

Forest Products Modernization Innovation Underway

Huckleberry Permitting on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Overview

In 2017, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest developed an online, fillable PDF form to permit free-use forest resource harvesting. The electronic format has given the forest the capacity to accommodate the high volume of requests for huckleberry permits. The forest has also transitioned to electronically permitting mushroom harvest. With the new system, permitting on the Gifford Pinchot is more efficient, simple, and secure.

Ingredients for Success

Leadership, collaboration, and communication occurred at several levels. Specifically, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest:

- Worked with leadership from the Chief Information Office to set goals and move the project forward.
- Ensured successful implementation of all project components by involving the Pacific Northwest Regional Office and field personnel.
- Avoided delays in project development by including Information Technology Security staff early in the development to address the online collection of public information.
- Facilitated the transition to the new process by conducting communication and outreach to the public.

Lessons Learned

Several advantages of electronic permitting on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest include:

- Receiving generally positive feedback about the simplicity and efficiency of the new process from the public after an initial release of the online interface.
- Securely collecting and storing names and contact information for permittees, allowing enforceability of harvesting restrictions and permitting limits.
- Consolidating information about resource harvesting into a single, easy-to-use online location.

Despite the advantages of the new system, the forest has encountered challenges ensuring system accessibility for some huckleberry users. The forest is working to remedy these issues.



Huckleberry plant in the forest. USDA Forest Service photo.

Next Steps

The forest is considering expanding online permitting to other free-use products. In addition, the forest hopes to work with the agency-wide, online Natural Resource Manager to spread the program to other forests that could benefit from online permitting of certain forest resources.

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