

APPENDIX B:
SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Issues and Concerns from Scoping and Public Involvement

Stakeholder meetings were held at Atterbury Fish and Wildlife Area on April 5 and the Indiana State Police Post in Putnamville on April 7. These meetings involved representatives from the following agencies, organizations and municipalities:

Atterbury Job Corps	Johnson County
City of Columbus	Johnson County Park
Cordry Sweetwater	Nineveh Heritage Committee
Edinburgh Schools	The Nature Conservancy
IGA	Putnam County
Indiana Department of Correction	Town of Bargersville
Indiana Department of Natural Resources	Town of Greencastle
Indiana Governor's Office	Town of Franklin
Indiana National Guard	Town of Trafalgar
Indiana Sportsmans Roundtable	U.S. Representatives of Indiana
Indiana Wildlife Federation	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

These meetings were designed to allow community leaders to be aware of the proposed action and the forthcoming public meetings. Overall, attendees voiced general support for the concept and indicated interest in the more formal public meetings.

A Governor's press conference was held on April 15 at Atterbury Fish and Wildlife Area where Governor Mitch Daniels publicly announced the proposed land exchange. At least nineteen news releases and articles regarding the proposal were published in various sources throughout the state. The Department of Natural Resources and the Indiana National Guard also provided details of the land exchange proposal via publications and web pages.

Public meetings were held on April 26 at the Atterbury Fish and Wildlife Area and April 28 at the Indiana State Police Post in Putnamville. Attendees were presented with an overview discussion, several large maps displaying the projects areas, a "Question & Answer" handout, and the opportunity to speak with representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. National Park Service, Indiana National Guard, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and Indiana Department of Correction. Attendees were also given comment cards, where they had the option of providing written comments to leave in a comment box or take home to mail in. These comments have been incorporated into this environmental assessment.

Of the comments received, several voiced general support for the proposed action without any specific concerns. Comments with concerns from the public and resources professionals are incorporated into the project assessment. This information was used to develop a list of issues and concerns related to the project. They are grouped into three categories: 1) issues analyzed in the assessment, 2) issues not analyzed in the assessment and 3) management recommendations.

Issues Analyzed in the Assessment

The list below summarizes the public comments received that are analyzed within the assessment.

Conservation

- Natural habitat, including wetlands, may be lost or damaged at Atterbury FWA
- Wildlife populations and behaviors (like migration) may be impacted at Atterbury FWA
- General impacts to wildlife
- Endangered or threatened species may be impacted
- Effect of fragmentation on wildlife

Recreation

- Change in user distance and convenience to available FWAs
- Proposed Deer Creek FWA is unfamiliar territory
- Several public use areas already near Putnamville area; loss of FWA at Atterbury
- Old roads at Atterbury FWA that provide easier user access may be lost
- Potential loss of upland game species and habitat

Other

- Additional use by hunters and other public users may cause trespass issues for landowners adjacent to the proposed Deer Creek FWA.

Issues Not Analyzed in the Assessment

These issues and concerns were raised by the public, but are not analyzed in detail due to the scope of the assessment. Further explanations are provided below.

Local road access and traffic. Several public comments received were in regards to important roads that border or pass through the Atterbury FWA and whether they may be closed to the public as a result of the exchange and may increase traffic elsewhere. From the Buffer and Enclave MOAs (Appendix C), road access to and through the area will not be affected.

Atterbury Shooting Range Complex. One concern shared among a few was whether the Atterbury Shooting Range Complex would be affected by the proposed action. The Complex is not a part of the proposed parcel to be transferred to ING and will remain on Atterbury FWA and open to the public.

Pheasant releases and hunts. Special pheasant release hunts at the Atterbury FWA on the proposed exchange parcel are popular. These “put-and-take” hunts are conducted solely by the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife and are not supported by federal funding. Indiana DFW will continue the program at Atterbury FWA. Estimated users for pheasant hunts are mentioned, but are not further analyzed in the alternatives due to the lack of federal funding involved.

Proposed Deer Creek FWA is already a public recreational area. This is an inaccurate statement that was expressed though at least one public comment. While the property is presently owned by the State of Indiana, public use is not currently allowed on the property. The new Deer Creek FWA would allow for public use and fish and wildlife management on 1,962 acres if the proposed action occurs. Approximately 5,000 acres at Atterbury FWA will remain open for public use and be managed for fish and wildlife.

State may lose revenue from tenant farming at proposed Deer Creek FWA. Tenant farming is expected decrease over time under the proposed action, but it is expected to continue. Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife will not accept cash payments from tenant farmers. Proceeds will occur in the form of goods and services.

Lead contamination at Atterbury FWA. Lead from past hunting may contaminate the area proposed for transfer to the ING. Potential contamination issues will be addressed in future environmental assessments by ING as development activities occur. If contamination is present, needs for remediation will be addressed at that time.

Development by ING on proposed exchange parcel at Atterbury FWA. The assessment analyzes the impacts of transferring the federal interest from one property to another. Future development activities that may be conducted by ING are outside the scope of this assessment. Construction and other development activities will be separately reviewed and assessed by applicable state and federal laws and regulations as they occur in the future. Such reviews may include historical and archeological reviews, endangered species reviews, and a NEPA environmental assessment.

Camp Atterbury does not need additional land. In 2005, the ING identified a need to expand through acquisition of additional land. A thorough discussion involving multiple stakeholders over several years indicated the proposed land for exchange is the only option available. Existing Camp Atterbury land and other adjacent lands are unsuitable for development.

Land exchange to ING may increase air activities and increase disturbance to area residents. Potential future activities conducted by ING are not within the scope of this assessment. Nevertheless, flight activities may decrease near the Atterbury FWA considering the proposed exchange parcel may be developed for residential use by military personnel.

Management Recommendations

All of the following were management suggestions from the public. These will be forwarded to DNR and ING for consideration to be incorporated into the plans to manage Atterbury FWA, the proposed exchange area at Atterbury FWA, and, if approved, Deer Creek FWA.

Atterbury FWA & Camp Atterbury

- Keep Hospital Road open.
- Allow public use (hunting, fishing, mushroom gathering and berry picking) at Camp Atterbury.

- Find a way to keep air training from flying so low as to not disturb local residents.
- Allow birding to continue on the proposed exchange parcel at Atterbury until the property is actually developed.
- Landscape proposed area of transfer with native plants to avoid problems with non-native invasive species.
- Increase active management of the remaining property for small game and game birds.
- Acquire additional adjacent property to expand the fish and wildlife area.
- Add public access to the Sugar Creek corridor south of Hospital Road for hunting and fishing.

Proposed Deer Creek FWA

- Use a lottery or other selection system for hunting to keep initial hunts from depleting animal populations.
- Employ local people to help manage proposed FWA.
- Involve adjoining land owners in the new plans for proposed FWA.
- Collaborate with People Pathways Project to develop the abandoned rail road track at the north boundary of proposed FWA into the National Road Heritage Trail.
- Install signs at the boundaries to remind hunters of private property boundaries.
- Manage wildlife to avoid eating crops on neighboring private property.
- Manage for early successional so that nearby Morgan/Monroe State Forest can be removed from harvest.
- Continue tenant farming.
- Dedicate additional staff and funding for management.
- Commit a significant area to small game and game bird management.
- Consider catch and release designation for the Deer Creek stream.

General recommendations

- Invite local hunters in assessing deer populations.
- Evaluate habitat needs statewide; use early successional habitat at proposed Deer Creek FWA to offset need for early successional habitat in State Forests.
- Install modern campground facilities at both FWAs.
- Allow periodic access for horse riding on paved or improved roads.

Public Review and Input of Draft Environmental Assessment

On September 14, 2010 the draft EA was released and published for a 15-day public review period. The document was available online through the FWS website and the IDNR website. Copies were available for public viewing at the Atterbury FWA headquarters, Indiana DFW main office in Indianapolis, and Putnam County Public Library in Greencastle, Indiana. IDNR sent paper and CD copies on request.

None of the comments received introduced new topics that need further analysis. Some supported the exchange, some opposed the exchange, but none based their opinions on regulatory concerns or factual disputes of data pertaining to the financial, recreational, or conservation value analysis.