

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION ***Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee***

August 13, 2015
Fort Custer State Park

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Commissioner Louise Klarr, Chair
Commissioner Tim Nichols, Co-Chair

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Ann Conklin
Bob Hoffmeyer
Mike McDonald
Amy Trotter

ABSENT

Vicki Pontz
Tom Bailey
Jim Hendricks
Jeff Gray
Mike Foote
Tom Ferguson
Jim Bradley
Mary Pitcher
Julie Clark

OTHERS PRESENT

DNR Management and Staff

MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

INTRODUCTIONS

Due to the informal nature of this meeting Commissioner Klarr did not officially call this meeting to order but did take a roll call at 8:45 a.m. A short meet and greet was held at the Eagle Lake Day Use area to outline the day's events and tours.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes were approved for both the April and June meeting via email, as there was not a quorum present for the August 13th meeting.

Park Manager Tony Trojanowski arranged for assistance from Fort Custer Military personnel (Sgt. Smith) to utilize a bus to transport members of the committee to the various locations around Fort Custer State Park. Tony shared that the park is on track to exceed visitation this summer. Recreation passport sales at Fort Custer are up about \$10,000, very large increase over last year. Concessions now offer kayaking and canoe rentals, which has been a very successful program

TOUR MOUNTAIN BIKE AND EQUESTRIAN STAGING AREA

Member's first stop was the mountain bike and equestrian staging area. Fort Custer has about 25 miles of trails. Some trails offer very technical sections offering challenges to bikers of all abilities. Equestrians now have their own parking area, restrooms etc. so they can expand and have room for vehicles and trailers. Equestrians have been increasingly using this park. Beyond the equestrian parking area is the rental cabins; most of these will hold 15-20 people at a time.

TOUR WHITFORD LAKE AND LAWLER LAKE ACCESS POINTS AND DAMS

The DNR has developed dam systems to create a water experience at parks; DNR now has a number of dams in state parks that we care for. Fort Custer has 4 dams, 2 are significant. These dams assist with regulating the water in the park.

TOUR FISHING PLATFORM

This fishing platform is one of the few we have in the district and is used often; a floating dock system is in place. This floating dock was built in 1998, still in good shape. One of the maintenance issues with this dock system is part of it has to be pulled up so it does not get ice damage during the winter months. This is a significant labor challenge. There are many users of the dock that have been catching fish all this season from this area.

TOUR KALAMAZOO BOAT ACCESS SITE

The cleanup of this area went on for many months, with numerous clean up vehicles utilizing this boat access for that purpose. Jay Wesley, Fisheries, described the Kalamazoo River area that has northern pike, cat fish and numerous other species. Almost a million gallons of oil spilled and made its way to this park, the oil came through and spread out through the park plane. Many birds were taken to a wild life recovery center to be cleaned up, worst hit were actually turtles. Much of the cleanup was submerged clean up, the oil sank and then dredging was required. The entire flood plane was dredged twice and restored. The river was closed for 1 year to allow cleanup; Enbridge needed access and this was a typical access site. . Habitat restoration was one of the largest challenges from this spill. Clean up was finished last fall, but the area continues to be monitored by Enbridge.

RETURN TO EAGLE LAKE DAY USE AREA – HILLTOP PICNIC SHELTER

Ray Fahlsing covered the native grassland areas in the park as well as how the Oak Wilt issue is being addressed. In 2002 we had severe wind that affected approximately 170 acres of forest area, which largely consisted of black locust trees. Black Locust trees are not native to the Michigan area. This area was converted back into a landscape that was more native to Michigan. Some of the forest that appears all brushy, we are managing with fire; about 50% of the park is under a fire management program. Many different types of grasses have been planted in the last several years. Farming has been being phased out in this area and being replaced with grassy areas within the park.

Representatives from BCBS were in attendance to discuss the MI Big Green Gym program within some of the parks. Cari Draft from Eco Trek Fitness was also present to explain some of the programs that Eco Trek participates in within our state parks. She also shared some of the products that Eco Trek distributes.

CLOSING REMARKS

In audible.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at today's meeting.

CLOSING BUSINESS

The next meeting is scheduled for October 8, 2015 in Cedarville, MI.