

Pigeon River Country Advisory Council
Minutes of June 16, 2006 Meeting

Meeting called to order at 6:35pm by Chairman Pete Gustafson.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Pete Gustafson, Richard Myers, Jim Supina, Bob Bolinger, Bud Slingerlend, Mark Ennes, Donald Huff, Ken Glasser, Eugene Horan, Arch Reeves, and Jack Owen.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dave Smethurst, Mike Moreau, Phil Alexander, Don Spence, Bob Hess and Tim Flynn.

EX-OFFICIO PRESENT: Rick Henderson and Brian Mastenbrook for Glen Matthews

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT: Dave Borgeson and Joe Jarecki
(Don Mittlestat present, substituting for Jarecki).

OTHERS PRESENT: Dayle Garlock, Ray Hoobler, Randy Sanders, Bonnie Owen, and Judi Jarecki. Richard Kropf acting as recording secretary.

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS: Deferred until primary business (Concept of Management update).

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Ray Hoobler, speaking as President of the Pigeon River Country Association (PRCA), expressed concern about several issues. Thinks that the proposed Concept of Management update drafts appear weak in several areas, for example, addressing such issues as canoe liveries and other commercial activities. Would like to see the Oil & Gas section more forceful in tone, and to include the text of the "Guyer Agreement". Also concerned about rumors that Song of the Morning Ranch will seek to develop Antrim wells in the Consent Order area and indicates that if pressed on this issue, the PRCA will take it back to court. No other public comments.

CONCEPT OF MANAGEMENT (COM) UPDATE: Chairman Gustafson, who represents the Advisory Council on the COM Update Steering Committee, asked that Council members voice their opinions and concerns regarding each draft section of the proposed update and that a Council vote be taken regarding a summary of suggested changes for each draft section.

Re. Aquatic Resources: That priority of management for brook trout (char), especially for the Upper Black River be more clearly stated; that this section of the draft be examined more closely by the DNR fisheries experts, especially those expert in fish growth patterns; that this section more clearly prohibit use of all but electric fishing motors on PRC waters; that the need for control of beaver population be made more explicit. There was unanimous agreement on these points.

Re. Forest Cover and Wildlife Habitat Management: In addition to asking for clarification of what is meant by "lowland poplar", the Council approved the following suggested changes: (re. the "Aesthetics" section of the draft) that "to the greatest extent possible" straight lines be avoided in planning cuttings; that more emphasis be placed on "team management" of the Forest and its resources; that mention of "Best Management Practices" be more clearly related (subsumed) to the management priorities set for the PRC by the COM; and that mention of "beaver" be dropped (considering the addition made to the Aquatic Resources section above) from the list of wildlife priorities in this section. Summary of proposed changes unanimously approved.

Re. Oil, Gas, Utilities, and Alternative Energies.

Note: Ken Glasser explained that this proposed draft is not as originally proposed by the Committee, that the second bulleted item regarding areas "annexed" to the PRC was added later, and raised the issue as to whether or not any more areas should be annexed to the Forest or further steps must be taken to ensure that the mineral rights in these areas come under state control. Henderson (from the DEQ) pointed out: a) that the Advisory Council must acknowledge the fact that it and the DNR do not have complete control where mineral rights are not owned by the

state; b) that we need to put up with some development activity for the sake of acquiring more land for the public; and c) not only the "Guyer Agreement" but all other relevant documents will be included in an appendix to the updated COM.

The Advisory Council then unanimously agreed that some editing corrections be made in the draft (mostly spelling out the many acronym/abbreviations at least once and adding "white oak" to the list of species regarding restoration of the Forest at former production sites as well as development of "wildlife openings" in others) and to the argument made to the effect that the advantage of adding more land to the Forest outweighs the temporary lack of complete control over the development of mineral rights.

Re. Private Land and Adjacent State Land: Some discussion of why Black River Ranch, or at least that part of it lying west of the Black River, is not included within the boundaries of the PRC. No conclusion reached. However, there was general agreement that some minor editing needed (comma placement and anagram explanation) and the need was expressed for a larger, easier to read map and a change in the map title as reflecting the proposed acquisitions for the PRC, not the actual management territory.

Re. Recreation and Law-Enforcement. A number of issues surfaced in regard to this draft. There was debate as to whether or not the sentence regarding snowmobiles was clear enough, especially in that it didn't -- unlike the old COM -- mention county roads and right-of-ways. However, because of legal problems in this regard, it became clear why only the forest roads and trails open to vehicles under the Vehicular Access Plan are to be open to snowmobiles. Need to incorporate the above plan into the COM update was expressed. Concern that "five year review" of impact of some uses like horseback activity is not often enough. A vote was taken regarding suggestion that the "discouraging" of berry, mushroom, and nut collection for other than personal use be changed to an outright "prohibition for commercial uses" passed with one opposed. Request that a prohibition of the use of bait in hunting as reflecting the Advisory Council's position down through the years was recognized by all the members, but a move to incorporate it into the new revised COM resulted in a 5-5 tie vote. However, when revised to ban baiting of "cervids" (i.e. deer and elk) it passed 6 to 3.

Re. The Advisory Council. It was noted that the text regarding responses to the Council communications from the DNR was supposed to have been changed from 90 to 60 days, or as to guarantee a response before the next scheduled Council meeting.

Re. Vehicular System. After a discussion as to how to discourage speeding in the Forest (legal problems encountered) it was decided that clearer language, such as "for management purposes" replacing "use" at the conclusion of the 4th. paragraph of the draft, and adding "as approved by the DNR" or similar language where needed. How all this is to apply to newer annexed areas needs also to be added, as well spelling out "Pigeon River Country Forest" instead of merely "Pigeon River" (sic).

No further review of the Introduction and History draft was made, and the same questions and remarks that applied to the Private Land and Adjacent State Land also apply to the Dedication draft.

MATTERS FROM DNR FOREST, MINERAL & FIRE MANAGEMENT. Dayle Garlock handed out a 24 page packet of papers outlining the new commercial use policies and permit system, calling attention to the dual criteria necessitating permits for one-time events, as well as guiding, guided tours, etc. Garlock also announced that formal appointment of Council members is now awaiting responses from various represented organizations.

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:

Wildlife: Brian Mastenbrook reported (with handout) on the Pigeon River Habitat Initiative Partnership (next meeting June 29th), well-pad restoration (map hand-out), the planned burning of some openings in the Forest, and the involuntary relocation of a bear from the City of Charlevoix to the Pigeon River Country Forest.

PRCSF: Don Mittlestat spoke of some planned aspen and pine stand cuttings that will involve more than the usual 40 acre limit. These plans may be reviewed at the Open House at the PRCSF Headquarters on July 18 (3-7pm) and he handed out the maps detailing these plans that will be finalized at the Compartment Review on August 10,

starting at 9am. Reeves asked if this variance (regarding stands larger than 40 acres) was to become more common, the response being that it involved stands considered to be over-aged. Mittlestat added that he expected Aurora Oil & Gas applications for permits for drilling in the Blue Lakes tract to be made very soon. Another question involved the effect of the Georgia-Pacific plant closing in Gaylord affecting sales. Answer: apparently not, but jack pine and oak not commanding much of a market and energy costs may be causing a drop off in timber purchases.

Council members voiced concern that there has been little or no input from the DNR fisheries division and a request that they be prompted to do so at future meetings. An inquiry was made regarding plans for opening the sink-hole lakes to public fishing.

OIL & GAS MATTERS: Dayle Garlock alluded to a request from the Oil and Gas Committee that all drilling and development permits be delayed until completion of the COM update process, saying that such a delay was impossible considering the rights of the lease-holders in the annexed areas of the Forest. Since most of the other issues involving oil and gas were reviewed earlier in the meeting regarding the Concept of Management Update, no more time was given to the subject.

The Chairman moved that the meeting come to an end, Jim Supina seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:35pm.

Minutes taken and summarized by R. W. Kropf