

Indiana Department of Natural Resources - Division of Forestry

2013 Indiana State Forest Open House Summary

Between March and October 2013, the IN DNR - Division of Forestry conducted nine open houses. Each state forest management unit, with the exception of Salamonie River/Francis Slocum, participated in an open house event.

The purpose of the open houses is to provide a venue in which detailed information about programs and activities held at each state forest can be distributed to the public, to create a dialogue with neighbors and constituents, and to allow an opportunity to receive input about the state forest's management and policies. Open houses were advertised locally and through a state-wide news release.

Each open house featured a number of displays. Areas of interest covered by the displays included Recreation Management, Resource Management, Land Management, Community Affairs, Property Direction and Staffing/Budget/Revenues. Three properties highlighted recently completed construction/recreational projects including the office remodeling at Ferdinand SF, the new Training Center at Fire Headquarters (Yellowwood/Morgan-Monroe SF), and the new cabins at Greene-Sullivan SF. Each attendee was asked to register and comment sheets were made available. The comment sheet asked for any ideas they wished to share about that particular state forest. Division of Forestry/Central Office staff attempted to attend each open house; however, as planned, much of the interaction was between the visitors and the property staff.

2013 marked the twelfth year of the annual open house events for Division of Forestry properties. Local Conservation Officers were invited to attend, both to provide security and to answer questions. The District Foresters, the Division of Fish and Wildlife, and partners of the Division also provided displays and information at some open houses.

Total registered attendance at the 2013 open houses was 676, up from last year's attendance by nearly 100 individuals. The highest attending events were those that were held in conjunction with other nearby public events. Most of the attendance (400) occurred at the Martin State Forest open house held at the Martin County Ag Day program. The second highest attendance (100) was at the Selmier State Forest open house event held during the Jennings County Fair. Other open houses held in conjunction with local community events included Owen-Putnam, held on the same day as McCormick Creek State Park's wildflower weekend (60 in attendance). The remaining six open houses were attended by a total of 116 people.

Formal, written comments were received at five of the nine open houses. Clark SF, Jackson-Washington SF, and Owen-Putnam SF each received one comment. Thirteen comment sheets were received at the Ferdinand open house and three comment sheets were received at the Yellowwood/Morgan-Monroe open house. Verbal comments/questions were received at Greene-Sullivan SF, Harrison-Crawford SF, Martin SF, and Selmier SF; however, most were typically general in nature and no written comments developed from the discussions. Multiple comments may have been received on a single comment card. Comments were counted individually unless within the same category (Forest Management, Recreation, Fish and Wildlife, General, or Other) and subcategory (support/concern). 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.

At three of the events a copy of a letter was provided as a comment. Since the letter was from the same individual and was an exact copy at all three locations it was counted as a single comment rather than representing three distinct individual concerns. At two of the properties, Ferdinand SF and Morgan-

Monroe SF, comments were also included from correspondences submitted to the property outside of the open house. Specific comments in regards to individual management guides that are received through the Division webpage are not included in this summary, but were addressed individually as they were received.

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 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. A summary of these comments can also be found on the Division webpage.

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.

Comment Summary

Location	Forest Management		Recreation		Fish & Wildlife		General		Other		Attendance
	support	concern	support	concern	support	concern	support	concern	support	concern	
Clark/Deam											4
Ferdinand	1	1		3			8		2	1	51
Greene-Sullivan											12
Harrison-Crawford											19
Jackson-Washington/ Starve		1									2
Martin											400
Owen-Putnam		1									60
Selmier											100
Yellowwood/ Morgan-Monroe	1	1					1				28
Totals	2	4		3			9		2	1	676

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. A copy of a single letter was supplied at three open house events; the letter was counted as a single comment under the first event at which it was delivered. Written comments received within the calendar year are reflected in this summary. Phoned and emailed comments were counted as comment sheets.

--Comments in the "Other Issues" category included: support of the open house events and information regarding the history of the property.