

NEWS RELEASE



USDA FOREST SERVICE, 160A ZILICOA STREET, ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

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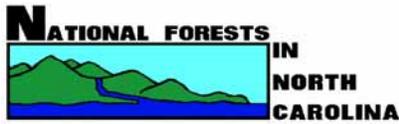
US Forest Service Seeks Comment on Forest Botanical Products Policy

Asheville, NC—The U.S. Forest Service has extended the comment period for public input on the Sale and Disposal of Special Forest Products and Forest Botanical Products Final Rule. The comment period will now end March 2. Detailed information and how to comment may be found on the web at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-1960.pdf>

The rule provides consistent national policy for gathering special forest products and forest botanical products on National Forest lands and contains guidelines for setting permit prices. Currently special use permits are required for collection of forest products for commercial or personal use. “We don’t expect major changes in prices for permits”, stated Dale Remington, Sales Forester for the National Forests in North Carolina. Berry picking and nut gathering for personal use does not require a permit.

The National Forests in North Carolina has one of the largest special forest products programs in the nation. This can be attributed to the great diversity of ecosystems in the Southern Appalachians and a long local tradition of gathering special forest products from these mountains. Revenue from these permits has averaged \$60,000 over the past three years. This money is used to manage the program to ensure that these special forest products are not overharvested. Prices for forest botanical products are set based on a percentage of current wholesale market values. The most common special products gathered from the National Forests in North Carolina include galax, ginseng, firewood, locust posts, rhododendron and laurel plants and roots, ramps, and medicinal plants.

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High demand for forest botanical products can result in high impacts on some species products. The US Forest Service is mandated to manage the forest resources sustainably. Through the permit system and the support of forest users, healthy populations of these forest botanicals can be sustained into the future. The return is direct and it benefits the same areas some families have enjoyed for generations.

Permits should be acquired at the Ranger District office closest the site in which you intend to harvest. For a copy of the rule, a complete list of all products, and fact sheets for certain species, reference the National Forests in North Carolina website at <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/resources/botanicals/botanicals.htm>

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