

2024 Indiana State Forest Open House Summary

Between October 22-24, 2024, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources - Division of Forestry conducted nine open house events. Each state forest participated in an open house. Each was advertised locally through newspapers and radio as well as regionally through a state-wide news release. Postcards announcing the event were also sent to neighbors and interested stakeholders. State Forests that held events on their property included Clark State Forest, Ferdinand State Forest/Pike State Forest, Greene-Sullivan State Forest, Harrison-Crawford State Forest, Jackson-Washington State Forest, Martin State Forest, Morgan-Monroe State Forest/Yellowwood State Forest, Owen-Putnam State Forest, and Salamonie River State Forest/Frances Slocum State Forest. Selmer State Forest conducted its open house event in conjunction with the event at Jackson-Washington SF, while Mountain Tea State Forest and Ravinia State Forest were held in conjunction with the Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood SF open house.

Designed as an opportunity in which detailed information about programs and activities held at each state forest can be distributed to the public, the open house events assist in creating a dialogue with neighbors and constituents and allow an opportunity to receive input on state forest management and policies. Each open house featured a number of displays and included such interest areas as recreation management, forest management practices (including timber stand improvement and invasive species management), land management, community affairs, property direction, etc. Properties also offered forester guided hikes to interested participants. Each attendee was asked to register, and comment sheets were made available for any suggestions or opinions that an individual wished to share on that particular State Forest. The division's Central Office staff also attended the open houses; however, as planned, much of the interaction was between the visitors and the property staff.

The year 2024 marked the 23rd year of the annual open house events for Division of Forestry properties. Local Conservation Officers, District Foresters, other DNR divisions, and partners of the division were invited to attend and to provide displays and information.

Total registered attendance at the 2024 open houses was 173, which was nearly 25% higher than the previous year's open houses. This year the highest attending events were Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood SF (36), Clark SF (35), Salamonie River/Frances Slocum SF (30), and Ferdinand/Pike SF (26). Greene-Sullivan SF, Harrison-Crawford SF, and Martin SF, had the lowest attendance of the properties.

Roughly 20% of the attendees attended the hike offered by the property. Discussions on the hikes encompassed a wide variety of topics including invasive management, multiple use management, prescribed burns, timber management, trail maintenance, High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF), and wildlife habitat.

Formal, written comments were received at four of the nine open houses: Ferdinand/Pike SF, Jackson-Washington SF, Owen-Putnam SF, and Salamonie River/Frances Slocum SF. Nine comment cards were submitted to the Division, an increase from previous year. A single comment card was received at Salamonie River/Frances Slocum SF, while two cards were submitted at Jackson-Washington SF. Three cards were received at both Ferdinand/Pike SF and Owen-Putnam SF.



Multiple written comments may have been received on a single comment card. Comments within the same card were counted individually unless they covered the same topic. For example, if a card was received that stated *fishing was great* and *trails needed maintenance* it was counted as two comments. However, if a card was received that stated *campground is great, campsite was awesome*, then it was counted as a single comment. Specific comments regarding individual management guides that are received through the Division webpage and comments from individual property emails received throughout the year are not included in this summary but were addressed individually as they were received.



Written comments were categorized into the following classifications: Forest Resource Management (8), Recreation (1), Fish and Wildlife (3), and General Division Operations (2). Comments concerning forest resource management included support for old growth forests and carbon sequestration by not harvesting on public land, support for forest management and especially for oak-hickory management through prescribed fires and mid-story removal, and how Forestry staff checks for rare, threatened, and endangered species. More specific topics included releasing the underplanting in Compartment 12, Tract 2 at Pike SF, adding additional protection to Compartment 4, Tract 8 of

Owen-Putnam SF, why the HCVF nomination process took so long, and a request to reconsider the Jordan Creek HCVF nomination.

The single comment pertaining to recreation was a concern for the need and cost of the gate at Rattlesnake Campground at Owen-Putnam SF. Comments relating to fish and wildlife included support for more warm season grasses and pollinator plantings, and concern for endangered species within harvest areas.

The general division operation comments included support for funding for the division to continue its forest management and provide recreation opportunities and commendations of the staff and of the property.

Verbal discussions during the open houses covered a wide variety of topics, including discussions on timber harvesting, oak management, managing private woodlands, trails, wildlife, hunting, fishing, invasive species, upgrades to property recreation features, and other forestry related issues. Specific topics pertaining to individual properties included discussions on specific trail repairs, recreation opportunities, and HCVFs.

Additional 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 systemwide database for tracking.

The open house program is one of many ways the division interacts with its constituents. All properties regularly receive suggestions on area management from our visitors. All tract management guides that

propose natural resource management are posted on the State Forest website and are open for, at minimum, a 30-day public comment period. Users of developed recreational facilities are also given the opportunity to submit comments on the Customer Satisfaction Survey cards.

The division remains convinced that the open house program is an important part of its public input process; however, we will also continue to evaluate whether there are more efficient and effective formats that can be utilized in future years. Notwithstanding potential changes in format, the division is committed to providing information about scheduled forest management activities and opportunities for public input.

2024 Comment Summary

	Forest Management	Recreation	Fish & Wildlife	General DoF Operations	Other	No. of Comment Cards	Total Attendance
Clark SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	35
Ferdinand/Pike SF	3	0	0	1	0	3	26
Greene-Sullivan SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Harrison-Crawford SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Jackson-Washington SF	0	0	2	0	0	2	13
Martin SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Morgan-Monroe SF/ Yellowwood SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	36
Owen-Putnam SF	5	1	1	0	0	3	17
Salamonie River SF/ Frances Slocum SF	0	0	0	1	0	1	30
Total	8	1	3	2	0	9	173

Notes:

--All of the comments received were reviewed by the Division of Forestry and placed into the broad categories shown above. Copies of each of the original comment 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. Phoned and emailed comments received as part of the open house event were counted as comment sheets.