



NEWS RELEASE

USDA FOREST SERVICE • FOREST PRODUCTS LABORATORY
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Fungi help foresee future of forests

Madison, Wis.— The biological diversity of tropical forests makes them excellent indicators of climate change and other environmental trends. Fungi on the Yucatan peninsula in Belize and on the Caribbean islands of Puerto Rico and Hispaniola are especially interesting indicators of forest health because of their close relationship with the plants, soil, and climate of the region.

However, in order to tap into this resource, there must be thorough documentation of the current species to allow for future comparison.

Currently stationed in Puerto Rico, mycologist D. Jean Lodge of the USDA Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory, and her team of researchers are creating an inventory of basidiomycete fungi in this tropical region. The inventory Lodge and her team are creating consists of over 1500 species, many of which were previously unknown.

Lodge's inventory will not only help document and predict future environmental trends, but will also share the wealth of knowledge they are collecting with others. "We are currently creating a variety of training workshops and identification guides," says Lodge. "These resources will then be available to various user groups in the region, including foresters, forest nursery managers, park and forest reserve managers, eco-tourism guides, teachers, graduate students, and professional mycologists."

Lodge recently received the Forest Service Chief's Award for Distinguished Science for her work in documenting the biological diversity of fungi in the Tropics.

In addition to Lodge, FPL research engineer Dr. Robert Falk received the Chief's Partnership Award for his work in implementing building deconstruction and lumber salvage as an alternative to demolition.

The USDA Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory was established in 1910 in Madison, Wis., with the mission to conserve and extend the country's wood resources. Today, FPL's research scientists work

with academic and industrial researchers and other government agencies in exploring ways to promote healthy forests and clean water, and improve papermaking and recycling processes. Information is available at FPL's Web site: www.fpl.fs.fed.us. Through FPL's Advanced Housing Research Center, (www.fpl.fs.fed.us/ahrc/), researchers also work to improve homebuilding technologies and materials.

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