

SUMMARY COMMENTS

Morgan Monroe & Yellowwood State Forests Comp 3 Tracts 6 & 11, Comp 4 Tracts 10, Comp 16 Tracts 9, 23 & 24, Comp 7 Tract 19, Comp 11

Tracts 1 & 2

30 Day Comment Period Ending: 6/6/2024

Comments Received: 14

The table below is a summary of public comments received concerning the draft Resource Management Guide(s). The public comments received have been reviewed in their entirety and given due consideration summarized in the Division of Forestry response below.

Comment Summary	Division of Forestry Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive of the active science-based forest management to benefit wildlife values, oak-hickory ecosystems, provide diverse forest age classes, and promote forest health and resilience. • Supportive of the use of prescribed fire, including larger burn areas and repeated fires (i.e., 3–5-year intervals). • Concern for the lack of young forest habitat and the wildlife that utilize them to forage, nest, or seek refuge. • Concern that not enough is being done to maintain the oak-hickory ecosystem. • Concern that little or no reference of hiking trails was mentioned in the RMGs, specifically Compartment 11 Tract 1. • General concern with active forest management on state forests, more specifically the use of prescribed fire, carbon storage, old growth conditions, wildlife (i.e., RTE), invasive species control, and recreation. • Concern that more than 97% of 160,000-acre state forest system is under a timber harvest rotation. • Concern with managing for oak and hickory. • Concern with the division’s strategic direction. • Concern with linking management guides to timber sales. • Concern with water quality, specifically Butler Creek, White River, Monroe Lake, and North Fork of Salt Creek. • Concern with management activities occurring before the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Division of Forestry has actively managed its lands for more than 120 years. This multiple-use management system provides many benefits for all. These benefits include forest diversity, watershed protection, recreation, wildlife habitat, and research areas. Recreational benefits include over 430 miles of designated recreational trails (e.g., horse, bike, hike and interpretive), over 500 individual camping options that include family and horse camp sites, rent-a-camp cabins, and family cabins. In addition, state forests offer dispersed primitive camping along three major hiking trails covering 125 miles, a swimming beach, gun & archery range, hunting, trapping, fishing, boating, caving, picnicking, mushrooming, and many other opportunities under this management philosophy on over 160,000 acres. • The Division of Forestry sees large-scale prescribed burns as a useful management tool. • Compartment 7 Tract 19 has a small section of horse trail that travels through the southern portion of the tract, which was noted in the original management guide. The remaining tracts do not have designated hiking trails within the tract boundary, as noted in those RMGs.

management guides are finalized through the public comment process.

- Concern timber harvesting has increased over the past 15 years on state forests.
- Concern with State Forest hardwoods going to global markets (i.e., Dubai).

- State Forest management is guided by science and implementation of sound silvicultural principles. They adhere to legal mandates and compliance with a comprehensive set of forest certification standards for long term forest sustainability. State Forests are subject to annual ‘third party’ audits for compliance with these standards. [Forest Certification](#)
- Silvicultural prescriptions proposed in draft RMGs include National Heritage Database (NHD) reviews as well as Division of Forestry staff reviews, which include a forest wildlife specialist and forest ecologist/botanist. Further information on direct and indirect impacts on species and habitats can be found in the [Indiana State Forest Environmental Assessment](#).
- Habitats, communities, and species of flora and fauna are considered as part of the management planning process. Along with field observations, NHD review for threatened or endangered species (federally and state) on or near the management unit are considered. ***Please note, for the protection of sensitive flora and fauna NHD review results are not disclosed in draft RMGs.*** Further information on direct and indirect impacts on species and habitats can be found in the [Indiana State Forest Environmental Assessment](#).
- Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) data (2021) indicates Indiana State Forests contain approximately 61.3 million live trees. Managed harvest levels are set at a level to ensure long term sustainability and promote forest health and diversity. These levels are periodically reviewed as new data is made available. See [CFI Summary of years 2017-2021](#)

- CFI data indicates 72 percent of the state forest acreage is oak-hickory.
- CFI data indicates stand age diversity at 6 percent young forest (0-19 years of age). This data shows that 11 percent of the forest stand is between 20-59 years old, 49 percent is 60-99 years old, and 34 percent is 100+ year old.
- The Indiana Division of Forestry represents approximately 30 percent of the Indiana DNR public lands portfolio, which encompasses more than 500,000 acres. The Division of Forestry is the only land holding division with an active timber management program. In addition to the 70 percent of Indiana DNR lands not subject to timber management, the Division of Forestry has over 4,000 acres set aside as no harvesting and 7,700 acres restricted to single tree selection only with longer rotations to mimic older forest conditions. These figures do not include areas removed from timber management such as campgrounds, archeological or geologically unique features, or other special areas.
- The Division of Forestry considers recreational impacts during the planning and execution of management activities. The visual enhancement area (VEA) policy requires visual consideration when managing within high-use public areas or high-use recreational facilities. During active management some sections of recreational trails may require temporary closure or rerouting for public safety. Those sections reopen following the completion of work.
- Invasive species, their presence and control, are evaluated as part of the property's normal operations. Treatments may

	<p>occur prior to or following a timber harvest, or situational based on their presence within the county. Treatments range from minor to aggressive utilizing a variety of methods such as manual, mechanical, chemical, prescribed fire, or a combination. Only approved herbicides are used following forest certification standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best Management Practices (BMP) will be implemented and monitored to address the soil erosion and sedimentation concerns. BMPs are required and included in each timber sale contract on state forests. The Division of Forestry will respond to reported BMP departures. 2022 BMP Field Guide• Contracts with management partners require that BMPs are followed on all state forests. State Forest staff perform regular site visits during active operations and evaluate as part of their post-harvest review. Additionally, BMP monitoring is performed on each harvest for application and effectiveness. There are 58 individual BMPs measured across five categories: access/haul road, log landings or yards, skid trails, stream crossings, and riparian management zones (RMZ). View results BMP Monitoring Results for State Forest Properties 1996-2023• Assessing climate change and carbon sequestration is beyond the scope of tract level resource management guides. See Forest Carbon Assessment for Indiana State Forests• Management activities like timber marking and harvesting are typically performed following the public comment period. Activities like invasive species treatments, light timber stand improvement or salvage work may occur in advance or
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	<p>without a management guide. Because a tour with forestry partners and stakeholders was planned as part of the return to active management for these state forests, some marking was allowed to serve as a visual aid for the management planned. Compartment 3 Tract 11 was marked and approved for harvest in 2017 following the public comment process. The harvest did not occur. The prescribed fire that occurred in 2024 was part of a public comment period in 2023. No comments were received.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State Forest timber sales are made available to the public on the Indiana Forestry Exchange. Each state forest timber sale listed provides detailed information about the sale including the associated resource management guide(s).• The number of timber sales per year, acres with timber sales, and trees sold has decreased over the past 15 years.• State forest timber sales support local markets throughout the state, providing jobs and materials. They provide material used statewide and abroad.
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