

Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee

Official Meeting Minutes

Location: Otsego County Library

Date: May 17, 2022

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee (P.R.C.E.C.) was held on May 17, 2022 at the Otsego County Library.

Members Present:

Chuck Fanslow, Barb Curtis, Kerry Mase, Darlene Alexander, Bonnie Cornelius, Sandy Franz, Natascha Graham, Norma Laine, Lynn Noll

Members Absent:

Carol Clute

Present:

Parks and Recreation Division:

Kelly Kinser – Otsego Lake State Park Supervisor and PRCSF Recreation Programs,

Logan Graff – PRCSF Park Ranger

Forest Division: Mark Monroe - PRCSF Manager

Ex-Officio Absent:

Wildlife Division: Brian Mastenbrook – Fields Operations Manager

Richard Hill – Gaylord District Supervisor

Paige Perry- Recreation Trails Specialist

Chairperson Barb Curtis called the meeting to order at 1:10. The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Comments from Chair:

Barb Curtis welcomed everyone to the meeting. Because of Covid the committee had last met November 2019. She thanked Dick Kleinhardt, Vicki Reinhardt and Kim Ross for their contributions over the years that they spent on the committee and welcomed the new members Natascha Graham and Lynn Noll.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion to accept the agenda was made by Chuck Fanslow seconded by Sandy Franz. Motion carried.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve the November 1, 2019 meeting minutes was made by Chuck Fanslow seconded by Darlene Alexander. Motion carried.

Unfinished Business:

Six connectors and the Inspiration Point Trail Requests Update

The Recreational Trail Specialist, Paige Perry, did not attend today's meeting so an update on the status of these trails was not available. Kerry Mase reminded the group that these six connectors were approved by the Advisory Council and the MDNR in 2016 but because the trails were located on land that had been purchased with license fee monies additional approval was also needed from the USFWS. Chuck Fanslow commented "we do not seem to be moving forward on these requests" He questioned what was being done to obtain USFWS approval. A **Motion** was made by Kerry Mase and seconded by Norma Laine that Barb Curtis email Paige Perry requesting an update and more specific information regarding what steps have been taken by MDNR to obtain approval. If a satisfactory response is not provided within 30 days Barb Curtis is further authorized to write to Dan Eichinger, Director of the MDNR requesting the information.

Update on completed Ford Lake Bridge and planning for Cornwall Dam project.

Mark Monroe, reported that the Ford Lake Bridge is almost completed. The only thing remaining is for the Road Commission to apply a top coat of asphalt. Kelly Kinser said one of the former campsites that had been affected by the flood that damaged the old bridge and washed out part of the road, will be replaced with a small day use parking space. The area that the public uses to access the river will be naturalized with native plants.

Mark Monroe received an update from Tim Cwalinski from the Fisheries Department on Cornwall Flooding dam. Tim Cwalinski reported that EGLE assessment has rated the dam in poor condition with high hazard potential, meaning that lives were in danger if the dam failed. Plans had earlier been made for repair, but the cost has now tripled. Tim Cwalinski has sent a report to MDNR Director Dan Eichinger, presenting all the pertinent facts and offering three options: 1. Draw down the water and fix the dam 2. Draw down the water in the flooding allowing only the Cornwall creek to continue to flow through the bottom drainage of the earthen dam 3. Draw down the water and remove the earthen structure of the dam. Fisheries would like to see the dam repaired as the Flooding provides valuable fishing experiences for the public. The final decision rests with the Director.

Natascha Graham asked about the Shore to Shore trail that currently goes across the dam. Mark said that all the options would require that the Shore to Shore trail to be rerouted around the Flooding

either on a temporary basis or permanently. Chuck Fanslow said MTRA would work with the Department if rerouting was required, and he did not feel it would be a problem.

New Business:

Election of Officers

Motion to have current officers remain was made by Lynn Noll and seconded by Darlene Alexander. Motion carried. Officers for 2022 will be Barb Curtis, Chairperson, Chuck Fanslow Vice Chair and Kerry Mase Secretary.

Land Aquisitions

Mark Monroe, manager of the PRCSF, reported that the 2100 acres, that is referred to as Storey Lake property, was acquired in October 2019. This property is East of Green Timbers and currently is not managed under the Concept of Management. Currently day use equestrian riding is allowed in Storey Lake. There is an access road and an old well pad that can be used for parking. Horse trailers should not be parked in the Green Timbers parking lot. A more recent purchase was the 600 acres of Walled Lake which lies south of Blue Lakes. Mark is still in the process of formulating the access plan for both of these properties which will be presented to the Advisory Council at their June meeting. Walled Lake is included in the Concept of Management and horseback riding is restricted there. The road into this property is open.

Logging plans in PRCSF that may affect riding

Mark Monroe said that as a result of inquiry made by Kerry Mase he was able to add seasonal restrictions to compartments 41, 51, and 99. Logging warning signs will be in place for compartment 48. The logging in these compartments have equestrian trails in them and the logging will be conducted in the off-riding season. Compartment 59 (location of E5 trail) seasonal restrictions were not possible to add because this compartment has already been sold. However, Mark added that because of Oak cutting restrictions from April 15 until July 15 there will not be any logging in this area until after July 15.

The Forest Management Plan for PRCSF will be available online June 20 and the open house will be at the PRCSF office on July 20 from 2:30 until 5:30. Foresters will be present to answer questions and take input. Both Chuck Fanslow and Kerry Mase have attended open house reviews of plans and encourage people to attend and give input. It is a valuable experience for both the DNR and the Public to engage in discussion about the plans. Mark added that public input is always given consideration although not all changes requested can be accommodated.

Report from Barb Curtis on Advisory Council meetings

Carbon credits: DTE has entered into a contract with the DNR to purchase carbon credits from the PRCSF for 10 million dollars which covers a 10 year time period. This should not change how the

Department manages logging in the PRCSF. Trees store carbon as they grow. The older and bigger the tree the more carbon is stored and the higher the carbon credit. Mark Monroe explained that because of the guidelines of the Concept of Management trees are more mature in the PRCSF before being logged and the forest therefore generates more carbon credits to sell than other state forests. The money obtained from the sale of the carbon credits will be directed to the State Forest Development and the Fish and Game Funds.

Oil wells: The Advisory Council continues to address the removal of oil wells from the PRCSF. Some of the wells have remained because the oil company claims they are still in production but the actual amount of production is unknown. More information is being sought by the Department from the oil company with the goal being the removal of some of these wells.

Report from Chuck Fanslow on Michigan Trail Riding Association

Chuck Fanslow reported that 11 acres within the city limits of Cheboygan was purchased by the DNR to develop a campground for MTRA.

MTRA is saving money to build a pavilion, location to be determined.

Dug Jordan, the ETS representative for the Northern Mi region is working on installation of new steps at Goose Creek campground river crossing.

Chuck reports that there are continuing problems with bike rider's incursion into campgrounds and on equestrian trails. He encourages people to report incidents to Dug Jordan.

Spring Elk Hill Work Bee

Kelly Kinser has provided a work list for Spring Work Bee that includes campground clean up, erosion control measures on the equestrian access path to the river, staining picnic tables, spreading more fill under the horse tether lines and installing the perimeter fence around the pavilion.

The Work Bee is hosted by the Back Country Horsemen – Pigeon River & Beyond. Lynn Noll, Back Country Chairperson has assembled a volunteer work crew. Several of the men have recently completed a Chain Saw Certification clinic and are eager to get to work. There are several trees in the campground and on the trails that will need to be removed.

Other:

Mark Monroe, manager of the PRCSF reported that they have recently installed an AED defibrillator on the back porch of the headquarters office. In early June there will also be an emergency 911 phone installed. Kelly Kinser reported that there is also one defibrillator in one of the trucks driven by the Park Ranger.

Black River Fire

On May 11th lightning struck a tree in the Black River Ranch which eventually ignited a fierce forest fire that was spotted by air at the same time it was called in to 911. DNR fire crews were able to quickly respond with assistance from local fire departments, EMS and law enforcement. The Forest was

extremely dry, and the fire quickly took off. Some area roads were closed. Four airplanes and a helicopter dropped water as crews used bull dozers to build fire lines. The Fire area was 4 ½ miles from the southern to northern end and a total of 900 acres in PRCSF and 1700 acres in the private Black River Ranch were burned before it was contained.

Discovery Center

Sandy Franz reported that the Discover Center opened on weekends at the end of April. The hours are 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday and Sunday. New to the Center is a Native American exhibit. The Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians provided their expert advice making sure that the information was an accurate portrayal from the Native American point of view. Additionally, the Center will host eight educational classes this year and for the second year MSU Extension will hold a Master Naturalist Course specific to PRCSF.

Campground amenities

Kelly Kinser reported that hand sanitizers in the outhouses, solar lights over outhouse doors, will be installed this summer. There are also plans to install wooden back stops in the manure bunkers. Lynn Noll said she could arrange volunteers to come and help with installation.

All the components for a solar well have been purchased but there currently is no money allocated in the budget to drill a new well. Chuck Fanslow suggested applying for a grant from the \$300,000 allocated for equestrians.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the PRCEC will be October 25, 2022 and will be held in Roscommon at the DNR office.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Six connectors and the Inspiration Point Trail Request – Update
Cornwall Dam Project

ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn the Meeting was made by Bonnie Cornelius and seconded by Darlene Alexander. Meeting adjourned at 3:30.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kerry K. Mase
Secretary