

OFFICAL MINUTES
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Corwith Township Hall, Vanderbilt, MI January 19, 2018

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (PRCAC) was held on Friday, January 19, 2018 at the Corwith Township Hall, Vanderbilt, Michigan. John Walters called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Walters, Brent Shank, Don Horrocks, Paul Rose, Chuck Fanslow, Alex Cerveniak, Sandy Franz, Drew YoungeDyke, Pete Gustafson, Randy Keen, Heather Shaw, Dave Smethurst, Lisha Ramsdell, Brian McPhail, Rique Campa, Paul Beachnau, Bill Loney, and Brad Garmon.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT: Director Keith Creagh, Steve Milford, Scott Whitcomb, Nick Torsky, Kerry Wieber, Kelly Kinser, Brian Mastenbrook, Rich Hill, Andy Stempky, Tim Rosochacki, Mark Depew, Kyle Cherry, Nate Sink, and Karen Chapman.

EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF ABSENT: Tim Cwalinski

OTHERS PRESENT: Joe Jarecki, Judi Jarecki, Eugene Horan, Stewart Smith, Aren Calton, Doug Mummert, Judy Mummert, Guy Lovelace, Dale Franz, Sue Walters, Anna Torsky, Eric Werda, Preston Casselman, Gene Skiba, and Mr. and Mrs. Casselman.

OPENING REMARKS-JOHN WALTERS:

John Walters opened the meeting by announcing his appointment to the Natural Resources Commission. He then welcomed everyone to the winter meeting of the PRCAC. Council members introduced themselves and indicated the groups they represent.

AGENDA:

Scott Whitcomb requested that the Nomination Committee item be moved to the last item under New Business with report given by Lisha Ramsdell, and the Discovery Center Update to be jointly given by Brad Garmon and Sandy Franz. Chuck Fanslow made the motion, Rique Campa seconded, all voted in favor, agenda approved as changed.

MINUTES:

After review of the October 19, 2017 meeting minutes, Don Horrocks made the motion to approve, seconded by Heather Shaw. All voted in favor, minutes approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

On behalf of the Skiba, Werda and Casselman families, Preston Casselman presented Conservation Officer Nick Torsky a framed photo of a bull elk taken in the PRCSF that Torsky helped seal. This photo was given to Officer Torsky in appreciation of his service in the PRCSF.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION:

On behalf of the PRCAC, John Walters presented Officer Nick Torsky with a certificate of appreciation for his service in the PRCSF.

DIRECTORS REMARKS:

DNR Director Keith Creagh shared with the group a couple of issues on his mind, including chronic wasting disease, invasive species, long term funding for state parks, land strategy and PA 288.

After his remarks, Director Creagh welcomed John Walters to the Natural Resource Commission and presented John with a plaque thanking him for his 10 years of volunteer service and distinguished leadership on the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council.

On behalf of the PRCAC, Pete Gustafson presented John Walters with an inscribed print thanking him for 10 years of passionate service to the PRCAC and the Big Wild.

OLD BUSINESS:

LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS - KERRY WIEBER:

Kerry Wieber gave an update on two current projects, Storey Lake and Walled Lake - at the December Natural Resources Trust Fund meeting, the board granted only \$900,000 of the \$3.6 million grant requested by the department to acquire the Storey Lake property. Unless they find alternate funding sources, they cannot move forward with acquisition. The department is coordinating with conservation partners to examine other funding strategies for acquisition. With regards to the Walled Lake property, the landowner accepted an offer from another party in December and the property is no longer available for acquisition.

DISCOVERY CENTER UPDATE - SANDY FRANZ AND BRAD GARMON:

Brad Garmon opened by thanking Sandra Clark, head of the Michigan Historical Center, who has been a great partner for spending her time and expertise helping with the exhibits. Sandy Franz then gave a brief update on the status of the exhibits. The Discovery Center is set to open on Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, with a number of celebratory events planned for Friday and Saturday.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE- BRAD GARMON:

Brad Garmon reported on a few legislative items the council should be aware of, the public land strategy bills, and the Natural Resources Trust fund bill. Governor Snyder is holding an extractive industries summit in February on the future of oil and gas development in the state.

PA 288 UPDATE- SCOTT WHITCOMB:

Scott Whitcomb gave a recap of PA 288 as it pertains to the PRCSF. The state forest roads within the PRC are going to remain closed to ORV's as per the Land Use Order that has been in place. The changes that will be implemented are that cross country retrieval of bear, deer and elk with a horse is allowed, as is cross country retrieval of elk using an ORV, only under the direct supervision of DNR personnel, except in Green Timbers.

RECREATION PLANNING UPDATE- KELLY KINSER/RICH HILL:

Kelly Kinser gave the results of the values exercise completed by members at the last PRCAC meeting. Kelly showed a "wordle" graphic, the larger size words indicate how often they were used in descriptions of values.

Kelly also reported that Deb Jensen gave a presentation on the recreation planning process to the Resource Bureau, which consists of chiefs of the different DNR divisions. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled with DNR divisional representatives to discuss the future of these planning efforts.

CAPPING FOREST 1-22 WELL UPDATE-ANDY STEMPKY:

Andy Stempky stated that they are still waiting for analytical results of the spill at the Forest 1-22 site.

NEW BUSINESS:

ELK SEASON REPORT- MASTENBROOK:

Will incorporate under Ex-Officio report.

WINTER STAFFING FOR RECREATION IN PRC- KELLY KINSER/ RICH HILL:

Kelly Kinser reported that PRC Ranger Scott Thompson has taken another position as Fire Officer. Kelly showed charts indicating campground and recreation passport revenues. At this point, there is not enough revenue generated to support winter staffing in the PRC. On the plus side, she did get some extra hours for the lead worker at Otsego Lake State Park, whom she could pull for help during the winter at PRC if needed.

NOMINATION COMMITTEE- LISHA RAMSDELL:

Lisha opened by thanking Pete Gustafson and Sandy Franz for working with her on the committee. The nominating committee submits Paul Rose for the position of chair and Rique Campa for the position of vice- chair for the 2018 Pigeon River Country Advisory Council. John Walters called for nominations from the floor, there were none. Motion made by Don Horrocks to accept nominees, seconded by Drew YoungeDyke. All voted in favor, motion carried.

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:

WILDLIFE REPORT- BRIAN MASTENBROOK:

Brian Mastenbrook gave an update on Chronic Wasting Disease, West Nile Virus, and Bovine TB in the area. Brian next gave an elk season summary - during hunt period 1 (8/29-9/1, 9/15-9/18 and 9/29-10/2), 30 bulls and 44 antlerless elk were harvested, and during hunt period 2 (12/9-12/17), 30 bulls and 54 antlerless elk were harvested. In February 2018, the department will be netting elk to replace collars. 2018 is the 100 year anniversary of elk in Michigan, Brian updated members on activities taking place to celebrate this event, including the Eastern Elk Management Workshop taking place in May at Garland Resort in Lewiston.

RECREATION REPORT- KELLY KINSER:

Kelly Kinser reported that they working on getting Scott Thompson's position filled. Campground fees have gone up to \$15 per night. As of Jan 1, 2018, a recreation passport will cost \$16.00 if purchased in the field, or \$11 if purchased at the Secretary of State.

OIL AND GAS UPDATE - ANDY STEMPKY:

Andy Stempky reviewed the oil and gas production report with members. Merit Energy is still operating in Michigan, their pending sale fell through. Andrea Sullivan, state geologist for this area retired on Friday, her replacement will probably be Steve Buyze.

LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE-SGT MARK DEPEW:

Sergeant Depew reported that the department is in the process of hiring up to 35 new officers to put through recruit school. It was a normal deer season; drug and alcohol use seemed to be up. With PA 288, officers did see an increase in illegal ORV use in the PRCSF. Conservation Officer Sydney Collins will be working with Conservation Officer Kelly Ross in Montmorency County. Sergeant Depew introduced Conservation Officer Kyle Cherry, assigned to Otsego County and Conservation Officer Nate Sink, who is the new PRC officer replacing Officer Nick Torsky, and will be attending the PRCAC meetings. Sergeant Depew also introduced Conservation Officer Tim Rosochaki, who covers Cheboygan County.

FOREST RESOURCES REPORT - STEVE MILFORD:

Steve Milford reported that the road signs for PA 288 just arrived, installation will begin this spring. It's estimated that the PRCSF will be installing 100-200 signs.

PRC UNIT REPORT- SCOTT WHITCOMB:

Scott Whitcomb opened by introducing Aren Calton, Huron Pines AmeriCorps member stationed at the PRC and gave a brief review of projects Aren will be working on. Back Country Hunters and Anglers will be coming in for a work day; specific work plan is yet to be determined.

With regards to PRCAC business, Scott introduced new PRCAC member, Alex Cerveniak, representing Trout Unlimited. Tom Deans, who represents the Otsego County Road Commission, has elected to step down from the council. Tom will remain on the Roads, Trails and Forest Access Committees. The director will have a vacancy on the council to fill.

John Walters closed the meeting with thanks to all.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Next meeting is Friday, April 20, 2018 at 5:00 pm - Pigeon River Country HQ

ADJOURN:

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.