

**OFFICIAL MINUTES**  
**PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
Corwith Township Hall, Vanderbilt, MI  
Friday, January 24, 2020

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (P.R.C.A.C.) was held on Friday, January 24, 2020 at the Corwith Township Hall in Vanderbilt, Michigan. Chair Paul Rose called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m., then led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Paul Rose, Lisha Ramsdell, Conan Smith, Doug Reeves, Sandy Franz, Rique Campa, Bill Wood, Rob Pallarito, Brian McPhail, Bill Loney, Don Horrocks, Brent Shank, and Barb Curtis.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Bryan Burroughs, Randy Keen, Heather Shaw, Dave Smethurst and Drew YoungeDyke.

**EX-OFFICIO & DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT:** Rich Hill, Brian Mastenbrook, Shelby Adams, Madeline Jazdyk, Greg Rekowski, Karen Chapman, Kerry Wieber, and David Price.

**EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:** Andy Stempky, Mike Shelton, Tim Cwalinski, Kelly Kinser, and LED.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Lance Cottrell, Jan Kellogg, Tom Kellogg, Stewart Smith, Eugene Horan, Joe Jarecki, Judi Jarecki, Mindy Koch, and Lynn Boyd.

**INTRODUCTIONS – PAUL ROSE:**

Chair Paul Rose welcomed all to the meeting; introductions were made around the room.

**AGENDA:**

Paul Rose revised the agenda by moving the Land Transaction Update by Kerry Wieber from New Business to the first item under Old Business. As there were no other revisions to the agenda offered, the amended agenda was approved.

**MINUTES:**

Don Horrocks made the motion to approve the minutes from the October 18, 2019 meeting, seconded by Rob Pallarito. With no corrections or deletions offered, all present voted in favor to approve the October 18, 2019 meeting minutes as presented.

**NOMINATION COMMITTEE REPORT – CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR ELECTION:**

Lisha Ramsdell reported that in December and January the Nomination Committee (which is made up of the Standing Committee chairs) reached out to council members seeking nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair. Based upon this effort, the Nomination Committee recommended that Paul Rose be considered as Chair for a second and final, two-year term, subject to annual confirmation. Rob Pallarito made the motion to accept the Nomination Committee's recommendation, which was seconded by Barb Curtis. There being no further discussion, all present voted in favor to elect Paul Rose as Chair for a second term, subject to annual confirmation.

The Nomination Committee also recommend that Rique Campa be selected as Vice-Chair for another term. The Vice-Chair position is not term limited. Don Horrocks made the motion to accept the Nomination Committee's recommendation, seconded by Brian McPhail. There being no further discussion, all present voted in favor to elect Rique Campa as Vice-Chair for another term.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No public comment was offered.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**FOREST COVER & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT – HEATHER SHAW:**

Paul Rose reported that Heather Shaw was unable to attend tonight. There has not been a recent meeting of the Forest Cover & Wildlife Management committee. Paul has had discussions with Heather in response to contacts and communications which have been received regarding the issue of deer baiting and feeding and also as it relates to elk management. Rose recommended that further discussion on House Bill 4687 (Deer and Elk Baiting/Feeding Ban) be deferred until Brian Mastenbrook's Wildlife report.

**RECREATION & ACCESS – RANDY KEEN:**

Paul Rose reported that Randy Keen was unable to attend tonight. There has not been a recent meeting of the Recreation & Access committee.

**EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT – LISHA RAMSDELL:**

Lisha reported that the committee has not met since the last P.R.C.A.C. meeting. Will defer comments until the Timber Harvest/Habitat Management Education and Outreach agenda item under Old Business.

**AQUATIC RESOURCES & FISHERIES MANAGEMENT – DAVE SMETHURST:**

Paul Rose reported that Dave Smethurst was unable to attend tonight. Tim Cwalinski provided a full report, which Paul will review later in the meeting.

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

Although Sandy Franz had nothing to report on behalf of the committee at this time, Bill Loney provided a brief update on behalf of Lambda Energy which indicated that operational activity within the PRC has been limited, other than the placement of a rig on the Charlton 6-4 today.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**DISCOVERY CENTER – SANDY FRANZ:**

Sandy reported that the fall fundraising campaign conducted through the Otsego Community Foundation was completed as of 12/31/2019. The goal was \$60,000 (which included a \$30,000 match from an anonymous donor), but they raised approximately \$70,000. The DC was the recipient of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant of \$254,900. The money will be used for capital improvements to the building such as a new roof and new windows. There is also money available within the grant for interpretative exhibits and outdoor signage along the DC pathway. A three-year education plan has been developed with 8 or 9 educational events planned for this summer, as well as for the next two years. In addition, the DC will be hosting the MSU Extension Master Naturalist course in 2020, which will be tailored for northern forests.

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

Barb reported that the last meeting of the Equestrian committee took place on November 1, 2019. They discussed PRD camping policy at Elk Hill group camp and the River camp and how it would impact their clubs. The ribbon cutting for the new pavilion at Elk Hill will take place on Friday, May 15, 2020. A work bee is planned for the Wednesday and Thursday ahead of the ribbon cutting. The Back Country Horsemen club is hosting a chainsaw certification class in Gaylord open to anyone; Barb will forward class information to Paul for distribution. The next Equestrian Committee meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2020.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**LAND TRANSACTION UPDATE – KERRY WIEBER:**

Kerry reported that after 19 years and 3 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grants, and countless hours of work, the DNR was successful in obtaining the 2,103-acre Storey Lake property. Currently there is no motorized access to the property, the public can park off of Fontinalis Road and walk in. The Department will be working on the access plan in the coming months, with public input. The Storey Lake property will be managed by the Pigeon River Country Management Unit; but will not be subject to the Concept of Management.

Kerry also reported that on January 17, 2020 the DNR closed on the 600 acre Walled Lake property. The purchase was funded through a Forest Legacy Program grant, the DNR Land Exchange facilitation fund, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. There will be no press release to the public until mid-February because Fisheries division has proposed regulations for Walled Lake to be approved by the NRC at their February meeting. The lodge at the property will be removed and the site restored. The Walled Lake property will be managed by the PRC Management Unit but will not be subject to the Concept of Management.

A minor property acquisition to note is the 120-acre Gapzynski property in Cheboygan County, surrounded by state land and located within the PRCSF boundaries. Closing on the property is expected within the next couple of weeks. The Little Traverse Land Conservancy initially purchased the property and held it for the DNR to acquire when funding was available.

Paul Rose stated that Tim Cwalinski conducted a survey of Walled Lake and determined that it was an exceptional fishery for trophy class blue gill, similar to that of the Blue Lakes to the north. Tim is recommending that the existing Fisheries Order in place for the Blue Lakes be adopted for Walled Lake. The recommendation was put forth for information at the last NRC meeting, and action on the subject is anticipated at the February 13 NRC meeting. Paul asked for a motion to support the Fisheries Division recommendation that the existing Fisheries Order for Blue Lakes be extended to include Walled Lake. Lisha Ramsdell made the motion to support, seconded by Rique Campa. There being no further discussion offered, all voted in favor, motion passed.

Discussion ensued as to why the Department decided that the Walled Lake and Storey Lake properties were going to be managed out of the Pigeon River Country Management Unit, but not going to be subject to the PRC Concept of Management.

**STATUS UPDATES ON TUBES AND CORNWALL FLOODING PROJECTS – LISHA RAMSDELL:**

Lisha reported that the Cornwall Flooding dam structure is old and failing, and seepage is occurring through the earthen berm. Fisheries Division has determined that repairs of the dam would go forward. Huron Pines

(HP) submitted a grant application to the Dam Management Program in 2019 and received funding to proceed. HP is working with Wade Trim to determine the best way to rehabilitate the structure. The amount of water drawdown is dependent on the downstream structure at Tin Bridge Road. Lisha has been working closely with Cheboygan County Road Commission to replace that structure as well. In order to raise funding to replace the structure on Tin Bridge Road in conjunction with the dewatering and replacement of dam structure, they applied for a grant from the Fisheries Division program. If funding becomes available, a temporary bridge will be installed during water drawdown. The total drawdown will be about 7 to 8 feet, at a rate of no more than 6 inches per day. The drawdown and water levels will be managed by the existing structure. Depending on the availability of funding and contractor bid results, the project is expected to start in 2020. Design should be finalized by the end of January, DNR approval is expected in February, and the permit applications are to be concurrently submitted. Although the bid opening date is yet to be determined, once bids are received and permits approved, a final determination can then be made regarding the funding status of the project. A communications plan will be developed in order to better inform the public and users regarding the process, use and access limitations during the project. Fisheries Division staff which includes Tim Cwalinski and Dave Borgeson have been directly involved in planning and believe that the project can be completed with a minimal adverse impact to the fishery.

Planning for the Pigeon River “Tubes” bridge replacement project continues for the Pigeon River campground area. Huron Pines has been working with the DNR, Otsego County Road Commission and many partners to obtain the necessary funding for this project. Significant grant funding has been secured for the project and the engineering, and all of the permitting has been approved. There is a signed contract in place with Otsego County Road Commission, who will be doing the work. In 2020, the site will be replaced with a 44-foot long timber bridge. Construction activities will require that site be closed from public access. Estimated time to complete the project is 4-5 weeks once construction starts –estimated start date will be August or September.

**TIMBER HARVEST/HABITAT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION/OUTREACH – L. RAMSDELL / B. MASTENBROOK:**

Brian Mastenbrook reported on the 177-acre stand for which a timber harvest which was prescribed as a part of the compartment review and approval process last year. The importance of an informational and educational effort was again discussed because of this area’s significance as an elk viewing area. Assuming that this timber sale occurs in the fall of 2020, harvest would likely occur in 2020 or 2021.

Lisha Ramsdell reported that as there are so many improvement projects going on in the Pigeon, that through the Education and Engagement committee, it would be a good idea to develop a 2020 communication plan outlining some of the big projects in the forest taking place over the next couple of years. Lisha also suggested the possibility of hosting a tour of the PRC in July. She expects to convene a meeting of the Education and Engagement committee soon which would begin developing such a communications plan.

Rique Campa made the motion for the Education and Engagement Committee to begin plans for a 2020 communication initiative, Don Horrocks seconded. With no further discussion, all voted in favor, motion passed.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**POSSIBLE PILOT PROJECT – DAVID PRICE, FOREST PLANNING AND OPERATIONS:**

David Price reported on a new pilot project, which is the marketing of carbon credits for DNR managed lands. One of the areas being looked at for a carbon credit pilot project is the Pigeon River Country State Forest. As

background, Governor Whitmer issued Executive Directive #12, which is related to climate change issues, which directed that the State of Michigan become part of the US Climate Alliance, and she has instructed state government to implement policies and advance the goals of the Paris Climate Accords. As a result, DNR Director Eichinger has created sprint teams to quickly implement such directives.

The amount of carbon that is sequestered by forests above a baseline condition (current management levels) can be quantified, and carbon credits can be generated. The carbon credits can be sold on the California Resource Board exchange or a voluntary carbon market to those entities who want to offset their carbon emissions. The DNR has compiled a list of potential contractors that can develop carbon marketing proposals and brokerage services. A Request for Proposal is being written to contract with a consultant/broker to explore the necessary steps for the DNR to enter into the voluntary carbon market.

Scott Whitcomb is leading the sprint team on climate change, and the team is considering the PRCSF as the site of a carbon credit pilot project. Potential pilot projects may take place at a state park, a state game area or at a state forest.

Further discussion ensued as to the mechanics of how this project would work considering the current forest management plan and using field staff input.

Sandy Franz made the motion that the Advisory Council supports the DNR's continued exploration of generating carbon credits for working forests, with the possibility of the PRCSF serving as a pilot project, provided that it is consistent with the Concept of Management and includes input from field staff. Motion seconded by Don Horrocks, with no further discussion, motion passed.

## **EX-OFFICIO REPORTS**

### **WILDLIFE REPORT - BRIAN MASTENBROOK:**

Brian reported on the results of the 2019 Elk Hunts with a total of 182 elk harvested in the September and December hunts. Brian showed a map of where the elk were harvested. Unfortunately, a higher than normal number of elk were poached in 2019. 2020 is an elk regulations year, and based on the last 4 elk surveys, Brian is confident that the current elk population is approximately 900 – 1500 and would recommend increasing the number of permits to get to the goal range population of 500-900. Also thinking of adjusting some boundary lines. Please let him know if you have anything you want considered for this regulation cycle. Recommendations will be made to Wildlife division at the end of this month, Wildlife will put before the NRC for information in March and acted on at NRC meeting in April.

Brian has been working on updating the Wildlife Strategic Plan, considering hunting and recreation trends in the future. Michigan Tech did a study and projected that the number of hunters by 2035 will be less than 400,000, however some recreation activities are increasing. Climate change will have an impact as well and wildlife diseases may be impacted as hunter numbers continue to fall.

### **UPDATE - HOUSE BILL 4687 (DEER AND ELK BAITING/FEEDING BAN):**

Paul Rose reported that this legislation which passed the State House and Senate to overturn the lower peninsula baiting and feeding ban on deer and elk and was vetoed by the Governor. The DNR strongly supports the ban on baiting and feeding, but the issue has been very divisive. Paul has received a number of calls and letters regarding the matter. Reminded council members that in June of 2018 the Wildlife

committee issued a letter that the P.R.C.A.C. unanimously supported the department's recommendation to support the recommendations of the CWD work group, which included banning baiting and feeding in the Lower Peninsula for deer. Since the State Legislature has one year to overturn the Governor's veto, the question has been raised if we want to reaffirm the Council's support of that policy - specifically the issue pertaining to the banning of the baiting and feeding of elk. After discussion, there was no consensus on the need for further communication to the DNR Administration on the matter at this time.

**RECREATION REPORT – RICH HILL:**

Rich reported that effective March 1, 2020, the cost of a Recreation passport is increasing by \$1.00, with a \$2.00 increase to non-residents. PRD is pursuing a solar well for installation at the Elk Hill campground. PRD was able to get a full-time park ranger at the PRC in addition to the one which already exists.

**OIL AND GAS UPDATE – MADELINE JAZDZYK:**

Madeline reported that all the cleanups in the PRC are progressing towards closure.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE – LED:**

No LED present, no update.

**PRC UNIT REPORT – GREG REKOWSKI:**

Greg reported that Samantha Peterson, AmeriCorps member is back at the PRC for another year of service. She has been coordinating interviews for the PRCA intern position. Greg has spent a lot of time working on the Storey Lake and Walled Lake acquisitions and trespass issues. With regards to timber harvest, it has been below average this winter with 3 or 4 active sales right now. Hopefully, the PRC Unit Manager job position will be posted soon.

**FISHERIES DIVISION REPORT – TIM CWALINSKI:**

Paul Rose reported for Tim Cwalinski – summaries of trout estimates, annual fish population survey on the Pigeon, showing strong wild rainbow populations, brown trout and brook trout numbers are lower. Continues to work with TU and UBRC on temperature logger placement in an effort to continue to track temperature data for the Black and Pigeon. Will meet with FRD to discuss some minor watercraft use changes at the sinkhole lakes, and special boating restrictions for Walled Lake. Chemical treatments scheduled for lampreys this year on the Pigeon. Lastly, spending a lot of time on the Cornwall Flooding dam replacement project.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

Please forward any agenda items to Paul Rose. Don Horrocks stated that he would like information on camping statistics at the next meeting.

Next meeting is scheduled for 5:00pm, Friday, April 24, 2020 at Pigeon River Headquarters.

**ADJOURN:**

Meeting adjourned at 7:57pm

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,**

**KAREN CHAPMAN reporting for  
GREG REKOWSKI, ACTING SECRETARY**