

# 2025-2029 Strategic Direction Public Input Summary

## Introduction

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Division of Forestry prepares a Strategic Direction at approximately five-year intervals to direct our efforts in the coming years. The *IDNR Division of Forestry Strategic Direction 2020-2024* expired at the end of 2024; development of this Strategic Direction began in 2023. The table below identifies key steps in the development and implementation of the 2025-2029 Strategic Direction.

Date	Activity	Location	Purpose/Outcome
December 2023	Executive Office Strategic Plan Review		Draft Plan Approved
December 14, 2023	State Forest Stewardship Meeting	Indianapolis, IN	Introduction of Draft Plan
September 12-13, 2024	Indiana Society of American Foresters Fall Meeting	Indianapolis, IN	Introduction of Draft Plan
October 22-24, 2024	State Forest Open Houses	State Forest Offices	Inform public and solicit comments
October 25, 2024	Press Release Announcing Public Input		Inform public and solicit comments
October 24 - December 17, 2024	Public Comment Period Open on Division Webpage		Inform public and solicit comments
November 6, 2024	Strategic Plan Public Meeting	Indianapolis, IN	Inform public and solicit comments
November 8, 2024	Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen's Association Board Meeting	Indianapolis, IN	Introduction of Draft Plan
November 14, 2024	Strategic Plan Public Meeting	Andrews, IN	Inform public and solicit comments
December 4, 2024	Strategic Plan Public Meeting	Mitchell, IN	Inform public and solicit comments
November 1, 2024	Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Annual Meeting	Wabash, IN	Introduction of Draft Plan

## Public Input Process

On October 25, 2024, a DNR news release was issued announcing the availability of the IN DNR – Division of Forestry Strategic Direction for comments on the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry webpage ([www.in.gov/dnr/forestry](http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry)) and upcoming public meetings for participants to discuss and ask questions about the goals and objectives of the Division. Comments were taken on the Strategic Direction until December 17, 2025, providing for a two-month comment period.

Three public input sessions were held in November and December. These public meetings were located across the state to provide additional input opportunities for Indiana citizens. The first public meeting was held in Indianapolis on November 6, 2024, at the Inn at Fort Harrison State Park. The second public meeting was held in northern Indiana at the nature

center at Salamonie Lake in Andrews on November 14. The third meeting was located in the southern part of the state at the Inn at Spring Mill State Park in Mitchell on December 4. Participants could listen to a presentation by the Division covering each section of the Direction in detail. The informal design of the meetings allowed participants to talk to Division staff to ask questions, offer comments, or discuss various aspects of the Direction. A total of 14 people (excluding Division of Forestry employees) signed the attendance record, a nearly 90% drop in attendance from prior public meetings for the plan.

Staff from the Division compiled all submitted comments received during the online public comment period. A total of 59 individuals/entities submitted responses (down nearly 75% from the previous comment period for the prior plan), which were categorized into nearly 250 separate comments. Each individual who submitted comments was assigned a respondent number. Comments were then summarized and sorted based upon the following categories: Forest Trends, Private Forestlands Management, Nursery, Conservation Educations (with subcategories Conservation Education for Private Landowners and Woods on Wheels Education Center), Fire, Forest Resource Information (FRI), State Forests (with subcategories Forest Resource Stewardship, Land Ownership and Acquisitions, State Forest Recreation, and Communications and Administration), Community and Urban Forestry, Forest Health (with subcategories Forest Health Threats/Damage Agents, Native Forest Pests – Insects and Diseases, Other Forest Heal Concerns, and Forest Health Management), Utilization and Marketing, Indiana Forest Best Management Practices, Licensed Timber Buyer Program, Logger Chain Saw Safety and Productivity Training, and general document. Each comment was carefully considered, and written responses were developed. A summary of the comments along with the Division's response is included below.

### **Public Input Summary**

The majority of the comments were in regard to the State Forests, Community and Urban Forestry, and Forest Trends sections; however, Private Forestlands Management, Fire, Forest Resource Information, Nursery, and Conservation Education also received a significant number of comments. Sections that received fewer than five comments included Forest Health, Utilization and Marketing, Indiana Forestry Best Management Practices, and Logger Chain Saw Safety & Productivity Training. Several comments were also received regarding the Direction as a whole or in general reference to the document.

The most widely received comments requested more details in various sections or were in regard to timber management (on both public and private lands). The number of comments in support of (14) or opposing (13) harvesting was about equally split. More individuals stated that they were in opposition to prescribed fires (15) than in support of them (8); however, an additional seven people also commented that they were in support of oak regeneration, which may include fire indicating too that comments were equally divided in this aspect. Carbon sequestration/carbon markets also garnered a significant number of comments with topics ranging from the use of forests to sequester carbon to providing assistance for landowners entering into carbon markets. Several comments were received that showed concern for

invasive species while other comments supported the protection/recovery of forests or plant/animal species.

Several categories of comments were received specific to the State Forests and included greater protection of cultural sites, the development of the HCP, the ecological review process, High Conservation Value Forests, botanical and wildlife inventories, invasive species and chemical control, and oak regeneration. Numerous comments were also received regarding planned recreation improvements on the properties.

Community and Urban Forestry and Conservation Education sections had several comments in support of these programs with some concerns over staffing or funding levels, and recommendations for more training and education opportunities, better online communication platforms, and providing more details on programs within the Direction. In the Private Forestlands Management section comment themes tended to center on providing additional resources and education, increasing program enrollments, and assisting in providing new markets to landowners. Comments regarding the Forest Resource Information Section included questions on how the data was utilized and suggestions for additional information to record, while the Nursery section included increasing production, including more ash and urban markets, and overall support for the program.

The Division of Forestry thanks everyone who commented on the 2025-2029 Strategic Direction. Your comments, suggestions, and input are important to us, and we appreciate the time you took to review the Direction and provide us with feedback.

## Summary of Comments

Below is a summary of the written comments, and the Division's response to each comment is listed in the column on the right.

### Division of Forestry General

General Comments	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This overview covers general comments on the report, not specific to a section.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>General (Respondent 36, 38, 47, 50, 53, 54, 57)</b>	
Supports partnerships between government, non-government, and public	The Division partners with non-government and public groups frequently on issues ranging from land acquisition to enhanced recreational opportunities.
Concern the Division does not have funding and staff to meet their goals	Thank you for your concern. The Division strives to fulfil its goals within its available resources.
Recommends removing the word "perpetuation" from the last paragraph of the Forest Trends section	The sentence was reworded.
Questions if forester wages increased with the recent increase in the conservation budget	Foresters' wages did not increase any more than the average state employee.
Recommends adding details on Environmental Justice initiatives	Forest management, either for state or private lands is based on the best available science.
Recommends plan addresses the need for more mature and old growth forests	The Division believes it already does a good job supporting mature and old growth forests. Estimates place about 50% of DNR lands in current or positioned to become old growth forests, and well over 10% of the trees are over the 80–100-year age class, which qualifies as older forests.
Recommends plan should address riparian zones	Riparian zones are addressed in greater detail in the <a href="#">Indiana Logging &amp; Forestry Best Management Practices 2022 BMP Field Guide</a> .
Recommends that the plan address climate change	The Division has recommended further study of climate change and is managing to ensure species diversity where possible to mitigate any possible impacts to the forest due to climate change.
<b>State Forests (Respondent 5)</b>	
Recommends a map showing the location of the State Forests.	We added a link in the State Forest Section intro to the online property map.

<b>Supports the Strategic Direction (Respondents: 20, 25, 38)</b>	
Supports the proposed plan	Thank you for your support.
<b>Concern with Strategic Direction (Respondents: 1, 2, 5, 8, 44, 47, 53)</b>	
Concern the plan does not use current and evidence-based information	The Strategic Direction is based on CFI data and science-based management techniques and silvicultural methods proven through research, both past and present, to yield the desired outcomes.
<p>Concerned that the document is not sufficiently detailed</p> <p>Recommends include metrics to objectives including estimates on manpower and resources, utilize outside expertise, and organize by year</p> <p>Recommends including more specific and measurable goals and timeframes</p> <p>Recommends including a pro-forma budget and detail annual budgets</p>	Thank you for your input. For consistency the determination was made to follow the same format of previous strategic planning documents.
Add glossary	Thank you for your suggestion.
Plan should focus more on private lands	Thank you for your suggestion.
<b>Forest Trends Section (Respondents: 5, 39, 50, 55, 56)</b>	
Recommends breaking down private land class into not-for-profit and individual/company owned	Currently, there is no complete database for not-for-profits.
Recommends adding statement "that forest lands need to be intentionally managed to sustain forest health and sustainability"	Where appropriate, this is a good recommendation. For some areas, such as Nature Preserves, this statement would not be appropriate.
Discrepancy in the number of forests in Indiana on private lands: 83 vs. 86%	The charts are based on two different data sources and the slight difference in percentage of private lands is a reflection of the different data sources.
Recommends natural course of forest succession overactive forest management	To maintain current species diversity of both flora and fauna, active management will be necessary to create suitable habitat types.
<b>Forest Wildlife (Respondents: 47, 49)</b>	
Recommends wildlife corridors be considered in all aspects of the plan	Thank you for your input. The Division feels that this level of planning is beyond the scope of this Strategic Direction.

Supports establishment of a bat conservation program	The Division appreciates and shares your support.
<b>Education (Respondents: 50)</b>	
Recommends adding additional details on education collaborations	Where appropriate, the plan lists a variety of groups and organizations which collaborate with the division on education. The Division is open to exploring other opportunities for collaboration.
<b>Carbon Sequestration (Respondents: 53, 56)</b>	
Recommends adding role of carbon sequestration	The Division, through its efforts to grow and sustain trees, does this indirectly. We are also exploring the possibility of selling carbon in the voluntary carbon market.
Recommends including a goal for restoring or expanding forest acres and to use forests for carbon sequestration	The Division feels that these concerns are addressed in several sections of the document, for example, the Private Forestlands Management and the State Forest sections.

## Private Forestlands Management Section

Goal Area: Retention of Working Private Forests	
<p><b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal focuses on increasing the value of forest to their landowners through expansion of private land programs, systems to pay for ecosystem services, and access to forest product markets. The goal also includes long-term conservation of private land including intergenerational transfers of property.</i></p>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Ecosystem Services Payments (Respondents: 32, 35, 37, 38, 43, 56, 59)</b>	
Train woodland owners to enter carbon markets; support of a carbon program	The Division is currently researching carbon market opportunities for forest landowners.
<b>Incentives (Respondents: 8, 38, 59)</b>	
Work with local governments to pass laws/incentives for Homeowner Associations (HOA) to treat invasive species and convert turf areas to native species	District Foresters work with Homeowner Associations that own 10 or more acres of forestland when requested. They provide management recommendations and information on incentive programs if they are applicable. The Division does not advocate for legislation.
Support of payment incentives and funding models to help landowners	Thank you for your support.
Supports Objectives 1.2 - 1.4	
Prioritize incentives to declining forest types	As incentives are developed, the Division will take this under advisement.
<b>Staffing (Respondents: 39)</b>	
Employ long-term professional foresters to work with private landowners, adequately staff District Foresters to handle Classified program and reach out to 80% of forest owners not being provided professional services.	The Division agrees with employing professional foresters. By law 312 IAC 15, District Foresters must be professional foresters. For the past few years, we have been trying to expand from 20 to 21 districts. The biggest challenge we have is finding foresters. Currently we have 3 vacant districts not including the expansion district.
<b>Additions (Respondents: 56)</b>	
Set objective to increase the acreage of the Classified Forest & Wildlands to at least one million acres rather than the current acreage.	The acreage listed under Objective 1.1 is solely to provide background information about the program not to set the program target.

Goal Area: Forest Resource Awareness	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>Conservation of private forests is dependent on citizens understanding the forests, forest management, and the benefits of forests on the landscape.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Staffing (Respondents: 39, 54)</b>	
Add professional foresters to the private forestlands staff to provide education and outreach activities	The Division also supports this request.
Supports educational programs for private forest owners	Thank you for your support. Providing educational resources to private forest owners so they can make informed management decisions for their properties is the cornerstone of the Private Lands Section.
<b>Forestry Knowledge (Respondents: 54, 56, 59)</b>	
Recommends working with Community and Urban Forestry Section to cross-promote Forest Resource Awareness with Tree Steward participants and other General Audiences/Programs	The Private Land Section works with other sections to promote forest resource awareness.
Supports development of new projects through partnerships to provide forest resource education for landowners	The Division agrees that partnerships are crucial for outreach.
Requests to provide landowners with more research and to promote better understanding of forest ecology	District Foresters work with landowners to help them understand the forests they own and the importance of those forests. Forest ecology is the basis for those discussions.

Goal Area: Private Forest Restoration & Health	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal includes providing landowners incentives to do management activities on their forest and promoting diversification of forest age, structure, and composition to ensure healthy forests for the future.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Forest Management (Respondents: 4, 14, 32, 35, 37, 38, 43, 47, 49, 55)</b>	
Concern about fire's environmental impacts and air quality  Concern of health impacts of prescribed burning	Prescribed fire is a complex management tool. The decision-making process to use or not use prescribed fire on a particular location should consider many factors including environmental and health impacts.



<p>Encourage selective harvesting</p> <p>Supports current science-based management of private forests</p> <p>Allow private forests to grow older before harvest (carbon sequestration)</p> <p>Encourage &amp; incentivize landowners to do active management for oak forests</p> <p>Supports active management on private ownership</p>	<p>The Division helps landowners learn about the forests they own, so they can make informed decisions about management on their property. The District Forester makes management recommendations based on the landowners' goals and the current conditions of the forests. It is ultimately the decision of the landowner to implement or not implement those recommendations.</p>
<b>Additions (Respondents: 56)</b>	
<p>Federal dollars for endangered species habitat conservations should be mentioned in Objective 3.1</p>	<p>Critical wildlife habitat was added to the list of management in Objective 3.1. Objective 3.3 deals with partnering with federal agencies which provide landowner management incentives. District Foresters let landowners know about current federal incentives that are consistent with the landowner's management goals. For example, if a landowner is interested in planting trees and wildlife, the District Forester may discuss the Farm Services Agency's Conservation Reserve Program – State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE). SAFE provides incentives for projects that provide habitats for threatened and endangered species and other wildlife.</p>
<p>Set an explicit goal of 500,000 acres of forests in the old growth stage</p>	<p>The Division did not include the requested goal for private lands. The Division does recognize the importance of old growth forests. If a landowner's goal for their forest is older forest or old growth forest conditions, the District Forester would provide management recommendations to help the landowner achieve that goal.</p>

## Nursery Section

### Goal Area: General

**Overview:** *This section includes broad comments relating to overall nursery functions.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>General (Respondents: 55)</b>	
Supports the goals and supports the expansion of the program	Thank you for your support.

### Goal Area: Seed Orchards

**Overview:** *This goal includes the expansion of seed orchards on state owned land.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>High Conservation Value Species (Respondents: 56, 57)</b>	
<p>Recommends adding ash to list of species under Objective 1.2</p> <p>Recommends working with scientists to develop ash seed stock resistant to EAB</p>	The Division is taking the advice of our Forest Health director and not yet sowing ash seeds to produce seedlings. This is all due to the EAB. The Division agrees with the research into finding species unscathed by the EAB and starting a seed bank for future plantings. More research needs to be completed to determine the resistance to EAB.
Support for providing species of high conservation value	Thank you for your support. The Division is currently working with researchers to grow and provide some species with higher conservational value such as American Chestnut and Butternut. We do provide a Butternut Hybrid that seems to grow free of canker and produce good quantities of seed. American Chestnut we feel is not to the point yet where seedling crosses will be able to survive after several years of growth. Some species, Yellowwood for example, are difficult to grow and to obtain enough seed from year to year to produce. Seed limitations are one of our biggest constraints to growing seedlings.

Goal Area: Seedling Production	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal includes producing and providing high quality affordable seedlings for conservation tree plantings.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Seed Sources (Respondents: 39, 54)</b>	
Utilizing nurseries from all hardiness zones to ensure the appropriate trees are planted	The majority of our collected seed used in production comes from sources found in Indiana. Most species found throughout all of Indiana can be moved to any region within the state. The only real problems are those with ranges found only in Southern Indiana and moved up to Northern Indiana. I believe private nurseries are already being used which augment the supply of state nursery stock. Many are located in various zones throughout the state where customers can choose which nursery best can handle the stock type of their choosing.

Goal Area: Potted Nursery Stock	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal includes providing larger, potted nursery stock for urban tree planting initiatives.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Promotions (Respondents: 54, 57)</b>	
Provide larger tree stock directly to residents and municipalities planting in urban areas	<p>Potted trees have been grown for a number of species for municipalities to plant with a very poor response for the larger plants. Trees can only be held in these containers for a short time or the plants become somewhat pot bound. At this time, we are limited in having the capacity to overwinter these plants during cold temperatures. The Division would need to be able to move all potted plants after a year of growth in the pots for the trees to have the most success.</p> <p>The Division has been strategic in the type of plants we sell at the nursery, mostly 1–3-year-old seedlings. To be able to produce and sell larger planting stock would take a new capital investment.</p>
Explore the demand by commercial nurseries to purchase state nursery trees as liners and resell	The Division does not believe we should be allowing the resale of our seedlings for private profit. Such action would require a change in Indiana code.

Goal Area: Education	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal includes educating the public while promoting tree planting.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Seed Sources (Respondents: 54)</b>	
Support for programs to supply trees to third graders and legislators	The Division plans to continue the 3rd grade Arbor Day Program as well as the SB609 trees. Thank you for your support.
<b>Carbon (Respondents: 56)</b>	
Recommends including education on the storage of carbon by older trees	Edits have been made to Objective 4.2 to expand the scope of the objective to beyond seedlings.

## Conservation Education Section

### Goal Area: Resources and Training for Educators

**Overview:** *This goal focuses on the variety of opportunities (HASTI, school forests, Project Learning Tree, the Natural Resource Teacher Institute, etc.) to provide training and resources for educators.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>General (Respondents: 39, 55)</b>	
Support for Project Learning Tree	Thank you for your support of Indiana Project Learning Tree. We are continuing to seek opportunities to expand PLT outreach for Indiana educators and adapt activities for Indiana forests.
Supports the goals and encourages increased resources for educators, especially in urban and underserved areas	We will continue to actively seek opportunities to increase accessibility and expand the reach for programming we provide. The Strategic Direction document has been updated to emphasize increasing accessibility to forestry education.

### Goal Area: Increasing Engagement

**Overview:** *This goal explores establishing new methods and expanding networks to get forestry resources to educators and the public. This goal includes Project Learning Tree workshops, social media, community programs, and the Division website.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Forestry Properties (Respondents: 9)</b>	
Recommends using DNR properties for educational opportunities and having them serve as living laboratories for education	Our State Forests provide excellent space for students to explore Indiana's forests ecosystems and their management. We are exploring further opportunities to provide both passive and active educational opportunities on-property.
<b>Staffing (Respondents: 39)</b>	
Recommends additional staff	Opportunities to add additional staff to our education program will be assessed as the program continues to expand.
<b>Social Media (Respondents: 54)</b>	
Supports increased engagement on social media	We are working to grow our social media following and compose posts that promote engaging with and educating about Indiana's forests.
<b>Education Topics (Respondents: 54)</b>	
Supports emphasis on urban forestry topics	Our education program is working closely with our Community and Urban Forestry program to continue

	supporting and expanding urban forestry visibility and education.
<b>Requested Edits (Respondents: 56)</b>	
Recommends using <i>forest ecology</i> instead of <i>forestry</i> throughout the section	Thank you for your input for the Division's education program. Forest ecology is the foundation of the practice of forestry, and we will continue to provide programming that explores both subjects.

<b>Goal Area: Supporting Forestry Education Organizations</b>	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal focuses on developing partnerships and maintaining relationships with a variety of organizations with an interest in forest education.</i>	
<b>Comment Summary</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Cooperation/Collaboration (Respondents: 9, 50)</b>	
Recommends working with other agencies to increase education opportunities	Our education program does maintain relationships with USDA Forest Service, state/county extension, and other DNR division staff to create and develop cooperative programming about our forests and other natural resources. We are always interested in finding new partners we can work with to increase the reach, accessibility, and efficacy of our educational programming. We are also supporting efforts to inspire the next generation of foresters/land managers through career-oriented outreach efforts and utilizing cross-curricular Project Learning Tree activities to encourage youth with a diverse array of interests to engage with nature.
Recommends working with others in outdoor education	
Recommends utilizing people from many disciplines as instructors	

<b>Goal Area: Conservation Education for Private Landowner</b>	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal focuses on providing outreach to private landowners. Eighty-three percent of Indiana's forests are in private ownership. Educating those landowners is essential for Indiana to have a healthy future. Note: In the Strategic Direction document, this Goal Area was merged with Private Forestlands Management Section's Goal #2: Improve Forest Resource Awareness.</i>	
<b>Comment Summary</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Additions Requested (Respondents: 39, 55)</b>	
Request to add a new objective regarding having staff provide timely and pertinent outreach information to the general public encouraging active management	A similar objective was added to the Private Forestlands Management Section Goal 2 (See Objective 2.1).

Request to add a new objective to support forestry demonstration areas around the state for private landowners to use as resources to learn about science-based forest management techniques	An objective related to demonstration forest areas was added to the Private Forestlands Management Section Goal 2 (See Objective 2.7).
Recommends fees for services	The Division sees the education of private landowners as part of our core responsibilities. This is an option we could pursue.

### Goal Area: Woods on Wheels: Public Outreach

**Overview:** *Woods on Wheels (WOW) will provide education regarding the hardwoods industry, sustainable forest management, and forest resources. This includes documenting attendance and participant satisfaction surveys.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Outreach (Respondents: 39, 55)</b>	
Update displays every 2 years to make sure information is current and repeat visitors have a new experience	Your recommendation of updating Woods on Wheels every 2 years is appreciated and understood. We hope to have the educational trailer on a 2–3-year remodel cycle after this current year’s redesign.
Requests for increased programming for urban and underserved populations	Woods on Wheels is committed to empowering educators by offering classroom resources for all age groups, distributed after each visit. To further promote urban forestry initiatives, we schedule over half of our events in urban areas.

### Goal Area: Woods on Wheels: Forestry Careers Outreach

**Overview:** *This goal focuses on using Woods on Wheels (WOW) to introduce students to career opportunities in forestry and the hardwood product industry.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>School Forests (Respondents: 57)</b>	
Supports Objective 2.3 - encouraging and supporting the development of school forests	Thank you for your support. Woods on Wheels strives to encourage and support the development of school forests as a way of promoting environmental education and hands-on learning for students. School forests provide valuable outdoor classrooms where students can engage in activities like tree identification, wildlife observation, and ecosystem studies. To support these initiatives, Woods on Wheels encourages educators to pursue an array of grants from the Indiana Forest Education Foundation to

	<p>opportunities from the Farm Bill such as CSP. These funding sources can help schools establish and maintain school forests/prairies, as well as develop outdoor curriculum and programming. To assure the support of urban forestry initiatives, Woods on Wheels also schedules over half of their events in urban areas.</p>
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## Fire Section

Goal Area: Increase Use of Prescribed Fire	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal covers providing technical advice and training to professionals and landowners to increase the use of prescribed fire.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Prescribed Fire (Respondents: 7, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 39, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59)</b>	
<p>Supports prescribed fire</p> <p>Opposes prescribed fire</p> <p>Support landowner assistance for prescribed fires</p>	<p>Prescribed fire is a silvicultural tool used in forest management throughout the central hardwood region. Fire is used in forest management to help promote shade-intolerant species (i.e. oaks and hickories) by reducing fuel load, opening the mid-canopy layer to allow more light penetration, and preparing a receptive seed bed. Fire also helps reduce competitors by removing small trees/saplings such as beech and maple that limit the sunlight on the forest floor. This will allow the oaks to establish themselves and then fire can be brought back in to reduce the competitors. In most cases, the oaks will be top killed, building a bigger more vigorous root system which in turn will promote more vigorous growth rates in this species.</p> <p>Fire following other silviculture treatments that open the canopy (e.g., shelterwoods, single or group selection, etc.) have shown to increase woody stem density benefiting a variety of wildlife such as bats, birds, and mammals. Fire can help control invasive species such as honeysuckle, multiflora-rose, barberry, etc. Fire can knock these species back, allowing less chemicals to be used to control the flush of new growth and helping to eliminate these invasive species from degrading our Indiana Forests.</p>
Concerned about health impacts of fire	<p>The Division utilizes daily General and Fire Weather forecasts as well as Daily Weather Graph estimates that predict expected conditions (wind direction, speed, relative humidity, temperature, and various other weather indicators), which helps us determine the amount of smoke produced and where our smoke will be carried. The forecasts also will give us predicted mixing heights and ventilation rates that help us know how high the smoke will rise and the dispersion rate</p>

	(how quickly the smoke will be diluted and carried downwind). We also use an online program called V-Smoke that gives us a predicted smoke plume area downstream of the fire and concentration levels of the smoke. These are all tools that we use to minimize the amount of smoke. As with all tools, there are limiting factors and in the case of smoke the accuracy of weather forecast is the biggest limiting factor. Predictions are only as good as the forecast data from the National Weather Service.
Recommends fees for services	Fees for services could be developed based on needs and demand in the future.

### Goal Area: Increase Wildfire Operational and Technical Assistance Delivery

**Overview:** *This goal promotes the efficiency, effectiveness, and preparedness of wildfire and prescribed burn operations.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Outreach (Respondents: 56)</b>	
Recommends flora and fauna inventories on public land tracts prior to prescribed fires	We use different databases for collecting information that could be found in the area such as cultural, flora, or fauna resources that could be sensitive to fire.

### Goal Area: Training and Prevention

**Overview:** *This goal promotes group training and prevention programs.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Outreach (Respondents: 39)</b>	
Supports utilizing existing programs to educate the public on the benefits of fire	Prevention/education is a large part of our mission, this is accomplished through special events such as county fairs, the State Fair, and other local events.

## Forest Resources Information Section

### Goal Area: Enhance Data Collection and Quality

**Overview:** *Maintain and improve standardized protocols for data collection to ensure consistency and accuracy. Maintain and improve data collection quality, utilize advanced technologies to improve efficiency and coverage, regular updates and feedback loops.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) (Respondents: 39, 43, 46, 48, 50, 53, 59)</b>	
Issues and inconsistencies with DNR's continuous forest inventory numbers, not good enough for Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) certification	<p>Continuous Forest inventory (CFI) plots are measured to get a better understanding of what is happening on our state forest properties. Plots are randomly generated. There is 1 plot per every 40 acres of state forest land. The CFI program mirrors the federal Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program. Several metrics are collected on these plots such as stand age, tree diameters and heights, any diseases or disturbances, invasive species cover, etc. Reports can be found on the Division website under publications and presentations and Forest Inventory and Analysis heading: <a href="https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/forestry-publications-and-presentations/">https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/forestry-publications-and-presentations/</a>.</p> <p>The CFI staff follow the rules and guidelines that are established in the Forest Inventory and Analysis National Core Field Guide. More information on that field guide can be found here: <a href="https://research.fs.usda.gov/understory/nationwide-forest-inventory-field-guide">https://research.fs.usda.gov/understory/nationwide-forest-inventory-field-guide</a>. The CFI/FIA crew has to pass a recertification exam annually to continue measuring plots. Quality Assurance (QA) checks are also performed randomly throughout the year on staff to ensure plots are being measured accurately.</p> <p>FSC® has no standard regarding the collection of CFI data.</p>
Concerned about use of "historical" CFI data being used when creating harvest volume targets	The CFI data is compiled into a database at the end of the year when all of the plots for that year are completed. The CFI program director then spends the beginning of the next year compiling the data into charts and tables. Thus, the most up to date CFI data available is used (ex. for year 2024, 2023 data is

	referred to since 2024 measurements are still ongoing).
Include bird songs, soundscapes as part of data collected. This will show changes in species utilizing managed areas	The Division does not currently possess the equipment or funds to conduct such studies at this time but does see the importance and value of them.
Questions concerning system wide botanical surveys  Support system wide botanical surveys	The Division is in the process of creating a system wide botanical survey to aid in making sustainable management decisions.
Supports Goal 1	Thank you for your support.

### Goal Area: Support Sustainable Forest Management

**Overview:** *Provide timely and relevant data to forest managers and policymakers to aid in decision making. Develop tools and resources that promote best management practices based on inventory data. Assess the diversity of tree species and habitats within forest ecosystems to identify key areas for conservation efforts. Monitor changes in forest ecosystems to track the impacts of climate change and human activities on biodiversity. Monitor forest carbon stocks and changes to assess their role in climate mitigation efforts. Provide data that supports the development of policies aimed at best forest management practices and forestry activities in relation to carbon.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Sustainable Management (Respondents: 17, 48, 50, 55)</b>	
Supports sustainable forest management and the CFI program	Thank you for your support of the Division's CFI program. Our professional staff is dedicated to ensuring our management is conducted in a sustainable manner using the CFI data.
Recommends including carbon sequestration	Some forest carbon data is gathered from our CFI plots. More information about carbon on state forests can be found in our yearly Forest Inventory and Analysis reports: <a href="https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/forestry-publications-and-presentations/#State_Forest_Continuous_Forest_Inventory">https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/forestry-publications-and-presentations/#State_Forest_Continuous_Forest_Inventory</a> , and in the Division's Forest Carbon Assessment: <a href="https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fw-carbon_assessment.pdf">https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fw-carbon_assessment.pdf</a> .
Recommends additional details on assessment process and partners in Objective 2.3	As this goal is implemented addition details will be developed and partners identified.
Recommends collecting data on the efficacy of Best Management Practices	A clarification was made to Goal # 2. The intention was for the plan to say, 'sustainable management practices', not 'best management practices.'

## Goal Area: Facilitate Public Awareness and Engagement

**Overview:** *Create educational materials to raise awareness about the FRI data collection and analysis program and the importance of forests and their management. Involve local communities and stakeholders in the data collection process to foster a sense of ownership and stewardship.*

### Comment Summary

### Response

#### Staffing (Respondents: 39)

Use additional staff from the Conservation Education Section to work with private landowners on data collection across the landscape

Thank you for your input. This is something we can take into consideration.

## State Forests Section

Goal Area: Forest Resource Stewardship	
<p><b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal includes maintaining professional leadership, forest certification, science-based information, sustaining oak-hickory cover types, using CFI data, invasive species management, carbon markets, Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF), cultural and archaeological resources, ecological review process, system wide botanical inventory, and Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment (HEE).</i></p>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Cultural and Archaeological (Respondents: 2, 40, 47, 48, 49)</b>	
Recommend more protection for culturally significant sites	Cultural and archaeological resources are reviewed by the Division's Forest Archaeologist and Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology. Protective measures issued are designed to protect areas identified following state standards and law.
More protection of cemeteries	
Recommends more details added to Objective 2.3	This information is available in the State Forest Property Procedure Manual.
<b>Best Management Practices (BMPs) (Respondents: 2, 56)</b>	
Concerned about future sustainability in regard to future climate changes and how BMPs are adjusted	BMPs are designed to cover all conditions regardless of the changing climate. The Indiana Logging & Forestry Best Management BMP Field Guide is periodically updated, any new information or considerations are incorporated at that time.
Recommends additional details on monitoring of BMPs on public land before, during, and after timber harvests	<p>The BMP monitoring program started in 1996, and guidelines were placed in all state forest timber sales agreements starting July 1, 1999. All timber harvests have been monitored or will be soon for BMPs since that date. Since the start of state forest certification in 2006, an annual report of the BMP monitoring for state forests has been published and made available on the Division's website.</p> <p>Before a timber harvest is sold, property foresters determine the locations of log landings and many of the skid trails are discussed and confirmed during the required pre-harvest conference. During a timber harvest on State Forests, the property forester(s) conduct regular site visits during which they check for conformance with our BMP standards, as outlined in the <a href="#">Indiana Logging &amp; Forestry Best Management</a></p>

	<a href="#">Practices 2022 BMP Field Guide</a> , addressing any corrections.
<b>Diversity (Respondents: 2, 9, 34, 36, 50)</b>	
<p>Recommends improving biodiversity of state forests by moving away from managing for value to managing for diversity and focusing more on biodiversity at the open houses and not focusing on oak and hickory</p> <p>Supports a diverse approach to forest management</p> <p>Supports increasing early successional habitat with increased focus on disease resistant trees, and diversity in bird and mammal populations.</p> <p>Supports a diverse and multi-age class forest</p>	<p>The Division agrees that improving biodiversity on State Forests is a fundamental responsibility of good land stewardship. We've listened to the overwhelming number of researchers - working on Indiana's State Forests and beyond - that report that the best way to improve species diversity - and forest resiliency - is through the diversification of habitats and forest age classes through the use of sustainable forest management activities. Our native wildlife depends on a wide range of healthy habitats for survival, and we believe providing these on State Forests to be among our highest goals. Nearly 20 years of research on the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment (HEE) has made it clear that researchers recommend providing a variety of forest habitats to promote species diversity, even for some of our most imperiled species. Bat research through the first decade of HEE has been summarized in "The Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment: 2006-2016", a Purdue Extension peer-reviewed publication (FNR-570-W) available on the HEE website (<a href="https://www.heeforeststudy.org/">https://www.heeforeststudy.org/</a>). This publication also summarizes findings associated with breeding bird research, concluding the management activities employed on State Forests can result in an "enhancement of bird species diversity" and "a larger number of species are supported in areas that have a diversity of habitats, including forest patches of different age classes." (pg.8) This conclusion is also discussed in the publication "Breeding Birds and Forest Management: the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment and the Central Hardwoods Region" (FNR-501-W), which is also available on the HEE website. The authors of this document report "diverse habitat structure attracts the most diverse bird population." (p.13)</p>
<b>Road Building (Respondents: 10)</b>	
Opposes building new roads	There are over 500 miles of fire lane across the state forest system. This figure does not account for every old fire lane or abandoned county road. These lanes or roads are periodically maintained to provide access for

	management and emergency response during wildfires, public extractions due to medical issues or injuries, and to aid in the search for lost hunters or other state forest users. New roads are avoided unless they can improve management, emergency response, or public access.
<b>Supports Management Harvests/Science Based Managements (Respondent 4, 6, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 28, 30, 36, 39, 52)</b>	
Supports science-based management	Thank you for your support. We care about the state forests, the wildlife that utilize them for cover, forage, and nesting, and the citizens of Indiana that use them to recreate. The Division has been practicing multiple-use/multiple benefits management for over 120 years. These benefits include recreation, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and forest products. Our science-based forest management practices provide diverse habitats with a mosaic landscape of early, mid, and late aged forests that benefit a broad range of game and non-game species. This management ensures we have healthy and resilient forests with varying forest age classes and types in perpetuity. We have professional staff dedicated to ensuring our management is conducted in a sustainable manner, and state forests are annually audited by international non-governmental organizations to ensure our practices are responsible and sustainable.
<b>Opposes Logging (Respondents: 10, 15, 32, 33, 41, 45, 51, 58)</b>	
Opposes logging on state forests  Opposes logging for habitat  Opposes commercial logging	The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) manages over 500,000 acres, state forests represent 1/3 of that area. Most of IDNR landholdings are dedicated to older forest conditions, only a fraction is available to provide diverse forest habitat and structure through active forest management. A portion of the 1/3 managed by the Division is removed from forest management activities, restricted to management for a particular species/community, or operates under longer management rotations.
<b>Oak-Hickory Management/Restoration (Respondents: 7, 17, 19, 48, 52, 54, 55, 57, 59)</b>	
Supports oak-hickory management/restoration  Supports shelterwoods for oak-hickory management	Oak and hickory are an important component of oak-hickory forests found in the central hardwood region, which includes Indiana. Oaks dominate most forest communities in Indiana. CFI data indicates oak, while slowly declining, are in the overstory but are grossly



Oppose focus on oak-hickory management	under-represented in the understory. Oak plays an important role in the habitat that supports a variety of wildlife, both game and non-game. We will continue to employ science-based silviculture to ensure these species remain in the landscape. We will continue to use silvicultural methods such as shelterwoods and single-tree and group selection, patch-cuts, TSI, and prescribed fire to promote conditions suitable for seed germination, growth, and advancement into the overstory.
<b>Harvest Levels (Respondents: 16, 46, 48, 53)</b>	
Oppose current management strategies for harvesting  Questions about why historical rather than current data is used to set harvest levels  Recommends more research to determine sustainable harvest goals	Harvest levels are established based on both historic and current Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) data, as well as past harvest levels. These harvest levels provide a balance among the many uses of the forests: providing diverse forest habitat for wildlife, sustaining cover types that require disturbance, wood products, recreation, research, and more. This multiple-use/multiple benefits approach benefits a broad range of user groups and keeps our state forests healthy and resilient for generations to come. State Forests have been certified since 2006, which requires the Division to meet all the criteria and standards for having a sustainable forest management program.
<b>Invasive Species/Pesticides (Respondents: 17, 21, 36, 39, 48, 53, 55, 56, 59)</b>	
Supports use of herbicides and fire for invasive control  Supports invasive species control  Recommends working with INDOT on invasive species control  Recommends plan address invasive species management  Recommends plan address the impact of timber management on the introduction of invasives  Recommends plan includes monitoring of pesticide treatment areas for run-off	Invasive species, their presence and control, are evaluated as part of the property's normal operations. Treatments may occur prior to or following a timber harvest or situationally based on their presence within the county. Treatments range from minor to aggressive and utilize a variety of methods such as manual, mechanical, chemical, prescribed fire, or a combination. Only approved herbicides are used following forest certification standards and chemical labels. The Division is willing to work with other state agencies (i.e., INDOT), adjacent landowners, and local government (i.e., county/townships) to control invasive species. The Division will continue to explore options to incorporate into management strategies that minimize the spread of invasive species.

<p>Opposes broadcast chemical control of invasives</p> <p>Concerns regarding aerial application of chemicals and impacts on wildlife, air quality, and recreational use</p>	<p>The Division follows all pesticide labels on use and application and adheres to all forest certification standards regarding the use of pesticides.</p>
<p>Supports mechanical control of invasives</p>	<p>In recent years, the Division has purchased skidsteers, drum mulchers, and brush cutters to more efficiently manage invasive species, especially in areas where there is a high presence of woody invasive species such as bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, and callery pear. We will continue to purchase these items across the system as funds allow.</p>
<p><b>Carbon (Respondents: 2, 32, 33, 35, 37, 43, 48, 50, 56, 57)</b></p>	
<p>What is being done to protect older forests as carbon sinks</p> <p>Supports utilizing forests for carbon sequestration</p>	<p>The Division agrees there are opportunities in the carbon market and continues to explore those opportunities. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources manages over 500,000 acres, state forests represent 1/3 of that area. The majority of IDNR landholdings are dedicated to older forest conditions, while only a fraction dedicated to providing diverse forest habitat and structure through active forest management. A portion of the 1/3 is also removed from forest management activities, restricted to management for a particular species/community, or for longer management rotations.</p> <p>State forest tracts are continuously assessed for the presence of old growth (Type 1 and Type 2) and stands with old growth characteristics during the regular tract management guide development process. Candidate stands or sites will be submitted to the Division's Property Specialist and the Forest Ecologist who will determine if further evaluation is needed. The Forest Ecologist annually queries the Continuous Forest Inventory database to identify plots sampled in stands that have canopy trees &gt; 150 years old. If areas meet the old growth requirements, they will undergo the High Conservation Value Forest protocols initiated by the Forest Ecologist.</p> <p>State Forests will remain forestland in the foreseeable future, which will allow for a continuation of carbon</p>

	uptake and storage over the long term. <a href="#">Forest Carbon Assessment for Indiana State Forest Properties.</a>
Supports The Division's entry into carbon markets	Thank you for your support. The Division is currently considering this recommendation.
Believes Objectives 1.5 and 1.6 are in conflict	The Division does not believe that there is a conflict between the two goals. Entering carbon markets could adjust harvest goals.
Recommends analysis of change in carbon as a result of management activities	The Division is in discussion with a major research institution to research this very question.
<b>Climate Resiliency (Respondents: 2)</b>	
Consider climate resiliency when managing State Forests	The Division continues to monitor climate change information to remain knowledgeable on forest vulnerabilities and how we might adapt management practices for future forest conditions. Climate Change Response Framework and Purdue University provide up-to-date information preparing natural resource managers on how the climate may affect the forests of Indiana, and the greater central hardwood region.
<b>Prescribed Fire (Respondents: 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 31, 32, 33, 34, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 57, 58, 59)</b>	
<p>Supports prescribed fire</p> <p>Opposes prescribed fire</p> <p>Concern management program is focused on prescribed fire and harvesting</p>	<p>Prescribed fire is a silvicultural tool used in forest management throughout the central hardwood region. Fire is used in forest management to help promote shade-intolerant species (i.e. oaks and hickories) by reducing fuel load, opening the mid-canopy layer to allow more light penetration, and preparing a receptive seed bed. Fire also helps reduce competitors by removing small trees/saplings such as beech and maple that limit the sunlight on the forest floor. This will allow the oaks to establish themselves and then fire can be brought back in to reduce the competitors. In most cases, the oaks will be top killed, building a bigger more vigorous root system which in turn will promote more vigorous growth rates in this species.</p> <p>Fire following other silviculture treatments that open the canopy (e.g., shelterwoods, single or group selection, etc.) have shown to increase woody stem density benefiting a variety of wildlife such as bats, birds, and mammals. Fire can help control invasive species such as honeysuckle, multiflora-rose, barberry,</p>

	etc. Fire can knock these species back, allowing less chemicals to be used to control the flush of new growth and helping to eliminate these invasive species from degrading our Indiana Forests.
Concerns/questions protection of private property during burns	Prescribed fires on State Forests are administered by professional staff who have been trained in both wildland and prescribe fire. All prescribed fires require a site-specific burn plan approved by the Division's Fire Headquarters. The plan addresses burn area, control measures, neighboring property, hazards, weather, number of personnel, equipment, etc.
<b>CFI Program (Respondents: 17)</b>	
Supports the CFI program	Thank you for your support. We believe the data is important to monitoring trends on State Forest's and helping guide our management decisions.
<b>HEE (Respondents: 17, 18, 19, 21)</b>	
Supports the HEE program	Thank you for your support. The Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment has provided Hoosiers with a wealth of information on the ecological effects of forest management. More information about this long-term, landscape scale experimental project can be found at the HEE website: <a href="https://heeforeststudy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FNR-570-W.pdf">https://heeforeststudy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FNR-570-W.pdf</a> .
<b>Planning (Respondents: 56)</b>	
Recommends that the plan include the number of acres set aside from logging, where they are located, and how they are determined	The Division feels that this is beyond the scope of this document.
Recommends plan includes information on local market needs	Local market needs are taken into consideration when making management decisions. The Division feels that this information is better addressed outside of this document.
Recommends more public involvement and extended comment periods for the Resource Management Guides	The Division expanded their input process in 2011 to include a 30-day comment period for all resource management guides (RMGs). Prior to this, Open House events were the only process for public input on draft RMGs. The Division offers a 30-day comment period where the public can review draft RMGs and provide comments. They can also review the comment summary following the 30-day comment period and follow up if they feel their comments were not addressed. In addition, management activities for RMGs are displayed at an annual Open House event

	where the public has the opportunity to further discuss planned management with staff before the implementation of the Guide.
<b>High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) (Respondent 17, 47, 48, 49, 50, 53, 57, 58)</b>	
<p>Supports HCVFs</p> <p>Supports more HCVFs and Nature Preserves</p> <p>Suggestions for the members of the committee that determines HCVF status.</p>	<p>HCVFs must meet the criteria set forth by the Forest Stewardship Council®.</p> <p>The Division may add experts with pertinent expertise to the HCVF review team depending on the nature of the criteria to be considered. These may be people from sister agencies or outside state government. There has been representation from the Division of Nature Preserves on every HCVF committee. A summary of committee members is listed at the end of each HCVF recommendation.</p>
Recommends more details on the HCVF process	<p>Details regarding the HCVF process can be viewed at: <a href="https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-HighConservationValueForests.pdf">https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-HighConservationValueForests.pdf</a>.</p>
<b>Wildlife Habitat Management/Plant Communities (Respondent 2, 17, 21, 52)</b>	
<p>Supports protection and recovery of native plants and animals</p> <p>Supports management for wildlife habitat and plant communities</p> <p>Supports habitat improvement</p> <p>Supports more open forest management for birds and bats</p>	<p>The Division strongly agrees with the need for research based on good science to sustainably manage forests and wildlife habitats. We agree that it is important that State Forests offer diversity in habitats that are suitable for the widest range of native species possible. We've listened to the overwhelming number of researchers - working on Indiana's State Forests and beyond - that report that the best way to improve species diversity - and forest resiliency - is through the diversification of habitats and forest age classes through the use of sustainable forest management activities. Our native wildlife depends on a wide range of healthy habitats for survival, and we believe providing these on State Forests to be among our highest goals. Nearly 20 years of research on the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment has made it clear that researchers recommend providing a variety of forest habitats to promote species diversity, even for some of our most imperiled species. Bat research through the first decade of HEE has been summarized in "The Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment: 2006-2016", a Purdue Extension peer-reviewed publication (FNR-570-W) available on the HEE website (<a href="https://www.heeforeststudy.org/">https://www.heeforeststudy.org/</a>). This publication</p>

	also summarizes findings associated with breeding bird research, concluding the management activities employed on State Forests can result in an "enhancement of bird species diversity" and "a larger number of species are supported in areas that have a diversity of habitats, including forest patches of different age classes." (pg.8) This conclusion is also discussed in the publication "Breeding Birds and Forest Management: the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment and the Central Hardwoods Region" (FNR-501-W), which is also available on the HEE website. The authors of this document report "diverse habitat structure attracts the most diverse bird population" (p.13).
<b>Bat Habitat Conservation Plan (Respondents: 46, 47, 48, 50, 53)</b>	
Questions why HCP is taking so long to finalize  Supports HCP	The Division continues working on a Habitat Conservation Plan for bats on State Forests. Previous versions of the draft plan were focused on one species, the Indiana bat; however, in recent years, additional species have joined the Indiana bat as federally endangered species (northern long-eared bat), which have been proposed for listing (tricolored bat), or are under review for listing (little brown bat). These status changes and listing uncertainties have delayed the completion of the Plan. In the meantime, the Division continues to follow guidance developed in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding bats and forest management activities on State Forests. Additionally, the Division continues its two decades of support for research on the effects of forest management on State Forest bats. The findings of this research have been published in scientific journals and extension materials (e.g., publications and videos) available on the website of the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment ( <a href="https://www.heeforeststudy.org/">https://www.heeforeststudy.org/</a> ).
Questions when listing of state and federal endangered bats will occur	The listing of wildlife species as federally or state threatened or endangered is outside of the purview of the Division.
<b>Ecological Reviews and Natural Heritage Database (NHD) (Respondents: 47, 48, 50, 53, 56, 57, 59)</b>	
Concerned about the eco review process	Regarding concerns about the presence of listed plant and wildlife species in management areas, during the

<p>Concerned about the use of the NHD data</p>	<p>management planning process a 2-step ecological review takes place (described in greater detail in the State Forest Procedures Manual). The first step is to let the forest manager know of any species of conservation concern in the tract they are considering for management or in the surrounding landscape. Information is provided by the Division's Forest Ecologist and Wildlife Specialist regarding the species and natural communities found in/around the tract and reports any management considerations that the forest manager will incorporate in their management plan (the RMG). Once the RMG is finalized, the Forest Ecologist and Wildlife Specialist review the completed guide to ensure that any earlier recommendations were incorporated into the management prescription of the guide. Both ecological specialists then conduct an impact assessment for each species or community based on the management prescription in the RMG. It is important to note that any recommended changes to the management prescription are based on the life habitats of the species in question. It may be the recommendation to change the prescription if potential impacts indicate avoidance would alleviate concern when species of conservation concern have been observed (e.g., through changes in timing or reserving a site from management activities).</p>
<p>Concern with use of NHD information over site specific surveys</p>	<p>Indiana's Natural Heritage Database is maintained by the Division of Nature Preserves. Its website (<a href="https://www.in.gov/dnr/nature-preserves/heritage-data-center/about-inhdc/">https://www.in.gov/dnr/nature-preserves/heritage-data-center/about-inhdc/</a>) lists the many uses of the Database, which include informing land management planning and supporting related permitting activities. Use of the Database to inform management decision-making is in full compliance with Forest Certification standards the Division has been annually audited against over the last two decades. DNR Ecologists working in the Division of Nature Preserves routinely visit DNR properties, including State Forests, to conduct systematic surveys for listed species that would be included in the Database. Ecologists repeat visits to sites where listed species are found to determine if the species still occur at the site. In addition, property staff throughout DNR report observations to the Database regularly. Researchers</p>

	not associated with DNR also submit observations for listed species found during their research activities. Each year, dozens of research projects occur on State Forests, as well as other scientific events such as bioblitzes and herbarium and museum specimen collection, and all of these are valuable sources of observations to the Database.
Recommends more details added to Objective 2.4	This information is available in the State Forest Property Procedure Manual.
Supports establishment of botanical inventory	The Division is in the process of creating a system wide botanical survey to aid in making sustainable management decisions.
Questions on how the botanical inventory data will be utilized	This information will be utilized in management decisions, including (but not limited to) the development of management prescriptions for species of concern to assist in ensuring the conservation of the species when conducting forest management activities.

### Goal Area: Land Ownership and Acquisitions

**Overview:** *Maintain partnerships with NGO and GOs that support acquisition of forest land, review land offerings from willing sellers, identifying strategic and ecological importance, identify non-essential land holdings and potential trades, boundary line management to include land encroachments.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Expanding State Forests (Respondents: 32, 33, 35, 37, 39, 43, 59)</b>	
Supports restoring and/or expanding forest acres	The Division continues to pursue land acquisition opportunities from willing sellers. The continued goal is to prioritize parcels that improve state forest boundaries, improve public and management access, provide greater protection to a unique area or region, or have something special ecologically or geographically. When an acquisition has open land (i.e., agricultural fields) the Division will continue to restore those areas to forest communities through tree plantings. The Division will continue to partner with the various state agencies, NGOs, and conservation groups to secure these key parcels.
Add timeframe to Objective 1.2	Thank you for your input. Land acquisition is a process that involves several partners and agencies, and timing perimeters are often outside the Division's control.



Goal Area: State Forest Recreation	
<p><b>Overview:</b> <i>Improving state forest recreation trails, infrastructure, campgrounds, lakes, etc. Identify state forests with greatest potential for opportunities, maintain dams, dredging where needed, monitoring fish populations and managing aquatic vegetation, maintain, enhance or add archery ranges or shooting ranges.</i></p>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Trails (Respondents: 13, 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 39, 59)</b>	
<p>Supports expansion of mountain bike trails</p> <p>Supports trail improvements</p>	<p>The Division supports trail improvements. Staff annually review trails for general maintenance, areas for improvement, or opportunities to expand where practicable. Annually, staff maintain and improve miles of trail across the state forest system. At some state forests volunteers assist with these efforts.</p>
<p>Concern about opening trails to OHVs and e-bikes</p>	<p>The IDNR has designed State Recreation Areas (SRAs) dedicated to OHV use. State Forest policy does not allow the use of OHVs; however, some trails are designated for OHV use for those with disabilities, provided that the required permits have been obtained. This exception is for hunting only. The Division does not plan to open trails to general OHV use.</p> <p>All classes of e-bikes are allowed on DNR non-gated roads within a DNR property. These are typically the main paved roads through the property. On designated trails that are paved, concrete, or gravel classes 1 and 2 e-bikes are allowed. Only class 1 e-bikes are allowed on natural surface designated trails for mountain bikes.</p>
<p>Opposed to building/adding trails</p>	<p>Additional paved trails are not planned for any state forest. The Division established the paved trail at Morgan-Monroe to reduce the amount of bicycle and pedestrian traffic on the main road, which was presenting safety concerns. The goal is to maintain what we have, only considering expansions if they are sensible and allow elimination of low or unused trails or trail segments to improve the overall quality of trail system.</p>
<p>Recommend environmentally friendly practices such as pervious pavement on parking areas rather than asphalt</p>	<p>Thank you for your input. This is something we can consider with future projects.</p>

Review trails that cross streams and consider improvements or bridges	Thank you for your input. This is something we will consider. We have made some stream crossing improvements over the past few years, but with over 400 miles of trails there are likely other opportunities for improvement.
<b>Fees (Respondents: 17, 47, 49, 53)</b>	
<p>Concerned that imposed fees to state forests would interfere with hunting and fishing and replace timber harvesting</p> <p>Opposes gate fees</p> <p>Would like additional details about fees and gate policy</p> <p>Recommends that if fees are implemented then perennial flowers should be planted on logging roads to enhance aesthetics and wildlife habitat</p>	At this time, it is unclear how the fee system would work, if approved. It is possible an annual permit/pass (i.e., \$20-25) would be required to hunt and fish or a day pass would be required for single day use (i.e., \$5). Other options include that this would only be for the core camping and recreation areas. Hunting and fishing would still be allowed, and the fee structure is not expected to replace our forest management program.
<b>Archery and Shooting Ranges (Respondents: 17, 18, 19)</b>	
Support continued development of archery and shooting ranges	The Division will continue to maintain and make improvements to the archery range at Jackson-Washington State Forest and look for opportunities at other state forests. The Clark State Forest shooting range will continue to be maintained, and we still anticipate the proposed new shooting range for Clark State Forest to become reality. There has been interest and support to adding a shooting range to Morgan-Monroe State Forest as well. We will continue to pursue both new shooting range opportunities.
<b>Campgrounds (Respondents: 17, 18, 19, 24, 54)</b>	
<p>Supports campground improvements</p> <p>Supports development of recreation opportunities (i.e. campgrounds) if infrastructure is designed to limit canopy loss and provides a different opportunity than is provided by state parks (i.e. not modern campgrounds)</p>	The Division continues to make improvements to the infrastructure of campgrounds and explore opportunities to upgrade campgrounds in areas that make sense through capital funds. These larger funded projects may be the conversion from non-electric to electric sites, addition of a comfort station, or adding cabins. In 2024, a comfort station was completed at Clark State Forest, and Ferdinand State Forest campground improvements are currently through design and will be completed in phases. Phase 1, the

	<p>addition of a comfort station and mound sanitation system, is expected to be completed in 2025. The additional phases include improving each campsite and adding electric. Other plans include campground upgrades at Clark and Yellowwood State Forest.</p> <p>Given the forested nature of State Forest, most improvements would require the removal of scatter trees; however, the overall goal would be to retain as much tree cover as possible.</p> <p>The Division has always provided primitive camping experiences, and we will continue to provide that experience at various State Forests.</p>
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Goal Area: Communications and Administrations	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>Provide information and education opportunities to the public, transparency, public input opportunities, maps, public input on HCVFs, maintain high-quality professional foresters and managers, continuing education, and volunteering opportunities.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Public Input (Respondents: 2, 43, 50, 51)</b>	
<p>Recommends more public input when improving recreation access and forest stewardship</p> <p>Concerned about the lack of public input</p>	<p>The state forest offers many input opportunities that include annual open house events, 30-day comment periods on all resource management guides, staff contact information is available on the webpage for direct access to managers and central office staff year-round, two webpage comment portals are available for year-round input, self-registration camping envelopes have space dedicated for comments, and customer satisfaction surveys. Large scale recreational improvements such as campground upgrades are in response to public input received. These types of improvements take time since funding requests and approvals are required. Smaller improvements such as improving a section of trail, replacing a foot bridge on a trail, updating directional post and signs, or replacing tables and grills in campgrounds are part of routine maintenance. All larger projects and some smaller projects are highlighted during open house events.</p>
Recommends defining “meaningful input” in Objective 1.3 of the Communication and Administration	The Division accepts all input regardless of how or when it is received, or whether it aligns with our management philosophies or not. Meaningful input

subsection of the State Forest section	would reference any input. Ideally, it's input that's easy to understand, has relevance, and a purpose to avoid speculation or misinterpretation of the input received.
Recommends including an escalation process for public input	The Division offers several input opportunities which include annual Open House events at 9 State Forests; two (2) input portals available on our webpage for the public to submit questions, comments, or suggestions; self-registration camping envelopes with a comment section; and the contact information for the property managers and support staff are available on our webpage. The Division of forestry does not believe an escalation process would provide a remedy when there are diverse opinions. The Division is tasked with managing forests with the best available science and has done so for over 120 years.
Recommends more real-time information	Thank you for your input. We will attempt to approve in this area.
Recommends upgrades to online comment system to expand two-way communication and make all conversations public	Funding at this point is limited for this type of system.
<b>Information, Education, and Outreach (Respondents: 9, 39)</b>	
Recommends working with other agencies to increase education opportunities  Recommends utilizing properties as living laboratories for students	The Division continues to work with various agencies within the natural resource discipline and collaborates with external organizations to meet a common goal. State Forests continue to utilize educational signs, guided hikes, open house events, and participate in informational and educational events. These include the various levels of school, universities, and NGOs. The state forests since their inception have always been viewed as living laboratories. Annually research permits, tours, and education events are hosted across the system.
Concern with real time awareness with what is occurring with management on the state forests, and missing opportunities to educate with follow-up responses on social media posts	Thank you for your input. We can look at incorporating more projects or active management posts in the future. The Division continues to utilize various educational outlets to talk about aspects of state forests and the management of them. Whether it be an educational sign or social media post the division must follow DNR policy and procedures for these platforms.

Staff Training (Respondents: 19, 24)	
Supports funding for staff training	Thank you for your support. The Division feels strongly about staff continuing to build their knowledge and skills within the discipline of natural resource management. Professional staff are required to complete a minimum of 60 hours of training in a three-year period, or an average of 20 hours per year. These training may be offered by the IDNR, universities, other government agencies, or national organizations such Society of American Foresters or Wildlife Society.

## Community and Urban Forestry (CUF) Section

Goal Area: Promote Awareness and Education	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal promotes awareness and education of community and urban forestry benefits and issues, through the Tree Stewards Program, coordinating with Project Learning Tree, and assisting with Arbor Day events.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Tree Stewards (Respondents: 1, 54)</b>	
Recommends online training course for tree steward program	Our program does not currently have the capacity to develop an online course for Tree Stewards.
Recommends creating youth focused programs associated with Tree Stewards	We are currently in the process of developing a youth-focused Tree Steward program.
<b>Youth Programs (Respondents: 54)</b>	
Concerns over Objective 1.2. Recommends changing text to read "Create youth focused program associated with Tree Stewards with hands on practical knowledge, skill building, and safety focus."	Thank you for your input.
<b>Poster Contest (Respondents: 54)</b>	
Recommends collaborating with partners to administer poster contest	We have multiple partners both within the DNR and NGO's that assist with this project.

Goal Area: Advocate for the Protection, Enhancement, and Expansion of Urban Forests	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal focuses on technical and financial assistance to Indiana communities with the intent of increasing and maintaining current urban tree canopy cover.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Technical Assistance (Respondents: 3, 12, 54)</b>	
Require developers to mitigate clearing of urban forests or plan projects to incorporate the forests	Our program has no jurisdiction over developers or specific urban forest policy at the community level.
Recommends including 'private trees' in list	The urban forest not only includes trees in parks and street right of ways but also on private property.
Supports more comprehensive tree ordinances. Suggests creating examples or instructions	Our program has examples of ordinances that we can provide upon request.

Supports more availability and diversity of native species. Provide information on tree species suitable for streets and parking lots	We encourage all communities in Indiana to plant a diverse range of native tree species. Native hybrids are an acceptable substitute for straight native tree species. We have a species selection guide that is available upon request that provides information on native tree species and what site locations are suitable for each species.
Recommends including mitigating climate change and clarifying goal	Edits have been made to the document.
Recommend clarifying 'all types of urban forest technical assistance'	Edits have been made to the document.
Recommends rewording of objectives	Edits have been made to the document.

### Goal Area: Improve Communications

**Overview:** *This goal clarifies the methods of communications and other training formats that the Section will use to disseminate proper urban forestry BMPs and research.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Technology (Respondents: 3, 54)</b>	
Recommends using electronic tools such as canopy cover estimates, invasive areas, tree inventories, etc.	There are many different electronic tools already developed that are free to use by the general public.
Recommends more diverse programs with offerings for advanced/higher level learning	The CUF program works with partners to provide higher level learning each year.
Recommends that some objectives are redundant	Edits have been made to the document.
Recommend clarifying Objective 3.4	Edits have been made to the document.

### Goal Area: Provide Subgrant Programs

**Overview:** *This goal directs the Section to provide financial assistance via subgrant programs to support municipal community and urban forestry programs.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Grant Process (Respondents: 3, 54)</b>	
Recommends simplifying grant application, implementation and reporting process	Our program staff are here to help all communities with every step of the grant process from developing ideas to walking through the application and project implementation.
Recommends including the word 'eligible' into the Goal and Objective 4.2	Edits have been made to the document.

Recommends combining Objective 4.3 to Goal 3 and Objective 4.5 to Goal 3 or 5	Edits have been made to the document.
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### Goal Area: Develop & Maintain Climate Resilient, Equitable, & Thriving Forests

**Overview:** *This goal outlines program initiatives to assist communities in maintaining resilient, accessible, and healthy forests.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Urban Forest Health and Accessibility (Respondents: 3, 54, 55)</b>	
Urban tree plantings should be allowed to be non-native species to prepare for pests and climate change	Hybrids of native species are allowed in our grant program. Species diversity and sustainability can be achieved without planting non-native species. The following study indicates which species native to Indiana are expected to do well based on their climate change model: <a href="https://forestadaptation.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/IndianapolisIN_TreeSpecies_ClimateVulnerability_1.pdf">https://forestadaptation.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/IndianapolisIN_TreeSpecies_ClimateVulnerability_1.pdf</a>
Recommends developing a toolkit to provide guidance to communities	A toolkit is currently in development.
Supports exploring urban carbon markets	Thank you for your support.
Recommends adding post planting care and maintenance to Objective 5.2	Thank you for your input.
Recommends acknowledging and addressing barriers to tree care and maintenance in Objective 5.4	Thank you for your input.
Supports Objective 5.3	Thank you for your support.

### Goal Area: Promote Networking and Partnerships

**Overview:** *This goal includes working to establish links that will generate interest and support for urban forestry. This will enable those involved in partnerships to exchange expertise, ideas, and support.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Networking and Partnerships (Respondents: 54)</b>	
Recommends adding objective(s) for specific actions with stakeholders identified, including one involving Workforce Development	Thank you for your input.



Recommends rewording of Objective 6.2	Thank you for your suggestion.
Concerns on appropriateness of some objectives	Thank you for your input.

### Goal Area: Support Arbor Day Programs

**Overview:** *Tree City and Tree Campus participation is a tremendous opportunity to raise awareness and increase broad based support in Community & Urban Forestry.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Arbor Day Foundation Programs (Respondents: 54)</b>	
Recommends promote/support addition of City/Municipal Arborists and/or Foresters to carry out these programs and support community tree activities at large	Thank you for your input.
Recommends clarifying Objective 7.1 and 7.3	Edits have been made to the document.
Recommends defining “dual participation” in Objective 7.2	Edits have been made to the document.

### Goal Area: General

**Overview:** *This covers general comments not tied to a specific goal.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>General (Respondents: 53, 54, 59)</b>	
Supports the urban forestry program	Thank you for your support.
Several recommendations for suggested wording	Edits have been made to the document.
Recommends organizing to short-, medium-, and long-term goals	Our goals include a combination of short- and long-term goals.
Recommends development and adoption of Urban Forestry Plans	Our program currently provides funding for communities to complete comprehensive inventories. We also have data available upon request regarding tree species diversity, size, and condition class based off of inventories completed in Indiana between 2016 and 2021. Adding the development of local community urban forestry plans is cost prohibitive at this time.

## Forest Health Program

### Goal Area: Invasive Species

**Overview:** *This goal includes threats to Indiana forests from exotic/invasive insects, diseases, and plants.*

#### Comment Summary

#### Response

#### Invasive Species (Respondents: 11)

Communicate with State Legislators to regulate the sale of invasive species

The Forest Health Specialist attends and participates in the Indiana Invasive Species Council and helps address invasive species regulation.

### Goal Area: General

**Overview:** *This covers general comments not tied to a specific goal.*

#### General (Respondents: 17, 39)

Supports forest health program

Thank you for your support.

Increase focus on invasive plants

Forest Health Specialist agrees and succeeded in establishing an Invasive Plant Specialist in the USFS St. Paul field office to aid in development and management of invasive plants.

Concern regarding organization of section

Edits have been made to the document.

Recommend all Division staff participate in local CISMAS and forestry committees

Thank you for your suggestion and support regarding working with CISMAS.

## Utilization and Marketing Section

### Goal Area: Renew Indiana Forest Price Report

**Overview:** *This goal promotes the re-establishment of the Indiana Forest Price Report, which was discontinued in 2020.*

Comment Summary	Response
<b>Forest Products Report (Respondents: 46)</b>	
Recommends that participation in the Forest Product Report be a requirement of the License Timber Buyer program	The License Timber Buyers program is statute driven and does not require licensees to provide log or standing timber prices. This would require a statute change.

## Logger Chain Saw Safety & Productivity Training

Goal Area: Provide Adequate Logger Cutter and BMP Training	
<b>Overview:</b> <i>This goal outlines annual training opportunities provided by the Division.</i>	
Comment Summary	Response
<b>Forest Products Report (Respondents: 49)</b>	
Supports logger and BMP training	Thank you for your support. We have provided logger training since the late 1980s and BMP training since 1998. These training courses are essential to everyday practices and safety.
Recommends development of invasive BMP for loggers	The spread of invasives takes many avenues. We will take this under advisement and continue to work with all the groups that help invasives travel.