

OFFICIAL MINUTES
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Pigeon River Country State Forest Headquarters, Vanderbilt, MI
Thursday, July 25, 2019

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (P.R.C.A.C.) was held on Thursday, July 25, 2019 at the Pigeon River Country State Forest (P.R.C.S.F.) Headquarters. Chair Paul Rose called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m., leading all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Rose, Rique Campa, Brent Shank, Lisha Ramsdell, Brian McPhail, Pete Gustafson, Drew YoungeDyke, Dave Smethurst, Don Horrocks, and Sandy Franz.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rob Pallarito, Bill Loney, Randy Keen, Barb Curtis, Heather Shaw, Bryan Burroughs and Brad Garmon.

EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT: Kelly Kinser, Brian Mastenbrook, Mike Shelton, Karen Chapman, Greg Rekowski (sitting in for Scott Whitcomb) and Jacob Vallance.

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT: Scott Whitcomb, Tim Cwalinski, Andy Stempky and D.N.R. Law Enforcement Division.

OTHERS PRESENT: Samantha Peterson, Emily Aisthorpe, Joe Jarecki, Judi Jarecki, Dan Sullivan, Eugene Horan, Andrew Knapp, Ethan Winchester, Richard Kroft, Lance Cottrell and Ray Hoobler.

INTRODUCTIONS – PAUL ROSE:

Chair Paul Rose welcomed all to the meeting; introductions were made around the room.

AGENDA:

Paul stated that as Barb Curtis was not present, there will be no Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee report, and the P.R.C.A.C. October 2019 outreach event will be covered under Lisha Ramdell's Education & Engagement Committee report. With those updates, the agenda is approved as presented.

MINUTES:

After a review of the meeting minutes from April 26, 2019, Don Horrocks made the motion to approve, seconded by Drew YoungeDyke, all voted in favor, motion passed to approve minutes as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Paul Rose opened the floor for public comment. Richard Kroft commented that while driving through the Hardwood Lake area he observed that the shoulder of the road appeared to be dug up by a harrow device used by bear hunters, which he thought posed a hazard to vehicles.

Dan Sullivan commented that he was concerned about the massive size of logging operations in the Round Lake area because it is tearing up the roads and is very unsightly. Brian Mastenbrook gave a brief review of forest management within the P.R.C.A.C. and using the Concept of Management as guidance. After additional discussion, Paul Rose encouraged anyone interested in forest management within the P.R.C.A.C. to get

engaged with the forest compartment review process. Greg Rekowski also commented that the more public input received at the forest compartment review open house, the better.

DISCOVERY CENTER – SANDY FRANZ:

Sandy reported that since opening on Memorial Day through the beginning of July, the Discovery Center has hosted over 900 visitors. This is due in part to opening the Discovery Center (D.C.) on some Fridays, thanks to Emily Aisthorpe (P.R.C.A. intern), and other publicity efforts. Sandy noted that on TV 9 & 10 there will be a short interview about the 100-year anniversary of the Pigeon River Country and the opening of the Discovery Center. Informational kiosks are being installed at the North Central State Trail trailheads in Vanderbilt and Wolverine.

Several education programs have already occurred this year, further programs are in development. The Discovery Center Steering Committee is working with local educators and Michigan State University Extension to assure classes are science based and specific to the P.R.C.S.F. The D.C. has received an award from the American Association of State and Local History; Sandy will be attending the award ceremony in Philadelphia. The D.C. steering committee has entered into an agreement with the Otsego County Community Foundation for a fall fund-raising campaign, the goal is to raise \$30,000; an anonymous donor will match donations dollar for dollar. The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application is still in process.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

FOREST COVER & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT – HEATHER SHAW:

As Heather was not present, Brian Mastenbrook reviewed the treatment proposals brought before the committee in Compartment 17 (located at the C.C.C. field, corner of Osmon and Clark Bridge roads). This area has many exotic, invasive plants such as Siberian crab, Japanese barberry and autumn olive planted in the wildlife openings. The red pine in these stands is 88 years old, which is past economic maturity and therefore should be harvested. However, harvesting the red pine will severely damage the hardwood trees in the understory. Therefore, the proposal is to clear-cut and roller-chop the area, and plant 6-foot oak and hawthorn, which will provide mast for the future. The DNR will work with Huron Pines to develop treatments for the invasives. The treatment would involve about 170 acres; and follow the roads for a long distance, we also need to figure out how to minimize the visual impact to the area. Pete Gustafson suggested using this as an educational opportunity and place signage (in keeping with the Concept of Management) at the area, explaining the forest management process. Brian stated that the large cut (over 40 acres) is better than breaking it up into smaller cuts because of the invasives involved, the location in the center of elk range with the potential for high browse pressure - a large cut will mitigate that risk, and the trees are at or past economic maturity. The Forest Cover & Wildlife committee unanimously approved this treatment proposal at their meeting. Dave Smethurst made the motion to provide conceptual approval for the proposed treatments which will exceed the traditional 40-acre harvest limitation in accordance with Brian Mastenbrook's proposal, subject to final details being resolved together with the unit manager (Scott Whitcomb). Motion seconded by Drew YoungeDyke, all voted in favor, motion passed.

RECREATION & ACCESS – No report.

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT – LISHA RAMSDELL:

Lisha reported that the committee met on June 18 and discussed using the October meeting as an opportunity to do engagement and outreach, considering that it is the 100-year anniversary of the P.R.C.S.F., and 45 years of the P.R.C.A.C. Staff of the D.N.R. Marketing and Outreach division came up to the area and met with Sandy

Franz and others, and based on those discussions, they will be running a series of stories about the Pigeon River Country State Forest. Lisha will send out more details to council members after tonight's meeting, but the tentative plan is to host an open house two hours prior to the advisory council meeting. Invitations will be extended to partners, local leaders, and department staff. D.N.R. Director Eichinger has the event on his calendar to attend. Specific details are yet to be developed and more information will be forthcoming.

Sandy Franz made the motion to support the efforts of the Education & Engagement Committee in planning the October 18, 2019 open house to celebrate the 100 years of the P.R.C.S.F. and the 45 years of the P.R.C.A.C. Don Horrocks seconded the motion, all voted in favor, motion passed.

AQUATIC RESOURCES & FISHERIES MANAGEMENT – DAVE SMETHURST:

Dave started by asking for a Cornwall Flooding update from Lisha Ramsdell. Lisha reported that funding has been received for the Cornwall Dam replacement, and Wade Trim has been hired as engineering support for the project. Signage is being developed with the Department for placement in the area to explain planned changes to the public. The dam being replaced has part of the Shore-to-Shore Equestrian trail located on it, so its temporary closure will be communicated to the equestrian groups.

Dave reported for Tim Cwalinski that the Upper Black River council is waiting to obtain stream improvement permits on the Black River from Johnsons Crossing to the old Saunders Dam. Fisheries Division is well represented in the planning stages of improvements within the Song of the Morning impoundment. Trout estimates will be done in August in the upper Pigeon River. Song of the Morning has plans to dig out the sand trap, which Dave considers to be of critical importance. Joe Jarecki gave an overview of the issues involved in the redesign project of the river channel. Dave invited Joe to give the council updates on the Song of the Morning project.

Lisha stated that the Tubes at the Pigeon River State Forest Campground are going to be replaced next year with a timber bridge. Signage is already in place at the location informing the public of the change.

RESOURCE USE & EXTRACTION – SANDY FRANZ:

Sandy reported that the committee met on July 10, minutes were made available to council members. Harry Faulkner, C.E.O. of Lambda Energy was present at the meeting, as was Mindy Koch, retired D.N.R. staff who was deeply involved in the legal, permitting and review process for oil and gas operators within the P.R.C.S.F. (and now sits on the Resource Use and Extraction Committee). Lambda has signed a transfer settlement agreement with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (E.G.L.E. – formerly D.E.Q.). Also in place is the 2004 Successor Operator agreement that Merit signed with the D.N.R., which is still pertinent because it applies to any "successors and/or assigns" who would follow Merit. The D.N.R. director has yet to approve Lambda Energy as the successor operator. In the past, this has been done by a Director's Memo to the N.R.C.; however, this time it may be an authorization letter by the Director. Lambda has posted a \$250,000 bond with the D.N.R.; and has posted an additional \$1,000,000 bond with E.G.L.E. specific to the P.R.C.S.F. The definition of marginal wells was discussed at length, and nothing was nailed down. Paul Rose stated that it appears Lambda is using updated technology to get more out of the wells. Lambda and Core Energy received a permit to conduct seismic testing in the Johnson's Crossing area. The annexed area is not covered by the 1980 Consent Agreement. Paul Rose commented that he was very grateful for all the attendees at the Resource Use & Extraction meeting, it was a long time coming and it was great to finally get there. Pete Gustafson commented on the importance of recalling the history of Mindy Koch's input

and involvement during the Shell to Merit transfer, and her advocacy for the P.R.C.S.F. Pete also reminded members that the Department is legally required to have P.R.C.A.C. participation in the matter.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business

NEW BUSINESS

Paul announced an M.U.C.C. On the Ground oak release project in the P.R.C.S.F. (meet at Pickerel Lake) on August 17.

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS

WILDLIFE REPORT – BRIAN MASTENBROOK:

Brian reported that Mark Monroe, Wildlife Technician in the P.R.C.S.F. for the last 10 years has accepted a new position with Forest Resources Division and will be leaving. Mark has done a stellar job in the P.R.C.S.F. over the years and will be sorely missed. Rique Campa also noted Mark's significant contribution to elk research. Dave Smethurst made a motion for the Chair to send a thank you letter to Mark. Seconded by Sandy Franz, motion passed.

PARKS AND RECREATION REPORT – KELLY KINSER:

Kelly introduced the new ranger for the P.R.C., Jacob Vallance. Jacob is from the Gaylord area and grew up hunting and fishing in the P.R.C.S.F. area. In early May, there was a clean up project for the High Country Pathway, volunteers were able to hit most of the pathway system in one day. The annual Elk Hill Equestrian camp work bee took place in May and about 32 volunteers attended. Camping numbers are about the same from last year, maybe slightly up. P.R.D. is down one summer employee, so Jacob and Tom Giesman are doing the work of 3 people! Ground has been broken for the Elk Hill pavilion, Keith Cheli, P.R.D. planner is tasked to assure the building is constructed according to the approved plan, and Jacob and Kelly perform site inspections as well.

OIL AND GAS UPDATE – MIKE SHELTON:

Mike Shelton reported that spill cleanups are progressing, Lambda requested closure on State Forest 1-22 well. There is a company interested in drilling in the vicinity of Black River Ranch.

P.R.C. UNIT REPORT – GREG REKOWSKI:

Greg reported that the Great Lakes Relay took place last week, no issues were immediately noted. Camp Vanderbilt will be getting some renovations, including a new roof. Samantha Peterson reported on the High Country Pathway clean up. She and Emily Aisthorpe, P.R.C.A. intern, were trained by Joe and Judi Jarecki on how to mark the pathway with confidence markers, so they have been busy this summer painting and marking. Greg reported that Sam and Emily have been working with Scott Thompson on road improvements and fixing resource damage. The annual timber sales are on track to be completed. Also, there was a prescribed burn off Sturgeon Valley Rd. in the Lovejoy Pines SCA that went very well.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Sandy Franz requested that educational signage in the P.R.C.S.F. should be discussed within the Education & Engagement Committee or the advisory council at large to assure it stays within the Concept of Management.

Paul Rose suggested starting with the draft road signage policy already in existence and see what is missing as far as educational signage.

Contact Paul Rose or Scott Whitcomb with any future agenda items.
Next meeting is October 18, 2019.

ADJOURN:

Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

**KAREN CHAPMAN reporting for
SCOTT WHITCOMB, SECRETARY**