

Official Minutes

PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE

August 16, 2018

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee (PRCEC) was held on August 16, 2018 at the Roscommon DNR office. Chairman Chuck Fanslow called the meeting to order at 1:03

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chuck Fanslow, Kerry Mase, Dick Kleinhardt, Carol Clute, Bonnie Cornelius, Darlene Alexander

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Barb Curtis, Vicki Reinhardt, Kim Ross, Don Horrocks, Norma Laine

EX-OFFICIO PRESENT:

Forest Division: Scott Whitcomb - PRCSF Manager

Wildlife Division: Brian Mastenbrook – Fields Operations Manager.

Parks and Recreation Division: Anna Sylvester - Northern Fields Operations Chief, Kelly Kinser – Supervisor of Otsego Lake State Park and PRCSF Campgrounds and Trails

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:

Richard Hill – Parks and Recreation Division -Gaylord District Supervisor, Paige Perry, Recreational Trails Specialist. Law Enforcement Division: Nathan Sink – Corrections Officer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Connie Kleinhardt, Chad Williamson and John Shaffer - Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR:

Welcomed the committee members, DNR and the guests.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Motion to approve the minutes for the March 15, 2018 meeting was made by Dick Kleinhardt and seconded by Carol Clute. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion to accept the agenda was made by Darlene Alexander and seconded by Carol Clute. Motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Pavilion

Chuck Fanslow reported that a basic design has been chosen by the PRCEC and DNR. He contacted several builders and the estimates ranged from \$125,000 to just under \$25,000. The builder with the lowest bid will be using local timber from Gladwin. Paul Rose, Chair of Pigeon River Advisory Council referred an architect who will do the architectural drawing and he will inspect the building as it is being built. The plan is for the site preparation to be completed by volunteers. The next step is for the DNR to review the architectural plan and provide the necessary approval. If all goes well the pavilion will be built next spring. Fund raising has begun with money being raised by equestrians all over the state. Backcountry Horsemen – Pigeon River & Beyond, a 501c3 organization, will be collecting the funds.

Elk Research

Chad Williamson from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University, presented an update on the Elk Research that has been conducted since February 2016 in the Pigeon River Country State Forest and Atlanta State Forest. Almost all of the field data has now been collected except for the final Objective which is to quantify the fine scale responses of elk to mountain bike and equestrian riding activity. Volunteers from both recreational groups will be participating in this final phase. Chad has emphasized that he wants the groups to ride their bikes and horses as they normally would and to stay on the designated trails. The camera data over two seasons shows that generally approximately 95% of the bike riders were in groups of 3 or less and 86% of horseback riders were in groups of 5 or less. He would like the research groups to be close in size to represent typical riding groups. During this experimental phase elk movement patterns during the rut, weather conditions, including wind, will be taken into account. Chad plans to have all the field data completed by the end of September. Final report will be ready in 2019. Brian Mastenbrook, Chief of Wildlife Division said that it will take time for the Department, stakeholders, and the public to analyze the research and make recommendations for changes based on the research.

PRD Equestrian Camping Policy

Anna Sylvester reported that the Policy is not yet finalized. During Department review it was determined that if a campground is labelled Equine Preferred then the equestrian users would have protection under the Equine Liability Act. Campgrounds and off site horse camping areas are being reviewed and recommendations made regarding designation as Equine Preferred. Scott Whitcomb reported that occasionally in the past, when no horse campers were using the Group campground, other non-horse organizations have been allowed to use this campground. This is not a drop in camp, but rather reservations have to be made in advance for groups to camp here. Concern was raised by

members regarding equine campers having access. Kelly Kinser said equine campers would continue to have “preferred” status for making reservations.

Stoney Creek Equestrian Loops

Brian Mastenbrook reporting for Paige Perry - The Trail Request has been approved by the Department with these modifications: education regarding shared use with other recreational users (such as ORV) was needed, general plan for seasonal stream crossing and culvert maintenance and a section of one of the loops needed to be rerouted around some private land. Chuck Fanslow said that MTRA would be holding a work bee in the area on August 24 – 25 and that he would flag a route around the private land. Shannon Smith of MTRA, the Trail initiator, will be asked to contact the local DNR field staff regarding the other two modifications.

Six Remaining Requested Equine Connector Trails

Scott Whitcomb reported that he and Brian Mastenbrook had been contacted by Bill O’Neill for their input. The local field staff had no problems with these six connectors. Dick Kleinhardt asked Scott to contact Bill O’Neill for an update.

Report on the Spring Work Bee

Dick Kleinhardt reported that the Spring Work Bee sponsored by Backcountry Horsemen Pigeon River & Beyond was a success. Over 30 volunteers came from the many different clubs and riding organizations. Over 700 hours of volunteer labor was logged. The designated equestrian trails and some of the two track roads were all checked. Some trees and downed branches that were blocking trails and roads were removed and branches were trimmed. Both campgrounds were raked and limbs and debris were picked up. The signs were fixed and stained, outhouses were painted and the picnic tables were all given a new coat of stain.

Solar Pump

Kelly Kinser reported that money from a small grant was used to buy all the components for a solar well. Application for the additional needed money to complete the project will be made in the next funding cycle.

Inspiration Point

Chuck Fanslow reported that he and Dick Kleinhardt walked the area with Brian Mastenbrook and the general consensus was to develop an equestrian trail that would be more on the north side away from the people walk way. A barrier would be put in place to keep horse away from the people viewing area. The horse trail would travel along the ridge to the road. Dick and Chuck will work at flagging the proposed trail and getting GPS data so the DNR field staff can review the location of the trail. The proposed trail would then have to go through the DNR’s Trail Approval Process. The area is on license fee land and would also need input from the USFWS. If approved a Land Use Order would need to be signed by the Director and the maps updated.

NEW BUSINESS:

Report from Chuck Fanslow on Advisory Council

Chuck presented a summary of the many topics brought before the Advisory Council at their last meeting.

Report from Dick Kleinhardt on Equine Trails Subcommittee

Dick reported that Mike Footes has stepped down as Chair of the ETS. Each region represented on the ETS gave their reports. In Dick's region, Backcountry Horsemen are trying to facilitate an equestrian campground in the Tin Cup Springs area by Luther, Michigan. There are already existing equestrian trails in the area but no campground. The area has been used for years by endurance riders. There are ORV trails also in the area but the trails are separate with some crossings.

Public Information Meeting

Kerry Mase - PRCEC will host a public meeting on September 28th at the Group EQ Campground. Barb Curtis will speak about the role of the committee, what has been accomplished and what we are continuing to work on in partnership with the DNR. Chad Williamson will speak to the group about the Elk research and answer questions. Members of DNR staff will be present to answer questions as well.

Next Meeting: November 1, 2018 Roscommon DNR Office 1:00

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Elk Research Update

Pavilion Update

PRD Equestrian Camping Policy

Six Remaining Requested Equine Connector Trails

Solar Pump and Hand Pump in the Group Campground

Inspiration Point Trail Proposal

Election of officers for 2019

Report from Chuck Fanslow on Advisory Council

Report from Dick Kleinhardt on Equine Trails Subcommittee

ADJOURN: Meeting was adjourned at 3:34

Respectfully Submitted,

Kerry K. Mase
Secretary