

**Official MINUTES**  
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE  
December 2, 2014

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee (PRCEC) was held on Monday December 2, 2014 at the DNR Roscommon Field Office. Chairman Dick Kleinhardt called the meeting to order at 1:00

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dick Kleinhardt, Kerry Mase, Chuck Fanslow, Carol Hyzer, Barb Curtis, Bonnie Cornelius, and Darlene Alexander

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** John Walters, Don Horrocks, Charlotte Prochazka, Norma Laine, Vicki Reinhardt and Carol Clute

**EX-OFFICIO PRESENT:** Scott Whitcomb- PRCSF Manager, Anna Sylvester -Chief of Northern Operations, Richard Hill -Gaylord District Supervisor and Charlie Maltby - Supervisor of Otsego State Park and PRCSF Campgrounds and Trails.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Connie Kleinhardt

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**COMMENTS FROM CHAIR:**

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:** **Motion** to approve the corrected Minutes for the April 4, 2014 meeting was made by Chuck Fanslow and seconded by Darlene Alexander. Motion carried.

While reviewing the April Minutes a discussion took place regarding ex-officio members of this committee. **Motion** made by Kerry Mase and seconded by Barb Curtis that ex-officio members of this committee will be representatives from Forest, Parks and Recreation, Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions. The PRCEC secretary will send notices of the meetings to Scott Whitcomb, Anna Sylvester, Charlie Maltby, Richard Hill, Brian Mastenbrook and Nick Torsky. If they cannot attend they have the option of asking another representative from their Division to attend.

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

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **Update on completion of campground improvements at Elk Hill.**

Charlie Maltby reported that almost everything on the original list has been completed for the Elk Hill Equestrian State Forest Campground and the EQ Group Campground except for improvements to the river access and the ADA Mounting Block. Because of the extremely high cost, a Solar Well is not being pursued at this time.

The Department is still working on the design for improved water access for horses. Some improvements need to be made in the design of the path down to the river and basic maintenance work is needed to clean the diversion ditches. Chuck Fanslow will provide equestrian input on the design.

The location for the ADA approved Mounting Block will be by the Day Use Parking area which is also located near the outhouses. The ADA rules also require that a Handicapped Parking spot at this site be provided and this parking place will require a Handicap Sticker for use.

PRCEC members expressed thanks and commented that the work that has been done in these two campgrounds has been very appreciated by the equestrians.

### **Maps of PRCSF Equestrian Access**

Charlie Maltby reported that some errors were discovered on the original maps that were available this summer at the campground and the Field Office. These maps are being corrected and after careful review and approval by the necessary divisions, they will be reissued. The next step will be to enlarge portions of the map in order to show more detail in the areas that are most frequently being ridden. Kerry Mase asked that equestrians input be sought in this step.

### **Signage and Trail Access Issues**

Charlie Maltby reported that DNR work crews have been working on replacing the numbered posts out in the forest. There are still numerous posts to be replaced and assistance from volunteers is needed. Spring 2015, Scott Whitcomb, Forest Manager, will work with equestrian volunteers on replacement of posts. Dick Kleinhardt said that Back Country Horsemen, Pigeon River and Beyond will apply for a Work bee permit and will coordinate with Scott on the best time for this work bee.

During the 2014 riding season there were some areas on designated riding trails that still needed the berms removed and better signage. A map of the locations was provided by Kerry Mase and she will meet with DNR staff on-site at some of these locations.

### **Big Oaks Campground**

Richard Hill, reported Phase One of the project got off to a slow start for a variety of reasons including snow depth this spring, followed by the rainy weather, the cutting ban from April to July because of Oak Wilt danger and the need for the construction crew to work in other priority areas. Richard said that he was now happy to report that most of the work is complete on ten sites. Tether post locations have been marked by EQ Jinjyr

Miller and will be installed next spring. Hazardous trees and limbs were removed from the entire campground and the campground road has been graded. The roadway that will connect the Phase Two camping sites (additional 10 to 11 sites) has been laid out. The old outhouses have been removed. The wells have been tested and approved. A new connector trail going from the campground to the riding trails that are across the road has been established. The area that is proposed for the Day Use area has been laid out. Phase Two work (additional camping sites and Day Use area) can begin next spring if weather cooperates and if the construction crew is available.

Richard thanked Cody Stevens, Forest Manager, Jennifer Kleitch, Wildlife Biologist, Dave Dekett, Supervisor of Clear Lake and Jinjyr Miller of WHAM for their involvement and help in getting Big Oaks Campground converted to an EQ Campground.

PRCEC members expressed appreciation for the work that has been done and look forward to being able to camp at Big Oaks next year.

### **Big Oaks and Lee Grande EQ Trails**

Richard reported that the EQ Trail Proposals for Big Oaks and Lee Grande are working their way through the DNR approval process. Kerry Mase is the initiator of both Trail Proposals. Walking Horse Association of MI will do Big Oaks maintenance and Shannon Smith will be the trail maintainer for Lee Grande Trails when approved.

Both these areas are currently opened to horseback riding. The approval of trails in these areas will allow mapping and signage of looped trails.

### **Stoney Creek Campground**

Improvements at Stoney Creek EQ Campground need to be put on hold until improved access on the County road leading into the campground can be addressed. A meeting is planned by PRD with the new Road Commissioner for Cheboygan County.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Election of Officers for 2015**

Darlene Alexander nominated Dick Kleinhardt as Chair, seconded by Carol Hyzer. No other members were nominated and Dick was elected. Kerry Mase nominated Chuck Fanslow as Vice-Chair, seconded by Bonnie Cornelius. No other members were nominated and Chuck was elected. Darlene Alexander nominated Kerry Mase for Secretary, seconded by Carol Hyzer. No other members were nominated and Kerry was elected.

## **DNR Draft Work Plan for Expanding Equestrian Access in the PRCSF**

Director Keith Creagh assigned Scott Whitcomb, Brian Mastenbrook and Anna Sylvester the task of developing a Draft Work Plan that addressed expanding equine access in the PRCSF.

Anna Sylvester presented the Draft Work Plan to the committee. PRCEC members have 30 days to submit their input on this Draft. PRCEC members are to send their input to Kerry Mase who will compile the input and forward to the DNR team. A finalized Work Plan will be sent by the DNR team to the Director for approval before February 1, 2015.

During discussion Anna asked for a primary EQ contact person for items that dealt with new trails or connectors, the reopening of the trail that connected the EQ Group Campground to the Elk Hill Equestrian Campground and improving the access to the river for watering. Kerry Mase will be the primary contact for the new trails and connectors and Chuck Fanslow will be the primary contact for the plan to fix erosion issues in order to reopen the trail between the Group Campground and the Elk Hill Equestrian Campground and improvements to the river access.

Re-opening or establishing new trails has to proceed through a five step trail approval process. After final approval a Land Use Order establishing the trail(s) comes before the Natural Resource Commission. The Director signs the LUO at the next NRC meeting. Kerry Mase pointed out that she submitted the Big Oaks Trail Proposal in October of 2013 and it is just now working its way through the approval process. Kerry said it appeared that a minimum of a 1 to 1 ½ years was needed for trail approval. She asked what was the worst case estimate on how long trail approval can take and Anna said, "If there were complications, 2 1/2 years."

The longer timeline will be needed for Blue Lakes, Green Timbers, and Inspiration Point. Before discussing trails in Blue Lakes and Green Timbers, PRD needs to complete their Recreational Management Plan for the PRCSF. The recreational management planning process takes approximately 1 to 1 ½ years to complete. Within one month of the completion of the PRD Recreational Management Plan the discussion regarding EQ trails in Blue Lakes and Green Timbers will take place. If EQ trails will be allowed, a trail proposal needs to be submitted and work its way through the five step approval process. If approved a Land Use Order is written, sent to the NRC and then signed by the Director.

Within 60 days of completion of the work on wildlife habitat in the Inspiration Point area (to be completed October 2015) discussion will take place on EQ trail at Inspiration Point. Again a trail proposal plan will need to be submitted and work its way through the five step approval process. If approved a Land Use Order is written, sent to the NRC and then signed by the Director.

### **Closing Comments from Chair**

Dick Kleinhardt shared a picture of a pavilion that EllenVanSyke, Janet Day and Darlene Alexander would like to see constructed at Group Campground at Elk Hill. Darlene said she thought equestrians would be willing to fund the project. Different funding options were discussed by Anna and Richard. Before this project proceeds Anna felt that the PRD Recreational Management Plan should be completed. Scott Whitcomb, Manager for PRCFS, reminded the group that the project would also need to be presented to the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council for their input. Anna suggested that after the PRD Recreational Management Plan was completed that Dick Kleinhardt presents the pavilion idea to the Advisory Council. Additionally, if construction of a pavilion is approved, the plans and construction materials for the proposed pavilion would need to be reviewed by Keith Cheli, planner for PRD, and necessary permits obtained. If funding and approval from all necessary levels and the necessary permit is obtained the timeline for the actual construction of the pavilion would be 1½ to 2 years.

The next PRCEC meeting is proposed to take place either the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> week of February.

### **Future Agenda Items:**

DNR Final Work Plan

Spring Work Bee to complete installation of Forest road signs and clean up any winter damage.