

MINUTES
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE
September 30, 2017

A meeting of the PRCEC was held on September 30, 2017 at the Group Equestrian Campground Pigeon River Country State Forest. Chairperson Barb Curtis called the meeting to order at 1:00.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Barb Curtis Chuck Fanslow, Bonnie Cornelius, Carol Clute, and Darlene Alexander.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dick Kleinhardt, Kerry Mase, Norma Laine, Kim Ross, Don Horrocks and Vickie Reinhardt

EX-OFFICIO PRESENT: Wildlife Division: Brian Mastenbrook
Parks and Recreation Division: Scott Thompson, Ranger for PRCSF campgrounds

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT: Forest Division: Scott Whitcomb, Pigeon River Country State Forest Manager, Law Enforcement Division: Nick Torsky – Corrections Officer
Parks and Recreation Division: Anna Sylvester - Northern Fields Operations Chief, Richard Hill – Gaylord District Supervisor, Kelly Kinser – Supervisor of Otsego Lake State Park and PRCSF Campgrounds and Trails

OTHERS PRESENT: Dr. Rique Campa, MSU Elk Research, Chad Williamson, Graduate Student MSU Elk Research, Ann Eicher, Laurie Dewey, Charlie Lewis, Kathy Lewis, Reece Hart, Martha Hart, Mary Lou Collins, Linda Christiansen, Janet Day, Fran Arhur, Pam Joslin, Harriet Pinger, Kim Kauranen

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR: Barb Curtis welcomed all those gathered for the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Members of the public that attended the meeting commented that they “love” the new trails and that the connectors were fabulous. Several commented that they were very appreciative. All who helped with getting the trails approved and in trail maintenance were thanked.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Added to the Agenda: Fire Pits and Operations Update. **Motion** was made by Chuck Fanslow and seconded by Carol Clute to accept the amended Agenda. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF March 16, 2017 MEETING MINUTES: **Motion** to approve the March 16, 2017 Minutes was made by Chuck Fanslow, seconded by Carol Clute. Motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Elk Research

Dr. Rique Campa and Chad Williamson presented an update on the Elk Research that is being conducted in the Pigeon River Country State Forest and the Atlanta State Forest. The research began in February 2016 and the purpose is to measure the elk response to two recreational uses of horseback and mountain bike riding and the quality of the habitat. There are four objective of this research. They have gathered and are evaluating the data for the first objective which addresses the habitat. In 2016 they utilized 38 cameras and in 2017 60 cameras to gather data regarding the frequency and scope of horseback and mountain bike riding, the second objective. The peak month was September. Using the initial 40 and now the remaining 30 GPS collars on the Elk they gathered data for the third objective regarding Elk seasonal movements and habitat selection in response to recreational activity. In 2018 they will be gathering data for the final objective which is to assess Elk movement in response to “experimentally applied recreational activity”. The final report on this research is expected in May of 2019.

Many questions were asked by the public and concern voiced about how this data was going to be interpreted and possibly used against equestrians. Brian Mastenbrook, Field Operations Manager for Wildlife Division said that Elk management plans need to be based on data. Research done in other states were not felt to be applicable to our area.

Dr. Campa reported that a project web page will be available this fall within the primary MSU web page and the project Facebook page, “MSU Elk Research”, will also be up dated this fall.

Report on Spring Work Bee

A work bee was sponsored this spring by the Back Country Horsemen – Pigeon River and Beyond. Ranger Scott Thompson reported that all the objective of the spring work bee were met. Targeted trails were trimmed to Equestrian Design Guidebook (the Brown Book) dimensions.

PRD Equestrian Camping Policy

Chuck Fanslow shared the email received from Anna Sylvester. It is being recommended that a Land Use Order be drafted that limits “one horse per person”. This will limit 6 horses per campsite as 6 people are allowed per campsite. They would also like to get more consistency with fees charged for Group campgrounds in the Forest, State Parks and Forest Recreation areas. At Stoney Creek the Department is recommended mixed use for the upper section. The Group area will continue to be Equestrian only. When the MTRA has a scheduled ride through the area the entire campground will be Equestrian Only. These recommended changes will be discussed at the next Equestrian Trails Subcommittee meeting. Comments are appreciated on these three areas.

Campsite fees for Forest Campgrounds are increasing next year to \$15 per night.

Status of Proposed Stoney Creek Equestrian Trails

Chuck Fanslow reported that the proposed loop trails in the Stoney Creek area was temporarily removed from the Trail Approval Process by Paige Perry because of Public Act 288 which will open Forest Roads to ORVs. Because the sponsoring group for these trails, MTRA, wanted the Trail Proposal to go forward, the trail proposal is again making its way through the process and final determination should be made by November.

Scott Thompson reported that Paige Perry is continuing to work with MTRA in locating and developing a campground for MTRA use on their journey from Stoney Creek to Mackinaw.

Trail Hanky

Darlene Alexander reported that it would cost \$5 to have a map of the EQ trails in PRCSF printed on a hanky. MTRA has had these made for the Shore to Shore trail and are making money at \$5 a hanky.

PRCEC membership

Barb Curtis reported that MTRA has nominated Kim Ross to replace Carol Hyzer on the committee. Ray Dodge has not yet nominated a member of the Elk Hill Riders to take Charlotte Prochazka's place on the committee.

Craft Property

Barb Curtis reported that a 40 acre parcel along the Black River was recently purchased with Natural Fund Monies. Some interest was expressed in the possibility of equine access to this site with picket poles, picnic table and access to water for horses to drink. A proposal would have to be submitted.

Hand Pump

Barb Curtis reported that several years ago a request was made by PRCEC to have a hand pump put in the group campground for those campers who did not have a generator to operate the pump that is there now. A location for the pump was established by Charlie Maltby but this project somehow got "forgotten". A follow-up by Kerry Mase to Anna Sylvester has put this back on the List of Things to Do. An email from Anna indicated that next year it will be included in the grant application for campground wells.

Fire Rings

There have been complaints received by PRCEC members regarding the fire rings provided by Parks and Recreation Division. The fire rings used in the forest and state campgrounds, according to Kelly Kinser, have to meet American with Disabilities guidelines. Bonnie Cornelius reported that the ADA guidelines provide minimum and maximum heights. ADA guidelines say a minimum of 9 inches above ground is required. If a cooking surface is provided then the minimum is 15 inches above ground. The current fire rings are much higher, within the maximum guidelines. They do not draw well and do not give off much heat. Bonnie asked if the fire rings can be put down into the ground to lower them. Further discussion with PRD is planned.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Barb Curtis asked about the status of the Parks and Recreation Division Recreational Management Plan. Brain Mastenbrook said that generally Management Plans take two years to complete. Currently only the initial stages of the Recreational Plan have been completed in Draft form and have been shared with the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council. PRCEC members would be provided a copy.

NEW BUSINESS:**Advisory Council report**

Chuck Fanslow a member of the Pigeon River Advisory Council reported that equestrians were not discussed at the last PRCAC meeting. Ranger Scott Thompson reported that there have only been a few reports of riders on illegal trails. For the most part there has been good compliance.

Operations Update

Ranger Scott Thompson reported that a selective cut will soon take place close to the Field office where horse trails are located. The work will be completed by Spring. Over the summer PRD improvements were made to the equestrian campgrounds. Campgrounds were mowed, more fencing was installed, signs were put up on the roads, shelves added to outhouses for supplies, they continue to work on filling the depressions under the tether lines, 500 square feet of invasive garlic mustard was hand pulled.

Maintenance and improvements to the trails is a continuous process that involves PRD staff and equestrian volunteers. Kerry Mase continues to be the contact person for comments and suggestions on the trails.

NEXT MEETING: December 7, 2017, Roscommon DNR Field Office

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Election of PRCEC officers
Elk Research Up-date
Schedule Spring 2018 Work Bee
PRD Equestrian Camping Policy
Status of Stoney Creek Equestrian Trails
Trail Hanky
Craft Property Equestrian Proposal
Fire Rings

ADJOURN: Meeting was adjourned at 4:00

Minutes were prepared using the notes taken by Janet Day, Darlene Alexander, Barb Curtis, Chuck Fanslow. Respectfully Submitted by Kerry K. Mase, Secretary