

2025 Indiana State Forest Open House Summary

Between Oct. 28-30, 2025, 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 statewide news release, Division of Forestry webpage, and DNR calendar. 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 displays and included interest areas such 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 2025 marked the 24th 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.



prescribed burns, timber management, trail maintenance, High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF), and wildlife habitat.

Total registered attendance at the 2025 open houses was 156, which was down from the previous year's open houses. This year the highest attending events were Ferdinand/Pike SF (51), Clark SF (30), Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood SF (25) (although an estimated 25 individuals attended the Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood SF open house who declined to register). Harrison-Crawford SF, Martin SF, and Greene-Sullivan SF had the lowest attendance of the properties.

Roughly 16% 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,

Formal, written comments were received at two of the nine open houses: Ferdinand/Pike SF and Owen-Putnam SF. Nine comment cards were submitted to the division. A single comment card was received at Owen-Putnam SF, while the remaining eight cards were submitted at Ferdinand/Pike 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 (1), Recreation (12), Fish and Wildlife (1), Education (0), Volunteers (0), and General Division Operations (0). Comments concerning forest resource management included concern over logging and burning on public land. The comment regarding Fish and Wildlife concerns was a request to open more disabled hunter trails.

The remaining comments focused on recreation on the properties and ranged from supporting more primitive campsites at Ferdinand SF, encouraging upgrades to the campground at Pike SF (including water, electric, comfort station, and dump station) and concern over the maintenance of trails. Several comments also recommended additional playgrounds or upgrades to playgrounds.

Verbal discussions during the open houses covered a wide variety of topics, including discussions on timber harvests, hunting access, prescribed fire, trail maintenance, fishing, highwall projects, lake management, road management, cabins, and increases in fees.



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 used 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.

2025 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	30
Ferdinand/Pike SF	1	11	1	0	0	8	51
Greene-Sullivan SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Harrison-Crawford SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Jackson-Washington SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Martin SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Morgan-Monroe SF/ Yellowwood SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
Owen-Putnam SF	1	1	0	0	0	1	13
Salamonie River SF/ Frances Slocum SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Total	1	12	1	0	0	9	156

Notes:

--All 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.