

**Notes from 4/20/2018 PRCAC meeting**  
**to PRCA Board of Directors:**

Held at Frontier Communications, Gaylord, MI

(**Note:** These notes are not intended to be draft minutes, nor do they cover every item presented at the advisory council meeting. I have excerpted only those issues/items I felt to be of interest to the PRCA board or members.)

The location of the April Advisory Council meeting was changed from Forest HQ to Gaylord because of the spring storm the previous weekend that gave us about two feet of heavy, wet snow. (The official tally in the newspaper said 21", but many of us felt it was more!!) AC member Brian McPhail very kindly offered his employer Frontier Communications' conference room for our meeting.

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There was a report from the Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee to supplement the written minutes from their December 7, 2017 meeting that were provided to Council members. Chairman Paul Rose expressed the hope that, in the interest of working more closely together, members of the AC would be notified of Equestrian Committee meetings and invited to attend. Additional equestrian connector trails and some trails that were not previously approved are being reviewed, including a proposed equestrian trail—separate from trails used by people—at Inspiration Point. Chuck Fanslow, chair of the PRCEC and AC member, provided information about the extent to which equestrians support the local economy and reminded the AC of their annual work bees for trail maintenance and other improvements.

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At the urging of several long-time forest users and hunters, Pete Gustafson raised anew the prevalence of chronic wasting disease (CWD) that Director Creagh referred to at the AC's January meeting as one of the Department's priorities. It was felt

that further study, and perhaps recommendations, by the AC regarding CWD could be an important contribution to the Department-wide effort. The issue was referred to the Wildlife Committee. There is a May 1 public information meeting on chronic wasting disease to be held at the Ellison Place convention center in Gaylord from 6-8 p.m., sponsored by the DNR and the Natural Resources Commission. The following information is from the Michigan.gov website:

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Natural Resources Commission will host a series of public engagement meetings on chronic wasting disease – a fatal central nervous system disease found in deer, elk and moose. The meetings will provide an opportunity for the commission and department to hear suggestions and observations from hunters and residents interested in the health of the state’s deer herd.

Vicki Pontz, chair of the Natural Resources Commission, said that both the commission and the DNR are focused on achieving specific CWD management objectives that include:

- Slowing the spread of the disease.
- Achieving a low prevalence rate.
- Preventing the disease from reaching new areas.
- Maintaining Michigan’s rich hunting traditions.

“Hunter and citizen involvement and support of efforts to contain and eradicate chronic wasting disease are critical,” Pontz said. “We want to hear from our stakeholders. We are asking them to share their thoughtful opinions on any new hunting regulations they believe may be needed before the start of the 2018 deer hunting season.”

At the meetings, DNR staff members will provide a CWD update and then collect attendees’ written ideas on how best to address this issue. Those unable to attend a meeting may participate in a web-based opportunity available starting April 10 at [michigan.gov/cwd](http://michigan.gov/cwd).

CWD public engagement meetings will take place in:

- **Bay City, April 10** – 6 to 8 p.m., Delta College Lecture Theater, Room G-160, 1961 Delta Road in University Center.
- **Cadillac, April 11** – 6 to 8 p.m., Wexford Center, 1320 North Mitchell.
- **Kalamazoo, April 12** – 6 to 8 p.m., Kalamazoo County Expo Center, 2900 Lake St.
- **Detroit, April 17** – 6 to 8 p.m., Doubletree Detroit-Dearborn, 5801 Southfield Freeway.

- **Rockford, April 18** – 6 to 8 p.m., Rockford Fine Arts Auditorium, 4100 Kroes St. NE.
- **DeWitt, April 19** – 6 to 8 p.m., DeWitt High School Auditorium, 13601 S. Panther Drive.
- **Marquette, April 24** – 6 to 8 p.m., Marquette High School, 1203 W. Fair Ave.
- **Iron Mountain, April 25** – 6 to 8 p.m. (central time), Bay College, 2801 North US 2.
- **Gaylord, May 1** – 6 to 8 p.m., Ellison Place, 150 Dale Drive.
- **Newberry, May 2** – 6 to 8 p.m., Tahquamenon High School Auditorium, 700 Newberry Ave.
- **Houghton, May 3** – 6 to 8 p.m., Magnuson Hotel, 820 Sheldon Ave.

“Michigan’s hunters have successfully partnered with the DNR for many decades on wildlife and conservation challenges and opportunities,” said DNR Director Keith Creagh. “We know they care deeply about the long-term health and vitality of Michigan’s wildlife, and right now the state’s wild deer population faces no more serious issue than chronic wasting disease.”

Since May 2015, CWD-positive deer have been found in Clinton, Ingham, Ionia, Kent and Montcalm counties. As of mid-January 2018, 57 free-ranging deer in those counties have tested positive for chronic wasting disease. CWD has not been found in the Upper Peninsula; however, the disease has been discovered in Wisconsin, approximately 40 miles from the western Upper Peninsula border.

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Unit Manager Scott Whitcomb reported that the Recreation Management planning process previously undertaken by the DNR’s Parks and Recreation Division for the PRC has been discontinued. The various divisions feel that they have the requisite tools necessary to provide management guidelines for the forest, primary among them, of course, the Concept of Management. Scott emphasized that the preparatory work that PRD did in anticipation of completing a Recreation Management Plan was not wasted and provided a lot of valuable information.

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Brian Mastenbrook reported that the elk herd survey was completed in January and the herd likely numbers somewhere between 1157 and 1187 animals. That is an average number taken from a range of between 850 and 1300 animals. The recommendation for the number of annual elk hunting permits will remain at 200 for the next two years, the same as it has been

for the last two years. There will be an elk management workshop at Garland Resort in Lewiston on May 8-9-10, 2018.

Brian also reported that the Wildlife Division faces a 10% budget decrease in FY 2019, and that decrease is expected to be larger in FY 20 and 21.

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There have been three small spills of brine and oil at the Forest 1-22, the Forest 1-24, and the Charlton 4 wellsites. As much of the liquid as possible was vacuumed up immediately and after frost laws are removed, Merit Energy plans to excavate whatever contaminated soils remain and to install two monitoring wells downstream of Forest 1-24 (the monitoring wells will remain inside the facility boundaries).

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There have been 6 applicants for the forest summer intern position funded by the PRCA. Unfortunately, all of them have either declined the offer or found other summer employment. This means we are still looking for a college or even graduate student to help HQ staff for the summer.

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The next Advisory Council meeting is July 19<sup>th</sup> at Forest Headquarters, the same day as the Forest Open House, at which DNR staff discuss and explain the compartment review process and the prescriptions for upcoming forest treatments.