

Pigeon River Country Advisory Council



Meeting Minutes

Location: Corwith Township Hall, 8170 Mill St., Vanderbilt, MI 49795

Date: Thursday, January 13, 2022

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (P.R.C.A.C.) was held on Thursday, January 13, 2022 at the Corwith Township Hall in Vanderbilt, and via Zoom teleconference. Chair Paul Rose called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., then led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Rose, Bill Loney, Lisha Ramsdell, Sandy Franz, Ken Glasser, Doug Reeves, Matt Hall, Mitchell Beach, Lance Cottrell and Greg Walz. Via Zoom – Rique Campa, Barb Curtis, Ryan Boyer, Jon Steigerwaldt, Conan Smith, and Bill Wood.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Don Horrocks and Ty Ratliff.

EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT:

Mark Monroe, Tim Cwalinski, Brian Mastenbrook and Karen Chapman . Via Zoom - Sam Black, Shelby Adams, Matt Fry and Andy Stempky.

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:

LED.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Andrew Knapp, Gary Isaman, Guy Lovelace. Via Zoom – Joe Jarecki, Judi Jarecki, Janet Huff, Frank Huff, Pete Kennedy and Kevin Stewart.

INTRODUCTIONS – PAUL ROSE:

Chair Paul Rose welcomed all to the January 2022 meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council; it was noted that a membership quorum was present for tonight's meeting. Paul thanked former council members Randy Keen, Drew YoungeDyke, Brent Shank and Brian McPhail for their service. He welcomed the newest council members Lance Cottrell, Mitchell Beach and Matt Hall. A moment of silence was observed in remembrance of Dave Smethurst and Ray Hoobler.

CHAIR NOMINATION COMMITTEE – SANDY FRANZ:

Sandy gave an overview of the Nomination Committee process for soliciting nominations for the Chair and Vice-Chair positions. The committee met via teleconference on January 7, 2022 to discuss and review nominees. A slate of nominees was agreed upon to present to the council. Sandy Franz stated that the Nomination Committee recommends Lisha Ramsdell as Chair. Paul Rose then opened the floor for nominations for the office of Chair. There were no other nominations for Chair. Ken Glasser made the motion to close nominations, and support Lisha Ramsdell as Chair, seconded by Matt Hall. All present voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously. With new Chair Lisha Ramsdell's permission, Paul Rose will continue to chair tonight's meeting.

Sandy Franz stated that the Nomination Committee recommends Doug Reeves as Vice-Chair. Paul Rose opened the floor for nominations for the office of Vice-Chair. There were no other nominations from the floor for Vice-Chair. Ken Glasser made the motion to close nominations, and support Doug Reeves as Vice-Chair, seconded by Matt Hall. All present voted in favor; motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA:

Motion made by Greg Walz to approve the January 13, 2022 meeting agenda as presented; motion was seconded. There being no further discussion offered, the agenda for tonight's meeting was approved as presented.

MINUTES:

Motion made by Doug Reeves to approve the October 21, 2021 meeting minutes; motion seconded. There being no additions, deletions or corrections offered, all members present voted in favor to approve the minutes as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT (5-minute limit):

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

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

FOREST COVER & WILDLIFE – DOUG REEVES:

Doug reported that the committee has not met; and has nothing to report.

RESOURCE USE & EXTRACTION/OIL & GAS RESOLUTION UPDATE – SANDY FRANZ:

Sandy reported that the committee met with Matt Fry, D.N.R. on December 8, 2021 to discuss the issues raised in the P.R.C.A.C. Oil & Gas Resolution of January 2021. In order to familiarize new council members, Paul Rose read aloud the Oil & Gas Resolution.

Matt Fry reported that he and Director Eichinger met with representatives from the Attorney General's office to review the P.R.C.A.C. Oil & Gas Resolution of January 2021. It is in the Attorney General's office opinion that there is little that can be done to change the way that oil and gas has been historically produced in the Pigeon River. However, the Director fully agrees it is in the public's best interest to produce oil and gas as quickly as possible to minimize the duration of activities associated with production in the P.R.C.S.F. Note that such activity is stipulated by law under the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Public Act 451 of 1994, Part 619 – Drilling in the Pigeon River State Forest. The Director has instructed staff to work with Lambda Energy and the P.R.C.A.C. to write instructions (which may be in the form of a DNR Policy & Procedure); the intent of these instructions would be to facilitate expeditious conclusion of operations within the Pigeon River. Matt is working with Mark Monroe and Scott Whitcomb on a draft document; the goal is to have a draft document available for review at the April 2022 P.R.C.A.C. meeting, with a final document in place by November 2022.

As regards to the definition of "marginal wells" the Attorney General's office agreed that it was the intent in the Consent Agreement that a marginal well is a marginal well – it does not produce enough revenue to offset costs of operation. However, it is virtually

impossible to create an accounting for an individual well. If it is part of a pooled unit even if production is low, it is probably generating enough revenue to offset operating costs and therefore by definition, not a “marginal” well. For this reason, the D.N.R. would not be willing to mount a legal challenge and contend that an individual well was costing more to operate than it received in revenue - unless there is something extraordinary with the well.

Sandy Franz pointed out to Matt Fry that the output of individual wells is documented in the quarterly reports provided by the operator. She also asked Matt for clarification on the type of document being prepared by the Department.

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT – LISHA RAMSDELL:

Lisha reported that the committee has not met since the October 2021 advisory council meeting.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

DISCOVERY CENTER – SANDY FRANZ:

Sandy reported that the Discovery Center (DC) has a new roof thanks to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. The D.C. committee is working with Mark Monroe, PRC Unit Manager and Sandra Clark, Michigan History Center on window replacement, log chinking, and log-end preservation. The Native American exhibit is almost ready to release for fabrication; the D.C. received strong support for the display from the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and their historian, Eric Hemenway.

PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE – BARB CURTIS:

Barb reported that the committee has not met since the last PRCAC meeting, nothing new to share.

ELK/RECREATION RESEARCH – RIQUE CAMPA:

Rique shared results of the MSU research project on the interactions of habitat suitability and potential-summer trail based recreation-elk movements and behavior. The elk range in Michigan has expanded, there are a variety of reasons that could influence the range expansion such as availability of agriculture foods, seeking refuge from recreational use, and/or other land use issues. Based on other national studies, it is known that the patterns of recreation and habitat suitability can influence wildlife movement patterns

and behavior. Rique reviewed and discussed the habitat modeling component of the research and the other objectives of the research and how outcomes may assist in elk management decisions. Due to internet issues the remainder parts of the project were postponed to discuss at the April 2022 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

PRC "CONTRACT" PROJECTS UPDATE – LISHA RAMSDELL:

Lisha reported that the "Tubes" are gone and have been replaced with a timber bridge. All that remains to be done is pavement of the deck, which will be completed this spring.

Regarding the Cornwall Dam project, the bid came in significantly over what was estimated; additional funds are being sought. Discussions are continuing with Fisheries Division on the project. Tim Cwalinski will have additional information in his ex-officio report.

FOREST TREATMENT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR THE PRC – LISHA RAMSDELL :

Brian Mastenbrook will cover in his ex-officio report.

NEW BUSINESS:

PROPOSED 2022 SCHEDULE – PAUL ROSE:

Meeting dates for 2022:

Thursday, January 13, 2022 – Corwith Township Hall (Hybrid meeting)

Thursday, April 21, 2022 – location to be determined

Thursday, July 21, 2022 – location to be determined

Thursday, October 20, 2022 – location to be determined

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS

P.R.C. UNIT REPORT – MARK MONROE :

Mark welcomed the new PRCAC members and thanked them for taking the time to serve on the council. Currently staff is preparing timber sales - approximately 1500 acres of forest will be set up for sale this year. The 2024 forest inventory is also getting started, staff inventories 10% of the P.R.C.S.F. every year. The purchase of the Hartle property

fell through, however, the Hoobler family wanted to sell their acreage to the State of Michigan – both properties have similar attributes. So a switch to the Hoobler property was made, and the funds for the purchase of the Hoobler property was approved by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The acquisition of the property is now pending legislative approval. There has been no further information from the Attorney General's office on the Tyrolean Hills gate issue. Progress and planning is being made on a variety of road projects – completion of work started last year on Road 1 and Road 24, also improvements on forest access roads in Compartments 8 and 18. With regards to structure removals, work is progressing on the plugging of water walls associated with these structures. The well driller plugging the water wells purchased the cabin at Walled Lake for one dollar and is in the process of removing the structure. The entirety of the electrical infrastructure at Storey Lake has been removed. With regards to facilities, Mark is requesting funds for installation of new roofs for the small residence and the bunkhouse, chimney repairs and new windows. Also requesting funds for refinishing the exterior logs of the Pigeon River Headquarters.

WILDLIFE REPORT/ELK HUNT UPDATE - BRIAN MASTENBROOK:

Brian reported that numbers for deer check through the northern lower peninsula were down by about 30% during the 2021 rifle deer season, he speculated that part of that decline resulted from mixed messages about check stations being opened or closed. Shared that the elk hunt was a normal season; showed location maps of where elk were taken. Elk survey is planned for this year.

Working on the final details for the forest treatment communication to the public for a large clear cut located at the intersection of Clark Bridge and Osmon Roads. Goals for this clear cut are to control invasive species, create early successional habitat, and improve elk viewing. 150 acres of the approximately 230-acre parcel is part of the plan of work for fiscal year 2022, will set up and sell those 150 acres this year, balance in fiscal year 2023. Shelby Adams will work with Mark Monroe and other staff on the engagement plan for this long-term project. The plan will cover all parts of the project on a local and statewide scope, staff wants to assure the word gets out. The first opportunity for outreach will be a prescribed burn scheduled for later this year. Invasive treatments are being planned for this summer which presents another opportunity for public engagement.

FISHERIES – TIM CWALINSKI:

Tim reviewed the 2022 regional fisheries workplan with the council. He then went on to discuss the Cornwall Flooding structure. The Fisheries Division current policy is against dams, but they currently own about 50-60 dam structures, which have to be inspected by an engineer on a regular basis. Cornwall, which was constructed in the 1960's, has to be

inspected every 3 years, as it is considered a high hazard dam because its failure may result in a loss of life. The inspection reports on Cornwall Flooding dam were getting worse and worse; coordination began with Huron Pines to replace the structure. The costs of repair came back much, much higher than anticipated; another \$750,000 is needed in addition for Cornwall dam replacement. Tim authored a report on the value (economic and other) of Cornwall Flooding for the area, which was shared with the Fisheries Division Management team as they prioritize dam repair and replacement. At this time, there has been no final decision made on moving forward with the Cornwall Flooding dam replacement project.

RECREATION REPORT – SAM BLACK:

Sam reported that there is a ranger vacancy in the PRC, Kelly Kinser hopes to get the position posted and filled soon. Pigeon Bridge and Pigeon River campgrounds have been plowed and kept open for winter campers. Completed some trail work on Shingle Mill cleaning up blow downs, and weather permitting, he will try to do some work on equestrian trails.

LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE – LAW ENFORCEMENT:

Mark Monroe shared that he has noticed an increase in snowmobile usage in restricted areas, he contacted C.O. Tim Rosochacki, and LED will be monitoring those areas.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Lisha reported that the Michigan Environmental Hall of Fame is seeking nominations for the Legacy Circle award category, which honors individuals who have passed on that have been champions of conservation. Lisha put forth Dave Smethurst as a nominee for the Legacy Circle category. Sandy Franz supported Dave Smethurst as a nominee and will assist Lisha in moving the nomination forward.

Mark Monroe thanked Paul Rose for his leadership as Chair of the PRCAC.

Please forward any future agenda items to Lisha Ramsdell.

The next meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m., Thursday, April 21, 2022, the location is to be determined.

ADJOURN:

Meeting adjourned at 7:32 pm

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
MARK MONROE, DNR