that you can think of.

3.2 Has the presence of a community forest, in your opinion, helped to keep jobs and opportunities open in the area, in general?

3.3 Is there a sense that people are looking for other sources of income, and that they would benefit from training and resources that would help them learn how to diversify their skills?

4 Context of Your Community Forest

4.1 Please briefly describe the history and context of your community forest.

4.1.1 What decision-making processes do you use? That is, who decides broadly how the community forest will be used? How would that decision be made? Who is responsible for day-to-day harvesting/access/management decisions? How are those decisions made? Who has input into management decisions and how?

4.1.2 How would you describe the goals of your community forest? How does the community perceive and use the community forest? From the following list of possible uses for the community forest, please rate them in your opinion as being very important to the community, of some importance, not very important, or completely insignificant:

- Recreation
- Cultural or subsistence use (e.g., berry gathering)
- Employment (e.g., forest technicians, commercial NTFP gathering, etc.)
- Aesthetic/biodiversity/preservation

4.1.3 What would you consider to be the most important contributions of the community forest?
Please list any sources for further reference, such as websites or important contact people.

4.2 Please describe any timber operations and other activities in the community forest area, both official and unofficial:
- Number of value-added activities (e.g., log sort yard, sawmill)?
- Formal recreation sites or trails? (yes/no)
- Research plots and activities (yes/no). If yes, approximately how many per year, and how many long-term research plot installments?
- Hunting? (yes/no)
- Protected areas? (approximate area?)
- AAC?
- Other?

Please list any observations, comments, information, etc., that were not addressed by this survey, as well as any further questions or concerns about NTFPs and your community forest, or with NTFPs and community forestry in general in British Columbia.
Ten community forests participated in this survey via phone or email: Fort St. James, Likely Xat’sull, Burns Lake, Westbank, Wells Gray, Prince George, Esketem’c, Khowutzun, Sechelt, and MacKenzie.

The following is a sample of compiled responses from the survey:

- Are NTFPs harvested commercially within your community forest, to your knowledge?
  
  YES: 6  
  NO: 4

- Are NTFPs harvested for subsistence/not for sale in your community forest, to your knowledge?
  
  YES: 10  
  NO: 0

- On a scale of 1–10, 1 being no involvement and 10 being very central involvement, how involved would you say that your community forest is in working with NTFPs?
  
  Rank 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
  Responses 2 5* 1 1 0 0 1 0 0 1*

  * One community forest gave two ranks: a rank of 2 and a rank of 10 to indicate change in involvement over time.

- Does anyone request assistance for harvesting, such as maps, information, loans, etc.?
  
  YES: 4  
  NO: 6  
  NOT SURE: 1*

  * One respondent answered both “yes” and “not sure if for NTFPs”.
APPENDIX 3  Reported non-timber forest product activities in British Columbia’s community forests, updated
November 2007

Species and products accounted for as harvested in community forests across the province:

- huckleberry, blueberry, saskatoon, wild raspberry, thimbleberry, chokecherry, wild strawberry, highbush-
  cranberry, soopolallie
- spruce, aspen, and birch burls for small box crafting
- spruce blocks for instrument making
- boughs for essential oils
- birch bark for decoration
- mushrooms: morels, chanterelles, boletes, pine, shaggy manes, giant puffballs
- decorative mosses
- salal: whole plants for native landscaping, boughs for wreaths
- devil’s club, wild sarsaparilla, prince’s pine

List of known activities in community forests:

- provision of maps
- joint proposal for research with the Centre for Livelihoods and Ecology and academic groups to assess
  mountain pine beetle impacts on non-timber forest products (NTFPs)
- plans to organize a First Nations workshop on NTFPs
- NTFP potential mapping using Predictive Ecosystem Mapping / Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping hybrid and a
  partial Vegetation Resources Inventory
- targeted zone modelling and site series typing with an independent firm on behalf of the local band: aware-
  ness of association of certain plants with certain sites
- NTFPs included in management plan: harvesting trials on medicinal plants and creation of tinctures from
  trials for sale in community
- organization of an agroforestry workshop with the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
- walking NTFP tour in forest
- provision of road construction information for whole native plant salvage harvesting
- use of willow and fern for site restoration
- almost all managers attend NTFP workshops at British Columbia Community Forest Association and other
  venues
Niche positioning of forest products

Some community forests have expressed interest in labelling their products as “locally harvested,” “sustainably harvested,” or “traditional,” or with an identification that supports Aboriginal peoples, and then selling the products to an urban market.

Obtaining organic certification is another possibility, but this can take five years and may incur costs. “Best practices trained” certification of individual harvesters is also a possibility.

- Many companies that sell herbal remedies or botanical products purchase from growers around British Columbia but may require certain growth standards, such as adherence to an organic program. It is best to research a few companies and contact them about their practices and standards.
- Gourmet restaurants, especially those that use local food, may be interested in purchasing mushrooms or herbs, but research into the willingness of a restaurant to purchase products and the feasibility of transport is necessary.

If you are considering selling a non-timber forest product (NTFP) to restaurants, consult the Guidelines for B.C. Food Producers & Processors on Selling to Food Service Distributors. It is available from the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/pdf/fsd_manual.pdf), and is listed on the “Recommended Reading for Vendors” page of the British Columbia Association of Farmers’ Markets website (www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/ven_links.htm).

Please see important information under “Food safety considerations and regulations” below.

Participation in the international market requires competition with established corporations. However, entrepreneurs in the natural products market have successfully created select types of high-end products on a smaller scale. It is best to research the market online or via word of mouth to obtain current information because contact information changes frequently. However, you may want to start your contact search with the Buy BCwild Directory, which lists buyers and products from across the province (http://buybcwild.com/buy-bcwild-directory). This is also available online at http://cle.royalroads.ca/node/183.

Business plan development

This topic is beyond the scope of this guide, but there are several online resources that provide guidance on the creation of an NTFP business.

- The BC Agriculture Knowledge Platform is the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands comprehensive online source for agri-food information. It contains numerous free resources on the marketing of specialty crops and how to develop and write a business plan, promote products, manage transportation issues, grade price and quality, and finance small specialty business ventures. Also included are financial management resources and tools, and information about business registration and licences. www.kmwpp.ca
- Authorization forms for Christmas trees, adventure/recreation tourism, wildlife, and trapping can be found at the Front Counter Service of British Columbia’s natural resource ministries: www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca/authorizations.html.
- The Community Futures Development Association of British Columbia represents a network of individual community development corporations throughout British Columbia. www.communityfutures.ca
- Small Business B.C. was co-founded by Western Economic Diversification Canada and the British Columbia Ministry of Small Business and Revenue. Small Business B.C.’s website contains resources about business startup and registration requirements, such as GST and licencing. www.smallbusinessbc.ca
- The Ministry of Small Business and Revenue offers an online service, BizPal, which can provide a customized list of all possible government permits and licences that you may need to operate a business. (It contains limited information for unincorporated areas, so many rural users will need to contact their regional district instead.) www.bcbizpal.ca

APPENDIX 4 Laying groundwork for a marketing plan and other considerations
The Aboriginal Business Service Network provides business information services for First Nations and bands across British Columbia, as well as contacts for local organizations. www.absn.ca/

Food safety considerations and regulations

There are important regulations to consider when developing business plans for food products such as mushrooms or berries. British Columbia requires training through the provincial FOODSAFE program for many, but not all, activities related to selling and handling food products. FOODSAFE offers numerous courses and certification in many communities across British Columbia. Additional information can be found at www.foodsafe.ca/.

The BC FOODSAFE Secretariat recommends that anyone with questions about the need for certification first consult their local health authority, which can then direct them to the appropriate health and safety measures, if necessary. Contacts for regional health authorities can be found at www.foodsafe.ca/ha_food_safety.

The Small Scale Food Processor Association provides resources about food safety that are geared mainly towards agriculture: www.ssfpa.net/.

The Small Scale Food Processor Association also provides a directory of specialty food products across British Columbia, including a category for “wild types” of products. The directory can be searched regionally, by season, or by food type: www.ssfpa.net/bcsfd.

A community that has many NTFP species may want to rate the requirements for products such as fresh mushrooms, herb blends, or berry jams to determine which product is “easiest” to produce safely, to prepare for sale, and to transport. These general guidelines are a start, but you will need to check the official food safety regulations in each case:

**Fresh foods** Mushrooms and berries that are sold “as is” will need to be quickly transported to market, and possibly refrigerated. These products are often sold for cash in informal, local markets or to buyers, but safety regulations should still be followed.

  *Investment:* bags/boxes, vehicle, refrigerator, coolers
  *Advantage:* may not require packaging materials or processing
  *Disadvantage:* can be difficult to get to market quickly

**Dried foods/teas** Herbs that are used in spice blends or for teas need to be dried on a commercial quality drier and must reach a certain level of dehydration to prevent mold and assure preservation. These products can be sold in bulk but may be more profitable if packaged in small amounts and advertised as gourmet and wild products.

  *Investment:* dryer, packaging, and labels
  *Advantages:* may be easier to store and transport larger quantities than fresh foods or jams; there is no need for a certified kitchen if the proper requirements can be met

**Jams/jellies/spreads** The high acidity of jams and jellies makes them less likely to host bacteria, so they are a lower risk category of prepared foods.

  *Investment:* vehicle, boxes, jars and lids, labels, canning supplies, outfitting of home kitchen or use of certified kitchen
  *Advantages:* a small business may be run out of a home kitchen if the proper requirements can be met, so the use of a certified kitchen may not be required
Floral buyers

Most buyers and wholesalers are based out of Richmond, Burnaby, and Vancouver. Check online Yellow Pages under “florals,” “floral auctions,” or “floral wholesalers” for listings.

Herb, spice, and foods buyers

The BC Herb Growers Association maintains a directory of members and informative links: www.bcherbgrowers.com/.

The National Herb and Spice Coalition maintains some information and links as well as a small list of buyers across Canada: www.saskherbspice.org/CHSNC/index.html

Mushrooms

Matsiman.com is an online resource for mushroom growers and harvesters. It provides information for Canada, the United States, and elsewhere around the world: www.matsiman.com/index.htm. The site also provides a list of various mushroom buyers: www.matsiman.com/buysellshrooms.htm.

Farmers’ markets

The British Columbia Association of Farmers’ Markets maintains an updated list of markets online: www.bcfarmersmarket.org/findamarket.asp.

The website also lists current health regulations for vendors at farmers’ markets, guidelines for how to start a new market in your area, and suggestions for vendor promotion and success, which may be of interest to those looking to market NTFPs.

Many local markets also have their own web pages. Markets exist as far north as Fort St. John.