



2016 Indiana State Forest Open House Summary

Between April and October 2016, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry conducted 11 open houses. Each state forest participated in an open house. And this year Ferdinand State Forest held two events, one at the Ferdinand office and a second at the Pike office. Open houses were advertised locally through newspapers and radio as well as a statewide news release.

The purpose is to share information about programs and activities at each state forest, engage with neighbors and constituents, and receive input about the state forest's management and policies.

Each open house featured displays with topics that included recreation management, resource management, land management, community affairs, and property direction. Several properties hosted additional educational events such as guided hike or having an archaeologist present to identify artifacts. Staff asked each visitor to register and made comment sheets available. The comment sheet asked for ideas or opinions about that particular state forest. The Division's Central Office staff attempted to attend each open house; however, as planned, much of the interaction was between visitors and the property staff.

2016 marked the 15th year of the annual open houses for Division of Forestry properties. Conservation officers, district foresters, the Division of Fish & Wildlife, and partners of the Division were invited to attend and to provide displays and information.

Total registered attendance at the 2016 open houses was 192. This number, however, does not reflect contacts made at the Martin SF and Selmier SF events, which were held in conjunction with their county fairs. This year, the highest attending event was at Yellowwood/Morgan-Monroe SF (42), which was less than half of the attendance for this property at their previous open house. The remaining eight open houses were attended by a combined 150 registered people (although actual attendee numbers may be higher).

Formal, written comments were received at eight of the 11 open houses: Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA, Ferdinand SF, Greene-Sullivan SF, Jackson-Washington SF/Starve Hollow SRA, Owen-Putnam SF, Pike Unit of Ferdinand SF, Salamonie River/Frances Slocum SF, and Yellowwood/Morgan-Monroe SF. A single comment was received from the Clark/ Deam Lake, Pike, and Greene-Sullivan open houses while two comment sheets were received from the Jackson-Washington/Starve Hollow, Owen-Putnam, and Salamonie River/Frances Slocum events. Four comment cards were submitted at the Ferdinand open house; and nine cards were received at Yellowwood/Morgan-Monroe.

Verbal discussions/comments/questions were received at all open houses; however, most were typically general in nature and no written comments developed from the dialogs. Multiple 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 stated *fishing was great* and *trails needed maintenance* it was counted as two comments. However, if a card stated *campground is great, campsite was awesome*, then it was counted as a single comment. Specific comments on individual management

guides that are received through the Division webpage and comments from individual property Facebook pages are not included in this summary, but were addressed individually as they were received.

Written comments were categorized into the following classifications: forest management (7), fish and wildlife (1), recreation (10), the Division in general (5), and others (3). Comments on forest management included one comment supporting the current management program, two comments in favor of increased cutting, two comments in support of a 10 percent set-aside for old-growth conditions, and two comments against timber harvesting. Fish and wildlife concerns included a comment encouraging the creation of more early successional habitat, particularly for grouse.

Input on recreation, which received the highest number of comments, included one comment applauding the construction of the mountain bike trails at Yellowwood SF and a comment venerating the horse trails. Four comments supported building an overnight shelter on the Tecumseh Trail, and one comment suggested signs on Bartle Knob at Clark SF cautioning of horse traffic. A single recommendation was made for a new trail in Coyote Hollow at Ferdinand SF, and for expanding the day-use parking area and developing a connector trail at Owen-Putnam SF. One comment questioned the amount of attention received by horseback riders.

General comments included one questioning the integrity of the Division, one recommending additional help at Salamonie River/Frances Slocum SF, and one lamenting the tossing out of beer bottles along the trails. One comment complimented the upkeep and condition of the property, while the final commenter appreciated the fire tower.

Three comments were received in the other category and included two general *very nice* comments and one comment highlighting the great job of an employee.

Verbal discussion during the open houses covered a variety of topics, including timber harvesting, managing private woodlands, trails, wildlife, hunting, fishing, emerald ash borer, and other forestry related issues.

Additional details on attendance and comments are in the attached table. Property staff, in conjunction with Central Office staff where appropriate, evaluated each comment and decided what, if any, changes to make in 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 constituents. All properties regularly receive suggestions on area management from our visitors. Properties send annual newsletters to all of our neighbors and to potentially affected neighbors of 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 comments on the Customer Satisfaction Survey cards.

The Division remains convinced that the open-house program is an important part of our 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.

Comment Summary

Location	Forest Management		Recreation		Fish & Wildlife		General		Other		Attendance
	support	concern	support	concern	support	concern	support	concern	support	concern	
Clark/Deam	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Ferdinand	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	28
Pike	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Greene-Sullivan	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
Harrison-Crawford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Jackson-Washington	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
Owen-Putnam	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	34
Salamonie River	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	32
Yell/Morgan-Monroe	1	3	1	4	0	1	0	1	0	0	42
Selmier	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Martin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	3	4	3	7	0	1	3	1	2	1	150+

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 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 were counted as comment sheets.