



## **2017 Indiana State Forest Open House Summary**

Between May and October 2017, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry conducted 10 open houses. Each state forest participated in an open house, which were advertised locally through newspapers and radio as well as regionally through a statewide news release.

State forests that held events on their property included Clark State Forest/Deam Lake State Recreation Area, Ferdinand State Forest, Greene-Sullivan State Forest, Harrison-Crawford State Forest, Jackson-Washington State Forest/Starve Hollow State Recreation Area, Morgan-Monroe State Forest/Yellowwood State Forest, Owen-Putnam State Forest, and Salamonie River State Forest/Frances Slocum State Forest. Martin State Forest and Selmier State Forest conducted their open houses at the Martin and Jennings county fairs.

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. Open houses were advertised locally and through a statewide news release.

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.

2017 marked the 16th year of annual open houses for Division of Forestry properties. Conservation officers, district foresters, other DNR divisions, and partners of the Division were invited to attend and to provided displays and information.

Total registered attendance was 177, a nearly 10 percent decline from the previous year. This number, however, does not reflect contacts made at the Selmier SF event, which was held in conjunction with the Jennings County Fair. This year the highest attending events were Salamonie River SF/Frances Slocum SF (30), Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA (29) and Ferdinand SF (27). The remaining seven open houses were attended by a combined 91 registered people. (This includes an estimated 25 contacts made by Martin SF, whose event was held at the Martin County Fair, but not the total number of individuals who visited the booth. Actual attendee numbers may be higher). Although several properties increased attendance levels (Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA, Harrison-Crawford SF, and Jackson-Washington SF/Starve Hollow SRA), other properties (Greene-Sullivan SF, Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood SF, and Owen-Putnam SF) saw a decline in participation. It should be noted that while the attendance numbers for Ferdinand SF were similar to participation last year, in 2016 the property held two events, one at the Ferdinand office and a second at the Pike office, which may account for part of the decline in participation in 2017.

Three properties held forester-led hikes as a part of their events. The hikes were well attended at two of the properties (Ferdinand SF and Morgan-Monroe SF/Yellowwood SF); however, at Jackson-Washington

SF none of the participants attended the tour. Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA opened a recreation cabin to be viewed, and several properties (Ferdinand SF, Harrison-Crawford SF, and Salamonie River SF/Frances Slocum SF) advertised that the Division's archaeologist would be available to identify artifacts and answer questions. Greene-Sullivan's open house highlighted the recently completed high-wall project conducted by the DNR Division of Reclamation as well as the next high-wall project planned for the property.

Formal, written comments were received at four of the 10 open houses: Ferdinand SF, Jackson-Washington SF/Starve Hollow SRA, Morgan-Monroe SF/Yellowwood SF, and Salamonie River SF/Frances Slocum SF. Twenty-four comment cards were submitted to the Division. They were: a single comment at the Salamonie SF/Frances Slocum SF open house; six from the Jackson-Washington SF/Starve Hollow SRA event; eight from the Ferdinand SF open house; and nine from Morgan-Monroe SF/Yellowwood SF.

Verbal discussions/comments/questions were received at all open houses; however, most were general in nature and no written comments developed. 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 about 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 (21), fish and wildlife (1), recreation (5), education (5), the Division in general (2), and others (4). Sixteen of the comment cards referred to forest management, covering 21 concerns. One comment favored the current management plan; three comments opposed logging on the state forests; and six supported reduced harvest levels. Three general concerned-about-logging comments were also received. Two commenters were concerned about invasive control, and one comment worried that best management practices (BMPs) were not effective. Two commenters supported the non-DNR proposed set-aside areas, and one comment supported more old-growth areas. A comment supported the Yellowwood High Conservation Value Forest designation, while another commenter was concerned about the creation of a new nature preserve and encouraged that the State Forest remain for timber and recreation.

The single comment pertaining to fish and wildlife recommended reinitiating the trout stocking program at Yellowwood State Forest. Input on recreation included two comments that recommended updates to recreation facilities, two comments that were supportive of recreation on the property, and a recommendation to work with private landowners to help maintain the integrity of the trails.

Five comments were received about education. They included three commenters who appreciated the provided information, one comment that recommended forestry tours before, during and after harvests, and one comment that recommended a public education campaign.

General comments included one remarking on the great job of an employee and the second giving a general statement that they live adjacent to a property. The remaining four comments were categorized as other and included a concern about the cost of insurance for a special-use permit, a concern that public opinion was being ignored, a request to reduce motor vehicles, and the final comment appreciated the opportunity to meet with the district forester.

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

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 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

	<b>Forest Management</b>	<b>Recreation</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Fish &amp; Wildlife</b>	<b>General</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>No of Comment Cards</b>	<b>Total Attendance</b>
Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
Ferdinand SF	4	3	2	0	0	4	8	27
Greene-Sullivan SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Harrison-Crawford SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Jackson-Washington SF/ Starve Hollow SRA	3	2	0	0	1	0	6	9
Martin SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
Morgan-Monroe SF/ Yellowwood SF	13	0	3	1	1	0	9	20
Owen-Putnam SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Salamonie River SF/ Frances Slocum SF	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	30
Selmier SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>177+</b>

### 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 were counted as comment sheets.