

Official Minutes
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE
March 16, 2017

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee (PRCEC) was held on March 16, 2017 at the Roscommon DNR office. Chairperson Barb Curtis called the meeting to order at 1:00

MEMBERS PRESENT: Barb Curtis, Chuck Fanslow, Kerry Mase, Dick Kleinhardt, Vicki Reinhardt, Carol Clute, Bonnie Cornelius, Darlene Alexander

MEMBERS ABSENT: Don Horrocks and Norma Laine

PRESENT:

Parks and Recreation Division: Anna Sylvester - Northern Fields Operations Chief,
Paige Perry – Recreational Trails Specialist
Kelly Kinser – Supervisor of Otsego Lake State Park and PRCSF Campgrounds and Trails

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT: Forest Division: Scott Whitcomb - PRCSF Manager
Wildlife Division: Brian Mastenbrook– Fields Operations Manager.
Parks and Recreation Division: Richard Hill – Gaylord District Supervisor,
Law Enforcement Division: Nick Torsky – Corrections Officer

OTHERS PRESENT: Connie Kleinhardt, BCH – PR&B, Jan Wolfin, MTRA , Nadia Kidder, Ostego Mounted Division, Kim Ross, MTRA

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance. Guests were introduced.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR: Barb Curtis commented that she felt that it will be hard for her to fill the big shoes of our former Chair person, Dick Kleinhardt and that she hoped he would continue to be our legislative contact and spokesperson when the need arose.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: **Motion** to accept the agenda was made by Vicki Reinhardt seconded by Darlene Alexander. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: **Motion** to approve the minutes for the November 30, 2016 meeting was made by Dick Kleinhardt and seconded by Barb Curtis. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Jan Wolfin, Secretary for MTRA requested that notices of meetings and a copy of the approved Minutes be sent to her for the MTRA records.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Guidelines for Trail Maintenance:

Kelly Kinser, PRD Supervisor of Otsego Lake State Park and PRCSF Campgrounds and Trails reported that she and Scott Whitcomb Forest Division Manager of PRCSF discussed the guidelines for equestrian trail maintenance. They felt two sets of guidelines were needed that addressed equestrian single track trails and the wider trails. They were recommending a width of 2 to 3 feet for the single track and 4 to 6 feet wide for the wider trails. Clearance of 10 feet overhead was still desired. Anna Sylvester, PRD Northern Fields Operations Chief, said that these are guidelines and not standards. The goal when possible would be to meet these guidelines, but it may not always be possible to do so. Kerry Mase and Chuck Fanslow talked about the difficulty of clearing overhead 10 feet. Paige Perry, Recreational Trails Specialist, said that the Trails Division was also discussing trail maintenance guidelines for all recreational trails in the State.

Prior to this year's Spring Work Bee, Scott Whitcomb will be designating the equestrian trails as either single track or wide track. Maintenance of equestrian Trails in the PRCSF using the Department guidelines will target certain trails each year taking 3 or 5 years to complete all the trails. The cycle will then begin over; trails cleaned to the guidelines in the first year will be revisited after the completion of all the trails. Exceptions may need to be made if there is unusual winter damage. Scott Whitcomb will identify the trails to be worked on this spring and the following years and will send a map to Kerry Mase to distribute to other PRCEC members.

During this discussion Barb Curtis said that she would like to see at least one of the current loops be designated for horse and cart. Jan Wolfen said that a trail suitable for a cart would need to be cleared 5 feet. During the coming summer Barb and Kerry will seek input from those who drive carts regarding which loop would be suitable. Paige Perry said that as long as the cart trail was part of the already approved trails it would not require additional approval. Kelly Kinser felt that suggested routes for carts be vetted through Forest Division in PRC. The cart trail would be eventually designated on the EQ trails map.

Stoney Creek Trail Proposal

Paige Perry – Recreational Trails Specialist reported that after she had received the necessary approval from the Cheboygan County Road Commission she entered the proposed equestrian loops in the Stoney Creek area into the DNR Trail Approval system. She said that there are three areas that will need to be monitored because of beaver activity but this should not be an issue. She has asked for an "expedited review" since all issues related to these loops have already been addressed internally. She is hopeful that the loops will be approved and that signs and maps will be available this summer.

Last year the entrance road to the campground was improved. Some of the camping sites were leveled, new bathrooms were installed, additional picnic tables and fire rings were added and picket poles replaced. Jeremy Spell is the Supervisor for Aloha State Park and the Stoney Creek campground and trails. Jan Wolfen reported that this is a great area to

circle ride in and that she has seen more elk and eagles there than she has seen in PRCSF. Chuck Fanslow agrees that this would be a great place for equestrians to travel to for camping and riding with easy access on paved roads.

Many thanks to Shannon Smith, MTRA member, who worked on two different proposals for these equestrian loop trails. She has also agreed to be the contact person for trail maintenance. MTRA President Al Davis, Vice Presidents Chuck Fanslow and Ed Godzinski support these trails.

PRD Proposed Equestrian Camping Policy

Anna Sylvester - Northern Fields Operations Chief, reported that the Equestrian Camping Policy has not yet been finalized and some changes may still be made to the policy. All the public input has been gathered and is being collated. This is the first time that she can recall that the public has been given an opportunity to have input into PRD policy. At this point they do not know whether they will stick with requiring a minimum of 24 for a reservation for an equestrian group campground. A considerable discussion took place on this topic by PRCEC members who are opposed to this high number. PRD is currently researching past history on the minimum number required. Input on the camping policy from local PRD and Forest Division staff is also being taken into consideration. The Director of PRD, Ron Olson, and the Section Chiefs will be making the final decision on the policy.

Dick Kleinhardt commented that there is a big difference between southern and northern regions and between State and Forest campgrounds making it unrealistic to think that one policy would make sense for all. Furthermore, unlike other state forests, equestrians have camping limitations within the PRCSF and a camping policy should take this into consideration.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chuck Fanslow

Chuck reported on the Pigeon River Advisory Council of which he is a member. Of concern to the Council are the existing Land Cap law and pending Legislation, SB 39 and 40. These legislative bills would run counter to the principles of the Concept of Management. An application to the federal Forest Legacy Program for purchase of almost 600 acres adjacent to PRC might also be in jeopardy.

Chuck recommended that the Chair of our committee provide updates to the Director about the activities and concerns of our committee as it relates to equestrian access and use of the State Forest lands.

Spring Work Bee

Dick Kleinhardt said that Backcountry Horsemen – Pigeon River and Beyond would again host the work bee. Our first choice is May 19 – 21st and our second choice is May 12 – 14th. Scott Whitcomb and Brian Mastenbrook will be contacted to see if there are

any conflicts with either of these dates. The primary focus of the work bee will be maintenance of the equestrian trails.

Trail Hanky

Darlene Alexander reported that the cost for 21.5" square 100% cotton prewashed was \$3.75 and printing was going to be almost that. To make a profit the hanky would need to sell for \$10. MTRA sells theirs for 5\$ and makes a profit. Darlene and Bonnie Cornelius are going to follow up and check into the MTRA source (Gear Up) and will report back next meeting.

Ten Camping Sites For Overflow

Anna Sylvester, Northern Fields Operations Chief, met with Richard Hill, Scott Whitcomb and Kelly Kinser. It was not felt to be feasible to set an area aside within the Group Campground as an overflow site. Some clubs that book reservations within the Group Campground have allowed people to join their club and camp with them if they have room in their reserved number. Other clubs are much stricter and do not allow anyone to join them.

The DNR will be providing information to campers both when they call for reservations and on the campground kiosk that will direct them to the smaller off site dispersed camping areas within PRCSF and also to Big Oaks and to Stoney Creek Campgrounds. Contact phone numbers will also be posted. Equestrian campers need to plan ahead, make reservations and not assume that they will have a place to camp.

Membership of PRCEC

Barb Curtis reported that Ray Dodge of the Elk Hill Riders will be nominating someone from this group to take the place Charlotte Prochazka who resigned. Chuck Fanslow said that Kim Ross has been nominated by MTRA to take Carol Hyzer's place. Letters from these groups nominating their representative will be sent to the Director for his consideration.

Campground Hosts

Kelly Kinser – Supervisor of Otsego Lake State Park and PRCSF Campgrounds and Trails reported that they are looking to have campground hosts at the Elk Hill Equestrian River Campground during the busy camping season from Labor Day to the end of October. A host will need to stay for a minimum of one week or longer. The host will help answer camper questions, hand out maps and encourage legal riding, and help with trail maintenance issues. In exchange they can camp for free during their host period. Anyone interested in being a host needs to submit an application. For more information Kelly can be contacted at Otsego Lake State Park.

Craft Property

The DNR has recently purchased a piece of property on the Black River that is within the borders of the PRCSF. According to the agreement reached between the PRCEC and the DNR (outlined in the Work Plan for Pigeon River Country, March 18, 2015) #9 "New lands acquired with Michigan Natural Trust Fund money within the PRC borders be open to equestrians use if suitable for riding". In an initial conversation between Kerry

Mase and Scott Whitcomb he thought this land was purchased with Natural Trust Fund money. Members of the PRCEC plan on looking over this parcel this summer to see if they feel it might be suitable for equestrian riding. If the members agree a trail proposal will be submitted.

NEXT MEETING PRCEC

September 30, 2017 at the Equestrian Group Campground at noon unless it rains and then the meeting will be held in the DNR Field office PRCSF

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Elk Research Up Date – Chad Williamson
Report on Spring Work Bee- Dick Kleinhardt
PRD Equestrian Camping Policy- Anna Sylvester
Trail Hanky- Darlene Alexander
PRCEC membership- Barb Curtis
Craft Property- Kerry Mase
Hand operated well at Group Campground- Kerry Mase

ADJOURN: Meeting was adjourned at 3:55

Respectfully Submitted,
Kerry K. Mase
Secretary