

**OFFICIAL MINUTES**  
**PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
Zoom Teleconference  
Thursday, October 22, 2020

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (PRCAC) was held on Thursday, October 22, 2020 via Zoom Teleconference due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. 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, Lisha Ramsdell, Rique Campa, Don Horrocks, Barb Curtis, Randy Keen, Sandy Franz, Rob Pallarito, Bill Wood, Conan Smith, Greg Walz, Bill Loney, Doug Reeves, Heather Shaw, Dave Smethurst and Drew YoungeDyke.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Brian McPhail and Brent Shank.

**EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT:** Cody Stevens, Brian Mastenbrook, Kerry Wieber, Kelly Kinser, Madeline Jazdyk, CO Tom Oberg, Matt Fry, Dave Price, Scott Whitcomb, Andy Stempky, Mike Shelton, and Karen Chapman.

**EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:** None.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Samantha Peterson, Joe Jarecki, Judi Jarecki, Greg Corace, Andrew Knapp, Bob Mannes, Kerry Mase, and Mike Koskus.

**INTRODUCTIONS – PAUL ROSE:**

Chair Paul Rose welcomed all to the October meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council. Rique Campa gave a quick tutorial on using the Zoom meeting platform.

**AGENDA:**

Rob Pallarito made the motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Sandy Franz, all voted in favor to approve the agenda.

**MINUTES:**

Doug Reeves made the motion to approve the minutes from the July 23, 2020 meeting, seconded by Don Horrocks. With one correction to add Doug Reeves to “Members Present”, so noted by Karen Chapman, all voted in favor to approve the minutes, as corrected.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

Paul recommended that council members review the two articles emailed out with the PRCAC meeting information – one from the Mackinac Journal about the Song of the Morning dam removal, and the other in the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Bugle about the recent land acquisitions in the PRCFS.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mike Koskus (a past chairperson of the PRCAC) commented that oil and gas marginal wells is a hard topic to get one's hands around. Mike discussed the definition of what makes a well marginal or profitable. For example, Charlton 2-4A, which no longer produces oil, but does produce gas. In 2019 this well produced about 511 barrels of product, and at \$40 per barrel, computes to a total of \$20,440. The question is, does \$20,440 constitute a profit on the Charlton 2-4A? He presents this question to people that know more about this subject than he does.

**COUNCIL THANK YOU:**

On behalf of the PRCAC, Paul thanked and recognized Samantha Peterson for her two years of service as the AmeriCorps member at the Pigeon River Country State Forest. Samantha was a great asset to the PRCSF and will still be in the area while serving a third year as the AmeriCorps member at Huron Pines.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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

Doug reported that the committee has not met since the last PRCAC meeting. There was a meeting scheduled which had to be canceled due to unforeseen circumstances. During the compartment review process, there were a few proposed timber sales before the committee that were larger than 40 acres. As Doug did not receive any objections from committee members to these proposed sales, he moves that the council support the compartment plans as presented, including those sales larger than 40 acres. The motion was supported by Drew YoungeDyke. With no further discussion offered, all present voted in favor of the motion.

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

Sandy Franz thanked everyone who attended the Resource Use & Extraction committee meeting on Monday, October 19, 2020. The two agenda items for the meeting were the sale of 8 wells located in the annexed area of the PRCSF from Lambda to Core Energy, and marginal wells.

At the July 24, 2020 PRCAC meeting, it was learned that Lambda had sold wells in the annexed area earlier in the year. Sandy felt that this sale should have been an informational item for the council. The sale took place fairly quickly in late spring, and communication among parties was disrupted due to COVID. At the October meeting, there were representatives from Core, Lambda and EGLE and all agreed that it should have come before the council. The exchange of information at the meeting was useful to remind all that the Concept of Management applies not only to oil and gas development in the consent order area, but also applies to council review in the annexed area.

With regards to the marginal wells issue, the definition of marginal wells that was in the 1980 circuit court judgment is the only yardstick the council has had over the years, and that definition of marginal wells has been made less useful due to advances in technology, pooling of wells, and fluctuations of market value, which can take a well in and out of marginality over a period of time. Sandy pointed out that if the definition currently being used is out of touch with what is happening on the ground right now, what is the yardstick that should be used to measure marginal wells?

At the October Resource Use and Extraction meeting, it was suggested by Harry Faulkner, Lambda CEO that a smaller working group be created to look at ways to create a more intentional and deliberate phase out of marginal wells.

Paul Rose stated that there will be a sub-committee created to continue discussions on marginal wells. Paul noted that this is part of the original charge of the advisory council.

Andy Stempky stated that one of the overriding principles of the EGLE statute is to prevent waste in any form. With regards to single well vs. a well field, those wells are looked at individually to make that decision. With regards to notification to the council of the well transfer, he wants to be clear that it was an oversight to not inform the council. The annexed area is not part of the consent area and is treated as any other well in the state. However, the council should have been informed as a courtesy.

Stempky also reviewed the status of the Tinsey – Charlton well. EGLE plans to approve this transfer from Lambda to Core Energy. The well is in the consent area, but is outside of the 1976 unit agreement area, and therefore is not subject to the one operator / successor unit agreement stipulation.

## **SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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

Sandy reported that the Discovery Center will remain closed until next spring. They are currently working on updating some exhibits, and in particular are working with the Odawa tribe on an exhibit showing Native American land use values and activity in the PRCFS. They are working with Sandra Clark of the Michigan Historical Center to begin implementation of the trust fund grant received last year.

Lisha Ramsdell reported that in partnership with the MSU Extension, the Master Naturalist program ended up going virtual, last weekend was the last course. Had great attendance with 29 participants, which is a high attendance rate considering the circumstances. Under consideration is partnering with MSU Extension to conduct these classes every other year.

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

Barb reported that the PRCEC has not met since the last advisory council meeting and they are scheduled to meet on November 10.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **PRC UNIT MANAGER POSITION UPDATE – CODY STEVENS:**

Cody reported there has been no movement to date to fill the PRC Unit manager position due to the current hiring freeze.

### **STATUS UPDATE - LAND USE ORDERS, SINKHOLE LAKES, WALLED LAKE, STRUCTURE REMOVAL ON FORMER WALKER AND STEVENS PROPERTIES – CODY STEVENS:**

Matt Fry opened by reporting that the land use order pertaining to the Sinkhole Lakes is almost completely written and should be completed this winter.

Kerry Wieber reported that the land use order for the Walled Lake property is available for public comment starting at the beginning of November. The order will go for action at the February 2021 Natural Resources Committee meeting.

Cody stated that they opened main interior road (access to residence) however they did not open entire property to vehicles. There will be a lot of berming and signage to be completed. There has been no budget released for any structure removal and it is unlikely to see any movement on structure removal until next summer.

#### **UPDATE ON TUBES AND CORNWALL FLOODING PROJECTS – LISHA RAMSDELL:**

Lisha reported that the Tubes project is ready to move forward next year and is projected to start after the July 4, 2021 weekend. The Cornwall Flooding Dam project is also moving forward, the dam has been flagged by EGLE as an unsafe structure due to seepage. The pre-bid meeting is scheduled for November, bids due back in December. More fund raising is needed and the project is unlikely to happen next year.

#### **CARBON CREDIT SALE – PRC PILOT PROJECT UPDATE – DAVID PRICE:**

David reported that a meeting with council members was held in September to provide an update on the carbon credit project. The Department signed a contract with Bluesource LLC, a carbon credit consulting firm based out of Utah. The new boundaries of the PRCSF was provided to Bluesource, they are preparing a request for proposal to have a forestry company from Michigan do a detailed inventory which should start in the spring. Marketing materials are being prepared for distribution and will be shared with the council, also a project specific website is being developed.

Paul Rose requested documentation from the Department in writing that this project will not be in conflict with the Pigeon River Country State Forest Concept of Management now or in the future. Scott Whitcomb stated that the Director is willing to write a letter to memorialize the intent of the project.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **LAND STRATEGY UPDATE AND PRC BOUNDARY REVIEW– KERRY WIEBER:**

Kerry gave an overview of past and current practices on how the Department acquires public land. An update of the DNR's 2013 land strategy is required to be submitted to the legislature for review by July 2021. The Department is in the unique position of concurrently implementing the 2013 land strategy and updating the 2013 land strategy to meet the July 2021 legislative deadline.

There are two primary components of the 2013 land strategy that are being implemented right now, the first is the project boundary review. There are dedicated project boundaries around all the state forests, game areas, wildlife areas, state parks and state recreation areas. Those boundaries are the guiding tools used by the Department to identify what the priorities are for public land ownership. The 2013 land strategy called for the reduction of privately-owned land within those boundaries by 1 million acres. The internal review process is almost completed and should be ready for public review by November, with an interactive map available for making comments.

The second component of the 2013 land strategy that is being worked on is the state land review. The strategy called for a review of approximately 240,000 acres of land, which includes state land that is under 200 acres in size and parcels of land with irregular shapes. The land will be reviewed and classified into 4 categories: 1) The parcels should be retained by the state, 2) The parcels should be offered to local units of government, 3) The parcels should be offered for land exchange, or 4) The parcels should be declared surplus and made available for auction. This is a very thorough and intensive process and will be worked on over the next couple of years.

With regards to the update of the 2013 land strategy, as required under Public Act 240 of 2018, the Director appointed a team including representatives from all DNR divisions. The team is charged with meeting those requirements in the statute and creating the updated strategic plan by July 1, 2021. This is a 6-year document, the focus will be on what can be achieved in during the next 6 years and what can the foundation be for the following 6 years. Three goals have been set for this strategy – protecting natural and cultural resources, providing access to outdoor public recreation opportunities, and promoting responsible natural resources management. Please visit the DNR land strategy website and provide your feedback.

With regards to the PRC boundary, it will be available for public review in November, you will be able to view what the 2004 boundary is and what the proposed 2020 boundary will be and provide your feedback.

#### **PROPOSAL 1-GENERAL INFORMATION:**

Kerry shared that the trust fund and state park endowment fund was established in the Michigan constitution therefore a statewide vote is necessary for any changes to those funds. Proposal 1 is a ballot measure that includes several changes to the constitution, with 2 primary components to the ballot proposal, the first being allocation of funds, the second is the amount available for acquisition and development grants.

Conan Smith shared that the Michigan Environmental Council has partnered with many like-minded entities in support of Proposal 1. Discussion ensued.

#### **EX-OFFICIO REPORTS**

##### **PRC UNIT REPORT – CODY STEVENS:**

Cody reported that the PRCSF compartment review process was completed for 2022. Foresters are starting work on 2023 year of entry compartments. Timber sale preparation was wrapped up by October 1, with some shortfall due to Forest Technician Rick McDonald's retirement. There is currently no timeframe yet for replacement of the PRC forest technician position. Assistance to complete the inventory was provided by John St. Pierre, roving forester. Cody also gave additional thanks to Samantha Peterson for all her efforts in the PRCSF.

##### **WILDLIFE REPORT / ELK HUNT UPDATE – BRIAN MASTENBROOK:**

Brian reported that during the early elk hunt, 83 out of 100 state hunters were successful, 2 Pure Michigan state hunters were successful with a total of 29 bulls, 52 cows, and 2 calves taken. With regards to the large red pine treatment at the Clark Bridge CCC field that was scheduled to start this year, it will be delayed a year due to the Gaylord Wildlife Technician position not being filled. With regards to the Wildlife Division strategic plan; it will probably be available in March of 2021 for public review and comment.

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

Kelly reported that the full time PRC ranger position has been filled by Sam Black. In addition, there will be another full-time ranger, Jillanne Eggleston who will be focused on campground issues. The PRCSF campground attendance is up over 100 camp nights higher than last year. The High Country Pathway bridges over the Black River and the one by Pine Grove on the are scheduled for replacement.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE – LED:**

Tom Oberg, CO reported that Green Timbers and Storey Lake property are having issues with electric motorized bikes, he has fielded a couple of complaints. Charges for multiple hunting violations have been brought against certain individuals at a cabin on private property off of Honey Locust Road. He has also been dealing with various ORV complaints.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

Please forward any agenda items to Paul Rose.

Paul reminded all that he has one more year to serve of his two-year term as chair. The council will be asked to confirm his final year as chair at the January 2021 meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 2021. The date, location and format are yet to be determined.

**ADJOURN:**

Meeting adjourned at 8:07pm

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,**

**KAREN CHAPMAN, DNR**