

Indiana Department of Natural Resources - Division of Forestry

2012 Indiana State Forest Open House Summary

Between March and October 2012, the Division of Forestry conducted ten open houses. Each state forest management unit, with the exception of Salamonie River/Francis Slocum, participated in an open house event.

The purpose of the open houses is to provide information about the various programs at each state forest, create a venue for dialogue with neighbors/others and to receive written comments about the state forest's activities. All open houses were advertised locally and through a state-wide news release.

Each open house featured a number of displays. Areas of interest covered by the displays included Recreation Management, Resource Management, Land Management, Community Affairs, Property Direction and Staffing/Budget/Revenues. Each attendee was asked to register and comment sheets were made available. The comment sheet asked for any ideas they wished to share about that particular state forest. Division of Forestry/DNR Central Office staff attempted to attend each open house; however, as planned, much of the interaction was between the visitors and the property staff.

2012 marked the eleventh year of annual open houses for Division of Forestry properties. Local Conservation Officers were invited to attend, to both provide security and to answer questions. The District Foresters and the Division of Fish and Wildlife also provided displays and information at some open houses.

Total registered attendance at the 2012 open houses was 583. The highest attending events were those that were held in conjunction with other nearby public events. Most of the attendance (250) occurred at the Martin State Forest open house held at the Martin County Ag Day program. The second highest attendance (100) was at the Selmier State Forest open house event held during the Jennings County Fair. Other open houses held in conjunction with local community events included Owen-Putnam, held on the same day as McCormick Creek State Park's wildflower weekend (59 in attendance) and Greene-Sullivan, held in combination with Marsh Madness in Linton (44 in attendance). The remaining six open houses were attended by a total of 130 people. Formal, written comments were received at six of the ten open houses, with Greene-Sullivan SF, Owen-Putnam SF, Starve Hollow SRA, and Yellowwood SF each receiving one comment. Five comment sheets were received at the Ferdinand open house and six comment sheets were received at the Pike Open house. Details on attendance and comments received can be found in the attached table. Property staff, in conjunction with Central Office staff where appropriate, evaluated each comment and decided what, if any, changes should be made in their operations. Comments were sent to the Central Office to be compiled into a system-wide database for tracking.

The open house program is one of many ways the Division interacts with our constituents. All properties regularly receive suggestions on area management from our visitors. Properties send newsletters annually to all of our neighbors and to potentially affected neighbors of nearby management activities. All tract management guides that propose natural resource management at the tract level are posted on the State Forest web site with allowance for at least a 30-day comment period. Users of developed recreational facilities are given the opportunity to submit comment cards on the facilities they use.

The Division remains convinced that the open houses program is an important part of our public input process. The Division will be evaluating whether there are more efficient and effective formats than the current local open houses that we can use in future years. Notwithstanding potential changes in format, the Division will continue to provide information about scheduled forest management activities and opportunities for public input.

Comments Summary

Location	Forest Management		Recreation		Fish & Wildlife		General		Other	
	support	concern	support	concern	support	concern	support	concern	support	concern
Clark/Deam										
Ferdinand		1		1		1	5		1	
Greene-Sullivan						1		1		2
Harrison-Crawford										
Jackson-Washington/Starve								2		
Martin										
Owen-Putnam		1								
Pike				7		1	2		1	1
Selmier										
Yellowwood/Morgan-Monroe				1						
Totals		2		9		3	7	3	2	3

Notes:

--All of the comments received were reviewed by the Division of Forestry and placed into broad categories shown above. Copies of each of the original comments sheets are on file in the Division of Forestry. Some sheets contained more than one comment. Single comment sheets bearing more than one signature were counted as one comment sheet; however, the comments were counted individually in the appropriate categories. Comments received within 30 days of each open house are reflected in this summary. Phoned and emailed comments were counted as comment sheets.

--Comments in the "Other Issues" category included: continue to include recreation and tourism in future decision making, a request for budget information, a proposal to develop county toll roads, a suggestion of a store, and improvements to county roads into the property.