



Pigeon River Country Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Location: Pigeon River Headquarters, 9966 Twin Lakes Rd., Vanderbilt, MI

Date: Thursday, July 21, 2022

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (P.R.C.A.C.) was held on Thursday, July 21, 2022 at the Pigeon River Country State Forest Headquarters in Vanderbilt. 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, Bill Loney, Mitchell Beach, Doug Reeves, Matt Hall, Rique Campa, Sandy Franz, Ryan Boyer, Ken Glasser, Ty Ratliff, Bill Wood and Lance Cottrell.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Barb Curtis, Don Horrocks, Paul Rose, Jon Steigerwaldt, Conan Smith and Greg Walz.

EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT:

Mark Monroe, Matt Fry, David Price, Mike Aksamit, Susanne Biteman, Madeline Jazdyk, Brian Mastenbrook, Shelby Adams, Officer Tom Oberg, Kelly Kinser, Jake Halabut and Karen Chapman.

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:

Tim Cwalinski

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jordan Hurst, Henry Kirchner, Rudi Edel, Eugene Horan, and Mike Koskus.

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS – LISHA RAMSDELL:

Chair Lisha Ramsdell welcomed all to the July 2022 meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council; she noted that this has been the first in-person meeting held at the Pigeon River Country State Forest Headquarters in almost 2 years, due to the pandemic. Lisha went on

to thank Mark Monroe and PRC staff for the tour they provided earlier today of the Blue Lakes Fire area.

AGENDA:

Ken Glasser made the motion to accept the agenda as presented, seconded by Rique Campa. There being no additions, deletions or corrections offered, the agenda for tonight's meeting was approved.

MINUTES:

Doug Reeves made the motion to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Lance Cottrell. 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 Lisha Ramsdell opened the floor for public comment. There was no public comment offered.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Lisha commented that she is looking to get council work done within the standing committees and noted there is a common template now in use for committee reports.

AQUATIC RESOURCES & FISHERIES MANAGEMENT – LISHA RAMSDELL FOR GREG WALZ:

Lisha reported that the committee met on June 7, 2022. The Cornwall Dam replacement issue is still under review with the Director. Starting to see more erosion at the sinkhole lakes which will need attention. The Upper Black River Council is planning woody debris installation on the Black River, downstream from Town Corner Stairs. Also discussed Walled Lake access and parking issues.

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT – BILL WOOD:

Bill reported that the committee has not met since the last P.R.C.A.C. meeting. Planning for a meeting prior to the October council meeting.

FOREST COVER & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT – DOUG REEVES:

Doug reported that two meetings were held in July, the first meeting was to familiarize committee members with the compartment review process, and the second meeting was to review the *2023 Compartment Review plans. Mark Monroe reviewed the stands over forty acres planned for harvesting. After a review of these stands, the committee recommends that the council support the department harvest plans for 2023.

*Doug Reeves made the motion that the P.R.C.A.C. support the *PRC 2023 Compartment Plan; motion seconded by Rique Campa. There being no further discussion, all members present voted in favor.*

*Please Note – should be 2024 Compartment Review plans.

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

Sandy reported that after the April council meeting, the Department sought comment from stakeholders, including this committee, regarding the draft Policy and Procedure "Conclusion of Hydrocarbon Operations within the Pigeon River Country State Forest". The main suggestion was to include language in the draft Policy and Procedure increasing the advisory council's role of review, input and oversight.

Matt Fry continued with a review and discussion on the current draft of the policy. Please forward any suggestions you may have that would increase clarity on the document to Matt. Lisha requested clarification on the timeline for approval of the draft. Matt expects that any refinements will be completed in August, and presented to the Natural Resource Bureau in September, with final action in October.

Sandy Franz made the motion that the P.R.C.A.C. write a letter to the Director indicating support of the draft Policy and Procedure "Conclusion of Hydrocarbon Operations within the Pigeon River Country State Forest", motion seconded by Doug Reeves. It was suggested to include in the letter that a better working definition of marginal wells be further defined. With no further discussion, all members present voted in favor.

RECREATION & ACCESS – MARK MONROE FOR PAUL ROSE:

Mark reported that the committee discussed O.R.V. signage for certain entry points into the PRC which has become necessary due to illegal O.R.V. usage.

With regards to Storey Lake, the management objective for this parcel is to serve as a transitional buffer between adjacent public and private lands and the PRC, it was decided that this area will be managed by the PRC, but not included under the Concept of Management.

O.R.V. access will not be allowed, the roads currently open to vehicles will include a proposed additional spur in the east-central interior that will end at a northern point and will provide walk-in access to Storey lake. A parking area at Alexander Road will also be provided.

The Walled Lake parcel will continue to be managed under the PRC Concept of Management. In addition to those roads which currently provide vehicle access, a proposed additional spur will allow limited vehicle access in the eastern area and will allow for more direct angler access to the Black River.

The R & A committee members were supportive of these recommendations as presented by Mark Monroe at their meeting. *Lisha Ramsdell made the motion that the PRCAC approve the recommendations, seconded by Rique Campa. There being no further discussion, all members present voted in favor, motion passed.*

Mark also shared that the construction of the High Country Pathway bridge over the Black River should be completed this year. The bridge replacements at Pine Grove, Tubbs Creek Crossing and Pickerel Crossing are still in the planning phase.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

DISCOVERY CENTER – SANDY FRANZ:

Sandy reported that the Discovery Center Native American exhibit has been installed. The Discovery Center educational programs are being well-received by the public.

PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE – BARB CURTIS:

Barb was not able to attend tonight. Mark Monroe attended the last PRCEC meeting; he reported there was discussion of the additional equestrian connector trails still under consideration by the Department.

OLD BUSINESS:

CORNWALL DAM UPDATE – LISHA RAMSDELL :

Lisha reported that they are still waiting to hear about any additional funding for the renovation of the dam. There is also discussion within the DNR Fisheries Division as to the feasibility of owning these types of structures. The Department may start to draw down Cornwall Flooding by the end of this year, due to the poor safety inspection report. Lisha has

invited Jim Dexter, DNR Fisheries Chief to the October council meeting to give an update on the next steps.

Doug Reeves inquired as to what the plan is for the draw-down - will it be left empty, will the area be replanted, what is the plan for invasive species, what about the Shore to Shore trail?

Doug Reeves made a motion for the council to send a letter to the Director regarding Cornwall Dam requesting additional information and clarification about the plan for Cornwall Flooding if it is drained, without repairs to the dam. Sandy Franz seconded the motion, all present voted in favor, motion passed.

BIG WILD CARBON UPDATE/REMSOFT WOODSTOCK MODEL – DAVE PRICE & DAN HECKMAN:

Dave Price reported that the third-party verification process took longer than expected but has been completed. DTE Energy has committed to buying the first 10 years of carbon credits generated. The first payment from DTE of \$2.35 million is projected for fiscal year 2022. The Big Wild carbon credit pilot project is nearing completion.

Dan Heckman gave a detailed presentation on the new State Forest Management Plan which is being developed using the Remsoft/Woodstock industry standard computer modeling program. This new plan is an update to the 2008 plan and will also incorporate three regional state management plans into one planning framework. The initial draft of the new State Forest Management Plan is expected to be ready for external review in the spring of 2023. Once completed and approved, the updated plan will be used for state forest management activities over the next 10 years.

NEW BUSINESS:

ELK MANAGEMENT ADVISORY TEAM UPDATE – BRIAN MASTENBROOK FOR PAUL ROSE:

Brian reported that the purpose of the Elk Management Advisory Team was to get input from stakeholders on the Elk Management Plan regarding any changes needed. This input will be used by Wildlife Division as they update the Elk Management Plan.

CLIMATE CHANGE WORKSHOP RESULTS/ELK RANGE – BRIAN MASTENBROOK/MARK MONROE:

Brian reported that he and Mark participated in a climate change workshop to learn how it would impact the elk range. Looking over a 50 to 100-year time frame, climate models showed milder winters, more snow-off time, perhaps increased drought, which means increased fire

risk. Some species may be stressed by the climate, some may not, there is a chance for decreased forest diversity, and more forest pests. We should plan for this over time and be prepared to manage the changing landscape.

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:

WILDLIFE REPORT – BRIAN MASTENBROOK:

Brian reported on the status of the CCC fields area project. There was a prescribed burn completed, an invasive treatment completed in June, and another invasive treatment is planned for September. Timber sale will be set-up this fall. Elk hunt season is set for 260 state permits. Wildlife Division is in the process of filling two open biologist positions, one in Atlanta and one in Gaylord. Brian has taken a new position as a regional supervisor for Wildlife. There will be mandatory online registration for deer season this year, information will be forthcoming on the new process.

P.R.C. UNIT REPORT – MARK MONROE :

Mark reported on the Blue Lakes Fire, which started on Friday, May 13, 2022. The wildfire burned approximately 2500 acres, 850 of which was state land. The fire was started by lightning which smoldered over time and ignited in the dry and windy conditions. There was another fire in the Chandler Dam area, which burned about 8 acres of state land. The cause of the fire was a tree falling on a power line. He then went on to review timber sale preparation accomplished by staff to date, and the status of the current compartment review process. In addition to the prescribed burn in the CCC fields, prescribed burns were also accomplished in Green Timbers and Hare Trail. Well site restorations, road projects and building removals are in progress. The roofs on the small residence and bunkhouse will be replaced and chimney repair work will be done. Working to get a contractor for log refinishing on the PRC buildings and the Discovery Center.

FISHERIES – LISHA RAMSDELL FOR TIM CWALINSKI:

Lisha reported that Tim has taken a new position as the Northern Lake Huron Basin Manager previously held by Dave Borgeson, who retired. The open fisheries biologist position will be posted. Survey work was done on the Pigeon River, near Elk Hill station. The sinkhole lakes were stocked this spring with yearling trout. Instream habitat work on the Upper Black River is starting to wind down. Concerned with increasing beaver populations.

RECREATION REPORT –KELLY KINSER:

Kelly reported that PRD is currently fully staffed in the PRC. Very busy with keeping campground facilities up and trail clean-up work. Equestrian work bee was in May, small crew this year, but they completed a lot of trail and campground clean up.

LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE – C.O. TOM OBERG:

C.O. Tom Oberg reported on the Blue Lakes Fire, worked on evacuating the area. There were no injuries or casualties. Currently working on ORV and littering issues in the PRC. There will be a new officer starting in Cheboygan County next week.

EGLE UPDATE – SUSANNE BITEMAN:

As the new district supervisor, Susanne will be attending the meetings in the future. Rick Henderson is retiring next week.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Lisha Ramsdell - the opportunity for Elk Plan input and State Forest Plan input.

Sandy Franz – final draft of the Policy and Procedure “Conclusion of Hydrocarbon Operations within the Pigeon River Country State Forest” and the timeline.

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

The next meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m., Thursday, October 20, 2022 at the Pigeon River Country State Forest Headquarters.

ADJOURN:

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
MARK MONROE, DNR