

Making the Case for the PRC: A Proposed Education and Engagement Plan Pigeon River Country State Forest

Approved July 17, 2014

Executive Summary

In late 2013, the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (PRCAC) created a new “Education and Engagement” standing committee (Committee). Over the course of several meetings and discussions beginning in December, 2013, Committee members worked to develop the following proposed education and engagement plan (Plan), which is offered here to the full PRCAC for its endorsement and commitment to action and suggested recommendation to the Director of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The purpose of the Plan is to assist the PRCAC and the DNR in conveying the “values and uniqueness” of the Pigeon River Country; providing decision-makers, users and the public a fuller appreciation and respect for the history, assets and cultural significance of Michigan’s “Big Wild”; and building the necessary support and broad awareness to continue to implement and uphold the PRC’s approved Concept of Management.

The Committee believes that such efforts are both required as part of the charge to the PRCAC, and are also helpful and desirable in ensuring continued public and political support for protection, management and appropriate use of the PRC in the years and decades ahead.

The Plan consists of three primary objectives; a set of educational themes; five overarching strategies; and metrics for measuring progress. An implementation plan, found in Appendix A, was also developed to provide clarity about roles, responsibilities and timelines for advancing the work outlined in the Plan. Before undertaking the development of the Plan, the group also grounded itself by confirming the foundations for such action in the guiding document of the PRCAC, namely the PRC’s Concept of Management (approved 1973, updated 2007) and DNR Director Gazlay’s original 1974 charge to the PRCAC members (found in Appendix B). Finally, an example educational initiative for Isle Royale National Park which was used for discussion and inspiration for this Plan and can be found in Appendix C.

In the end, the Plan provides a set of communication tools and strategies that will serve to clarify, promote, secure and elevate the PRC in the hearts and minds of both decision-makers and the PRC’s many passionate supporters and users, both current and future.

Rationale for the Plan

The Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (PRCAC), established through the Concept of Management and charged with advising the DNR director, created the Education and

Engagement Committee in 2013. This group, after discussing a host of historic and current pressures and challenges facing the Pigeon River Country State Forest (PRC), concluded that there is a current and ongoing need to “make the case” for the PRC and its Concept of Management.

In early meetings, it became apparent to the Committee members that one of the overarching needs of an education plan is to differentiate the PRC from other national, state and local forest areas. This is necessary in order to secure and promote its status as a special management unit of the Michigan DNR, and to protect and preserve the DNR’s ability to enforce a relatively unique set of regulations, management tools, and oversight structures (including the 40-year involvement of the diverse membership of the PRCAC).

Because the PRC is a part of the state forest system, a range of elected and appointed leaders weigh in on issues that have direct or indirect impact on its management. The Michigan legislature, Natural Resource Commission, local boards and commissions, and even user groups themselves are part of the ever-evolving management decision-making structure that shapes the forest and its surrounding communities.

Many of these individuals, it is clear, are not familiar with the PRC itself or its unique needs and opportunities. Moreover, lacking this understanding, there is a persistent threat that the PRC’s special status might be eroded through decisions intended to satisfy short-term expediencies, single-issue or special interests, or simply to streamline management or oversight.

So, what does make the PRC special? What are the “values and uniqueness” of the area that are so clearly cherished by those who know and return to this place, and so quickly apparent to first-time visitors?

The answer to those questions gave rise to the “educational themes” developed in the following sections. But in short, the Committee suggests that the PRC’s uniqueness derives primarily from three critical components: a) its large size and contiguous state ownership, which enable comprehensive management, provide opportunities for backcountry exploration in a rugged area, and support prized wildlife species (especially elk, but also black bear, bobcat, pine marten, etc.), some of which require large blocks of land with both openings and intact forests to thrive; b) it hosts an especially rich diversity of landscape features, ecological associations and natural communities, all gathered together in relative close proximity within a single management area; and c) it has historically been managed as a working landscape, with active forest treatments to support wildlife and timber production, while the development of additional infrastructure and amenities was simultaneously limited or excluded entirely.

The “Big Wild” of the PRC is a very wild place, without being regulated as a formal wilderness, and is an outdoor adventure haven largely free of recreational aides, imposing facilities or commercial influence. Accessible within a few hours’ drive of major population centers, it remains dominated by unconfined, unfettered, rustic recreational pursuits in a wild setting that require fortitude, inspire wonder and instill a connection to nature.

The resulting experience epitomizes the “wild character” of the PRC that is celebrated in various ways in the personal stories of its many visitors and users, through the writings of its early advocates and champions, such as P.S. Lovejoy and Ernest Hemingway, and reinforced in the strategies outlined in the Concept of Management.

This special combination of values and characteristics, however, also evolved through a careful balancing of intense resource management (timber harvests, mowing to create elk habitat, etc.) and a “do-it-yourself” ethos with regard to recreational use (low maintenance, little signage, few trails and amenities, etc;) that encourages visitors to be self-reliant and explore on their own – an approach quite unique in Michigan, and perhaps the country. This delicate balance exists only in light of good public oversight provided by the PRCAC; careful, long-term stewardship by a series of talented DNR managers and staff; and the engagement and cooperation of a range of volunteer stewards and advocates.

This system has proven effective but is inherently vulnerable to a constantly evolving set of recreational use pressures, public policy priorities and management paradigms that are forever changing with the times. It could also quickly be undermined by aggressive or rapid change in any of the components, including intense or geographically focused changes in recreational demand. These changes, unfolding without understanding and respect for the PRC’s character, could alter the fundamental balance of natural and human interactions that have come to define the place.

An educational approach is likely the best tool available to protect the PRC and its unique combination of assets and management strategies. While other areas might look to infrastructure (signage, trails, campsites etc.) or increased oversight and enforcement (strict oversight, patrols, ticketing, etc.) to ease the pressures, it is clear these approaches would likely undermine the things most valued to the PRC: its undeveloped character and opportunities for true backcountry solitude.

Another dominant theme of Committee discussions was the notion that an education and engagement initiative intended to support these objectives must necessarily satisfy a diverse array of purposes and target audiences: the public, policy-makers and the users of the PRC among them.

Maintaining and defending the complex, nuanced and delicate management balance within the PRC makes educating diverse audiences about the “values and uniqueness” of the PRC a task that necessarily is ongoing and unending. It is a task best suited to a combination of passionate volunteers dedicated to the wise stewardship of the PRC, such as the PRCAC, and the DNR staff charged with implementing the Concept.

Thus, the Committee developed this Plan with the overarching goal of reaffirming the underlying “values and uniqueness” of the PRC in the belief that providing decision-makers,

forest users and the public with a fuller appreciation and respect for the history, assets and cultural significance of Michigan’s “Big Wild” will ultimately help secure and protect the unique management approaches and the special experiences afforded in the PRC.

In other words, it is the Committee’s belief that this education and engagement effort should not simply “educate” people about the PRC; it should strive to inspire and reinforce the same sense of adventure, exploration and discovery in the Pigeon River Country State Forest that secured its first 40 years of stewardship, and engender a new generation of advocates who will seek to understand, respect, protect and enjoy the unique character of the PRC.

Objectives and Educational Themes

The Education and Engagement Committee has approved the following objectives for this educational initiative, each drawn directly from the approved Concept of Management and the original director’s charge to the PRCAC:

- Objective 1: Increase “awareness and understanding of the value and uniqueness of the Pigeon River Country and its special concepts of management” (from Concept of Management, page 35).
- Objective 2: “Increase public support for the PRC’s special management objectives” (from Concept, page 38).
- Objective 3: Inspire “knowledge and respect” for the PRC among visitors, users and public (from Concept, pages 25, 38).

Educational Themes

Natural	The unique role and character of the Pigeon River Country, as articulated in the Concept of Management, derives from the belief that a few special natural places like the PRC provide their highest and best value to visitors and to the State of Michigan by remaining relatively remote, undeveloped, and unencumbered by excessive infrastructure and signage. By policy, the PRC is managed differently than other state forests in order to retain certain critical attributes related to its “wild character” that provide an opportunity for a remote, undeveloped backcountry experience.
Multiple-Use	The PRC is a part of the working landscape of Michigan’s state forest system, and as such relies on a strategy of active human management of forests and wildlife to serve a wide variety of public uses and private activity, including timber production, hiking, camping, hunting and fishing, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, mushroom hunting and many more.
Access	The PRC provides a “wild” experience without being designated or protected as “wilderness.” It remains purposefully rugged and challenging to access and explore by virtue of unique restrictions on uses such as resource extraction; motorized vehicles; road and trail access; signage; and other aspects of recreational and commercial behavior. A “Keep It Wild, Walk In” ethos prevails.
Emotional/Spiritual	The PRC provides opportunities for renewal and solitude that are becoming

	increasingly rare in modern society. By virtue of its reliance on primarily primitive and unconfined recreation, the PRC serves as a haven from the pressures of modern society.
Stewardship	The longevity of the PRC as we know it today depends on individual and societal commitment to the stewardship model outlined in the Concept of Management, on cultivating respect and appreciation of the special qualities of the area, and on appropriate and responsible visitor use, behavior, and values.
Cultural and Historical	Cultural, historical, archeological and literary connections and sites in the PRC can provide a unique picture of Michigan’s history and relationship to nature, conservation, reforestation, and outdoor recreation. This includes but is not limited to its influence on the work of Michigan’s conservation leaders, like P.S. Lovejoy, and the writings of American literary icons such as Ernest Hemingway.
Risk and Responsibility	PRC visitors have the opportunity to face physical and mental challenges with accompanying risks and rewards. Unlike at more developed State Park facilities, the PRC visitor must exhibit a degree of self-reliance and accept certain inherent risks associated with the area’s extensive miles of unimproved, unmarked roads and paths, patchy cellular phone coverage, and typical backcountry challenges related to weather, terrain, water hazards, wildlife, plants and other natural elements. Visitors should approach the PRC with respect and knowledge. No agency or educational initiative can guarantee visitor safety, but it can be enhanced with proper information, trip planning, outdoor skills training, and responsible individual behavior.

Education and Engagement Strategies

To achieve these educational objectives, the Education and Engagement Committee recommends developing and deploying the following five strategies:

- Brand development
- Online outreach
- Print materials
- Presentations and meetings
- Partnerships with NGOs, schools and “gateway communities”

The proposed strategies are described more fully below, and are followed by a set of metrics to measure progress on deploying the tools and strategies.

Notably, all these strategies and associated tools must be implemented by a variety of entities, both PRCAC members and the paid staff of the DNR. Many would also require the engagement and support of agencies, communities and partnerships with many other volunteers, hence the emphasis of this committee on “engagement” as fundamental to successful education efforts.

Strategy 1: Brand identification packet

A set of “branding” materials will be provided, as appropriate, to the various management agencies and divisions, non-governmental (NGO) partners, and neighboring “gateway”

communities that have economic and cultural connections to the PRC such as Vanderbilt, Atlanta, Onaway, Gaylord and Wolverine. The packet will include at a minimum:

- A. Official Pigeon River Country State Forest logo (to be developed)
- B. Standardized nomenclature and language:
 - “Pigeon River Country State Forest” when referring to the cultural landscape associated with the forest and its assets, recreational opportunities and history, including state lands, rivers, and camps, e.g., “Welcome to Pigeon River Country State Forest.” Most appropriate for marketing, education and awareness efforts related to cultural, historic or ecological features of the general area.

DNR staff should apply this name consistently across all new state signage, print materials, and online resources, and over time convert existing materials as they are replaced. Staff and PRCAC members should work together to engage local “gateway” communities and NGO partners to similarly add or convert materials to this standard name.

- C. List of iconic phrases, images and historic quotations that can help agencies and partners convey consistent expectations of the “unique values, heritage and character” of the PRC assets and experience:

- Pigeon River Country State Forest: Michigan’s “Big Wild”
- Pigeon River Country State Forest: Heart of Michigan’s Elk Herd
- Pigeon River Country State Forest: Three Blue Ribbon Trout Streams
- Over 100,000 Acres of Adventure – the largest block of contiguous, publicly owned land in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula
- “Don’t we all want, yep for, need, some considerable ‘getting away’ from the crowds and the lawn mowers and the tulips? Isn’t that the yep for the Big Wild feel and flavor? I claim it is.” P.S. Lovejoy, commonly referred to as the father of the Pigeon River Country State Forest.
- “We camp at the Black way out on the barrens and you won't see a house or a soul. Nothing but the Pine Barrens with great wide sweep and ridges of pine trees rising up like islands. And the fishing is absolutely wonderful. Come on up and stay for just as long as you can.” Ernest Hemingway, letter to a friend, 1920.

The packet of brand materials should also include access (either online or on a portable drive) 10-20 high-quality photographic images that convey the beauty, diversity, uniqueness and wild character of the Pigeon River Country State Forest.

Strategy 2: Online outreach

There are several online or web-based resources that can be improved to provide greater education and engagement capacity. These include several DNR “landing pages” for the PRC

(i.e., depending on what you're looking for, you might end up on the PRC's forest campground reservation site, on its forest management information website, or a site dedicated to the PRC's management tools, including the Concept of Management). In addition to updating, improving and consolidating these sites which are managed or populated by the DNR, there are also several other related online or media-related sites that should be engaged in the effort to provide consistent, reliable information about the PRC.

The Committee recommends converting and/or consolidating the existing PRC-related DNR websites to add the following consistent set of information, as relevant and appropriate:

- Branding tools: Names, quotes, phrases, and imagery
- Historical Significance and timeline of the PRC
- General map; campgrounds and Forest Pathway descriptions
- "What to Expect When You Visit" materials (based on Isle Royale example in Appendix C) including:
 - Landscapes, ecological communities and natural communities of the PRC
 - Leave No Trace ethics
 - Backcountry safety/personal responsibility
 - Road access/signage expectations
 - Trail access/shared-use approaches
 - Forest management/clear cuts
 - Wildlife viewing
 - Hunting/fishing
 - Management Goals

In addition, to amplify the PRC presence online and in media, DNR staff and volunteers should strive to write and get support from the PRCAC to submit the following items. These are not to be written or submitted on behalf of, or "speaking for," the PRCAC, but instead should be written by knowledgeable individuals focused on education items of interest related to the forest itself:

- Two general education-based messages to post each month to the Facebook page of the Pigeon River Country State Forest and the Facebook page of WILD Northern Michigan
- Develop and send four quarterly stories of PRC resources, people or activities to WILD Northern Michigan and DNR media personnel
- Five educational stories per year to be posted on partner websites (Pigeon River Country Association, Huron Pines, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, etc.), especially before seasonal shifts, natural transitions and other events within the forest's natural communities.

Strategy 3: Print materials

A common way to share educational information about the PRC is through printed materials, commonly distributed in the form of maps, pamphlets and other materials at the Headquarters

building. This category also includes printed posters used in educational displays at the Headquarters.

There are also non-DNR generated printed materials which serve an educational purpose and which are sold by the DNR or partnering NGOs such as the Pigeon River Country Association, such as Dale Clarke Franz's book, *Pigeon River Country: A Michigan Forest*, and an artistic representation of the area and its distinctive features that was developed by the Pigeon River Country Association through a local artist.

The Committee recommends evaluating all existing print materials and either consolidating or updating them as necessary. New materials recommended in this plan are, at a minimum:

- A new "What to Expect When you Visit" brochure highlighting the features, values and unique aspects of the PRC (similar to Isle Royale brochure)
- Educational displays – primarily for use at the Headquarters building but also made available to community parks, museums and other facilities in neighboring "gateway communities."

Strategy 4: Presentations and tours

One of the primary ways to improve understanding and appreciation of the PRC is to encourage people who know and love the area to engage and talk to others about it. This includes encouraging more informal interactions between knowledgeable users and the public, but also an increased focus on getting PRCAC members in front of the formal commissions, elected officials and other public bodies that directly or indirectly influence the PRC, such as the Natural Resources Commission of the DNR and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board.

The Committee also believes that it would be helpful to bring more of these decision-makers out into the PRC to see and experience the place directly. As such, it is recommended that DNR staff and the PRCAC work together to include NRC commissioners, legislators and local government officials from the surrounding area in tours and educational sessions, such as new member orientations or field trips conducted in conjunction with regularly scheduled PRCAC meetings.

Slideshow. PRCAC members should volunteer to give periodic presentations, and to interact more frequently with elected and appointed officials in their capacity as PRCAC members and as knowledgeable advocates for the PRC and the Concept of Management. To facilitate this activity, the Committee recommends that a basic Pigeon River Country slideshow presentation be developed that includes:

- Branding tools: Names, quotes, phrases, and imagery
- Significance and timeline of the PRC
- Explanation of the Roles and Membership of the PRCAC
- Management goals of the PRC/Concept of Management

- Unique natural resources management success and opportunities of the PRC, such as elk, pine marten, fisheries, etc.

Additional optional presentation materials. It is also recommended that a “slide deck” of additional slides be developed that can be inserted into the main presentation selectively, based on the needs, interests or purposes of specific presentation audiences, such as:

- General map; campgrounds and Forest Pathway descriptions
- “What to Expect when you visit” information highlighting the features, values and unique aspects of the PRC (similar to brochure and website)
- Economic Data for the PRC
- Ecological and Natural Resources of the PRC
- Historical Significance of the PRC

Strategy 5: Partnerships with NGOs, schools and “gateway communities”

Another critical component of the proposed education and engagement is the recognition that the DNR and the PRCAC cannot and should not succeed alone. There are a range of strong, committed and capable organizations and community leaders in the geographic area surrounding the PRC interested in supporting the Pigeon River Country State Forest and, in turn, improving the range of reciprocal social, educational and economic benefits they receive as a result of the PRC’s presence.

Gateway Communities program. To develop a more successful “partnership” approach to the PRC education and engagement strategy, the Committee recommends that the DNR and PRCAC work to develop signage, kiosks, trailheads and other PRC-related educational facilities *outside* the PRC State Forest boundaries through a “gateway communities” initiative.

There are good examples of the multiple benefits of successful “gateway community” programs available through the National Park Service, and an emerging “Pure Michigan Trails” and “Pure Michigan Trail Towns” program that would assist in this effort. As part of this effort, staff and PRCAC members should develop relationships and partnerships with regional and local tourism bureaus, economic development agencies, and local governments to find ways that local communities and businesses can better understand and accrue economic benefit from users of the PRC.

Education and Volunteer engagement. In addition, the PRC provides a host of valuable educational opportunities, both to help users young and old better understand and value the PRC, but also to engage a new generation of stewards willing and interested in putting their time and talents to use in protecting, enhancing and enjoying the PRC.

To this end, the Committee recommends improving outreach to schools, research institutions and university outdoor recreational clubs, hosting and tracking volunteer stewardship and maintenance events, and working directly with “Friends” groups and associations, watershed

groups, statewide conservation and environmental organizations, to get people out working and supporting the PRC.

Measureable Metrics to Track

Strategy 1: Branding

- Number of brand identification packets distributed to partners, gateway communities and businesses
- Number of signs, print materials and website utilizing branding materials (names, photos, phrases, etc.)

Strategy 2: Online outreach

- Number of PRC-related educational posts each month on the Facebook page of the Pigeon River Country State Forest and the Facebook page of WILD Northern Michigan
- Number of PRC-related educational stories published by WILD Northern Michigan and DNR
- Number of PRC-related educational stories appearing on a partner website or newsletter (Pigeon River Country Association, Huron Pines, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, etc.)

Strategy 3: Print materials

- Number of Dale Clarke Franz's book: *Pigeon River Country: A Michigan Forest*, specifically those sold at headquarters and those sold online by the Pigeon River Country Association
- Number of education-based maps sold at headquarters and through the Pigeon River Country Association
- Number of new brochures distributed (i.e., how many are given away at headquarters, through Gaylord Visitors Center, etc.)
- Number of new educational displays at headquarters
- Number of new educational displays hosted in neighboring "gateways communities"

Strategy 4: Presentations and tours

- Number of PRCAC member presentations to the Michigan Natural Resources Commission
- Number of PRCAC member presentations to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board
- Number of PRCAC members presenting at public meetings hosted by local boards of commissioners, township boards, planning groups and economic development councils
- Number of PRCAC members engaged in face-to-face conversations with state legislators regarding the PRC (including in the local district and in Lansing)

- Number of PRCAC and DNR co-hosted tours of the PRC specifically for state legislators and NRC commissioners (i.e., in conjunction with new PRCAC member orientation tour)

Strategy 5: Partnerships with NGOs, schools and “gateway communities”

- Number of neighboring communities officially adopting a “gateway community” strategy for the PRC.
- Number of stories about PRC carried by partner websites, newsletters, etc.
- Number of monthly and annual volunteer hours donated to PRC through trail maintenance, etc. (also, hours should be aggregated annually and converted to a dollar value using minimum wage as a multiplier).
- Number of class outings with school groups using the PRC for environmental education
- Number of university research projects conducted in the PRC
- Number of group camp registrations of university outdoor recreation clubs

Other metrics to track

- Number of weekends per year that the Headquarters is open and staffed either by DNR or volunteers
- Number of guests registering in logbook at Headquarters building
- Number of direct interactions with campers or recreationists recorded by PRD and FRD staff
- Number of camp night registrations at state forest campgrounds
- Number of backcountry camping tags registered with DNR

Evaluating Impact

The Committee was very interested in education and engagement efforts that could be evaluated for their effectiveness over time. Measuring or evaluating the *results* or the *impacts* of education would tell us how effective our strategies have been at changing behavior or attitudes. However, it became very clear that measuring the actual impact of these efforts would be more complicated –and perhaps more costly–than tracking the efforts themselves because it would require tools that would give us both “before” and “after” measurements of the attitudes and behaviors of the target audience.

To accomplish this, the committee recommends further exploration of the potential for a user survey that could be deployed online and at headquarters, campgrounds, trailheads and (contingent on resources) through direct interviews with users and visitors.

In the meantime, the committee believes that a small number of existing or potentially accessible data points should be tracked by DNR staff (and reported annually to the PRCAC) in order to gauge the impact of our efforts. This list of items could include the:

- Number of unique webpage views (measured by month, comparing year-over-year) of the DNR's PRC landing page (via Google Analytics or similar tool)
- Geographic distribution of viewers of DNR PRC landing page
- Number of "likes" on the PRC's Facebook page (contingent on establishing working relationship with page hosts)
- Number of self-described "gateway communities" surrounding PRC.

Other potential outcomes-based evaluation metrics to consider tracking, based on current data or items which could potentially be tracked with few additional resources, might include:

- Visitor compliments and complaints as registered by DNR staff
- Number of visitors signing the guest log book at the headquarters
- Number of user-conflict complaints reported to DNR staff
- Number of violations of individual PRC use restrictions reported to DNR staff (trail use, hunting, etc.)
- Hunting/fishing license data
- Number of legislative initiatives targeting or challenging PRC management tools or strategies
- Number of local governments supporting new land or in-holding acquisitions within PRC boundaries
- Financial support for PRC initiatives

Conclusion

This education and engagement plan is presented by the Education and Engagement Committee of the PRCAC for consideration and adoption by the full Council.

The Committee would also like to reiterate that this document is not intended to directly address or resolve any ongoing issues and concerns the PRCAC has related to signage (kiosks, sinkhole lake signs, etc.), infrastructure (trails and roads) or development generally within the PRC.

However, it is the Committee's hope and expectation that, if aggressively and successfully initiated, the plan outlined here would serve to alleviate or even eliminate some of the pressures leading to those conflicts, and may in some instances replace or minimize the need for additional signage and infrastructure within the PRC.

The Committee, in fact, seeks to reduce demand for signage and educational infrastructure dispersed throughout the forest through these initiatives, because preserving the “defining characteristics” of the PRC (namely, as a “large, uninterrupted block of public forest in unspoiled, undeveloped condition”) and to manage the area for activities that are “in keeping with the unique and wild character of the Pigeon River Country and to protect the area from overuse and overdevelopment” remain the ultimate goal and purpose of the Advisory Council and ones universally embraced by members of this Committee (PRC Concept of Management, page 14).

Appendix A: Implementation Plan (subject to change and ongoing revision)

Task to be completed	Responsible Party	Timeline
“PRC brand identification” packet including standard fonts, backgrounds, and photos	Garmon and Whitcomb	Present draft at fall 2014 E&E Committee meeting
New educational displays for the Headquarters building or at parks, museums and other facilities in neighboring “gateway communities.”	Whitcomb and Americorp/Bartowitz	Present draft at fall 2014 E&E Committee meeting
PowerPoint presentation highlighting the key assets, history and unique values of the PRC.	Garmon and Whitcomb	Present draft at fall 2014 E&E Committee meeting
Historical Significance and Timeline of the PRC	Garmon and Whitcomb	Present draft at Oct 2014 PRCAC meeting
General map; campgrounds and Forest Pathway descriptions	Garmon and Whitcomb	Present draft at Oct 2014 PRCAC meeting
Tracking and metrics system established for DNR staff use in measuring year-to-year changes and activities	Garmon and Whitcomb	Present draft at winter 2015 E&E Committee meeting
Brochure highlighting the value and unique attributes of the PRC (similar to one for Isle Royale)	Garmon and Whitcomb with support from DNR communications staff	Present draft of text at winter 2015 E&E committee
“What to Expect When You Visit” web materials (based on Isle Royale example in Appendix B)	Garmon and Whitcomb with support from DNR communications staff	Present drafts of text at winter 2015 E&E committee
Consolidate and update DNR’s PRC-related websites	Garmon and Whitcomb with support from DNR	Present drafts at Spring 2015

	communications staff	E&E committee
PRCAC members volunteer to make presentations to the Michigan Natural Resources Commission, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board, and local boards and commissions	PRCAC members	Starting 2015
Hosted tour of the PRC specifically for state legislators and NRC commissioners (i.e., in conjunction with new PRCAC member orientation tour)	Whitcomb	Starting 2015
Outreach to neighboring communities seeking gateway community” partnerships with the PRC	PRCAC members	Ongoing

Appendix B: Foundations for “Education and Engagement” Initiative

Director’s Charge to the PRCAC (Gazlay, 1974)

It “is essential that the public be closely involved in shaping the future course of events on this unique State Forest. A broadly representative citizen advisory body is a key provision of the conceptual management plan developed by the Department and approved by the Commission. The Advisory Council has now been formed and is hereby charged with the following duties and responsibilities:

1. **To become familiar, as may be individually necessary, with the physical features, characteristics and values of the Pigeon River Country State Forest,** including present patterns of public use.
2. To become familiar with past and existing management policies and programs for the area.
3. To become familiar with the conceptual plan which has been officially adopted as the broad policy framework for future management.
4. To develop a workable, effective operating structure.
5. To assist the Department in framing management programs which will assure wise future use of the Forest's varied resources, minimize and harmonize conflicts to the extent possible, and above all, insure wise conservation of the special resource values for present and future generations to use and enjoy.
6. **To serve as a sounding-board for the public.**
7. **To help develop and crystallize public support for all programs which the Council and Department agree to, including necessary financial support.”**

Concept of Management (DNR 1973, Updated 2007)

Education: “It is critical that the DNR **gain public support by fostering an increased awareness and understanding of the value and uniqueness of PRC** and its special concepts of management” (Concept, 35).

Engagement: “**Public support should be increased** by regular communication with conservation organizations, area businesses, local and regional units of government, private landowners and the general public” (35).

Information and Education: “The DNR will provide information about the area, maps of trails and roads, and restrictions which must be observed by PRC users. The

Headquarters provides a great opportunity for public interface and should be open to the public as much as possible” (24).

Wildlife Viewing: “Viewing opportunities abound in the PRC and are in harmony with the wild character when done **with knowledge and respect** for the wildlife being observed as well as for other wildlife viewers. Large groups and overuse of certain areas at certain times of the year disturb wildlife and compromise the very opportunities that people seek. Management and **user education about wildlife viewing are critical and required** to ensure a continuing and rewarding experience” (25).

“Increase awareness and understanding of the value and uniqueness of the natural resources of the PRC, and increase public support for the PRC’s special management objectives.” (Appendix 1, Goal 3):

OBJECTIVE A: “Develop a communications plan to **increase understanding and support for the PRC**. This plan would communicate goals and objectives of PRC management, determine current levels of understanding and misunderstanding, identify public concerns, **identify key messages and where to focus efforts (target audiences)**, and develop communication strategies and an implementation plan” (38)

OBJECTIVE B: “**Strengthen partnerships** with other conservation organizations, area businesses, and local and regional units of government. **Obtain their support and assistance in promoting the understanding and values of the uniqueness of the PRC and its special concepts of management**” (39).

Appendix C: Example of Successful Education Materials from Isle Royale National Park

A helpful example of the educational plan recommended the Pigeon River Country can be found in the National Park Service's treatment and portrayal of Lake Superior's Isle Royale National Park, especially in its online and print materials. While the resources and park are obviously very different than the PRC, there are similarities in desired outcomes of the educational materials that make this comparison worthwhile.

In examining the written and online materials for the area, the Committee sees much to emulate in an approach that:

- **Sets high user expectations.** "Welcome to Isle Royale National Park, an opportunity for connection to the resource through adventure, discovery, and exploration . . . Enter the quiet of the boreal forest and wander beneath spruce and fir trees draped with tangles of Old Man's Beard. Perch on a rock and experience Lake Superior's moods which shape and change this area's rugged shoreline. Listen for the cry of the loon, luring you deeper into this isolated Island wilderness. Explore..."
<http://www.nps.gov/isro/planyourvisit/index.htm> and
<http://www.nps.gov/isro/planyourvisit/upload/Rock%20Harbor%20Area%20Guide.pdf>
- **Puts responsibility for safety on the user.** "Park visitors need to accept wilderness on its own unique terms. Proper preparedness and hazard awareness can prevent injuries . . . Your wilderness experience can have a happy ending if you come prepared and stay aware."
- **Fosters greater appreciation and stewardship.** "We hope your experience will be a memorable and rewarding exploration into the nature of life - an exploration that will foster a strong wilderness ethic, leading to the desire to promote stewardship. These personal connections will serve to preserve and protect Isle Royale National Park for future generations." <http://www.nps.gov/isro/planyourvisit/index.htm>.
- **Conveys the underlying value of the experience.** "Visitors have 'Things to Do', which expand their horizons, challenge their abilities, deepen friendships, bond father to son, mother to daughter, give meaning to life, relax the soul, slow the pace of life, humble the mind, and create the avenue for change. The[ir] arrival unites them all with the awesome power found inside Isle Royale National Park."
<http://www.nps.gov/isro/planyourvisit/things2do.htm>.
- **Combines history and natural resources to foster unique personal connection to the place.** "Nothing can compare to standing on the dock at Wright Island, feeling the fresh lake air, watching a moose across the harbor, and hearing the distant call of a loon. We can't just write down that Ingeborg Holte used to stand here and watch the sun rise. We need to be able to stand here too so we can feel at least a little what it was like for her. Being able to stand in the same spot connects us to the past in a way that words simply cannot." <http://www.nps.gov/isro/historyculture/index.htm>. Also see:
<http://www.nps.gov/isro/planyourvisit/upload/Windigo%20Area%20Guide.pdf>
- **Deepens understanding of the natural resources.** "Lake Superior creates cool, moist conditions which favor boreal forest. In contrast, the warmer/drier conditions and

deeper soils found in the interior of the island near its western end support an extensive forest of Northern hardwoods. There, autumn hikers along the Greenstone Ridge Trail shuffle through colorful leaves fallen from sugar maples and yellow birches, the two tree species that dominate this forest type.”

<http://www.nps.gov/isro/naturescience/trees.htm>.

- **Points users to developed areas for more information.** “The northeastern end of Isle Royale National Park offers a variety of activities designed to enhance your park experience. Drop by the Rock Harbor Visitor Center to: view displays, browse publications, receive your backcountry permit, check the interpretive program schedule, or have your questions answered.”