

Official MINUTES
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE
December 16, 2015

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee (PRCEC) was held on December 16, 2015 at the Roscommon DNR office. Chairman Dick Kleinhardt called the meeting to order at 12:37

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dick Kleinhardt, Kerry Mase, Chuck Fanslow, Norma Laine, Vicki Reinhardt, Barb Curtis, Bonnie Cornelius, and Carol Hyzer

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Walters, Darlene Alexander, Don Horrocks, Charlotte Prochazka, and Carol Clute

EX-OFFICIO PRESENT:

Forest Division: Scott Whitcomb - PRCSF Manager– Fields Operations Manager.
Parks and Recreation Division: Anna Sylvester - Northern Fields Operations Chief,
Richard Hill – Gaylord District Supervisor, Kelly Kinser – Supervisor of Otsego State Park and PRCSF Campgrounds and Trails

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:

Wildlife Division: Brian Mastenbrook
Law Enforcement Division: Nick Torsky – Corrections Officer

OTHERS PRESENT: Connie Kleinhardt, Jan Wolfin, Al Davis, Chris Rayner

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR: Dick Kleinhardt thanked the Trail Committee: Kerry Mase, Carol Clute, Darlene Alexander and Bonnie Cornelius for the work they had done in identifying 24 connector/trails for consideration to be re-opened and for attending meetings with the DNR and the Pigeon River Country Advisory Committee.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: **Motion** to approve the minutes for the May 28, 2015 meeting was made by Barb Curtis and seconded by Vicki Reinhardt. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: **Motion** to accept the agenda was made by Kerry Mase seconded by Chuck Fanslow. Motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Status of the first 13 connector/trails that are in the “system” for approval and the results of the Mediation on the remaining 11 connector/trails. – Anna Sylvester

Three weeks ago the first set of connector/trails showed up in the Trail Approval system. The proposed connector/trails have not yet been reviewed by all the District Managers. At the Mediation session for the remaining 11 connector/trails only one trail was “approved” by the representatives of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council members. Scott Whitcomb, Brian Mastenbrook and Anna Sylvester then met to review input from both the PRCEC and PRCAC members who participated in the Mediation. In addition to the one that the PRCAC members approved the DNR staff “approved in concept” three additional connector/trails. Scott Whitcomb and Keith Cheli, Landscape Planner for PRD have recommendations for changing the routes on three of the connector/trails. Kerry Mase, Bonnie Cornelius and Barb Curtis will meet with Scott Whitcomb to walk the proposed reroutes.

The approval of the connector/trails has not moved as quickly through the DNR approval process as hoped. In January the process will be modified and hopefully all trail requests will move more quickly through the DNR review and approval process.

Anna and Scott will work on drafting a Land Use Order for the Director to present for information at the February Natural Resource Commission and then signed in March which will officially open these connector/trails for equestrian use.

Dick asked about access to Inspiration Point. Scott Whitcomb reported that the DNR was not finished with the habitat restoration work that was being done in that area. The foot trail has been re-routed but consideration of an equestrian trail needs to wait for the removal of Locust trees.

DNR process by which a landowner can request access to public lands -

At the May meeting Anna Sylvester presented the draft process and criteria for granting access to private landowners. Today Anna presented the ten evaluation questions that the DNR will use when considering a land owner’s request for access to State lands. (Attached in Addendum). The DNR property manager and other staff will meet with the property owner(s) to review their requests. Resource and wildlife impact and the source of funds to acquire the land will be taken into consideration. Vickie Reinhardt is a land owner that is representing others in her subdivision who are requesting access. She was appointed by Dick Kleinhardt to facilitate their request and to report back to the Committee at our next meeting.

LeeGrande trail proposal- Anna Sylvester

The original requests for loop trails within the LeeGrande area was denied. Shannon Smith submitted alternative loop trails that are on State owned land but do not include the LeeGrande GEM property. This new Trail Request is making its way through the DNR Trail Approval process.

Stoney Creek Campground: Richard Hill reported that the DNR worked with loggers, township and road commission members to get much needed repairs completed to the

road leading into the Stoney Creek Campground. This fall the dam on Stoney Creek had to be repaired and heavy equipment used this road. Restoration for any damage that may have occurred as a result is to be made and will be monitored by the DNR.

PRD Recreational Management Plan update -

Anna Sylvester reported that the Parks and Recreation Division is in the beginning stages of developing a Recreational Management Plan for PRCSF. It began with a review of the management plans already in place such as the Concept of Management, Forest Management and Wildlife Management Plans. Zones within the PRCSF need to be identified and named. Appropriate uses within the zones will be recommended. There will be presentations and opportunity for input from the stake holders and the public. The final Recreational Management Plan will then be developed. The Recreational Management Plan will serve as a guide for future recreational use with the PRCSF.

Richard Hill shared that State Parks have Recreational Management Plans but this will be the first such plan for State Forest land. Several DNR Divisions have responsibilities within State Forest lands including Parks and Recreation, Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries. These DNR Divisions are supporting the development of a Recreational Management Plan. Scott Whitcomb, manager of PRCSF, says that he feels this will be a helpful management tool. Once the first draft is completed it takes approximately fourteen months to gather input, review and make changes and develop a final plan.

NEW BUSINESS:

Election of Officers:

Chairperson: Dick Kleinhardt

Vice-Chair: Chuck Fanslow

Secretary: Kerry Mase

Spring Work Bee

April 21 – 24, 2016 have been selected for the Spring Work Bee in the PRCSF. Our objectives will be to clean up any winter storm damage within the two equestrian campgrounds and the equestrian trails, reopen the connector/trails that the Director designates in the Land Use Order, and to work on equestrian campground projects that Kelly Kinser, Supervisor PRD, identifies and equestrian trail projects identified by Scott Whitcomb, Manager of PRCSF.

How do we encourage legal riding and Leave No Trace ?

Bonnie Cornelius, President of Alpena County Horsemen's Club, said that she believes that the clubs that regularly use the campgrounds and trails are following the rules and are riding legally. She feels that it is very important for clubs to let their members know what is expected from them and to teach the next generations proper conduct. Norma Laine, Shiawassee Trial Riders and Barb Curtis, Tri County Horse Association, said that their clubs also strictly enforces the rules for their members.

Chuck Fanslow, President of Michigan Trail Riding Association, says that they have a Trail Boss whose job is it to ensure that their campers clean up after themselves in the DNR recommended manner for each campground that they use on their organized rides. MTRA also wants to help mark trails in the Pigeon River Country State Forest to help riders stay on the legal trails. Maps need to be more accurate and readily available in the campgrounds not just at the Field office.

Kelly Kinser, PRD, said that when the group that is registered for the Group Campground is not large the DNR has allowed additional camping groups to register. However, some EQ campers who have no prior registration just coming in and use the campground. Starting in 2016 registered campers will be given color coded tags to display. Those without tags are not legally camping and the Ranger will ask them to leave. Registered groups will be given guidelines for camp clean up, only using fire pits and legal riding. Big groups can request wheelbarrow(s) from PRD. Also discussed was the fact that excessive numbers of campers have used the off- site camping areas that are only supposed to have four rigs. The Hardwood Lake camp site is a large area and Scott Whitcomb felt that a designated area for camping should be established with tether posts.

NEXT MEETING: February 23, 2016 - Roscommon DNR Field Office - 12.30

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Land owners request for access – Vicki Rienhardt
Spring Work Bee jobs- Kelly Kinser
Status of connector/trails requests sent to MDNR for approval- Scott Whitcomb
PRD Recreational Management Plan update – Anna Sylvester
Status of Equestrian loop trails in the Stoney Creek area – Anna Sylvester
Pavilion – Darlene Alexander

ADJOURN: Meeting was adjourned at 3:26

Respectfully Submitted,
Kerry K. Mase
Secretary

ADDENDUM

Landowner Request for Access onto State Land DNR Evaluation

1. What is the request for access, for what purpose?
2. What are the purchase and management strategies for the land? Does the recreation use comply with purchase and management of the lands?
3. Is there access to appropriate and approved trails or recreation from the landowner property?
4. What is the distance to the nearest public access? Is there another trail or recreation access available within a one mile radius?
5. Is the landowner willing to allow others to access the state land through their property? This includes all legal uses such as mountain bicycles, horses, hunters, anglers, hikers or other allowable recreationalists.
6. Is the landowner willing to maintain the access for all users?
7. Is the access for year-round use? If seasonal use, for what time periods?
8. Is the landowner willing to grant the DNR easement for the access?
9. Will the landowner want a gate for access? Does the DNR want gated access? Is the landowner willing to open and lock the gate during open/closed hours?
10. Is the landowner willing to have insurance on their property, if required?