

## Bulleted Comments

1/29/04 Pere Marquette Scenic Corridor Plan Update Public Scoping Meeting  
7PM-9:25 PM Fair Plains Township Hall in Baldwin, MI

Compiled by Charles M. Nelson, Meeting Facilitator, Michigan State University

Meeting began with introductions by Les Russell, USFS District Ranger Baldwin-White Cloud District and thanks for DNR partners in resource management sharing their presentations tonight and public participation in the Corridor Plan Update process

Facilitator Chuck Nelson (MSU) asked about issues not fully covered in previous meeting or in subsequent written comment. Attendees noted the following:

Single point of issue for watercraft permits is inconvenient (i.e. Mason Co. resident)

Option to obtain permit after 4pm

Concern about closure of Lower Branch Bridge access

Even though it had been mentioned wanted to emphasize the importance of access on lower river

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Presentations on DNR Corridor Management Responsibilities and Directions  
Tom Rozich, DNR Fish Division (DNR Fish)  
Dan Pearson, DNR Fish Division Natural Rivers Program (DNR NR)  
Scott Dice, DNR Park and Recreation Bureau (DNR P&RB)

Presentation on the NEPA Process  
Diane Walker, USFS Asst. District Ranger Baldwin-White Cloud District

Questions/Comments/Responses Concerning Presentations  
Responses to comments are denoted by an →

What are FS intentions about Lower Branch Bridge access?

DNR NR → Historic access site, door not closed to access site designation/construction per DNR Nat. River regulations

L. Branch is in 1990 plan as an access site. Why isn't it an access site now for trailered boats?

FS → - problems re: erosion

- proposed dev. parking area
- this needs to be addressed in 2004 plan update
- will not be "swept under the rug"
- currently no facilities on site
- planning process is the place for change to occur at this site

If mgt. actions done in corridor do they fall under NEPA?

- Is this (L. Branch Br.) potential eagle nesting habitat?
- Rel. to county road comm.?

FS → Did an EA for Lower Branch Bridge Access based on 1990 plan

Adj. Landowners were opposed

Project withdrawn

Later alternative access slightly downstream was proposed

- At that time was when the concern about eagles emerged

DNR NR → Lower B. Br. is a historic access site

- potential access site nearby (gen. vicinity) is not a different site

Is L. Branch an access site for trailered boats? That is the question.

FS → 1983 plan L. Branch was a campsite and boat launch & access

CG was closed due to environmental damage

1990 plan acknowledged need for boat access and watercraft control

Never any clear design for a launch facility

Will need site-specific analysis for L. Branch Br. access

- past proposed access was appealed

Lots of pressure on Upper river because lack launch points on lower river

FS → shift in fishing regulations (no kill on flies only area) has shifted use downstream

State land use rules/Natural Rivers designation

- Will there be separate state and federal permits for watercraft use?

DNR NR → Prefer cooperative agreement with FS and a single system

Guide would prefer single FS/DNR permit system

DNR P&RB → Would also support single permit system along with combined management of public access sites

- Noted that the DNR Commercial Use on State Lands Committee is chaired by Scott Whitcomb, DNR Wildlife Division

When were state land use rules changed?

DNR NR → 2001. However they are not fully implemented or enforced to date.

Now have single set of rules but have not created implementation guidelines

Jason Fleming – Parks and Recreation Bureau (P& RB) Lansing noted that P&RB has been waiting on DNR land use rules and implementation guidelines. DNR will be implementing a

permit program in 2004 for commercial use of DNR P&R Bureau access sites. This will also apply to “organized” use by non-profits. Permits are envisioned to be annual permits.

How does P&R Bureau have authority for this when DNR hasn’t implemented policy across all state lands?

Jason Fleming DNR P&RB → From P&R Bureau management team

Jason Fleming (517) 241-2054 encouraged people to contact him or his supervisor Harold Heurta concerning P&R Bureau access site commercial & organized use permits/fees

Concern about how to acquire watercraft permits in a convenient manner from DNR or USFS in a convenient manner.

Why the spike in 1999 rainbow trout populations in data presented by Tom Rozich?

DNR Fish → We sample at one site (mouth of Baldwin R.) about September 1 every year. Getting 1-4” steelhead, which are not very influenced by fish staying another year. These are young of the year fish. They would like to do more sampling, but are constrained by the # employees and time.

What is the reason for the reported increase in Brown trout in the flies only stretch of the Upper River?

DNR Fish → habitat #1, also no kill and the end of brown trout stocking may have some positive effect.

Will there be any regulation changes downstream for fisheries (especially slot limits for brown trout)?

DNR Fish → Not likely as slot limits are not one of the 7 classes of regulations. T. Rozich noted he didn’t believe slotted size limits or no kill have any positive effects on brown trout populations after the fish are 15” or longer.

What about woody debris in river, downed trees? Concern about people removing this habitat.

DNR NR → Tree still attached to bank is landowner property.

DNR Fish → Talk to USFS. DNR Fish & FS Fish will work together. Likely to cable tree to bank after it is swung downstream.

Many requests for increased law enforcement. Also it was noted that there was a need for more public education to complement enforcement efforts. This includes in the areas of erosion, litter and snagging. Liveries, guides and others are key information distribution channels.

Concern about two tracks and non-designated road access to the river. 1990 plan addressed some of two tracks and other roads along Big South Branch of the PM. Also roads between Walhalla & Indian Bridge. There is still a further need to implement management of undesignated roads

FS → Big South is not part of the PM Scenic Corridor Plan. It is part of the overall plan for the Manistee NF. The Scenic Corridor plan does go downstream on the main stem all the way to US 31.

What is the timeline for the next meeting and next steps in the PM Corridor Plan Update?

FS → Goal by the end of 2004 is to have a draft EA. This is intertwined with & enhanced by full forest plan.

Rainbow Rapids bathrooms are hard to see from the river. The signs are small and are up the bank so many bypass the toilets and use private property illegally. Those who do know they are there often climb the bank creating erosion. FS needs a visible alternative closer to the river. Also concerns about the accessibility of those bathrooms to those with disabilities. Suggest a porta john located near the river and visible and accessible from it.

Concerned about comments calling for decreased use of the river. Commenter has been turned away due to lack of a permit. Commenter didn't want to rent canoe after bringing own boat. How are permits allocated?

FS → This is an issue. Alternatives will be presented in the next meeting.

Request for info from FS on how many days all public permits are used.

Could there be an annual permit instead of a daily permit? It would be more convenient and may be less costly to consumers even if there was a fee.

FS → We will put up permits issued summary from 2003 on the HMNF website in the PM Corridor Plan Update section

Trespass issues – lots of challenges due to river meander with public/private ownership. Are there better ways to consolidate public ownership than are currently being implemented?

FS → Exchanges are prohibited in Federal Wild and Scenic Corridors. FS can purchase or accept donation of land however.

Commenter noted the FS allows call ahead reservations. For a \$2 charge this provides certainty about permit availability.

Another commenter has a concern about having to pay anything for permit reservation.

Concern about litter from canoes, especially from tipovers. Who is responsible for litter? Is it the watercraft livery business?

FS→ There is a problem with all segments of recreation users regarding litter. There are litter cleanups in the corridor by anglers, Scouts, etc. For anglers, litter is often campsite related. In general, litter in the corridor is a major problem.

DNR Law (Sgt. Ron McCarty) → DNR Law Enforcement Division Conservation Officers do enforce littering laws. However, it is difficult to enforce, as the officer has to see the offender doing the littering. Key DNR enforcement focus related to the PM is on closed stretches of tributaries during steelhead season for actions such as spearing, netting, illegal fishing, etc. Conservation officers are rarely seen in flies only as there are 5 officers for 3 counties with many duties. During the summer they are spread especially thin. The effected county sheriffs and the FS do marine safety patrol on river however during summer and at other times. In the Fall, DNR Conservation officers work hard on the salmon run. They are also part of the Riverwatch Program:

Citizens Assisting Resource Enforcement (CARE)

- volunteers in highly visible orange vests patrol
- 3 weekends a year have a concerted patrol & cell phones with CARE volunteers
- generally successful although there are some challenges with specific time commitments by the volunteers

DNR Law Enforcement North Zone Enforcement Team

- bring in out-of-district officers to target problem sites
- 3 weekends/year on the PM during the salmon season
- focus on Mason Co./Indian Bridge area
- lack of additional personnel time is the constraint to additional enforcement

Sgt. McCarty encourages the use of positive peer pressure to shape positive behavior in recreationists

Call DNR officer on the phone with violation info, leaving message if officer is unavailable

DNR Conservation Officers will enforce state land use rules but those rules will not be the driving force behind scheduling of patrols

What % of violators (snag, litter, trespass) are unaware they are violating?

DNR Law → None, people know these activities are wrong

Encouraged education during pre-trip meeting w/ managing agency.

Commenter noted a positive response from DNR officers when they are called

DNR Fish → Native Americans are exercising what they view as treaty rights (1836) by doing some spearing of steelheads on Manistee watershed. This is a test case re: Treaty of 1836. The State wants this resolved by Fed. Court. Currently DNR Law and Fish are recording information on the spearing. This information will be important to any court case.

Next PM Corridor Plan Update meeting?

FS → At the next meeting draft alternatives will be available. It will be held in about 3 months.

Reminded attendees that updates in this process are available at the FS Web address:

[www.fs.fed.us/r9/huronmanistee](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/huronmanistee)

Thanks to all attendees by facilitator Nelson

Meeting adjourned at 9:25PM