



Pigeon River Country Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Location: Otsego County Library, 700 S. Otsego Ave., Gaylord, MI

Date: Thursday, April 21, 2022

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (P.R.C.A.C.) was held on Thursday, April 21, 2022 at the Otsego County Library in Gaylord. Chair Lisha Ramsdell called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., then led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lisha Ramsdell, Rique Campa, Lance Cottrell, Barb Curtis, Sandy Franz, Matt Hall, Bill Loney, Ty Ratliff, Doug Reeves, Paul Rose, Conan Smith, and Greg Walz.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ryan Boyer, Mitch Beach, Ken Glasser, Don Horrocks, Jon Steigerwaldt and Bill Wood.

EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT:

Mark Monroe, Matt Fry, Mike Shelton, David Price, Mike Aksamit, Susanne Biteman, Madeline Jazdyk, Brian Mastenbrook, Officer Tom Oberg, Sam Black and Karen Chapman.

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:

Tim Cwalinski.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jordan Hurst, Kevin Stewart, Dale Franz, Carl Saunders, Pete Kennedy, Andrew Knapp, Joe Jarecki, and Judi Jarecki.

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS – LISHA RAMSDELL:

Chair Lisha Ramsdell welcomed all to the April 2022 meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council; it was noted that a membership quorum was present for tonight's meeting. Lisha thanked Paul Rose (immediate past Chair) and Rique Campa (immediate past Vice-Chair) for their leadership of the P.R.C.A.C. over the years.

AGENDA:

There being no additions, deletions or corrections offered, the agenda for tonight's meeting was approved as presented.

MINUTES:

Rique Campa requested a few modifications under his report "Elk/Habitat/Recreation Research". Paul Rose made the motion to accept the minutes, as amended, seconded by Sandy Franz. There being no other additions, deletions or corrections offered, all members present voted in favor to approve the minutes, as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENT (5-minute limit):

Chair Lisha Ramsdell opened the floor for public comment. There was no public comment offered.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Lisha stated that everyone should have received a copy of the new committee assignments. If members have any questions regarding the committee they serve on, please contact the committee chair.

FOREST COVER & WILDLIFE – DOUG REEVES:

Doug reported that the committee has not met since the last meeting. There will be a meeting to discuss and offer input on the Pigeon River forestry compartment review process; same for the Wildlife Division update of the Elk Management Plan.

RESOURCE USE & EXTRACTION/OIL & GAS POLICY UPDATE – SANDY FRANZ/MATT FRY:

Matt Fry reported on the Department's "Draft - Policy and Procedure – Conclusion of Hydrocarbon Operations within the Pigeon River Country State Forest" which is in response to both the P.R.C.A.C. Oil & Gas Resolution of January 2021, and also in response to a proposal made by Lambda Energy to open up Unit 1 to exploration activities. He then went on to describe the process the Department must go through to enact a new policy and procedure. They consulted with the Attorney General's office on specific questions as to what could be incorporated into the draft. Matt then reviewed the procedures spelled out in the draft

document to achieve this for the Consent Order Area of the P.R.C.S.F. and the Annexed Area of the P.R.C.S.F.

Sandy Franz and Matt Fry noted that P.R.C.A.C. review and oversight language will be included in the policy. Matt anticipates having a final draft for review in July 2022. Paul Rose proposed that any formal motion to support the Policy and Procedure be deferred until the final draft is available for committee review and brought before the council at the July 2022 meeting.

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT – BILL WOOD:

Lisha reported on behalf of Bill Wood that the committee has not met since the last P.R.C.A.C. meeting. The committee will be discussing communication to the public for the Inspiration Point project and using the Discovery Center as a forum for public engagement.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

DISCOVERY CENTER – SANDY FRANZ:

Sandy reported that the Discovery Center Native American exhibit panels have been installed; thanks to Joe and Judi Jarecki for their work installing the panels. The Discovery Center educational programs for 2022 are in place, thanks to the work of Jordan Hurst, P.R.C. AmeriCorps member.

PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE – BARB CURTIS:

Barb reported that the committee has not met since the last P.R.C.A.C. meeting. There is a meeting scheduled for May 2022.

ELK/RECREATION RESEARCH – RIQUE CAMPA:

Rique continued his report from the April 2022 meeting, presenting the results of the MSU research project on:

- Interactions of habitat suitability and potential
- Summer trail based recreation
- Elk movements and behavior.

Based on results of this study, when making elk management decisions the approach should be to look at habitat suitability which could be critical for planning and evaluating the spatial and temporal distribution of the vegetation types needed for elk conservation. At this time, there is little evidence to suggest that summer trail based recreation alone is having direct or indirect negative effects on elk. The researchers found that the abundance and distribution of vegetation types that provide elk habitat are critical to maintain high habitat suitability so we

can have 100 more years of elk conservation, and a diversity of recreational activities including elk hunting and viewing. The restrictions of recreational use on designated trails are likely limiting interactions with recreation users. We do find that ORV use can be problematic in some areas of public land. A future topic for exploration is the cumulative response of elk to all recreation types throughout the season.

CARBON CREDIT UPDATE – DAVE PRICE:

Dave Price reported on the history of carbon credit projects in Michigan. He also talked about a second carbon credit project recently started on state forest land in the Keweenaw Peninsula. Moving on to the Big Wild Carbon Credit project, Dave reported that the third-party verification process should be concluded soon. The project is also getting close to the actual sale of credits in the June or July timeframe. DTE Energy has committed to buying the first 10 years of carbon credits generated. Payment for the first 10 years of the project is projected to be approximately \$13 million, with the first payment of \$2.35 million projected for June or July.

OLD BUSINESS:

FOREST TREATMENT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR THE P.R.C. – BRIAN MASTENBROOK :

Brian reported on the large red pine habitat enhancement cut planned for Compartment 17, located at Osmon and Clark Bridge Road (CCC fields). Shelby Adams, PRC Wildlife Biologist worked on the communication strategy and plan for the DNR and Huron Pines before going on leave. Huron Pines has been contracted to do part of the outreach, which will be accomplished using a number of steps, communicating over and over again as each change to the area takes place, starting with the prescribed burn this spring. There will be before and after aerial "ortho" photos and ground photos of the site available as each event takes place.

NEW BUSINESS:

No new business to report.

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS

P.R.C. UNIT REPORT – MARK MONROE :

Mark opened by introducing Jordan Hurst, AmeriCorps member serving at the P.R.C. We also have a Pigeon River Country Association intern starting soon. Staff is working on preparing timber sales, 1,564 acres worth. Staff will be presenting the 2024 YOE compartment plans to the Forest Cover & Wildlife committee soon. The Jarvis property acquisition is currently being

appraised and is up for review. Should be coming online in the next 6 months or so. There are three prescribed burns planned for the P.R.C. – the CCC fields, Green Timbers and Hare Trail. Per Kerry Heckman, progress on the Black River Ranch acquisition is moving along. The Forest Legacy funding has been appropriated, which amounts to \$10.6 million, and along with other grants, all funds have been acquired for the property. Kerry is working on the grant paperwork from the US Forest Service. Note: This property is still privately owned with no public access currently available.

With regard to building removals, the plugging of water wells (8 in total) at these sites are in process by the vendor, Ron Hart. The McIntyre building was purchased by Ron for \$1.00, and he is removing it for the building materials. Mark described the asbestos abatement process required for removing buildings. Pigeon River HQ complex - funding was approved for building upgrades, new roofs to be installed and chimney repairs completed for the small residence and the bunkhouse. Funding was also obtained to repair the windows and refinish logs on the PRC HQ, small residence, bunkhouse and shop. An AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) has been installed on the P.R.C. HQ back porch, along with a 911 phone which will also be available for use by the Discovery Center.

ORV users are driving in from Cheboygan County that don't know where Cheboygan County ends and Otsego County begins, have the same issue for Montmorency County. A meeting will be planned with the Recreation & Access Committee to review and discuss placement of No ORV signage. Paul Rose reminded Mark that there is an updated sign policy. Brian Mastenbrook stated he would also like to discuss temporary signage at some of the habitat enhancement projects. Lastly, council members take note, please let Mark or Lisha know if there is interest in doing a day of service.

WILDLIFE REPORT/ELK HUNT UPDATE - BRIAN MASTENBROOK:

Brian reported on the Elk Plan update in process, the last update was 10 years ago. There will be an opportunity for public comment at an open house being held next Wednesday, at BJ's Restaurant in Gaylord. There will be an elk management advisory team formed; the P.R.C.A.C. will be getting an invitation to send a representative. The team will be made up of a broad array of stakeholders with an interest in elk. The hope is to have the plan signed by Director Eichinger and in place before the end of the year.

FISHERIES – GREG WALZ FOR TIM CWALINSKI:

Greg reported on concerns of erosion issues at the sink hole lakes. Funding needed for the rehabilitation of Cornwall Flooding is still being discussed at the DNR Director level.

RECREATION REPORT – SAM BLACK FOR KELLY KINSER:

Sam reported that they should be fully staffed shortly, but PRD is looking for short term workers for the summer. The Elk Hill work bee is scheduled for May 19 – 22, planning to get a lot of campground and equestrian trail maintenance completed. All the campgrounds are open, working on getting them cleaned up. Working with volunteers from area mountain bike groups on High Country Pathway clean up. There is a volunteer trail clean-up day being scheduled for June 18.

LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE – C.O. TOM OBERG:

C.O. Tom Oberg reported on some illegal snowmobile use this winter, especially in the Green Timbers area. Getting ready for more people coming in the forest as the weather improves, and the season progresses.

EGLE UPDATE – MIKE SHELTON:

Mike reported that EGLE shared their comments with Matt Fry regarding the draft Hydrocarbon Policy & Procedure. He also reported there are site clean-ups in progress.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Dave Price requested that he and Dan Heckman be added to the July agenda to present the results of the Remsoft Woodstock models.

Please forward any other future agenda items to Lisha Ramsdell or Mark Monroe.

The next meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m., Thursday, July 21, 2022 at the Pigeon River Country State Forest Headquarters. Please note - there may be a tour or work bee scheduled for July 21 prior to the 5 p.m. meeting, more information will be forthcoming.

ADJOURN:

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
MARK MONROE, DNR