

In the U.S. how Public Forests Nourish and Heal Millions

Scientists at the United States [Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) Forest Service have conducted a study to estimate the amount of food and medicine harvested from forests in the United States.



Study

The study estimations were done using publicly available data, [hunting surveys](#), and proprietary data from the Wild Harvest Initiative.

The researchers applied statistical modeling to address gaps in data and provide [accurate projections](#), although they acknowledged limitations due to incomplete reporting and variability in harvesting patterns.

Data was extrapolated to provide estimates of [meal servings](#) based on accepted standards.

Study Findings

The overall estimation of plant-based food and medicine revealed that public forest lands provide large amounts of [biomass](#).

Over the ten years (2013 – 2022), about 9.25 million liters and 2000 metric tons of food and medicine were harvested from US forest [public lands](#), accounting for almost two million servings per year.

The US agencies (the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of [Land Management](#)) receive, on average, approximately \$570 thousand dollars in receipts from permits to harvest food and medicine.

From 2013 to 2022, these agencies received approximately 5.7 million dollars in receipts for these products. A decline in estimated harvesting reduced the estimated wholesale value of forest-harvested food and [medicine](#) during this period.

Approximately 9.9 million animals were harvested annually from public forest lands, producing more than 68 thousand metric tons of [wild meat](#), equivalent to 437 million servings.

The authorized number of animals grazing for a period of 30 days surpassed 15 million from 2007 to 2022. During this period, approximately three million metric tons of meat were derived from domesticated [livestock grazing](#) on public lands.

Researchers observed that hunting and foraging on forest lands remain integral to [food security](#) in rural areas, particularly in the western U.S., where public lands dominate the landscape.

Conclusion

The study firmly supports the well-known fact that a large volume of [forest-harvested flora](#) and fauna contribute to the health and well-being of a significant proportion of the US general population.

According to the study estimates, more than 255 thousand metric tons of forest foods and medicines are harvested across public lands in the [United States](#). This figure highlights the often-overlooked role of forests in providing sustainable, natural resources to meet growing nutritional demands.

In addition to highlighting the significance of harvesting wild flora and fauna in the United States, the case study of subsistence harvest in Southeast Alaska clearly depicts the potential benefits of recognizing the importance of these [natural resources](#) to its residents.

The researchers emphasize that improved [data collection](#) and reporting could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these resources, supporting better forest management and conservation practices.

An improvement in land management and food security and more effective utilization of natural resources can be achieved through rigorous [institutional efforts](#) recognizing the importance of forest food and medicines to people and communities.

Source:

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