Developing Niche Markets in WNC

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Assist Rural Businesses
Hire & Train Workers

• $1.974 million ARRA grant awarded to Land-of-Sky Regional Council through competitive process by USDA Forest Service’s Southern Research Station

• Goal – generate jobs for un/underemployed Forest Producers through diversifying products, marketing, and regional cooperation
Project Structure

- 15 Businesses and Non-profits in 9 counties in WNC selected through competitive process
- 4 Cooperating Organizations providing Technical Assistance, workshops, marketing, regional branding
- Regional Technical Advisors providing specialized assistance in fields such as legal, accounting, web design, and budgeting
Partners

USDA Forest Service’s Southern Research Station
Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
NCSU Department of Horticultural Science
NC Forest Service – Division of Forest Resources
Southern Forests Network
Project Accomplishments

- Market Analysis and Consumer Survey for Forest Foods
- 50:50 Marketing Cost-Share Program
- NCSU Extension information sheets for Forest Foods
- One-on-One Technical Assistance, marketing, branding
- Innovative eBook for forest product marketing and education
- Workshop series - *Does Your Forest Talk Money?*
- WNC Forest Owner’s Resource Directory: wncforestowners.org
- Curbside Consulting Workshops
- *WNC Forestry Success Stories* – video documenting workshops and on-site demonstrations
Project Results

- Led to creation/retention of 164 jobs directly
- 68+ estimated additional jobs in community
- $4.2 million estimated community financial impact
- 90% job retention rate
- Partnerships leveraged new projects:
  - WNC AgriVentures ($1.63 million)
  - WNC Farms & Forest ($200,000)
  - Urban Forestry collaboration
  - Local Foods & Farming collaboration
FURNITURE SPECIALTIES

FS website
Elly Wells
RECOVERING TRADITIONAL CHEROKEE DELICACIES

Turner HD Media/C. Edwards
GREEN RIVER FOREST PRODUCTS

Turner HD Media
HIGHLAND CRAFTSMEN

Photo by E. Anderson
NC MOUNTAIN MUSHROOM COOPERATIVE

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SMOKY MOUNTAIN NATIVE PLANTS ASSOCIATION
The Take-Away...

- Sometimes its all about the basics
- Know when to step aside
- Businesses are unique...and remarkably similar
- It isn’t just business, it *is* personal
- Not everyone wants to grow (or should grow)
- Folks like grants!...but not the *asterisk
- Well worth the effort
Take the Time!

It is appreciated.

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