

Wayne National Forest Plan Revision Newsletter

Public Collaborative Learning Workshops Result in a Diversity of Themes

How much influence can a hamburger buy? Two Forest Plan Revision Public Workshop participants with opposing views joked about swaying each other's opinion with the mere offer of a free burger in the November Athens meeting. This friendly atmosphere combined with serious negotiating typified the three public workshops that attracted over 100 people interested in the future management plan of the Wayne National Forest.

The meetings in Athens, Brookville and Akron, Ohio, used a collaborative learning workshop style to help the participants understand the impact of their desired actions on other groups and Forest users.

"These three workshops have been a great example of effective public participation," stated Forest Supervisor Mary Reddan. "People took time out of their busy personal lives to come together and share their knowledge, experiences and opinions with others. I was very pleased that despite, in some cases very obvious deeply held opposing opinions, all participants treated each other with respect," said Reddan.

While part of the workshops was devoted to explaining how to use systems thinking as a way to learn how others understand the situation, the majority of the workshop had participants broken into small discussion groups. Individuals in each group discussed, face-to-face, their desires for the WNF management plan with others not necessarily in agreement with them. Each group was asked to develop an alternative theme that might help the Forest in their final "plan" decisions. In some groups reaching agreement on a single theme that would address the concerns of everyone in the group proved to be difficult and opted to develop an alternative theme.



Group members develop an alternative as they learn from each other at a public Collaborative Learning workshop for revising the Wayne National Forest Management Plan.

According to Forest Planner Robert Gianniny, the Collaborative Learning techniques used in these workshops are a way to help folks to interact on a complex subject like Forest Planning. "While people may not agree on a single solution to a problem, they can often agree on specific points of how to improve the current situation," stated Gianniny.

The diversity of the themes reflected the vast differences of perspectives of the participants. The themes have been posted, as recorded, on the WNF website at www.fs.fed.us/r9/wayne.

The themes will be used to help the Forest develop a range of alternatives. The effects of the alternatives will be analyzed in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement scheduled for release in the fall of 2004.

It was evident that the workshop group participants learned from each other, both at the collaboration table as well as the lunch table.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN 2004

DEVELOP A RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES
ANALYZE EFFECTS OF ALTERNATIVES
SELECT A PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
PUBLISH A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
THREE-MONTH COMMENT PERIOD