

Opportunities for Public Input – Indiana Division of Forestry

The Division of Forestry welcomes the ideas and suggestions of Indiana taxpayers. We actively solicit public input through several processes. Public input is given serious consideration in the development of strategic and operational plans and management decisions.

The three major ways public input is accepted is through personal contact with division managers, open houses, and the internet. Lists of Property Managers and division staff are available on the Division web site. Although not all field offices are staffed at all times, email and telephone messages will be addressed. A question, comment or suggestion pertaining to a state forest property decision or action should first be addressed to the property manager. If you feel your comment is not given proper consideration, the State Forester and/or appropriate staff would be your next option.

Open houses are scheduled each year, usually during the period from February 1 through May 31. Open house locations and times vary from year to year. When open houses are scheduled, a statewide news release is issued and the dates, times and locations are posted on the Division of Forestry website. Open houses for multiple properties may be combined in a central location. Times vary from daytime, evening or weekends. Check the Division of Forestry website each year around February 1 to find a schedule for the current year. Property personnel at each open house will provide maps and descriptions of upcoming activities, including timber management, recreational developments, recent land acquisition, upcoming management plans, and general issues facing the property. Each visitor is given the opportunity to submit written comments to the property. Comments are considered by each property in finalizing management activities. A statewide summary of open houses is posted on the State Forests web page.

Forest management planning is done through a process we call the management guide. Before any forest management activity can take place, property personnel must complete a management guide for a given tract. Specific guidelines for the content and preparation of a management guide can be found in the Procedures Manual. Each management guides is summarized and presented at an open house and/or posted on the State Forests web page. Guides are posted as they are prepared throughout the year. Indiana taxpayers are given the opportunity to review and comment on management guides through a minimum 30-day comment period for each guide. To submit a comment, complete and submit the attached Comment Form to the Property Manager. A summary of comments received and how those comments were addressed will be posted before management plans are implemented. If you feel your comment is not given proper consideration, submit your comment to the State Forester. Management actions related to your comment will be delayed until the State Forester issues a decision.

Division Strategic Plans and other occasional planning efforts will follow a process that allows or encourages public input. The current 2008-2013 Strategic Plan for the Division of Forestry was the result of numerous scoping meetings, public meetings, and draft plans posted on the Division web site for public comment, all before the plan was finalized. A

summary of public comments received and how those comments were addressed is also posted on this site.