

**Official MINUTES**  
**PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE**  
May 28, 2015

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee (PRCEC) was held on May 28, 2015 at the Pigeon River Country Management Unit Headquarters. Chairman Dick Kleinhardt called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dick Kleinhardt, Kerry Mase, Don Horrocks, Chuck Fanslow, Norma Laine, Vicki Reinhardt, Carol Clute, Bonnie Cornelius and Darlene Alexander,

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** John Walters, Carol Hyzer, Charlotte Prochazka and Barb Curtis

**EX-OFFICIO PRESENT:** Forest Division: Scott Whitcomb - PRCSF Manager  
Wildlife Division: Brian Mastenbrook – Fields Operations Manager.  
Parks and Recreation Division: Anna Sylvester - Northern Fields Operations Chief,  
Richard Hill – Gaylord District Supervisor, Kelly Kinser – Supervisor of Otsego State Park and PRCSF Campgrounds and Trails, Scott Thompson – PRCSF Ranger

**EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:**  
Law Enforcement Division: Nick Torsky – Corrections Officer

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Connie Kleinhardt, Dale Franz

**COMMENTS FROM CHAIR:** Dick Kleinhardt greeted everyone and said that he was looking forward to today’s meeting focus of improvements to access for equestrians in the PRCSF. He was optimistic that all parties could work together to bring this about.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Dale Franz, Pigeon River Country Association, said that he wanted to attend today to learn more about the PRCEC and our efforts to increase equine access. He felt that there was probably more compatibility between the PRCEC and the PRCAC. Both are interested in forest health.

Dick Kleinhardt responded that we recognize and support that the PRCSF is under special management. Equestrians are looking for a fair and balanced approach to usage of this public land. Horses have been a part of the forest history before there were even roads in the area. Equestrians are among the first recreational users of the forest. We all agree that it is a special place and we want to help to preserve and maintain it while using it responsibly.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:** **Motion** to approve the minutes for the meeting was made by Darlene Alexander and seconded by Carol Clute. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Motion** to accept the revised agenda was made by Chuck Fanslow seconded by Bonnie Cornelius. Motion carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Introduction of new PRD Otsego Lake State Park/PRC campground and trails manager.** Anna Sylvester introduced Kelly Kinser who is the new supervisor of Otsego State Park and will also be the manager of the PRCFSF campgrounds and trails. Kelly said that she was looking forward to her new position and working with the PRCEC.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

**DNR's criteria for granting access to PRCFSF requested by landowners-(item # 15 on DNR Work Plan)** Anna Sylvester reported that the DNR is developing draft standardized process by which a landowner can request access to public lands. The process would be: "Landowners would request access by completing Trail Proposal Application Form and submitting to Department. Department will evaluate and if approved an access site will be developed, which may include the need to obtain easement from private landowners." The access considered would be: " Similar to when a subdivision wants to have entry. Each request evaluated on a case-by-case basis. One access per neighborhood or subdivision. Must not already have access readily available. Easement or other agreement is required to allow public access across private land. May be open to other uses as designated (mountain bikes, hikers, hunters). Access trails must be open to the public. Landowner is responsible for opening gate (if it exists). No individual access points – not one per property owner, not exclusive access."

Before completing a Trail Proposal Application it would be helpful if the landowner(s) met first with the local DNR staff such as the forest manager and wildlife biologist to discuss possible access routes to find the most suitable route from both perspectives (landowner and DNR).

### **PRCEC Trail Team's Recommendations for Connectors**

Kerry Mase, Carol Clute, Darlene Alexander and Bonnie Cornelius submitted their Trails Requests for review by the PRCEC and the DNR. Kerry Mase provided maps and descriptions of each of the 24 trail connectors being requested. Adjustments to two of the routes were recommended by the DNR staff and corrections to the maps were made for three of the items.

**Motion** to accept the Trails Requests as amended was made by Bonnie Cornelius and seconded by Darlene Alexander. Motion carried.

The next steps will be to present the Trails Requests to the Forest Roads and Trails Subcommittee of the PRCAC for their input. The Trails Requests will then be presentation to the Advisory Council at their July 16, 2015 meeting.

## **CAUTION HORSE BACK RIDER SIGNS:**

Ranger Scott Thompson reported that two damaged signs were being replaced and two more signs were ordered. The new signs would be placed at the north and south ends of Blue Lakes Road to alert drivers to the possible presence of riders in the road. The smaller maps of the riding area around the campground are still in the sign shop. These smaller maps show an enlargement of the riding area north and south of the campgrounds and will be made available in the campgrounds as well as in the Field office. Bonnie Cornelius pointed out that Plexiglas needed to be installed behind the big map in the group campgrounds as critters had eaten through the back. Scott also reported that when reservations are made for the group campground the person making the reservation is sent a letter with stipulations regarding the use (such as not tying to trees and using the manure bunkers). A horse etiquette sign will also be posted at the kiosk in the smaller campground.

**OTHER COMMENTS:** Richard Hill reported that the new equestrian campground at Big Oaks on Avery Lake is nearing completion. A work bee is planned that will complete the camping sites in Phase One. Whenever the construction crew is available they will work on the Phase Two camping sites.

Chuck Fanslow, President of Michigan Trail Riders Association reported that MTRA was the recipient of the first Friends of Trails Award at the International Trails Symposium in Oregon May 19, 2015. The award was recognition of their “outstanding support of their local trails.” Members of the PRCEC expressed congratulations on this very well deserved award.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

- 1) Next steps for moving forward on Trails Requests

**ADJOURN:** Meeting was adjourned at 12:55. Group then reassembled at the Elk Hill Trail campground and walked three trails that are on the Requests lists. Further discussion took place on routes of these trails and possible erosion control that could be used. If a general “yes” is obtained on the trails the exact location and design will be worked on with PRCEC and the Parks and Recreation and Forest Division staff. DNR will have final say on route and design.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kerry Mase, Secretary