

## **Pigeon River Country Association Annual Meeting, July 24, 2011**

Meeting called to order at 1 pm by President Ray Hoobler.

### **Present**

Ray Hoobler, Joe Jarecki, Eugene Horan, Mike brown, Rick Kropf, Greg Keith, Matt BKahn, Scot Whitcomb, Stewart Smith, Judy Jarecki, Fran Hoobler, assorted members and spectators

### **Approval of minutes**

Minutes from last year's annual meeting approved by unanimous voice vote.

### **Treasurer's Report – Joe Jarecki**

See attached report here. Report approved by unanimous voice vote.

### **DNR Forest Manager Report – Scott Whitcomb**

#### **Staffing:**

Scott was given additional temporary assignment to administer Atlanta Management Unit as well as the PRCSF in December 2010. A permanent manager is expected to be appointed in the next month or two. This extra responsibility resulted in Scot being responsible for approximately four times the acreage and personnel compared to the PRCSF alone.

The previous forester for the Pigeon retired and was replaced by a new one. The secretary for the PRCSF is now shared with the Atlanta Management Unit, so her presence at the HQ has been reduced from 2 days to three. The equipment operator, who made significant contributions to the PRCSF, left for health reasons and has not yet been replaced. Scot also has a new supervisor.

#### **Buildings and Facilities**

The new display boxes on the HQ porch, legacy of the Jerry Myers Memorial Fund, have been installed. The PRCSF received a \$50,000 building renovation grant from the Land Trust Fund. It's being used at the HQ to replace windows cracking due to settling, improving drainage around the parking and driveway areas, repairing sun damage to the southern facing outside wall, and updating displays if funds are left after the other projects. An \$8,000 grant was received to update and repair signs noting ORV regulations around the forest perimeter. The Michigan Mountain Bike Association has also helped with installing signs on the pathways. Internet service to the HQ was upgraded to high speed, greatly improving data access and availability.

#### **Campgrounds**

Attendance is generally down this year, following a statewide trend, but revenue is up, due to increased enforcement and interaction with forest staff. Two campgrounds, Pigeon Bridge and Round Lake, were

nearly closed in budget cuts, but were spared for this year at the last minute.

The new Passport system, where drivers can purchase a license plate tab for \$10 allowing access to all state parks, may eventually funnel 7% of its proceeds to campground maintenance.

Currently, all pathway maintenance is unfunded, and so is done by the PRCA intern (Matt Kahn in 2011) and user groups such as the Michigan Mountain Bike Association. A comment was made by a PRCA member in the audience that the Michigan Trail Riders Association would likely help with pathway maintenance as well.

### **Other Issues**

Various potential and in process land acquisition issues were discussed, such as Hackett Lake, Storey Lake, Cudlip, Thies, Saunders properties, etc. The proposed and approved acquisition just north of Green Timbers from the Ford family fell through when the Fords changed their mind. A PRCA member in the audience brought up the question of how much land the DNR wanted to procure in the area. Scot stated that the main goal was to acquire from willing sellers all inholdings within the PRCSF boundaries, and large parcels adjacent to the forest for buffer areas.

Horse access regulations are in an ongoing state of revision. A plan to add additional trail access and campgrounds was developed at legislative request, but did not meet US Fish and Wildlife Service requirements. USFWS approval is needed since federal Pittman-Robertson funds were used to purchase much of the PRCSF land. Other uses, such as equestrian trails, can't interfere with hunting or fishing uses on these lands. A new proposal to allow expanded horse access is being developed to try to meet the needs of all users, with a May, 2012 target for implementation.

Approximately 1300 acres of timber were cut this year. The Open House for the public to comment on proposed timber sales for the upcoming year is scheduled for 9.14.11, from 3 – 7 pm. The final decision on the sales will be made 10.4.11.

A September and December elk hunt is planned, with a goal of keeping elk numbers between 600 – 800 animals. This is a bit smaller target than in the past. The purpose of the lower number is to restrict the bulk of the herd to the PRCSF area proper, and prevent excessive numbers of elk from moving onto private lands.

### **Intern Report – Matt Kahn**

Matt gave a PowerPoint presentation detailing his work so far, mostly on maintaining the pathways. He's done extensive work clearing overgrown brush and downed timber, as well as implementing a standardized blaze system to mark the trails. He thanked the PRCA and others for providing him the opportunity to complete his internship in the PRCSF.

## **President's Report – Ray Hoobler**

### **Angling Gear Restriction and Dam Removal Permit Comments**

Ray reiterated the comments the PRCA board submitted regarding the new fishing regulations. The Board, while not an angling organization, is concerned about how new gear restrictions might impact access issues, particularly if more anglers, attracted by the new regulations, begin to create new access points or degrade existing ones.

Ray also reiterated the Board's objections to the proposed permit for dam removal submitted by Golden

Lotus, Inc. These objections, primarily the inadequacy of silt removal and failure to fully implement the Interim Agreement regarding dam removal, are discussed below under Dam Removal Implementation.

### **Board Issues**

The PRCA bylaws need updating to reflect the organization's status as a 501(c)3 organization. This will require a mail in ballot that will be sent to all members.

There was a brief discussion about how to notify and deal with members who haven't paid dues for over 2 years. No final decision was made.

### **Other Issues**

The possibility of adding a 'Members Column' to the newsletter was similarly discussed. This would allow members to contribute articles, essays and the like to the newsletter.

The Jerry Myers Memorial display boxes are mounted at the HQ. Content and a plaque commemorating Jerry will be added. Any remaining memorial funds will be deposited in the PRCA general fund, as per the Myer's family instructions.

There was discussion of having a member contributed 'Photo of the Month', displayed on the website and possibly elsewhere. After a year the photos may be published as a calendar for fundraising.

The Otsego Public Library will be holding a book signing for a book detailing the creation of the Land Trust Fund from oil and gas royalties. The author will generously donate \$8 from every book sale at the event to the PRCA.

Stewart Smith has volunteered to chair the newly created Membership committee. As a committee chair, he will automatically have a seat on the Board as well.

There's been no notification of a ruling on the latest court motions in the dam removal process. The PRCA and Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited (MITU) are preparing statements expressing approval or disapproval, depending on what the ruling is. These will be ready for release as soon as the ruling is known.

\*\* Note – The judge's ruling was received Monday, July 25, 2011, the day after the Annual Meeting. The judge's order upheld the position of the PRCA and MITU that 'dam removal' in the Interim Agreement means full dam removal, not partial removal as Golden Lotus, Inc. and the MDEQ argued. \*\*

### **Advisory Council Report – Mike Brown**

The Advisory Council discussed improving existing access at Dog Lake and Cornwall Flooding.

Enbridge, a pipeline operator, gave a presentation on efforts they're making to ensure pipeline safety and to train first responders in the event of a spill.

Rick Campeau from MSU is planning to conduct a study of the impact of equestrian and mountain bike use on the elk herd.

The Standards & Limitation (S & L) Committee presented three options regarding commercial use of the forest, particularly guiding, to the full PRCAC board. The first, banning all commercial use, was tabled to a later date. The second, clarifying the definition of 'commercial use', was referred back to the committee. The third, making sure the Forest Manager is notified and involved in the process and of any guides that are licensed, passed.

The same committee, along with the Access committee, worked on the issue of expanded equestrian use mentioned above, with the S & L committee focused on topics such as reconfiguring Elk Hill

campground and the Access committee on path and trail issues.

According to area CO's, fishing activity is down this year, probably due to lower water levels. There's also been ORV caused damage to parts of the forest in Cheboygan County (which allows more ORV access), and also subsequently to the forest in northern Otsego County.

### **Dam Removal Implementation Committee – Joe Jarecki**

See attached report for details, and the note under 'Other Issues' in the President's Report above.

### **Old Business**

No old business.

### **New Business**

Discussion on the need to be vigilant about the possible threat of new drilling posed by exploration in the Collingwood formation.

### **Election**

The existing slate of officers was re-elected by unanimous voice vote, with the addition of Stewart Smith as chair of the Membership Committee. The 2011 – 2012 PRCA Board of Directors is:

President:	Ray Hoobler
Vice Pres.	Eugene Horan
Treasurer	Joseph Jarecki
Secretary/Web Chair	Greg Keith
PRCA Adv. Council Rep.	Mike Brown
Membership Chair	Stewart Smith
Pres. Emeritus	Rick Kropf