



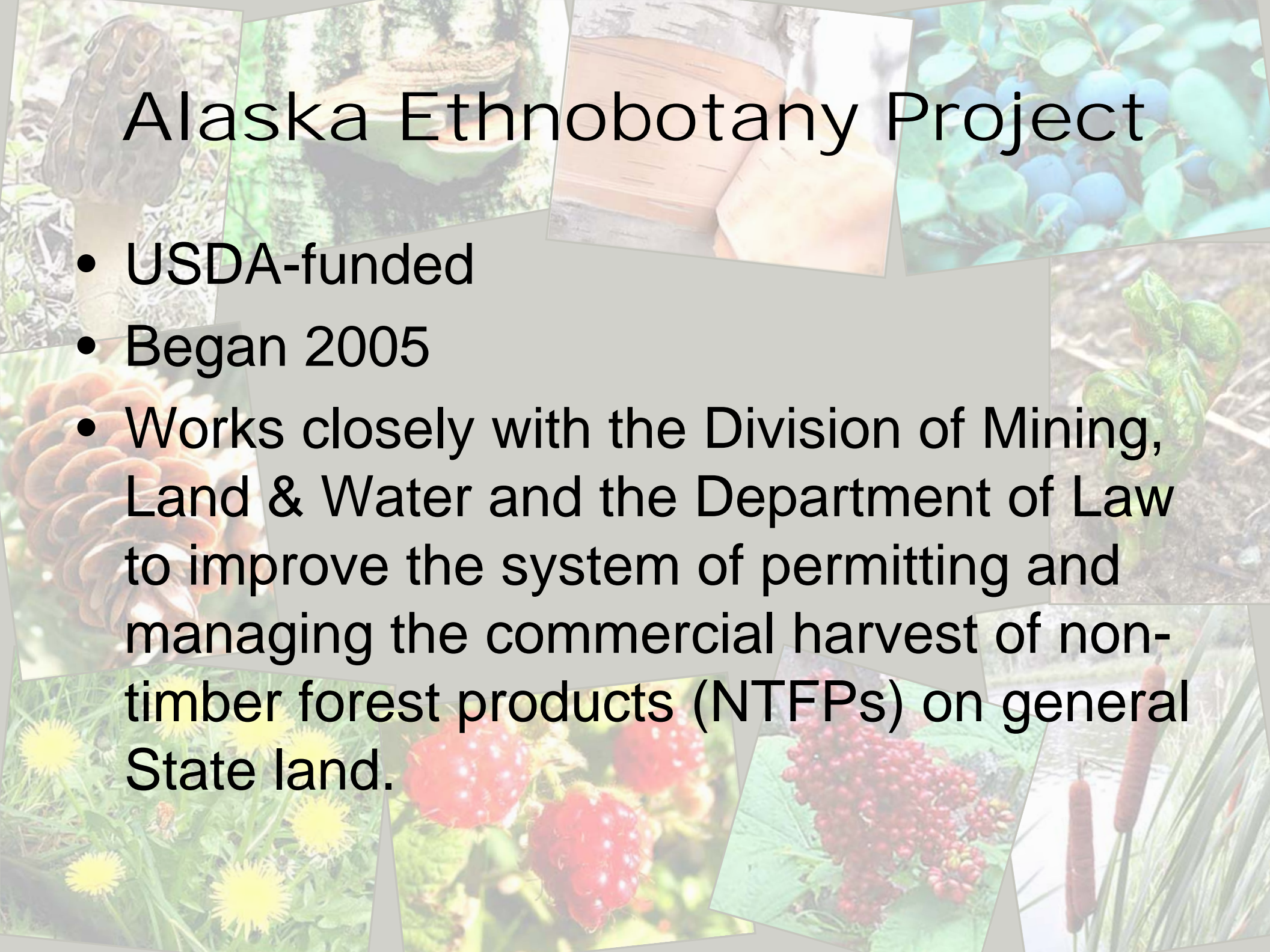
Balancing Commerce, Subsistence and Sustainability

Ethnobotany and Non-Timber Forest Products in Alaska



Alaska Ethnobotany Project

- USDA-funded
- Began 2005
- Works closely with the Division of Mining, Land & Water and the Department of Law to improve the system of permitting and managing the commercial harvest of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) on general State land.



Non-Timber Forest Products

- Generally defined as products derived from biological resources excluding firewood, saw-timber, pulpwood, cull logs, small round-wood, house logs, poles, posts, Christmas trees, minerals, animals, animal parts, rocks, water, and soil.
- Examples of non-timber forest products may include mushrooms, conks, boughs, cones, leaves, burls, landscaping transplants, roots, flowers, and fruits.





NTFP Examples

Here's Just a Few of Those Found in Alaska



Ethnobotany

- The study of the relationship between plants and people.
- Most, if not all, of the plants found growing in Alaska have historical, cultural, spiritual, or economic relationships with Alaskans both Native and non-Native.
- DNR is to “develop, conserve and enhance natural resources for present and future Alaskans” – quite the balance to keep!

Worldwide Phenomenon with Local Applications

- Rural and indigenous people worldwide participate in NTFP harvesting for cultural, personal-use and commercial purposes.
- In the U.S., it's very commonplace in the Northeast and the Pacific Northwest – think wild ginseng, black cohosh, matsutake mushrooms, fir boughs, floral greenery and moss....
 - Most NTFP research has been performed in third-world, tropical countries.

Worldwide Phenomenon with Local Applications

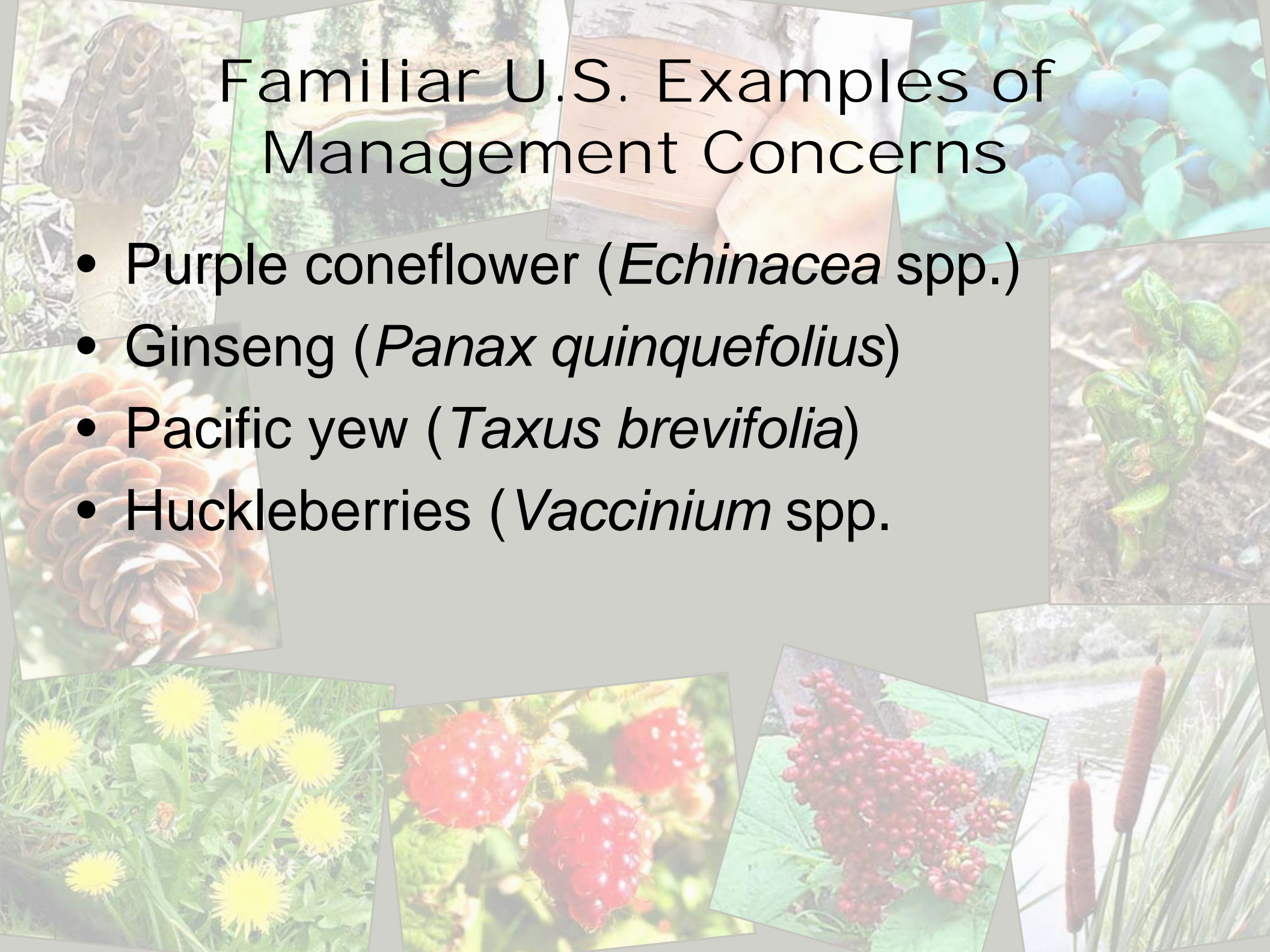
- In the U.S., including Alaska, NTFP usage goes back to “time immemorial,” but NTFP management is only recently hitting the radar again after decades of management for timber, recreation, grazing, etc.
- Perceptions of economic opportunity and plentiful biotic resources inspire more and more people to harvest various wild plant species for economic gain.
- Inventory, monitoring and oversight of NTFPs rarely fit management priorities – this is beginning to change.

Alaska Should Consider the Following in Its Management:

- Evaluations on sustainability of wild, native plants to prevent over-harvesting
- Input from Native Alaskans who may own intellectual property rights to the curative or nutritive values of native plants
- Adverse impact on subsistence gatherers
- Rules, regulations and policies in place in other states and countries to protect plants from over-harvesting while maintaining sustainability

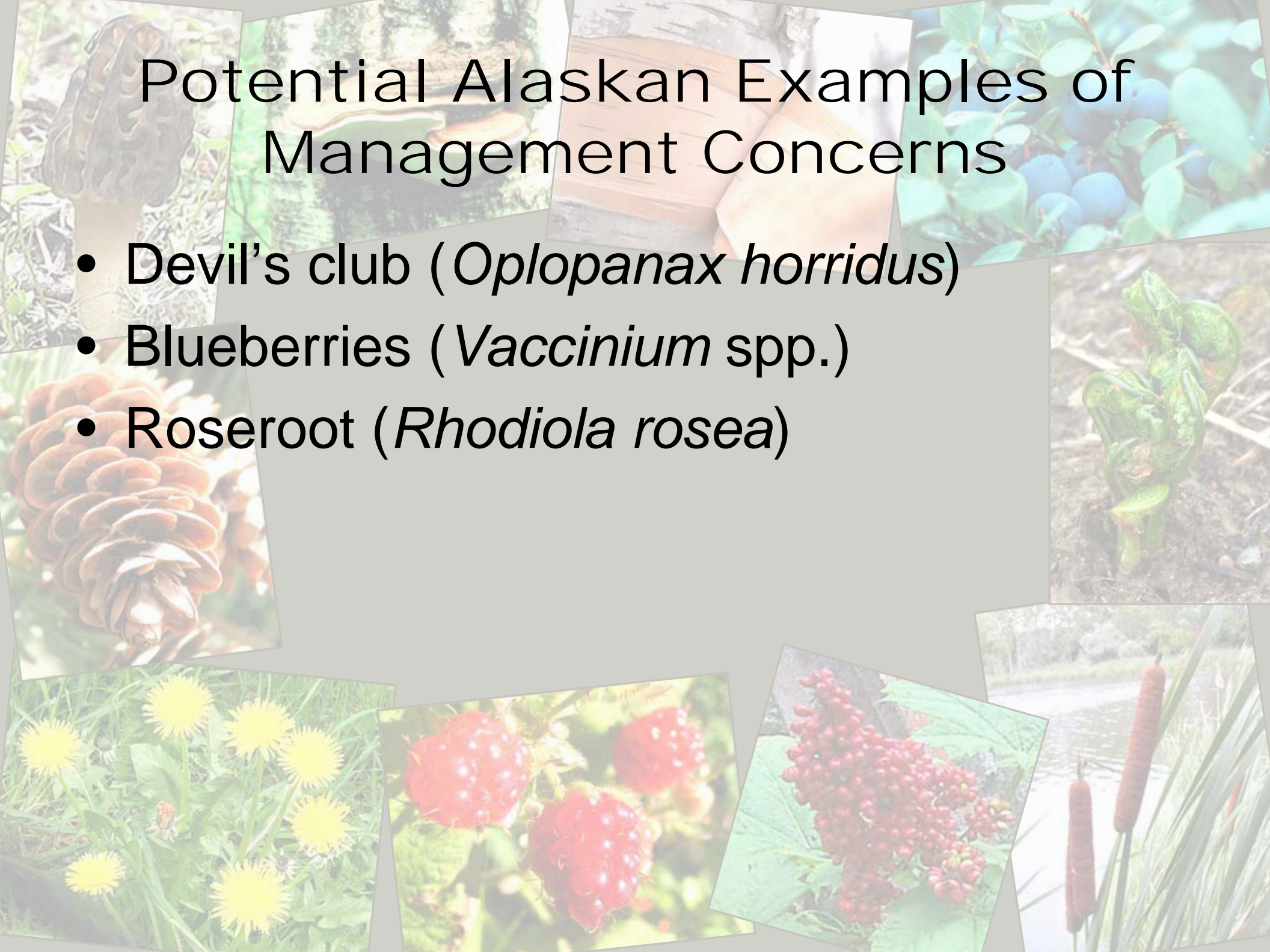
Familiar U.S. Examples of Management Concerns

- Purple coneflower (*Echinacea* spp.)
- Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*)
- Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*)
- Huckleberries (*Vaccinium* spp.)



Potential Alaskan Examples of Management Concerns

- Devil's club (*Oplopanax horridus*)
- Blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.)
- Roseroot (*Rhodiola rosea*)



The State's Proactive Approach

- Streamline the permitting process to get current harvest out from under the table
- Educational outreach – get harvesters informed of conservation and cultural issues AND of the legal requirements for harvest
- Start drawing a picture of management needs and usage patterns
- Future vision – create a full management and enforcement plan

Where We've Been

- Research NTFP harvest laws and regulations from most other states and many countries – how much do we need to reinvent the wheel?
- Gather harvesting standards from other organizations.
- Alaska is rather unique!





Where We Are Now

- Working with the Alaska Coastal Management Plan (ACMP) to streamline the permitting process for low impact NTFP harvest
 - Any activity requiring a permit that falls within a coastal zone must also go through ACMP revision (at minimum 30 days) unless it is already determined that the activity is generally consistent with the ACMP – we want to establish that.

Where We Are Now

- Alaska Non-Timber Forest Products Harvest Manual
 - The basis for the ACMP consistency determination
 - Draws a line between low-impact and higher-impact harvests
 - Establishes standards of careful harvest for most NTFPs found in the State



Where We Are Now

- Drafting an over-the-counter permit and associated regulations to back it up.
- Consulting with Alaska Native groups, University scientists, NTFP business owners and other involved/interested people to take different needs and perspectives into account.
- Designing research on effects of harvest on plants of interest – to get rolling this summer

Where We Will Be

- Regulations to manage higher impact harvesting activities and NTFP buying companies.
- More contact with and materials for harvesters and buyers – education, collaboration.
- User-friendly AND effective way to “develop, conserve & enhance natural resources for present & future Alaskans.”