



Pigeon River Country State Forest Fact Sheet

In 1919, P.S. Lovejoy created a vision for what is now the Pigeon River Country State Forest (PRCSF) as the “Big Wild,” which today is 118,000 acres in Cheboygan, Otsego, and Montmorency Counties.

The development of an oil and gas well in 1970 triggered the development of the PRCSF original Concept of Management and initiated the creation of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

The Concept of Management was approved December 7, 1973, and the Michigan DNR adopted “the policy to protect and maintain the natural beauty of its forests and waters, and to sustain a healthy elk herd and wildlife populations.”

In 2005, the Natural Resources Commission convened a 10 person steering committee, chaired by then Commissioner Jerry Hall, to initiate a process to review and update the Concept of Management to maintain the wilderness character of the PRCSF, based on

- the increasing and changing recreational uses;
- private development around the forest that threatened the wilderness character of the PRCSF;
- the size of the PRCSF had increased by more than 15,000 acres since the original Concept was approved; and
- after three decades, science and technology for resource management had evolved.

The original 1973 objectives were validated by the NRC on March 14, 2005 as still being appropriate to guide the management of the PRCSF.

The steering committee created seven subcommittees with representatives from diverse interest groups to provide recommendations to the steering committee to modify the Concept of Management.

Two public meetings were held in northern Michigan after the steering committee completed a draft of the plan. All versions of the draft plan were posted on the DNR’s Web site for public review and comment.

A final draft of the Concept of Management was prepared and provided at the October 2005 NRC meeting for information, and was approved by the DNR Director at the 2005 November NRC meeting.

Following the recommendations in the Concept, a snowmobile land use order to limit snowmobile use to forest roads and county road rights-of-way was submitted for review at the November 2007 NRC meeting and approved at the December 2007 NRC meeting.

An additional work group was created by the DNR Director in January 2008 to look in more detail at the Concept's recommendations related to equestrian use and bicycling in the PRCSF.

Based on the work group's comments, the recommendations for equestrian and bicycling opportunities were expanded. The DNR has committed to work with equestrian groups to create a new equestrian trail system north of the PRCSF to offer additional riding and wildlife viewing opportunities.

A land use order to open up to public use seven lakes that were used for research , as recommended in the Concept of Management, was submitted for review at the March 2008 NRC meeting and has been submitted for the DNR Director's approval at the April 2008 NRC meeting.

Another land use order was submitted for review at the April 2008 NRC meeting, also recommended in the Concept, addressing (1) equestrian camping at the Elk Hill Campground and the Johnson's Crossing Campground, providing equestrian use on 280 miles of state forest road, county road rights-of-ways, the shore-to-shore equestrian trail, and a limited amount of closed two-track roads to create family-oriented loops (this is an expansion of what was in the amended Concept of Management, but is a reduction of equestrian opportunities from last year); and (2) bicycling on forest roads, county roads, the Pickerel Lake Pathway, the High Country Pathway, and the Shingle Mill Pathway, providing 300 miles for bicycling.

Additional recommendations in the Concept regarding vegetative management and wildlife habitat, aquatics systems management, oil and gas development and alternative energy, vehicular access and cooperative efforts with private landowners in and around the PRCSF are in different phases of implementation.

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