

OFFICIAL MINUTES
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Frontier Communications Office, Gaylord, MI
April 20, 2018

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (PRCAC) was held on Friday, April 20, 2018 at the Frontier Communications Office, Gaylord, Michigan. The meeting was moved to Frontier from the PRC HQ due to hazardous road conditions caused by an April snowstorm. Chair Paul Rose called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., then led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Rose, Brian McPhail, Bill Loney, Brad Garmon, Pete Gustafson, Drew YoungeDyke, Lisha Ramsdell, Alex Cerveniak, Chuck Fanslow, Sandy Franz, Heather Shaw, and Paul Beachnau.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dave Smethurst, Rique Campa, Randy Keen, Brent Shank and Don Horrocks.

EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT: Chief Deb Begalle, Steve Milford, Scott Whitcomb, Nick Torsky, Nate Sink, Kelly Kinser, Brian Mastenbrook, Steve Buyze (DEQ), 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, Mike Brown, Dale Franz, Dick Buss, Larry Huff, Kay Reinhardt, Darlene Alexander, and Bonnie Cornelius.

OPENING REMARKS – PAUL ROSE:

Chair Paul Rose opened the meeting by calling for a brief moment of remembrance for two conservation icons that have passed away since the last meeting - John Robertson, former DNR Fisheries Chief and Pete Petoskey, former DNR Wildlife Chief. After a moment of silence, Paul thanked Brian McPhail and Frontier for hosting the spring meeting on short notice. Brian and Frontier have offered to host the spring meeting on an annual basis. Paul welcomed everyone to the spring meeting of the PRCAC, and introductions were made around the room.

AGENDA:

Scott Whitcomb recommended that the Recreation Planning Update be moved to the last item after Public Comment. Pete Gustafson requested that a CWD discussion be added under New Business, and Sandy Franz requested time to give an update on the grand opening of the Discovery Center; which was added under New Business. Motion was made and seconded, all voted in favor of agenda as amended.

MINUTES:

After review of the January 19, 2018 meeting minutes, Paul Beachnau made the motion to approve, seconded by Drew YoungeDyke. All voted in favor of minutes as written, motion approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment was made.

RECREATION PLANNING UPDATE - SCOTT WHITCOMB:

Scott Whitcomb reported that, as all are aware, the Department has been looking at developing a recreation plan for the Pigeon River Country State Forest (PRCSF). The thought was that a recreation plan may help guide the Department in developing recreation opportunities for the forest. The Department went through the first steps of the recreation planning process by gathering initial background information, which was reviewed by the council. Because the initial phase took 3 years to complete, the Department decided to re-evaluate the need for such a plan. DNR staff concluded that the Department already has the tools to make recreation planning decisions in the PRCSF based on existing procedures using the Concept of Management and other tools already in place. DNR leadership concurred, so the recreation planning process is on hold. Deb Begalle commented that Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) plans are structured for parks, and the template didn't fit well with state forest land. Paul Rose requested that the Department continue to bring forward any recreation proposals in an open and transparent manner while decisions are being formulated.

PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE - CHUCK FANSLOW:

Chuck reminded members that copies of the December 2017 PRCEC meeting minutes were available to review; the committee recently held a meeting in March 2018 at the DNR Roscommon office. At that March meeting, Chad Williamson reviewed the work being done on the elk study. Chuck also noted that the Stony Creek trail loops are in the process of getting approved. They are working on a new trail camp in Cheboygan - the Michigan Trail Riders Association (MTRA) has a private camp at Mullet Lake, however, their lease runs out in 2019. They are working with the DNR on acquiring a new camping area. The PRCEC also discussed the 6 through connectors that were not approved at Elk Hill; they would need to be approved by the Director through a Land Use order. There is still interest by equestrians in accessing Inspiration Point on horseback. Chuck reminded all that an Elk Hill work bee is coming up on May 18, 19 and 20th to clean and mark the trails. Chuck also reviewed a summary of how many volunteer work hours, equipment and donations that equestrian groups put into trail maintenance throughout the state. The next PRCEC meeting will be at 1:00 pm on August 16, 2018 at the DNR Roscommon office. Paul Rose reminded the council that the PRCEC is independent of the Advisory Council, and the desire is to improve communications between the groups. Chuck stated that Don Horrocks and John Walters were seated on the PRCEC. Chuck will give a PRCEC report at future PRCAC meetings.

AD HOC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - LISHA RAMSDELL:

In order to follow up on the 2016 PRCAC self-evaluation process, Paul Rose asked Lisha Ramsdell to chair an "ad hoc governance committee", comprised of the chairs of standing committees. Paul charged the ad hoc committee to complete a review of past practices and policies of the PRCAC and provide recommendations on the following topics related to the advisory council committee function and governance, member recruitment, and internal and external communications.

Lisha reported that the first meeting of the ad hoc governance committee was held on April 3. Those in attendance were Paul Rose, Pete Gustafson, Heather Shaw, Brad Garmon, Lisha Ramsdell and Scott Whitcomb. This meeting clarified the role of the governance committee, reviewed the current selection process for the chair and vice-chair, and reviewed the current committee roles. One of the recommendations is that the chair and vice-chair be elected for 2 year terms, and that the chair of the council serves no more than two consecutive terms. The 2 term limit will not be applicable to the vice-chair. In order to comply with the PRCAC *Articles of Organization*, the election of officers shall take place or be confirmed annually. As they were reviewing the *Articles of Organization*, and the *Concept of Management*, the committee noted some inconsistencies in light of motions made at previous meetings with regard to ex-officio members. In the *Articles* it states that ex-officio members will be the local forester, wildlife biologist and fisheries biologist. The

committee recommends that the ex-officio portion of the *Articles* be updated to reflect those approved motions. The *Concept of Management* added a 4th ex-officio member, that being DEQ representation. At a 2013 PRCAC meeting, a motion was made and passed to add Law Enforcement and Parks and Recreation representatives as ex-officio members. Therefore, the committee recommends that the *Articles* be updated to reflect the current ex-officio members, and change "local forester" to "unit manager". Also noted were several clerical errors in the *Articles* that needed correction. Copies of the *Articles* were distributed with recommended changes noted in red.

Motion made by Ramsdell: "It is the recommendation of the Governance Committee for the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council to give full consideration for amendment of the *Articles of Organization* at the July 2018 Advisory Council meeting, which includes changes to the ex-officio list, change to the length and terms of service for the Chair and Vice-Chair and minor text update." Motion seconded by Pete Gustafson. All members present voted in favor, motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS:

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE (CWD) - PETE GUSTAFSON:

Pete Gustafson reminded the council to recall the presentation by Director Creagh at the last meeting. CWD is a focused concern of the Department. Being the home of the elk herd and white tail deer this concerns the PRCAC as well. The PRCAC should take the issue of CWD and address how this issue affects the PRCSF. Pete suggested that CWD is referred to PRCAC Wildlife Committee for prompt consideration. As a reminder, the question of game management and addressing of game disease vectors into the ungulate herds in the PRCSF has been an issue going back to the 1980's. Brian Mastenbrook informed all of the upcoming public meeting on CWD in Gaylord on May 1 at the Ellison Place, and that there is information on CWD on the DNR website.

DISCOVERY CENTER UPDATE - SANDY FRANZ:

Sandy announced that the Discovery Center will be open to the public on Saturday, May 26 (Memorial Day weekend). Grand opening festivities begin at 10:30am with a ribbon cutting, and the Center will be open from 11am - 4pm. It is anticipated that the center will be open on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays spring through fall. The Center will be staffed by trained RSVP volunteers. The exhibits are almost done and ready to be delivered and installed. Sandy invited all to enjoy the grand opening festivities.

EX-OFFICIO AND DNR STAFF REPORTS:

FISHERIES DIVISION REPORT - TIM CWALINISKI (Not Present):

Paul Rose shared a reminder that there is going to be some habitat improvement work this summer on the Black River, upstream and downstream of Tin Shanty Bridge. Alex Cerveniak shared that he, Tim Cwalinski, and Nico Tucker walked from Sparr Road to Tyrolean over two weekends, which he described as "a cedar swamp death march". Cwalinski made some recommendations on improvements in that area and Trout Unlimited will be going in to do some dam removal.

WILDLIFE REPORT – BRIAN MASTENBROOK:

Brian reported that the elk survey has been completed. The elk population estimate is about the same as the previous year. Wildlife recommendations for management were approved last month, 200 permits will be issued again this year. In celebration of the 100 years of Elk in Michigan, the DNR is hosting the Eastern Elk Management Workshop this year on May 8, 9 and 10 at Garland Resort in Lewiston. TB prevalence is up with

more TB positive deer found outside the core TB area (DMU 452). Brian again reminded members of the CWD public meeting in Gaylord on May 1 at Ellison Center, Gaylord.

RECREATION REPORT – KELLY KINSER:

Kelly Kinser reported that the new ranger in the PRCSF, Kole Hallenbeck, will start on Monday. Kole previously worked as a ranger at Burt Lake State Park. PRCSF summer staff will start a week or two after Kole, and get campgrounds ready for campers.

OIL AND GAS UPDATE – STEVE BUYZE (DEQ):

Steve reported that they received test results on a spill at the Forest 1-22 well site. There are some soils impacted, which will be excavated. At the Forest 24 CPF, there was a release. They removed as much impacted soil as they could, and will return to the site for further cleanup after frost laws are done. Also a release at Charlton 4, will continue mediation when frost laws are out. Monitoring wells have been placed at Forest 24.

LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE –NATE SINK:

Nate introduced himself, and stated he is learning his way around the Pigeon. Has written a few tickets on snowmobilers, and is still working on some complaints.

FOREST RESOURCES REPORT/PRC UNIT REPORT – SCOTT WHITCOMB:

Scott reported that for the past several months he has been active in forest planning, and may revise some forest planning objectives. Aren Calton, PRC AmeriCorps member has been assisting in that, as well as monitoring road traffic counters, creating new maps and other projects. The forest roads inventory project has been time consuming, working on the Upper Peninsula portion now. With regards to the PRC intern, there were 6 applicants and all turned down the position. Scott described to members an MSU research project by Dr. Frank Lupe and a graduate student on the economic impact of elk. The PRC Forest Inventory open house is scheduled for July 19, on the same day of next PRCAC meeting, come early and learn about planned forest treatments. Scott also reminded members of volunteer activities that Aren is helping to coordinate, such as the upcoming garlic mustard pull. He also noted that interest from outside groups and the DNR in the PRCSF has been growing, and he is continually getting requests for tours.

Brian Mastenbrook suggested that it may be a good idea for the Education and Engagement to meet again to talk about new educational opportunities that have come up.

Deb Begalle invited the members to visit the new DNR website, and to be sure to give input on the new site. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is on the west side of Michigan, please let the Department know if you see anything.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Paul Rose reminded all to review the committee assignment list, he would expect that Wildlife, Education & Engagement committees will be meeting prior to the July PRCAC meeting, and will be on future agendas, as well as the ad hoc governance committee.

Next meeting is Thursday, July 19, 2018 at 6:00 pm – Pigeon River Country HQ

ADJOURN:

Meeting adjourned at 6:30PM

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

SCOTT WHITCOMB, SECRETARY