

OFFICIAL MINUTES
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Pigeon River Country State Forest Headquarters, Vanderbilt, MI
October 5, 2018

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (PRCAC) was held on Friday, October 5, 2018 at the Pigeon River Country State Forest Headquarters. Chair Paul Rose called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m., then led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Rose, Rique Campa, Brent Shank, Don Horrocks, Bill Loney, Chuck Fanslow, Sandy Franz, Lisha Ramsdell and Brad Garmon.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Randy Keen, Paul Beachnau, Alex Cerveniak, Pete Gustafson, Brian McPhail, Heather Shaw, Dave Smethurst and Drew YoungeDyke.

EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT: Eric Bottorf, Emily Pleiness, Kelly Kinser, Andy Stempky, Scott Whitcomb, Karen Chapman and Brian Mastenbrook.

EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF ABSENT: Steve Milford, Tim Cwalinski.

OTHERS PRESENT: Joe Jarecki, Judi Jarecki, Eugene Horan, Stewart Smith, and Aren Calton.

INTRODUCTIONS - PAUL ROSE:

Chair Paul Rose opened by welcoming all to the fall meeting of the PRCAC. Paul noted for the record that there was a quorum of PRCAC members present. He then opened the floor to public comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment made.

AGENDA:

Paul Rose amended the agenda by adding two items under "New Business", Lambda Energy transfer update by Bill Loney, and Media Communications opportunities. Under "Special Committee Reports", Sandy Franz will give a Discovery Center update. With no formal objections, the agenda was amended.

MINUTES:

After review of the July 19, 2018 meeting minutes, Lisha Ramsdell noted a typographical error on page 3, last paragraph. Karen Chapman will correct error. Don Horrocks made the motion to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Sandy Franz. All voted in favor of minutes as amended, motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS:

USE OF CAMERAS AND MONITORING EQUIPMENT IN THE PRC - SCOTT WHITCOMB:

Scott stated that maps and descriptive locations of trail cameras being used in two different MSU studies were available and distributed to members. Dr. Rique Campa is the primary investigator for a study researching recreational use and the impact on elk movement, the other is an elk economic study headed up by Dr. Frank Lupi. Both studies are being done with cooperation and funding by the department. Fisheries Division uses trail cameras to collect usage data (i.e. Cornwall Lake Flooding) with the data being used to support future funding requests. There is no formal department policy regarding trail camera use on state forest land.

Dr. Rique Campa gave an overview of research training and protocol; explaining how strictly regimented the process is. Using appropriately placed trail cameras allows researchers to collect valuable information that was not able to be collected in the past and can be used to help guide management decisions. Rique also stated that their cameras are clearly labeled. Scott Whitcomb noted that while camping in Canada, both provincial parks and national parks had a photos and research disclaimer statement in their brochures.

Paul Rose stated that this topic of discussion would be appropriate on a statewide basis, not just in the PRC.

LAMBDA ENERGY TRANSFER UPDATE - BILL LONEY:

Harry Faulkner and Larry Albright, two of the three principle managers of Lambda Energy were at the PRC today to introduce themselves and tour the facilities. The transfer agreement between Merit Energy and Lambda Energy officially ended September 1, and Lambda is now totally running all operations. They will focus on using newer technologies, for example, pressure testing the flow lines with fresh water and under higher pressure. Lambda Energy is also looking at eliminating older equipment, getting well sites cleaned-up, and reducing leaks and spills. Michigan is currently their only business; and Bill said he will be staying on with Lambda for now.

With regards to bonding and surety requirements, Andy Stempky stated that they are still working on the transfer settlement agreement between Lambda and the state. Discussion ensued regarding the Successor Unit Operator Agreement that existed between the DNR and Merit, and will it assign to Lambda.

MEDIA COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES - PAUL ROSE:

Paul stated that considering marketing campaigns taking place on a statewide basis to increase awareness of public lands, for example, the Pure Michigan campaign, there was interest expressed in having a discussion specifically to include Pigeon River Country in these efforts. Is there interest among council members in telling the Pigeon River Country story on a larger stage? After group discussion expressing interest, the topic will be referred to the Education and Engagement committee for further study and review.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

AD HOC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - LISHA RAMSDELL:

Lisha started with a refresher on the purpose of the Governance committee, which was formed to complete a review of past practices and policies of the council, provide recommendations (as guided by the Concept of Management) and committee function, of governance, member recruitment, and internal and external communications. To date, the committee has accomplished updating the Articles of Organization, which consisted of grammatical and numbering corrections, updated the ex-officio list, reviewed the length of service for the chair and vice-chair, updated the term of service for the chair, all of which was approved and adopted at the July 2018 PRCAC meeting. The committee also reviewed the structure of the nomination

committee, which will be made up of the chairs of the regular standing committees. In addition, serving on the nomination committee will be rotated among the standing committee chairs. The Governance committee then reviewed the existing standing committee structure, using the Concept of Management for guidance. At the July 2018 council meeting, the Governance committee made a recommendation for member consideration to re-align the committees, which consists of reducing the current six committees to five committees; and will be renamed as follows: 1) Forest Cover and Wildlife Management Committee, 2) Aquatic Resources and Fisheries Management Committee, 3) Recreation and Access Committee, 4) Resource Use and Extraction Committee, and 5) Education and Engagement Committee. Lisha formally made a motion for the committee restructuring to five standing committees, named as aforementioned, motion seconded by Brad Garmon. After brief discussion, all present voted in favor, motion passed. Next steps for the Governance committee will be to review and discuss internal and external communications.

HURON PINES AMERICORPS UPDATE - AREN CALTON:

Scott Whitcomb opened by saying that the PRC is in its fifth year as a host site for the Huron Pines AmeriCorps program, which enables young natural resource professionals to obtain field and real-life work experience. Aren is from southern Alabama and has jumped in with enthusiasm for Michigan weather and all his projects and has embraced the Pigeon River Country State Forest.

Aren gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation showing data obtained from his current projects, starting with traffic monitoring, visitor logs and forest use surveys. He coordinated many volunteer projects including the garlic mustard pull on May 19 assisted by the Boy Scouts, coordinated (with Alex Cerveniak) a beaver dam removal project from the Upper Black River, coordinated maple and aspen removal (with Greg Rekowski) from a 12 acre stand to release oak saplings, and completed Pickerel Lake trail maintenance with Glen Lake High School football team, cleaning and clearing the entire two miles of trail. He cleaned up an illegal dump on state forest land, about 20 yards of garbage was properly disposed. The Owl Prowl was almost too successful, with a total of 50 adults and children attending. He volunteered at the Earth Week Expo in Cheboygan, attended Bio-blitz in Gaylord, and put on a Wildflower Wander at the PRC. Aren displayed the Shingle Mill Trail Map he updated and the Sinkhole Lake brochure he developed. Huron Pines has been doing well pad restoration for several years, through a Wildlife Habitat Grant, and is putting together a best management practices guideline, he assisted with completing soil and vegetation surveys of the well pads. Conducting frog and toad surveys were a great reason to get out in the PRC woods at night. He also assisted Brian Mastenbrook with the bear hair snare survey.

ROADS, TRAILS AND FOREST ACCESS COMMITTEE (VEHICLE ACCESS PLAN) - SCOTT WHITCOMB:

As part of PA 288, the department is charged with doing a comprehensive vehicle access inventory of our road system. For many years, the PRC has had a vehicle access plan, however it has long been known that changes are needed to the current plan. For example, Johnson's Crossing and Crockett Rapids, are areas that have never been integrated into the vehicle access plan. As part of the annual review process of PA 288, recommendations were made by Scott and Brian which were reviewed at a meeting of the Roads, Trails and Forest Access committee. Some changes recommended by the committee were incorporated and the recommendations were moved forward to the next level of review. The next level review staff expressed concern and asked for a more careful look at these changes. Most of the proposed changes were pulled back for more review, the council will see a new version next year. A few changes were put forward, (see handout for road name and details) which will go up for official review and comment in November 2018. Paul Rose noted that the vehicle access plan changes recommended by PRC staff were put forth as a recommendation

by the Roads, Trails and Forest Access Committee, and asked for a motion to accept, Lisha Ramsdell made the motion, Don Horrocks seconded. All present voted in favor, the motion passed.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE - CHUCK FANSLAW:

A preliminary site location for the pavilion was marked out today at the Elk Hill group camp. Prints were completed, and a builder has been selected. The Backcountry Horseman will serve as the fiduciary organization that will issue checks to pay for pavilion costs. Paul Rose said that the DNR's Gift and Acceptance agreement, site plan and approval process, and the LARA permitting process still need to be completed.

DISCOVERY CENTER UPDATE - SANDY FRANZ:

From the Memorial Day weekend grand opening until yesterday, the visitor count for the Discovery Center was at 1100 people. They have added and submitted supplemental information to support their Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. Sandy invited people to join the PRCA Steering committee to focus on strategic planning, educational efforts, and fund raising. Volunteers are also working very hard on preparing the building for the coming winter.

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:

WILDLIFE DIVISION REPORT - BRIAN MASTENBROOK:

Wildlife openings work has been very much the same as last year, Mark Monroe, wildlife tech, has done an excellent job getting work done efficiently on these openings. Wildlife budget will be available in the next two or three weeks. The 100 years of Elk in Michigan has gone very well, from the poster contest, the license plate and all the printed material distributed. Brian reviewed the results from the early elk hunt and discussed elk movement.

OIL AND GAS REPORT - ANDY STEMPKY:

Nothing further to report.

LAW ENFORCEMENT REPORT - ERIC BOTTORF:

Staffing structure has changed a lot in the past year, which has allowed them to fill additional positions. Nate Sink transferred to the Michigan State Police, started the MSP academy about two weeks ago. Kyle Cherry is still in Otsego County and the hope is to fill the open position out of the next recruit class. There is an open position in Montmorency County, and open positions in Alpena as two officers have recently transferred. Within the PRCSF, there have been a few problems with vehicles entering closed areas, other than that, things have been business as usual.

PRC UNIT REPORT - SCOTT WHITCOMB:

Please note the beautiful deer mount placed over the door to the PRC conference room donated by Don Horrocks' brother-in-law Leon Graham. Thanks to Don and Leon for the donation. After an infusion of cash, the PRC HQ is getting a new heat pump unit, the wood floors refinished, and an automatic stand-by generator installed. Scott Thompson will be working with at the PRC about one month per year, putting in berms and working on roads. Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and Headwaters Chapter Trout Unlimited installed the majority of "NO ORV" signs this summer. Great Lakes Relay Race would like to come out to the forest again in

2019, for a one day use of the forest, they are willing to do a great deal of trail maintenance for us, if the permit is approved.

RECREATION REPORT - KELLY KINSER:

Kelly introduced the new ranger in the PRCFS, Emily Pleiness who has been doing a great job. Camping numbers are trending up, currently the equestrian season is in full swing, the number of horse complaints are down, our education efforts have paid off.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS – PAUL ROSE:

Paul stated that the 2016 self-evaluation effort and fulfillment of original directors' charges to PRCAC members will be revisited. In addition, looking for volunteers to help to prepare outreach materials for new members, at the legislative level, and within the department. Rique Campa, Lisha Ramsdell and Sandy Franz volunteered. Lastly, as a reminder, it will be necessary to extend his and Rique Campa's terms for another year.

Scott Whitcomb noted that in 2019, it will be the 100-year anniversary of Pigeon River Country State Forest!

Scott Whitcomb will email out a proposal for 2019 meeting dates.

ADJOURN:

Meeting adjourned at 8:45PM

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

SCOTT WHITCOMB, SECRETARY