

**OFFICIAL MINUTES**  
**PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
Corwith Township Hall, Vanderbilt, MI  
Friday, January 23, 2015

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (PRCAC) was held on Friday, January 23, 2015 at the Corwith Township Hall, Vanderbilt, MI. Chairman John Walters called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

John Walters, Eugene Horan, Kerry Mase, Arch Reeves, Jim Supina, Rique Campa, Kurt Jagoda, Pete Gustafson, Paul Rose, Dave Smethurst, Paul Beachnau, Randy Keen, Sandy Franz, Lisha Ramsdale, Mark Ennes

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Donald Horrocks, Jason Melancon, Brad Garmon

**EX-OFFICIO PRESENT:**

Scott Whitcomb, Nick Torsky, Brian Mastenbrook, Steve Milford

**EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:**

Tim Cwalinski, Andy Stempky

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Director Keith Creagh, Denise Kinsinger, Charlie Maltby, Stewart Smith, Rich Hill, Scott Thompson, Pete Datema, Anna Sylvester, Debbie Jenson, Sue Allor, Darlene Alexander, Bonnie Cornelius, Connie Kleinhardt, Dick Kleinhardt, Vicki Reinhardt, Joe Jarecki, Judy Jarecki, Mike Brown, Dale Franz.

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Walters welcomed everyone to the meeting on behalf of the Council members. Introductions were made by attendees.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** No comments were made.

**APPROVE AGENDA:** Scott Whitcomb stated he would like to add the Special Meeting Minutes to the agenda.

Paul Beachnau made a Motion to add the Special Meeting Minutes of December 15, 2014. Pete Gustafson seconded. Motion carried.

**APPROVE MEETING MINUTES:**

Approval of October 16, 2014 Meeting Minutes. A Motion to approve was made by Jim Supina and was seconded by Dave Smethurst. Motion carried

Approval of December 15, 2014 Special Meeting Minutes. Motion to approve was made by Sandy Franz and seconded by Paul Rose. Motion carried

John Walters thanked Director, Keith Creagh, for attending the meeting and asked if he would like to take a few moments and speak to the council regarding the Land Cap Law.

Director Creigh stated he would take 5 minutes to update us and then take questions. He was on his way to the UP to discuss some mining issues and some tribal negotiations. I have been asked if there is anything new regarding the Governor's State of the State. He talked about the license package, hunting and fishing. The revenue came in a little bit light at 8 mil not 11 mil. We actually drove people's behavior in buying. Reduced doe tags by 200,000. We managed for the resource not the dollar. There was a little bit of a reduction in revenue but it is o.k. We are working with all the coalitions.

Invasives- We have 5 million in budget for 2015 and a tentative 8 million for 2016.

Land Cap Land Strategy – Legislature didn't want to remove the cap. Land is a big issue and we will be challenged on that issue. From my prospective our footprint could be improved so that you have a quality experience.

Is the Trust Fund solid? No, it is not. My opinion is that it needs to be tweaked. 500 Million cap and right now we have about 560 Million. You cannot spend more than 25% on development.

Park Endowment Fund - Build corpus and parks

Limestone mine, east end of the U.P. - Chief's recommendation was not to do the deal.

Wolves - Fish and Wildlife Service have lost every time in court. We will see some congressional action.

Bats- White Nose Syndrome – It was going to be listed as an endangered species. Fish and Wildlife Service backed up and it was moved from endangered to threatened. It is not practical to shut down timber from April to September.

Dave Smethurst – Pipeline under Straits. Does the Department have any regulatory control? Schuette and Wyant have a task force and we are looking at the pipeline under the Straits. Looking at when should you replace the pipeline? The pipeline is the safest way to move commodities. Timeline is May.

Director thanked everyone for what they are doing.

John Walters announced that there are three new council members, Sandy Franz, Jason Melancon, Lisha Ramsdale. He welcomed them and stated we look forward to their insight and positive input.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

##### **Nominating committee - Jim Supina**

John Walters was nominated as Chairman and Rick Campa was nominated as Vice Chairman. Jim Supina made the motion and Kerry Mase seconded. Motion carried.

### **Education and Engagement Committee: Rick Campa**

Rick state he was sitting in for Brad Garmon. There were 6 members to take a look at the proposal for the development of an interpretive historical center at the old manager's residence building. There was widespread support by the Education Committee members. It was not unanimous however. One member was opposed, stating that the facility not consistent with Concept of Management. The committee, in reviewing the Draft Proposal, that there was more information needed to be developed and shared. There has been some seed funding provided for the facility, however there was concerns regarding the sustainability of long term funding and the maintenance of the building and ADA accessibility issues. Some of the suggestions that were brought forth to the committee were to tap into contacting conservation organizations for potential partnering for financial planning. There is more fact finding that needs to be discovered before we go forward.

Scott Whitcomb added additional information stating we recognized the need within the Department as well as on the advisory council to provide additional educational slant in the PRC. A family foundation approached PRC with money to put toward educational displays. Manager's residence has been empty for 10 years but would possibly serve as a good space for this development. At that point I turned it over to the PRCA to flesh out some of the details. The Association was able to put together some partners who were interested in the project. The first step was to try to get some sort of control over the building from the Department. They put together a proposal for a long term lease for the facility. Typically those are 25 years long. There has to be something of value to exchange. The Association is building an operational plan at this time.

John Walters stated that at the fall meeting we approved the general concept of an Interpretive Center. There is no further action needed at this time. We would need more facts to present an update. We will put this on the Agenda for next meeting in April.

### **Concept of Management – Pete Gustafson**

I am just going to over this as a prelude to further discussion. The committee was assigned by the Chair at the December 15, 2014 Special Meeting of the Advisory Council to review the Concept of Management in connection with the proposed cabin rental program by PRD.

The Sub-Committee does not believe that a formal process for updating the Concept has been initiated by the Director nor does the Committee recommend that such a process be undertaken at this time in reference to the proposed Cabin Rental Program. Rather, the principal issue in the committee's view is whether the provisions of the Concept as written permit consideration of the cabin rental program as a management purpose. If so, whether the Advisory Council would recommend consideration of the cabin rental program as an appropriate management activity subject to such terms, conditions and limitations that the council may recommend and the Department approve. Accordingly, the committee recommends that the Advisory Council first answer the following question:

Assuming that a Cabin Rental program is permitted by the Concept for a management purpose; does the Advisory Council recommend further consideration of such a program as an appropriate activity, subject to such terms, conditions and limitations as may be developed?

If the Council answers this question "yes", then the Committee recommends that the Advisory Council ask the Director to provide an interpretation of the Concept language set forth in the Forest Cover and

Wildlife Management section, specifically whether or not the Department would consider a cabin rental program to fall under the "management purpose" provision of this section of the Concept.

The Committee notes in making the foregoing recommendations that the Department and the Director are the final interpreters for the Concept, and that the advisability of giving further substantive consideration to the cabin rental proposal depends on whether the program is permissible under the Concept of Management.

Pete Gustafson made a motion, stating that the motion would be; is the AC willing to follow this suggestion and have a discussion on the first part of the proposal?

We don't believe the Concept of Management should be amended. It does not discuss this issue.

Paul Rose, logically the first step would be to have some type of conversation by the advisory council. This does not necessarily rise to the need to revisit the Concept. There is enough information to not amend the Concept of Management.

John Walters stated that in order to proceed we need a vote amongst the members.

Pete suggested an open discussion before the motion.

John Walters stated that under Robert's Rules there has to be a motion.

Sandy Franz stated that Pete Gustafson had recommended that we make a motion based on the content of the third paragraph, ...assuming a cabin rental program is permitted...I have a problem with that and I would not be comfortable voting on a motion that had that assumption at the beginning of it. I would support a motion based on the second paragraph which defines the principle issue in the committee's view as to whether or not the provisions of the Concept permit the cabin rental program.

Paul Rose stated the initial purpose of this was that we did not want to put the Director in a position of interpreting the Concept.

Dave Smethurst made a Motion that we recommend that we have a rental program. Seconded by Kerry Mase.

Paul Rose made a Friendly Amendment, " limited conditional cabin rental program".

Motion by Dave Smethurst, Does the Advisory Council recommend further consideration of such a program as an appropriate activity, subject to such terms, conditions and limitations as may be developed? Seconded by Kerry Mase.

Mike Brown stated he is against the rental program. We should take the cabins down. The sites should be used as camp sites, not a camp ground.

Dave Smethurst for the record, I made the Motion per the Chair. I disagree with Mike Brown a little bit because we have not had buildings quite like these. I don't want the PRC to become a park. I want it to remain a working forest. And, I don't think it is a wilderness area either. If we start having a rental cabin program it will edge people to think of us as a park. So, I don't think we should do this.

Paul Beachnau, I support the proposal. Can people bring in recreation vehicles? Scott Whitcomb said yes. Beachnau stated he was more opposed to RV's than the cabin rental program.

Sandy Franz stated, in my review of Concept there were several more excerpts that could apply that make the cabin rental inappropriate.

Paul Rose stated, I wanted to add that I am very concerned about future acquisitions and our ability to acquire inholdings with Trust Fund monies.

Arch Reeves stated, I followed the Concept from its beginning. It was my recreation area before it became Pigeon River Country. Now I see it being picked apart. I think the whole thing is going to fall if we don't stick to the Concept. I would say no to the cabin rental program.

Eugene Horan –The Concept says management purposes but further down it says recreation use criteria. I say leave them. I also agree with Paul.

Kerry Mase stated she agrees with it as well. I think Trust Fund money is for recreation as well as hunting and fishing. I am strongly in favor of a rental program with current structures.

John Walters stated he would like to defer to Nick Torsky for his opinion. Nick stated Law Enforcement doesn't have an opinion. Personally, I am not in favor. 100 nights of use has a significant impact on the river.

*Motion by Dave Smethurst, Does the Advisory Council recommend further consideration of such a program as an appropriate activity, subject to such terms, conditions and limitations as may be developed? Seconded by Kerry Mase.*

Motion – not carried, vote was 6 yes - 8 no

Kerry Mase stated she thought a really good case was made for looking at addressing revision to parts of the Concept due to PRD being involved now.

Paul Rose responded that the concern by the committee was that this may be a short term shift in responsibility by PRD.

#### **Wildlife Report - Jim Supina**

At the last meeting we discussed GEMS and what the implications are for the PRC. Wildlife Committee is going to address that. There are probably some opportunities in Education and Outreach. We will be discussing this.

#### **Awards – Scott Whitcomb**

Scott would like to present the Volunteer of Year award before the Director leaves so we can take a photo with the Director. In 2014 there were a lot of important volunteer events. Last year we started a program to recognize the important volunteers in the forest with our Witness Tree Award. Volunteers do three main things:

- Help with the mission of the department
- Help expand capacity
- Engage and energize a group of conservation minded folks that have invested in the area

This year's recipient of the Witness Tree Award is the Pigeon River Country Association.

#### **Map - Brian Mastenbrook**

We have some new graphic design people in Wildlife so we proposing we re-do the PRC map/poster. The PRCA handles sale of the poster. Wildlife graphic design would do the work and turn it over to the Association to have printed. Please take a poster and make notations in the next two weeks to check for changes and return to me. This is another instrument to talk about the values of the forest.

#### **Equestrian Draft Work Plan – Anna Sylvester**

This is our draft work plan for the PRCEC regarding initiatives of use of equestrian within the PRC. This draft was presented to PRCEC. The four important facets of the plan are:

- Provide high quality experiences for equestrian riders in the Pigeon River Country.
- Retain high quality natural resource management
- Continue providing high quality management of other recreational and commercial uses within the PRC
- Adhere to the Concept of Management Plan for the Pigeon River Country

We are requesting input at this time and then we will meet with the Director. We will then proceed with deadlines.

Kerry Mase is the contact person for the Equestrian Committee.

John Walters stated he felt it was very important to receive input from the Advisory Council and requested more time in order to review the draft. Anna agreed to extend the deadline to March 1<sup>st</sup>. Comments will need to be back by February 24<sup>th</sup> to Anna Sylvester.

Dave Smethurst stated he felt there was a potential for user conflicts in considering proposals. There was a comment made about River Fish Friendly, and there are other river and lake access points that are issues about horseback use beyond this one place sited in the documents. I think there needs to be some real work done on Paragraph 12, equine impact on rivers and lakes.

Pete Gustafson made a motion that the draft work plan be referred to committee to meet deadline of February 24<sup>th</sup>. Paul Rose seconded. Motion carried.

Pete Gustafson asked if we have representation on this committee. We need to understand the makeup of the committee and our role in it. Are any of these recommendations included in proposals from Scott? We need to go to committee and we will need maps.

John Walters stated that we will meet and have an answer back to Anna on or before February 24, 2015.

### **Management Plan for Parks and Recreation – Debbie Jenson**

The Management Plan has been done for 30 state parks so far. It is an adaptable process to fit a lot of different things. The Plan was modeled after the National Park Service.

We currently have 102 State Park and Recreation areas.

First we identify the core values and a lot of that work has been done here for you; you have the Concept of Management.

These are a long term plan. They are intended to be a 20 year management zone plan. We plan to review them every 5 years to make sure we are on the right track.

Another part of the plan is to develop 10 year action goals.

Planning team consists of DNR PRD, FRD, Wildlife, Fisheries, Law Enforcement, Marketing and Outreach, and Minerals Management.

Timeline typically takes 12-18 months to complete plan.

Core values: DNR Mission Statement, PRCAC Concept of Management

Rick Campa asked how the objectives are evaluated. Debbie said that the 5 year reviews are just now happening. We are finding that we are still on track with the three areas that are currently up for review.

Sandy Franz asked if a PDF of the slide show could be provided and Debbie stated she would forward one to John Walters.

Dave Smethurst stated he likes a planning process for recreation. If we looked at the US Forest Service process, would it look differently? And, are your 9 standard management zones applicable on state forests? Can you take a park model and put it in a state forest model?

Pete Gustafson stated that PRD is increasingly in front of us, and questions have come up regarding the extent the PRD is familiar with PRC Concept and how it interfaces with recreation ideas that have been put forward.

Pete Gustafson made a motion, that the chair, with a small supporting group, request an opportunity to have a collaboration session between FRD, PRD and rep of the AC to discuss how the Concept of Management, which has been in place now in substantially the same form for 40 years, effects the PRD's increased involvement in the PRC and some of these ideas that are being pushed forward tonight. Sandy Franz seconded. Motion carried.

John Walters stated that he was going to appoint 5 to the committee.

#### **Pigeon River Country Building - Scott Whitcomb**

Scott Whitcomb handed out a draft memo from staff locally from various resource divisions which is going to the Chief of FRD with recommendations regarding the future of the Green Timbers cabins. This gives some background information on the Green Timbers Cabins. Basically what has happened is that since 1982, until 3 years ago, these were taken care of by FRD. They were on a first come, first serve basis. As PRD has transitioned into caring for these cabins, they have evaluated them and due to the extent of damage and cost, does not have interest in adding them to their recreational portfolio at this time. It is our recommendation that they be taken down. We are going to move this up the chain of command.

#### **EXOFFICIO REPORTS:**

##### **Nick Torsky-Law Division**

Deer season was interesting to say the least. There was way more snow for opener this year, which impacted the number of people hunting in the PRC, in my opinion, so it was pretty quiet.

There were several reports of Elk poaching. One reported in PRC with no real evidence to support poaching.

Snowmobile activity has been less than normal so far.

There are three new officers in this district and a new recruit school is currently running.

It looks like there will be more funding for more detectives.

##### **Steve Milford – FRD**

Nothing to report.

##### **Scott Whitcomb-Unit Manager's Report**

Scott passed around an updated contact information sheet for Advisory Council members, asking that each person check for mistakes or new information. An updated copy will be sent out via e-mail.

We are currently wrapping up our 2014 priorities and setting our priorities for 2015. This list is to let you know some of the issues and direction the department and I will be going.

Pete Datema has taken over for Kyle this year in the Americorps program. There is a lot of work here for him to do and I anticipate he will be participating on the Education and Engagement committee and well as some other committees. I talked to Kyle today and he has landed a full time job with WDOT as an environmental coordinator.

We have picked up a new 40 acre acquisition in Forest Township. There are buildings on it.

**Brian Mastenbrook-Wildlife Division**

I have two handouts: a newsletter for Wildlife and some elk information.

Deer count was down this year which seems to be the trend.

We had some Elk that ended up in Antrim County. Two of the animals were euthanized by law enforcement due to public health.

86 Elk were killed out of 114 permits out there with good distribution.

Poaching numbers this year were up. We usually lose 25 to 30 animals per year. This is not a survey year. We will be doing a survey a year from now.

Paul Beachnau asked if there were any confirmed wolfs in PRC or surrounding area. Brian stated there was nothing confirmed.

There was a photo of cougar in UP that was verified. None documented in LP.

**Tim Cwalinski – Fisheries Report**

Not here but provided report.

**Charlie Maltby - PRD**

Group camp reservations are being made. Camping fees went up. ORV campgrounds and equestrian campgrounds went back to \$17.

John Walters thanked Steve Scott, Dave Matelski and Mike Brown for their service to the PRCAC.

Mike Brown stated that since Andy Stempky was not here, increased production was approved by DEQ. Applied for plugging on 57 well and they delayed that. The plugging is now completed on that well.

John Walters stated that Mike Brown was Committee Chair for Oil and Gas and he has appointed Dave Smethurst for that Committee Chair.

Meeting adjourned at 9:55.