

# Pigeon River Country Advisory Council



## Meeting Minutes

Location: Corwith Township Hall, 8170 Mill St., Vanderbilt, MI

Date: Thursday, July 22, 2021

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (P.R.C.A.C.) was held on Thursday, July 22, 2021 at the Corwith Township Hall in Vanderbilt. Chair Paul Rose called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., then led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Paul Rose, Rique Campa, Ken Glasser, Bill Loney, Barb Curtis, Doug Reeves, Lisha Ramsdell, Bill Wood (via Zoom), Conan Smith (via Zoom), Greg Walz, Drew YoungeDyke, Sandy Franz, Don Horrocks and Brent Shank.

### **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Randy Keen, Brian McPhail, and Dave Smethurst.

### **EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT:**

Mark Monroe, Kelly Kinser, Brian Mastenbrook, Madeline Jazdyk, Shelby Adams (via Zoom), Mike Shelton (via Zoom), Andy Stempky, Karen Chapman and Conservation Officers Eric Bottorf, Matt Theunick, and Mark Depew.

### **EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:**

Tim Cwalinski.

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Judi Jarecki, Robert Strain, Pete Kennedy, Pat Bruzewski, Glen Matthews, Mike Koskus, Lance Cottrell and Stewart Smith.

## **INTRODUCTIONS – PAUL ROSE:**

Chair Paul Rose welcomed all to the July 2021 meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council; and noted that it has been 545 days since the council last met in person! Paul confirmed that a membership quorum was present for tonight's meeting. He also introduced Mark Monroe, new DNR Pigeon River Unit Manager effective April 2021. Mark gave a brief overview of his career with the DNR. Paul extended thanks to those who helped keep the council moving along during the pandemic.

## **AGENDA:**

With a motion from Don Horrocks to approve, seconded by Rique Campa, and with no further discussion offered, the agenda was approved as presented.

## **MINUTES:**

There being no additions, deletions or corrections offered for the April 22, 2021 minutes, all members present voted in favor to approve the minutes as presented.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Paul opened the floor for any public comment, with a 5-minute limit. There was no public comment offered.

## **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **FOREST COVER & WILDLIFE – DOUG REEVES:**

Doug reported that the Forest Cover & Wildlife committee met on July 13, 2021. At that meeting, Mark Monroe and Chad Fate, DNR Forest Inventory & Planning Specialist, gave an overview of the DNR Forestry compartment review process, demonstrating how to access and view the compartments online and offer comments and questions ([www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)). Compared the forest cover goals in the Concept of Management with what is currently occurring on the ground, discussed how the goals are being met. They then moved on to discuss the compartments under review for the year of entry 2023. Five stands proposed for cutting

exceed the 40-acre recommendation in the Concept of Management. Doug then turned the floor over to Mark Monroe for a review of forest management in the P.R.C.S.F.

Mark Monroe shared a powerpoint presentation reviewing the methodology and tracking of forestry management to meet the goals set in the Concept of Management. Brian Mastenbrook commented that the Concept of Management was written in 1973, and in 1975, the elk population was estimated at 200. During the 1980's studies were started on the impact of elk browse on aspen, particularly big-tooth aspen. In the last several years, the amount of aspen has gone down, while the elk population has gone up. Rique Campa commented that big-tooth aspen makes up a smaller proportion of the aspen in the forest, while the browsing is much more significant. Big-tooth aspen has nutritional qualities that make it tastier to elk. Heavy browse causes mortality to aspen. If aspen is desired on the landscape, creative thinking is required on how to do that on a landscape with elk. Discussion ensued on efficient regeneration of aspen.

Doug reported that the committee unanimously voted to recommend approval to harvest the 5 stands over 40 acres, as proposed for year of entry 2023. There was also discussion on what the committee would recommend for a much larger cut on the Hackett Lake property. The committee also recommended that additional acres be added as a clear-cut in order to maintain big-tooth aspen regeneration in the area.

Doug Reeves, on behalf of the Forest Cover & Wildlife Committee, made a motion for the council to recommend approval of the DNR Forestry proposals regarding cuts over 40 acres that have been put forward, including the much larger stand on the Hackett Lake property. Motion seconded by Drew YoungeDyke. After more discussion, all voted in favor, motion carried unanimously.

## **RESOURCE USE & EXTRACTION – SANDY FRANZ:**

Sandy reported that the committee met on July 14, 2021. Kim Sanders from Core Energy gave an overview of their operations in the P.R.C.S.F. Core Energy is planning an exploratory drill on private land by the annexed area of the forest. If the well (Buckhorn 3-23) comes in, they will connect the well to a central processing facility (C.P.U.) on another parcel of private land on the other side of the annexed area. There is 1,373 feet of state forest annexed land between the well and the C.P.U., 810 feet of the pipeline would be bored under a wetland. Debate and discussion ensued. Sandy shared handouts, which included the Core Energy Easement Application, and other pertinent information.

Another issue discussed at the committee meeting was oil and gas operator leases on state land. In the past, the DNR has entered into shorter term special use agreements, to

be renewed annually. However, as agreements may be lost, expired or changed over time, this comes to light when there are large transfers of oil and gas assts. The D.N.R. has a statewide initiative to replace and update these leases, to assure proper collection of fees and appropriate bonds are in place. There are Lambda well leases in the consent area that are in the process of being updated.

They also received a report from E.G.L.E on fluctuating contaminant levels from Charlton 4 monitoring wells. There was a sparge well system installed by Merit Energy, which pipes air into the wells which activates the aerobic bacteria to consume the contaminants. There was one area that was difficult to access due to equipment placement, and that area's readings continued to fluctuate. Lambda installed 3 additional sparge wells in that area, and the latest results from the monitoring well were clean. They will continue to monitor the area as E.G.L.E. requires one year of clean readings before the wells can be plugged and the E.G.L.E. file is closed out.

Sandy reported that Matt Fry, D.N.R., gave a status update of the D.N.R. response to the council's January hydrocarbon resolution. Meetings have been held with Director Eichinger, Kirk Lapham, of the Minerals Management division, Scott Whitcomb and others. Since the oil and gas activity with the P.R.C.S.F. is subject to multiple legal documents and statutes, the D.N.R. is seeking a review and recommendation from the Attorney General's (A.G.) office regarding marginal wells and other requirements associated with operations in the Pigeon. To date, no response has been received from the A.G.'s office, and nothing further yet from the D.N.R. Sandy then opened the floor for discussion with the council.

## **EX-OFFICIO REPORT:**

### **FISHERIES – DREW YOUNGEDYKE FOR TIM CWALINSKI:**

Drew reported that stocking of the Sinkhole Lakes with yearling trout is complete, and rainbow trout have been planted in Pickerel Lake. Stream surveys of trout population on a reach of the Black River near Tubbs Creek will take place in mid-August. Trout population survey on the Pigeon River near Elk Hill will also take place in mid-August. All 20 in-stream temperature loggers are deployed in the Black and Pigeon Rivers. The stream restoration work contracted by the Upper Black River Council is continuing, the crew is currently working at the old Sanders dam location.

Paul Rose shared that there have been reports of turbidity downstream from the bank reshaping work taking place at the Song of the Morning reach of the Pigeon River.

## **SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **DISCOVERY CENTER – SANDY FRANZ:**

Sandy reported that on July 17, 2021, the Discovery Center (D.C.) opened to visitors for the first time since the fall of 2019. They are planning on having the D.C. open every Saturday and Sunday until October. With regards to the dugout canoe donated to the D.C.; it is believed to be of native American origin. The tribes will be meeting in July to discuss appropriate ownership and other matters regarding the dugout canoe that was donated to the D.C. Through a generous donation, a very small piece of the canoe was sent to a firm in Florida for carbon dating, no results yet. The D.C. will also resume their educational classes, starting now and running through October.

### **PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE – BARB CURTIS:**

Barb reported that the committee has not met. Rique Campa offered to give an update at the next P.R.C.E.C. and P.R.C.A.C. meetings regarding Chad Williamson's research on elk response to recreation use and habitat potential.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **PRC “CONTRACT” PROJECT UPDATES – LISHA RAMSDELL:**

Lisha presented information, via a detailed handout, regarding projects in and around the P.R.C.S.F. In June, the Cheboygan County Road Commission replaced the culvert on Tin Bridge Road, timed with the work to be done on the Cornwall dam renovation. There are 6 upcoming road stream crossing projects, and Lisha noted that the Cheboygan, Otsego and Montmorency County Road Commissions have been great partners in getting these projects done. The “Tubes” replacement project is almost done, the bridge deck is down, and they are starting to assemble the timber bridge. On the Cornwall Dam renovation project, the bids came in much higher than expected. Another grant request was submitted to the DNR Fish Habitat grant program, which is not approved at this point, additional information was requested - the grant request is still under review.

They have also been working with the DNR Wildlife division for a couple of years on some wildlife habitat projects in Green Timbers and Inspiration Point.

### **LAND STRATEGY UPDATE/BLACK RIVER RANCH UPDATE – MARK MONROE FOR KERRY WIEBER:**

Mark Monroe reported that in May, Governor Whitmer signed the bill for the MNRTF to award \$2.3 million towards the purchase of Black River Ranch. There was a press release issued by the D.N.R. regarding the potential acquisition of Black River Ranch which resulted in some public misunderstandings. The D.N.R. has not yet acquired the Black River Ranch, and the \$2.3 millions is only a partial funding, with another \$10 million being requested from the Forest Legacy Program.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **FOREST TREATMENT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR THE PRC:**

Paul reported that there will be more information on this subject at a future meeting.

## **EX-OFFICIO REPORTS**

### **PRC UNIT REPORT – MARK MONROE:**

Mark reported that Director Eichinger appointed a new member to the P.R.C.A.C., Brent Rudolph, representing Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society. The new forestry technician, Jake Halabut, will be starting on Monday, July 26. The forest inventory process is moving forward, with final compartment reviews on August 17. Timber sales are moving forward, with help reaching the goals from John St. Pierre, district roving forester, and other forest management units. This spring, we were able to complete one prescribed burn in the Green Timbers area, approximately 410 acres were burned. In the first part of July, there was a 26-acre wildfire by the bridge that crosses the Sturgeon River in Green Timbers. The approved roads have been opened in the Walled Lake and Storey Lake areas. We will issue a survey to gather public input on how to utilize these properties. Once we have that data, we can analyze it, and will help us develop strategies on how to best utilize these properties.

Mark shared that he was able to do some outreach regarding forest management, with an interview on Michigan Out-of-Doors, and another interview with Mike Avery just this week.

With regards to the Tyrolean Hills gate and easement, the issue is with the Attorney General's office, there is a meeting scheduled for July 29 to discuss the matter. Roads projects are moving along, going to work on Road 111, part of which is right next to the Song of the Morning. Trying to sell or recycle buildings on recent property acquisitions.

The P.R.C. H.Q. opened to the public on Monday, July 19, 2021, and the RSVP volunteers will start weekends again at the P.R.C. H.Q., on August 7. The P.R.C. H.Q. water well will be replaced, hopefully the well replacement will start in August. Have been working with the Pigeon River Country Association (P.R.C.A.), who have kindly assisted with finding volunteers to assist with small maintenance projects on the small residence and the staff house. Lastly, there will be an outdoor Automated External Defibrillator (A.E.D.) and a 911 emergency phone installed by the back door of the PRC HQ.

### **WILDLIFE REPORT– BRIAN MASTENBROOK:**

Brian reported that although staff has been working on wildlife openings this year, there have been equipment problems, however, they are planning on doing a lot of planting in the fall. The elk management plan is scheduled to be revised in 2022, will be obtaining public comment and forming an elk advisory committee. As to the P.R.C. Wildlife biologist position, staff are evaluating candidate applications, interviews will be conducted, and hopefully by October, the position will be filled.

### **RECREATION REPORT – KELLY KINSER:**

Kelly stated that campground attendance numbers in the Pigeon are up this year. Staff have been working on getting fire pits replaced and upgraded, also replacing tables. Still a struggle finding summer staff, was only able to fill one of two short term worker positions. Working with the consultant on the High-Country Pathway reroute, the Pine Grove bridge was removed in February, still working on an appropriate re-route. There will be a portable A.E.D. available in one of the ranger vehicles.

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE – LED:**

Mark Depew, C.O. reported that in order to patrol for O.R.V. violations, you will see officers on an O.R.V. Several elk cases have been submitted to various courts, there is a huge backlog of cases. Congratulations to Eric Bottorf, C.O., who is retiring after being with the Department for over 24 years. His position will be filled by Matt Theunik, C.O.

### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

Lisha Ramsdell requested an update on the Bluesource carbon credit pilot project and carbon markets. Sandy Franz requested continued follow-up on the council's January hydrocarbon resolution.

Please forward any other future agenda items to Paul Rose.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2021 at 5p.m. The location and format are to be determined.

**ADJOURN:**

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,  
KAREN CHAPMAN, DNR