

Official Minutes

PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE March 15, 2018

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee (PRCEC) was held on March 15, 2018 at the Roscommon DNR office. Chairman Chuck Fanslow called the meeting to order at 1:04.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chuck Fanslow, Barb Curtis, Kerry Mase, Dick Kleinhardt, Vicki Reinhardt, Carol Clute, Darlene Alexander,

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Bonnie Cornelius, Kim Ross, Don Horrocks, Norma Laine

PRESENT:

Wildlife Division: Brian Mastenbrook – Fields Operations Manager.
Parks and Recreation Division: Anna Sylvester - Northern Fields Operations Chief,
Paige Perry, Recreational Trails Specialist, Kelly Kinser – Supervisor of Otsego Lake State Park and PRCSF Campgrounds and Trails,

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT:

Forest Division: Scott Whitcomb - PRCSF Manager
Parks and Recreation Division: Richard Hill – Gaylord District Supervisor
Law Enforcement Division: Nathan Sink - Conservation Officer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Chad Williamson - Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University.
Connie Kleinhardt

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR:

Chuck Fanslow welcomed everyone to the meeting.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion to accept the agenda was made by Dick Kleinhardt and seconded by Darlene Alexander. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Motion to approve the minutes for the meeting was made by Dick Kleinhardt and seconded by Carol Clute. Motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Elk Research

Chad Williamson from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University presented an update on the Elk Research that has been conducted since February 2016 in the Pigeon River Country State Forest and the Atlanta State Forest. In February of this year 12 additional elk were captured and collared because of mortality of the elk and collar failure. There are 22 bulls and 23 cows in the study group, divided between Pigeon River Country State Forest and Atlanta State Forest. All of the collars are programmed to fall off after the completion of the study. Their GPS locations will allow them to all be retrieved from the forests.

Of the four objectives being studied Chad reports that he is nearly done compiling all the data for the first Objective which was to quantify the types, suitability and the potential for future habitat for elk on both public and private lands in the study areas. Data also continues to be gathered and analyzed for Objective 2 (“quantify the number and relative intensity, frequency and geographic scope of horseback riding and mountain biking” in the study areas), and Objective 3 (“quantify temporal elk movement and habitat selection patterns in response to the number and relative intensity and frequency and geographic scope of horseback riding and mountain bikes in the study areas”). Data for Objective 4 (“elk response to experimentally applied recreational disturbance”) will be gathered this summer and fall. Chad would like to accompany riders. Riders are expected to stay on trails and to not alter their normal riding behavior. October will be the end to the gathering of data. Final report is expected May of 2019.

Chad will be updating the Facebook page, MSU Elk Research. Additionally an elk research link will eventually be added to the MSU web page.

Proposed EQ Trails Stoney Creek

Paige Perry, Recreational Specialist reported that the trail request has been reviewed by all the department field staff and has been at the Department Chiefs level since December. She hopes that the trails will be approved by this spring or summer.

Chuck Fanslow asked what progress had been made on getting approval for a new campground site north of Stoney Creek that could be used by Michigan Trail Riders. Paige indicated that another meeting will soon be held to further discuss this campground.

Trail Hanky

Darlene Alexander reported that she has been unable to find a vendor that would produce the hanky for less than \$5 each with a minimum order of 100. She does not know of any club that would be willing to foot the initial bill and be responsible for the sales. This item will be tabled.

USFWS Input on Requested Equine Connector Trails

Brian Mastenbrook reported that the resource staff does not object to the connector trails. There has been more discussion regarding the connectors by upper level DNR. Both Dick Kleinhardt and Chuck Fanslow have spoken to Director Creagh about equestrians continued desire to have these additional six connectors. Brian said that if the Chiefs and the Director agree a Land Use Order will be needed to open these additional connectors. The Land Use Order would have to go before the Natural Resource Commission before the Director could sign it. The process could take four months.

Dick Kleinhardt asked about getting an equestrian trail to Inspiration Point. Brian Mastenbrook is willing to meet with equestrians at the site to discuss possible routes. This would be step one. Brian and members of the PRCEC tentatively agreed to try to meet sometime during the May work bee weekend.

Spring Work Bee

The May 18 - 20 work bee will again be hosted by Back Country Horsemen – Pigeon River & Beyond. Dick and Connie Kleinhardt will fill out the DNR work permit. Kelly Kinser will have the gate to the EQ group area open on the 17th. She will provide a list of the campground maintenance that she would like the volunteers to complete. Kelly will meet with the group at the campground prior to work beginning. Chuck Fanslow requested that we have the list prior to the work bee so we have a better idea regarding the number of volunteers and equipment needed.

Currently the position of Ranger for the PRCSF campgrounds is open. Scott Thompson has taken another job within the DNR. PRCEC members all expressed high praise and gratitude for all the work that Scott did for us while he was Ranger. He will be missed and all wished him well on his new job.

PRD Equestrian Camping Policy

Anna Sylvester reported that she has not yet seen the final policy. She said that she did know that the minimum for reservation at the group camp will be five camping units (minimum of one person per camping unit) rather than just five people as in the past. If there are only five people they will be required to pay for six. Additional numbers will be in units of six. Kelly Kinser said that after the initial reservation is made and a group wants to increase the number they have to check with her first as more than one group may be booked and the maximum for the entire camp is 100. Each camping unit will have to have a minimum of one horse, so no guest without a horse. Also the fee may be changing from \$6 a person, but at this time she did not know what the change would be. The fee for the smaller campground has already changed to \$15 per night per camping unit.

NEW BUSINESS:

Report on Advisory Council Meeting

Chuck reported on the January meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council. Paul Rose is the new Chair and Rique Campa continues as Vice Chair. John Walters, former Chair, is now on the Natural Resource Commission. His years of service on the Council were acknowledged with gratitude.

An issue of concern raised at the meeting is the increase in illegal ORV riding in the PRCSF. PA288 did not open any of the forest roads in the PRCSF. Numerous signs prohibiting ORV access to forest roads will need to be posted. The Department has added 35 new Conservation Officers. Nick Torsky has gone to another area in the state. The CO for Pigeon will be Nathan Sink. The newly completed Discover Center will be opened this May. Michigan will be hosting the Eastern Elk Management Workshop at the Garland resort. Scientific papers will be presented regarding elk management in Eastern areas of the country.

Solar Pump

Anna Sylvester reported that supplemental funding has become available and it may be possible to get a solar water pump for the smaller EQ campground as well as a hand pump for the group EQ campground. She will keep us posted.

Public Information Meeting

Barb Curtis reported that there was good public attendance at the September PRCEC meeting because it was held during a popular camping weekend at the EQ group campground. Big attendance is not great for getting "business" done but it was a great opportunity for the public to ask questions and to give their input. There were a lot of positive comments from the public at this meeting. She would like our group to develop a one page information sheet about the purpose and activities of the PRCEC that members can pass out at club meetings and whenever they camp. She would like to see a public information meeting scheduled in September while Tri County and Alpena Horsemen are in the campground. It was also suggested that if PRD is successful in getting a campground host that they could hand out the information sheet as well. Barb, Chuck and Kerry will work on a draft and bring it to the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Dick Kleinhardt gave a report on the activities of the Equine Trails Subcommittee. High priority items have been identified. The top three were: 1) Signage throughout the state for trails and campgrounds 2) Expansion of campground trails to a minimum of 10 miles 3) Inform the public on how to participate in land management.

In Dick's region \$213,000 worth of volunteer hours was logged. Overall the state amount was \$350,000. The Chair of the ETS, Mike Foote, will be presenting this information to the Michigan Trails Council.

Back Country Horsemen, through the efforts of Dick and Connie Kleinhardt, are working on getting an equestrian campground in the Luther area along the Tin Cup Spring Trail. There currently are ORV trails in the area and an Equestrian trail that is separate from the ORV trails but does cross it seven times. Dick has been speaking to legislators who support the idea. Funds for campground development could come from Natural Trust Fund or the DNR budget proposal process.

Next Meeting: August 16, 2018, Roscommon DNR, 1:00

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Elk Research Update
Spring Work Bee Report
PRC Equestrian Camping Policy
Proposed EQ Trails Stoney Creek
Status of Six Connector Trails in PRCSF
Progress on PRD Recreational Management Plan
Public Information Meeting

ADJOURN:

Meeting was adjourned at 3:20

Respectfully Submitted,

Kerry K. Mase
Secretary