



Indiana DNR Division of Forestry 2018 Indiana State Forest Open House Summary

In December 2018, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources - Division of Forestry conducted nine State Forest open house events. Each state forest participated in an open house, which were 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. In addition, several stakeholders posted information about the open houses on their websites and social media pages. State Forests who held events on their property included Clark State Forest/Deam Lake State Recreation Area, Ferdinand State Forest/Pike State Forest, Greene-Sullivan State Forest, Harrison-Crawford State Forest, Jackson-Washington State Forest/Starve Hollow State Recreation Area, Martin State Forest, Morgan-Monroe State Forest/Yellowwood State Forest, Owen-Putnam State Forest, and Salamonie River State Forest/Frances Slocum State Forest. Selmier State Forest conducted its open house event at the Jennings County fair in July.

Designed as an opportunity to publicize information about programs and activities held at each State Forest, the open house events assist in creating a dialogue with neighbors and constituents and allow an opportunity to receive their input on state forest management and policies. Each open house featured a number of displays and included such interest areas as recreation management, resource management, land management, community affairs, property direction, etc. Several properties hosted additional educational events such as a forester led hike, tours of facility improvements, tours of recreation enhancements, etc. Each attendee was asked to register and comment sheets were made available for any ideas or opinions that an individual wished to share on 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 the visitors and the property staff.

2018 marked the 17th 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 2018 open houses was 217, a nearly 20% increase from the previous year. This number, however, does not reflect the number of contacts made at the Selmier SF event, which was



held in conjunction with the Jennings County Fair. This year the highest attending events were Ferdinand SF/Pike SF (38) and Harrison-Crawford SF (32). The remaining seven open houses were attended by a total of 141 registered people. While most properties increased their attendance levels, several properties (Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA, Martin SF, and Salamonie River/Francis Slocum SF) saw a decline in participation at their events. Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA and Martin SF had the lowest attendance of the properties.



Four of the properties held forester-led hikes as a part of their open house events. The hikes at Ferdinand SF/Pike SF, Greene-Sullivan SF, and Owen-Putnam SF focused on recreation improvements on the property while Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA's hike highlighted recent management activities near the office. Greene-Sullivan SF's tour also included a tour of the reclamation project to remove the highwall on Narrow Lake. Jackson-Washington SF/Starve Hollow SRA held a tour of the ongoing dredging project designed to remove decades of accumulated sediment from Starve Hollow Lake. Harrison-Crawford SF highlighted sections of the office that had recently been remodeled and Morgan-Monroe SF/Yellowwood SF held a tour of the new office building.

Formal, written comments were received at seven of the nine open houses: Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA, Ferdinand SF/Pike SF, Greene-Sullivan SF, Harrison-Crawford SF, Morgan-Monroe SF/Yellowwood SF, Owen-Putnam SF, and Salamonie River SF/Francis Slocum SF. Twenty-five comment cards were submitted to the Division and included a single comment received at Salamonie SF/Francis Slocum SF and Greene-Sullivan SF, two comment sheets from Morgan-Monroe SF/Yellowwood SF, three cards from Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA, four comments from Ferdinand SF/Pike SF, six comment sheets from Owen-Putnam SF, and nine cards from Harrison-Crawford 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 in regards to 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 (6), Fish and Wildlife (2), Recreation (20), Education (1), the Division in General (1), and Others (1). Three of the comments regarding forest management expressed concerns for the use of herbicides, harvesting along streams, and harvesting along trails. The remaining three comments showed support of the current management system on the properties.

One of the two comments pertaining to Fish & Wildlife was a concern on the loss of habitat for ruffed grouse, an early successional species, while the second commenter expressed their interest in bobcats and the recent bear reports in Indiana.

Recreation received over three times as many comments of any other category, and more than all other categories combined. Recreation comments primarily centered on trails and the proposed new gun range at Clark SF. Three comments were received on the gun range; all written comments submitted at Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA's open house were in relation to the gun range. All three are favorable of the proposed project with one commenter providing several suggestions in regards to services and design of the range. Two comments were received in favor of developing/expanding horse trails at Morgan-Monroe SF/Yellowwood SF, and two commenters were in favor of increasing the amount of mountain bike trails at Owen-Putnam SF. Harrison-Crawford SF included within its displays the result of an in-depth analysis to trail conditions on the property and recommendations for each trail, and all nine comments received at the Harrison-Crawford SF's open house were related to recreation trails. Five comments recommended rerouting of the Adventure Hiking Trail away from the Blue River flood plain at Harrison-Crawford SF, two comments were concerned about proposed trail closures, and one comment was given with recommendations to improve specific locations on horse trails at Harrison-Crawford SF. Two comments were received that showed support for the proposed placement of cabins and additional recreation at Ferdinand SF and three comments were general appreciation for the trails and recreation opportunities that were available on the properties.



One comment was received in regards to Education and asked for continual education of the public on natural resources. Both general comments were related to increase funding for the Division. The remaining comment categorized as 'Other' included concern about the amount of gravel spread on a forest access road and the cost of the gravel.

Verbal discussion during the open houses covered a wide 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 its constituents. All properties regularly receive suggestions on area management from our visitors. Properties send newsletters to their neighbors and to potentially affected neighbors of nearby management activities. All tract management guides that propose natural resource management are posted on the State Forest web site 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.

Comment Summary

	Forest Management	Fish & Wildlife	Recreation	Education	General	Other	No of Comment Cards	Total Attendance
Clark SF/Deam Lake SRA	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	15
Ferdinand SF/Pike SF	1	0	3	0	0	0	3	38
Greene-Sullivan SF	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	21
Harrison-Crawford SF	0	0	9	0	0	0	9	32
Jackson-Washington SF/ Starve Hollow SRA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
Martin SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Morgan-Monroe SF/ Yellowwood SF	0	1	2	1	2	0	2	26
Owen-Putnam SF	3	1	2	0	0	1	6	26
Salamonie River SF/ Frances Slocum SF	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	25
Selmier SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Total	6	2	19	1	2	1	25	217

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.