

2009 Indiana State Forest Open House Process

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Between March 17 and April 25, 2009, the Division of Forestry conducted seven open houses. One additional open house was conducted at the newly acquired Covered Bridge State Forest on November 7, 2009. Each state forest management unit participated in one of the open houses.

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 displays covering the following areas of interest: Recreation Management, Resource Management, Land Management, Community Affairs, Property Direction and Staffing/Budget/Revenues. Each attendee was asked to register at the door and received a comment sheet. The comment sheet asked for any ideas they wished to share about that particular state forest. Each open house was attended by Division of Forestry/DNR Central Office staff, and as planned much of the interaction was between the visitors and the property staff.

2009 marked the eighth 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 2009 open houses was 441, significantly higher than the total attendance of 125 at the 2008 open houses. Most (312) of the attendance occurred at the Starve Hollow and Covered Bridge events. The Starve Hollow event was held on a weekend with a high number of recreational visitors on the area, many of whom attended the open house. The Covered Bridge event was a preview event for a new state forest which attracted a high number of equestrian users. The other five open houses attracted a total attendance of 129. Those in attendance submitted a total of 47 comments sheets. Details on attendance and comments received can be found in the attached table.

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.

2009 State Forest Open House Comments Summary

Location	Anti-Timber Mgt.	Recreation Support	Fish and Wildlife Concerns	General Support	General Concerns	Other Issues	Registered Attendance	Total Comment Sheets
Owen Putnam Greene-Sullivan		1				1	25	1
Martin							11	0
Morgan-Monroe Yellowwood	3			1		4	21	7
Harrison-Crawford	1						16	1
Starve Hollow Jackson- Washington Selmier						2	150	2
Ferdinand				2			29	2
Clark							27	
Covered Bridge		34					162	34
Totals	4	35	0	3	0	7	441	47

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: no logging in the backcountry area at Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood, logging is inappropriate in this housing market, leave it a forest rather than make forests more like a park, set aside 10% of the forest to become simulated virgin tracts with large trees, appreciate DNR work on invasive plant species control; concern about outcome of a boundary survey, interest in employment opportunities.

--Comments in the "Recreation Support" category at Covered Bridge related to excitement about the area opening soon and the inclusion of equestrian trails and facilities.