

## 2008 Indiana State Forest Open House Process

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Between March 18 and April 26, 2008, the Division of Forestry conducted four (4) open houses. Each of the state forest management units participated in one of the open houses. This year the Division experimented with a slightly different format. Rather than schedule an open house at each property, several nearby properties were combined into joint open houses. Another change from previous open houses was the inclusion of a short field tour designed to give visitors a better understanding of activities planned.

Open houses were held at the following locations.

Date	Location	Properties Attending
Tuesday, March 18, 3:00 – 7:00 PM	Greene Sullivan SF	Owen Putnam SF
Tuesday, April 1 3:00 – 7:00 PM	Yellowwood SF	Morgan-Monroe SF
Tuesday, April 15 3:00 – 7:00 PM	Ferdinand SF	Martin, Harrison-Crawford and Pike SFs
Saturday, April 26 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM	Clark SF	Deam Lake and Starve Hollow SRAs, and Jackson-Washington and Selmier SFs

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 finally 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 (stations) 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.

2008 marked the seventh 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 2008 open houses was 125, significantly lower than the total attendance of 301 at the 2007 open houses. The lower attendance is due, in part, to the lower number of open houses and the apparent reluctance of our neighbors to travel a greater distance to attend an open house. Those in attendance submitted a total of 30 comments sheets, similar to the 29 submitted last year. 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 reduction from 9 open houses in 2007 to only 4 in 2008 reduced total attendance and opportunities for local constituents to participate. 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.

### 2008 State Forest Open House Comments Summary

Location	Pro-Timber Mgt.	Anti-Timber Mgt.	Recreation Support	Recreation Concerns	Fish and Wildlife Support	Fish and Wildlife Concerns	General Support	General Non-support	Budget	Other Issues	Registered Attendance.	Total Comment Sheets
Greene-Sullivan				1			1				30	2
Yellowwood	5	4		3	2		2			6	48	17
Ferdinand		2	2	9		1	4			5	19	11
Clark											28	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>30</b>

**Notes:**

--All of the comments received were reviewed by the Division of Forestry and placed into one of ten 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. Some individuals provided comments at several open houses.

--Comments in the "Other Issues" category included: no logging in the backcountry area at Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood (4), purchase additional land (1), increase educational/demonstration areas (1), consider values of roadless areas in addition to timber production (1), demonstrate fire equipment (1), no justification for controlled burning or pesticides on state forests (1), hold a day camp for kids at Ferdinand (2)

--Comments in the "Recreation Concerns" category include: need benches in the dog running area at Greene-Sullivan (1), need horse trails on Morgan-Monroe (3), improved swimming, fishing, bathroom and shower facilities at Ferdinand (3), enhanced biking and hiking trails at Ferdinand (1), keep the entrance gate at Ferdinand (5), install 30-amp electrical hookups with 50-amp at sites 34 & 50 at Ferdinand (1).

As a direct result of the comments received at the 2008 open houses, the Division will make the following management decisions:

- The Division has reviewed current forest management policy and consulted with various groups on this management of the Backcountry Area at Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood State Forest. We believe that the policy set in place in the early 80's is still the correct approach to maintaining a diverse and healthy forest.
- Continue to actively pursue acquisition of key inholdings
- Continue to manage for the full array of species and habitat types, from early successional hardwood forests to mature/overmature forests with old growth characteristics.
- The Division will consult with the Division of Fish and Wildlife about fish habitat and fishing opportunities on property lakes. We are in the planning stages to resolve the silt problem in some of the lakes, and expect implementation in 2009-2010.
- Other issues such as camping, electrical upgrades, trails improvements will be based on funding and potential usage. Currently we have set priorities for the next 2-3 years. Major improvements will take place at Clark and Morgan-Monroe State Forests. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> state forest for improvements will be Green-Sullivan. We realize there is much to improve and we are systematically going through the facilities and investing where we think there is the greatest return for the investment. We plan to produce master plans for M-M, Clark and G-S in the coming year.
- The Division will consider operating the gate at Ferdinand Friday through Sunday in 2009 on a trial basis.