

**OFFICIAL MINUTES**  
**PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
Pigeon River Country State Forest Headquarters, Vanderbilt, Michigan  
Friday, April 26, 2019

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (P.R.C.A.C.) was held on Friday, April 26, 2019 at the Pigeon River Country State Forest (P.R.C.S.F.) Headquarters . Chair Paul Rose called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m., then led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Paul Rose, Rique Campa, Barb Curtis, Lisha Ramsdell, Brian McPhail, Pete Gustafson, Drew YoungeDyke, Dave Smethurst, Brad Garmon, Don Horrocks, Heather Shaw, Bryan Burroughs and Sandy Franz.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Rob Pallarito, Bill Loney, Brent Shank, Randy Keen.

**EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT:** Scott Whitcomb, Kelly Kinser, Brian Mastenbrook, C.O. Tom Oberg, Mike Shelton and Karen Chapman.

**EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:** Tim Cwalinski

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Samantha Peterson, Jeffery Whiting, Ryan Neal, Steve Warfield, Judi Jarecki, Joe Jarecki, Ethan Winchester, Judy Mummert, Doug Mummert, Stewart Smith, Eugene Horan, Andrew Knapp and Lance Cottrell.

**INTRODUCTIONS – PAUL ROSE:**

Chair Paul Rose opened by welcoming all to the spring 2019 meeting of the P.R.C.A.C. Introductions were made around the room.

Paul Rose noted that there was an orientation held earlier today for new P.R.C.A.C. members and new non-advisory council committee members. The non-advisory council committee members will help bolster the performance of all committees and assist in identifying new people for future membership with the P.R.C.A.C.

**AGENDA:**

Paul Rose stated that unless there were any additions or deletions, the agenda is approved as presented.

**MINUTES:**

After review of the meeting minutes from February 1, 2019, Paul reminded members that as there was no member quorum at the meeting, the minutes and discussion that took place were informational, and no official action was taken. Dave Smethurst made the motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Lisha Ramsdell, all voted in favor, motion passed.

**CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR CONFIRMATION VOTE – LISHA RAMSDELL:**

As there is a quorum present tonight, Lisha made a motion to confirm that Paul Rose continue as Chair of the P.R.C.A.C. for the second year of his first term, as well as confirm the second year of the term for Rique Campa as Vice-chair. The motion was seconded by Drew YoungeDyke, all present voted in favor; motion passed.

Paul reminded members that in October 2019 there will be a nomination committee convened to present a slate of officer candidates for member consideration at the January 2020 meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Paul Rose opened the floor for public comment. No public comments offered.

**AD HOC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – LISHA RAMSDELL:**

Lisha reminded members that if you are a committee chair, you are a member of the Ad Hoc Governance Committee. Next steps of the committee will be to talk about internal and external communications. Part of the P.R.C.A.C. member charge is to be the sounding board for the public and engage in communications about the Pigeon River Country. Lisha will be sending out a meeting notice soon for the next Ad Hoc Governance Committee meeting to all committee chairs.

**PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE – BARB CURTIS:**

Barb reported that the Equestrian committee has not met since the last P.R.C.A.C. meeting. Chuck Fanslow is waiting for the builder to return signed prints for the building permit for the new pavilion at Elk Hill. The gift/acceptance documentation with the Department has been completed. The builder is anticipating breaking ground in about 4 weeks.

**DISCOVERY CENTER – SANDY FRANZ:**

Sandy reported 1,228 visitors visited the Discovery Center during its first partial season in 2018. Heading into the second season, the center is opening on Saturday May 4, 2019 and will be open weekends. With the help of Sam Peterson, Huron Pines AmeriCorps member at the PRC and the P.R.C.A. intern, the Discovery Center may be open for additional hours on Thursdays and Fridays. The hours will be posted on the Discovery Center website, [www.pigeonriverdiscoverycenter.org](http://www.pigeonriverdiscoverycenter.org). The D.C. will be hosting an “Evening Under the Stars” on May 11, a Dark Sky program with Astronomer Patrick Stonehouse. Doors open at 7:00 p.m., program begins at 9:00 p.m. An educational presentation and field trip on sinkhole lakes is under development, which will be led by retired DNR geologist Ty Black, date is yet to be determined. The Discovery Center has been nominated for an Award of Excellence by the American Association of State and Local History. The winners are notified in July. An application has been submitted to the Natural Resources Trust Fund grant for further repair and development of the Discovery Center. Finally, to celebrate opening day of trout season, Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited is hosting a breakfast at the Discovery Center on Saturday, April 27, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Paul Rose stated that there should be one more person from the P.R.C.A.C. to work with the P.R.C.A. Steering Committee and be the representative; possibly a P.R.C.A.C. member or one of the new non-P.R.C.A.C. committee members may have an interest in being the liaison – please contact Paul or Sandy if you would like to serve.

**AD HOC OUTREACH EVENT COMMITTEE – PAUL ROSE:**

Paul reported that there are plans to conduct another program and tour of the P.R.C.S.F. to promote it to new legislators, DNR leadership and local government leaders. The current plan is to conduct the event at the October 18, 2019 meeting. Three volunteers have stepped up to serve on this committee, Lisha Ramsdell, Sandy Franz and Rique Campa. Brad Garmon, as past Education & Engagement committee chair, has been asked to help. The committee is meeting with DNR leadership to start the planning process in the coming week. If you would like to get involved in the planning and activities of this event, please let Paul know.

## **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **FOREST COVER & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT – HEATHER SHAW:**

Heather reported that the committee met on April 4, 2019 to review and discuss a proposed variance for non-commercial management in multiple stands and multiple compartments. Huron Pines successfully procured a wildlife habitat grant and Ruffed Grouse Society is also a partner. The team worked with Scott Whitcomb to identify sites for non-commercial management within the P.R.C. to improve wildlife habitat. Two motions were made to approve the variances for each of the stands in compartments that were proposed. Heather made the motion to approve the variances, as approved by the Forest Cover & Wildlife Management Committee, motion supported by Don Horrocks, seconded by Drew YoungeDyke, all present voted in favor, motion passed. Contact Heather if you would like more information on the habitat work.

Paul stated that he has received calls from past P.R.C.A.C. members with concerns about Senate Bill 37, which, if adopted, would transfer the authority of baiting and feeding to the legislature and away from the Department. This would run counter to the scientific management of fish and wildlife and the act signed into law in 2014 and again in 2016, it would also reverse one of the most important elements to the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management strategy put into law in the past year. Paul proposed that he and Heather could draft a letter on behalf of the P.R.C.A.C. restating supporting of the CWD management strategy along with a comment supporting the DNR position (opposition) on the matter of Senate Bill 37. Dave Smethurst made the motion to authorize Paul Rose, P.R.C.A.C. Chair and Heather Shaw, Forest Cover & Wildlife Management Committee Chair to draft such a letter to the Department and the NRC. Lively discussion ensued, after which, all voted in favor of motion. Paul stated that a sub-committee will be formed to draft the letter, consisting of Heather, Paul, Rick and Drew. Draft letter will be sent out for a formal review, then, after a consensus document is obtained, will send it out and copy all on the council.

### **RECREATION & ACCESS – RANDY KEEN:**

Randy was not present. Scott Whitcomb reported that the Recreation & Access Committee met to consider a request from a vendor to sell manufactured firewood in a self-serve kiosk in campgrounds. The committee is not recommending use based on appearance of kiosk. Also reviewed several events - the Great Lakes Relay, who is willing to provide maintenance on the High Country Pathway (HCP) in return for using part of the HCP for their event. Also reviewed a bike packing event, using county roads, and a small section of the Shingle Mill Pathway and will help with trail maintenance. Also, the Shore to Shore trail riding event. Also reviewed the May 4 HCP trail maintenance event. The committee is supporting these events, as we gain volunteer support and resources to maintain pathways.

### **EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT – LISHA RAMSDELL:**

Lisha stated that the committee has not met since the last P.R.C.A.C. meeting, will be sending out a meeting notice soon.

### **AQUATIC RESOURCES & FISHERIES MANAGEMENT – DAVE SMETHURST:**

Dave stated he will be contacting committee members to arrange a meeting soon. Would like to review the status of S.O.M. dam removal and sediment control.

### **RESOURCE USE & EXTRACTION – SANDY FRANZ:**

Sandy reported that the committee has not met since the last P.R.C.A.C. meeting. She would like to focus on the current status of the mineral field in the P.R.C.S.F. She wants to assure the transfer to Lambda will provide enough bonding for closing and restoration of the wells in this aging oil field.

Paul introduced Mike Shelton, D.E.Q. Geologist, and explained the concern of Lambda having enough bond coverage. In Mike's opinion, there may not be enough bonding by Lambda. Lambda is focused elsewhere at this time, not much going on in the P.R.C.S.F. Scott Whitcomb stated that the Department found that Lambda currently does not have a \$1,000,000 bond in place with D.E.Q. as outlined in the successor operator agreement.

Scott Whitcomb noted that there is an increased interest in doing seismic testing around the perimeter of the P.R.C.S.F., and a firm is currently working through the Department processes.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **UPDATE ON TUBES PROJECT AND CORNWALL FLOODING – LISHA RAMSDELL:**

Lisha reported that Huron Pines is the project manager on each of these projects. She reported that work is moving forward on the Tubes project, which is slated for 2020. Currently Huron Pines is working on getting signage up for the public at the campground. The Cornwall flooding dam renovation project was awarded funding from the DNR dam management program, and that project start is slated for 2020.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY AIRSPACE – SCOTT WHITCOMB:**

Scott Whitcomb reported on the Quiet Airspace Agreement with the military dating back to 1990. There were some proposed changes in airspace, but they were for high level flights. The Michigan Air National Guard (MiANG) was occasionally flying low levels over the P.R.C.S.F. but has agreed to work with DNR on those to move those flight paths. They also proposed to increase the size of Military Flights ops area from Camp Grayling (MOA), including half of the P.R.C.S.F. and were planning a public outreach opportunity. Based on public comments at a Gaylord meeting, MiANG has redrawn the MOA concept and will no longer impact the P.R.C.S.F. with a low MOA. This is higher altitude than the historic limits that were in place. For more information on the airspace proposal and updates, you can go to this website:

<https://www.alpenacrtc.ang.af.mil/Resources/Airspace/>.

## **EX-OFFICIO REPORTS**

### **PARKS AND RECREATION REPORT – KELLY KINSER:**

Kelly reported that the new ranger for the PRC, Jacob Vallance is starting on May 5. Jacob is new to ranger duties and will be in training. As a result, you may see other park staff covering at the PRC as Jacob gets up to speed on his new duties. Summer staff will be starting up within the next couple of weeks. We received a Land Use permit application from Pavement Ends for a bike packing event called the Sub-48 to be held the first full weekend in September. The application for the event was reviewed and recommended to be approved by the P.R.C.A.C. Recreation & Access committee; the event will use primarily forest roads and portions of the Shingle Mill pathway. We also have the Great Lakes Relay coming through the P.R.C. as well, to date, we have not reviewed their Land Use application but anticipate a similar route as last time they were

here. The HCP volunteer clean-up event is on Saturday May 4, the goal is to clear the entire 80 miles of pathway. The Equestrian committee (PRCEC) volunteer work weekend is scheduled for the weekend of May 17,18 and 19. Lastly, the “Tubes” replacement project is coming up, which will affect parts of the Pigeon River State Forest Campground.

**WILDLIFE REPORT – BRIAN MASTENBROOK:**

Brian (beefsteak Brian, thanks Heather) requested a meeting of the Forest Cover & Wildlife committee to discuss Compartment 17, as there are some proposals that may be controversial. There was a new MOU signed between USDA, MDARD and DNR regarding TB management. As part of the new MOU, the Department will be collecting more heads for TB testing in Cheboygan and Otsego counties. There has been a cattle herd that tested positive for TB in Alpena, and another potential TB positive herd in Presque Isle county. Take note that September 15 is opening day for many hunting seasons!

**OIL AND GAS UPDATE – MIKE SHELTON, DEQ:**

Mike Shelton reported that in general the groundwater clean ups from past oil spills are going well, Charlton 4 is better, Forest 24 is looking better.

**PRC UNIT REPORT – SCOTT WHITCOMB:**

Scott Whitcomb reported that the facilities are being updated with the PRC HQ floors being refinished, a new heat pump, new lighting, and new emergency back-up generator, which will also be tied into the Discovery Center. Also looking at some improvements at our storage facilities at Camp Vanderbilt and restoring utilities at the small residence to expand our housing capabilities. DNR is trying to wrap up trespass cases in process. Little Traverse Conservancy now owns 120 acres north of Clute Road in the PRC and is holding it until DNR can purchase from them. Walled Lake and Storey Lake land acquisitions are still pending.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE – C.O. TOM OBERG:**

Tom recently transferred from Chippewa County to Otsego County. He has been spending time getting familiar with the PRCSF, please contact him with any issues.

**FISHERIES DIVISION UPDATE – TIM CWALINSKI:**

Tim was not present tonight but sent an update via Scott Whitcomb. There are no Fisheries surveys planned in the PRCSF this year. Fisheries Division will do some trout population surveys in the upper Pigeon River to compare steelhead passage upstream pre and post removal of the Song of the Morning dam. The sinkhole lakes and Pickerel Lake will be stocked with trout at their typical prescribed levels – no change from past years. Tim is excited about Cornwall dam project. The Upper Black River Council is obtaining in-stream habitat improvement permit from DEQ to put large woody debris in stream. They are doing Saunders-Tyrolean reach of the Black for 2019. Ken Reed is reviewing recent habitat enhancements upstream and downstream of Tin Shanty Bridge. The Upper Black River Council, Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited and DNR Fisheries teamed up again this year to place 20 temperature meters at fixed sites in the Black and Pigeon Rivers.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

Contact Paul Rose or Scott Whitcomb with any future agenda items.  
Next meeting is Thursday July 25, 2019.

**ADJOURN:**

Meeting adjourned at 7:06pm

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,**

**SCOTT WHITCOMB, SECRETARY**