

Failing culvert dam being replaced by timber bridge over Pigeon River



Known as the tubes, the three cylinders have been a favorite stop for visitors.

Photo by Dale Franz

The embankment surrounding three culverts beneath Ford Lake Road is coming undone from erosion and age, so the Pigeon River crossing will be replaced with a timber bridge sometime next summer. The crossing was originally a bridge. The culverts are undersized for the natural flow of the Pigeon.

Engineering designs are currently being reviewed by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), which replaced the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in April. The timber bridge will allow the river to flow freely.



Embankment surrounding culverts is eroding.

Photo by Lisha Ramsdell



A storm in 1995 overflowed the culverts and washed out Ford Lake Road that spans the Pigeon near Pigeon River Campground. A campsite on the right beyond the picnic table will become a parking area when the culverts are replaced by a timber bridge.

Photo by Joe Jarecki



This 1940 photo shows the wooden bridge that preceded the embankment and culverts that will now be replaced. The Pigeon flows right to left in the image.



Plunge pool at outflow of culverts will get shallower as the artificial velocity of the water slows to natural flow.
Photo by Lisha Ramsdell

During removal of the culverts and bridge construction, expected in late summer 2020, the road will be closed an estimated three to six weeks. A single camp site that is next to the river will be converted to a day use parking site.

The plunge pool currently created by the high velocity flow through the culverts is expected to gradually fill to the surrounding river depth once the Pigeon again flows freely beneath the bridge. The pool has been a popular swimming site.

The nearby Pigeon River campground will remain open during the bridge work, but the High Country Pathway, which follows the campground road, will be closed at the river crossing during construction. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is expected to issue a temporary rerouting of the pathway.

The project is a collaboration of Huron Pines, Otsego County Road Commission, DNR, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The three-span bridge will have a 32-foot road surface width and 44-foot span (length).

High Country Pathway, Pigeon map updated

The forest map recognized as a detailed and reliable guide to the 80-mile High Country Pathway, including all of the Pigeon River Country, has just been updated by the Pigeon River Country Association. Our treasurer, Joe Jarecki, provides this report.

With our supply of maps getting low, last winter we began updating our HCP/PRCSF map. Jessica Kane and Alex Code of Line 45 generously offered their GIS (Geographic Information System) expertise. With their help, the following changes were made:

- State forest acquisitions since 2015 were added. All 760 acres are outside the PRC.
- Little Traverse Conservancy and HeadWaters Land Conservancy preserves that are open to the public were added. Of about 520 acres of preserves owned by the conservancies, 120 acres are inside the PRC.
- The Discovery Center, behind the PRC Headquarters was added.

- The Towerman's Watch pathway, a new 3+ mile hiking trail starting at the PRC Headquarters, was added.
- The Equestrian Connectors (on administrative roads closed to vehicles), which horseback riders may use to create "circle rides" using the road system, the North Spur and the connectors, were added.
- An insert showing features of the area near PRC Headquarters at about double scale was added.
- The map covers slightly more area to the west to be able to show the 2,000 +/- acre Storey Lake acquisition which will be added to the map by hand when/if it is acquired, possibly as early as this fall.

Mitchell Graphics in Petoskey is printing the updated maps which will be available by June 29th. It can be obtained with the order form on our website, www.pigeonriver.org, or the form attached to this printed newsletter. The map is also available at Pigeon River Country Headquarters and in the Discovery Center.

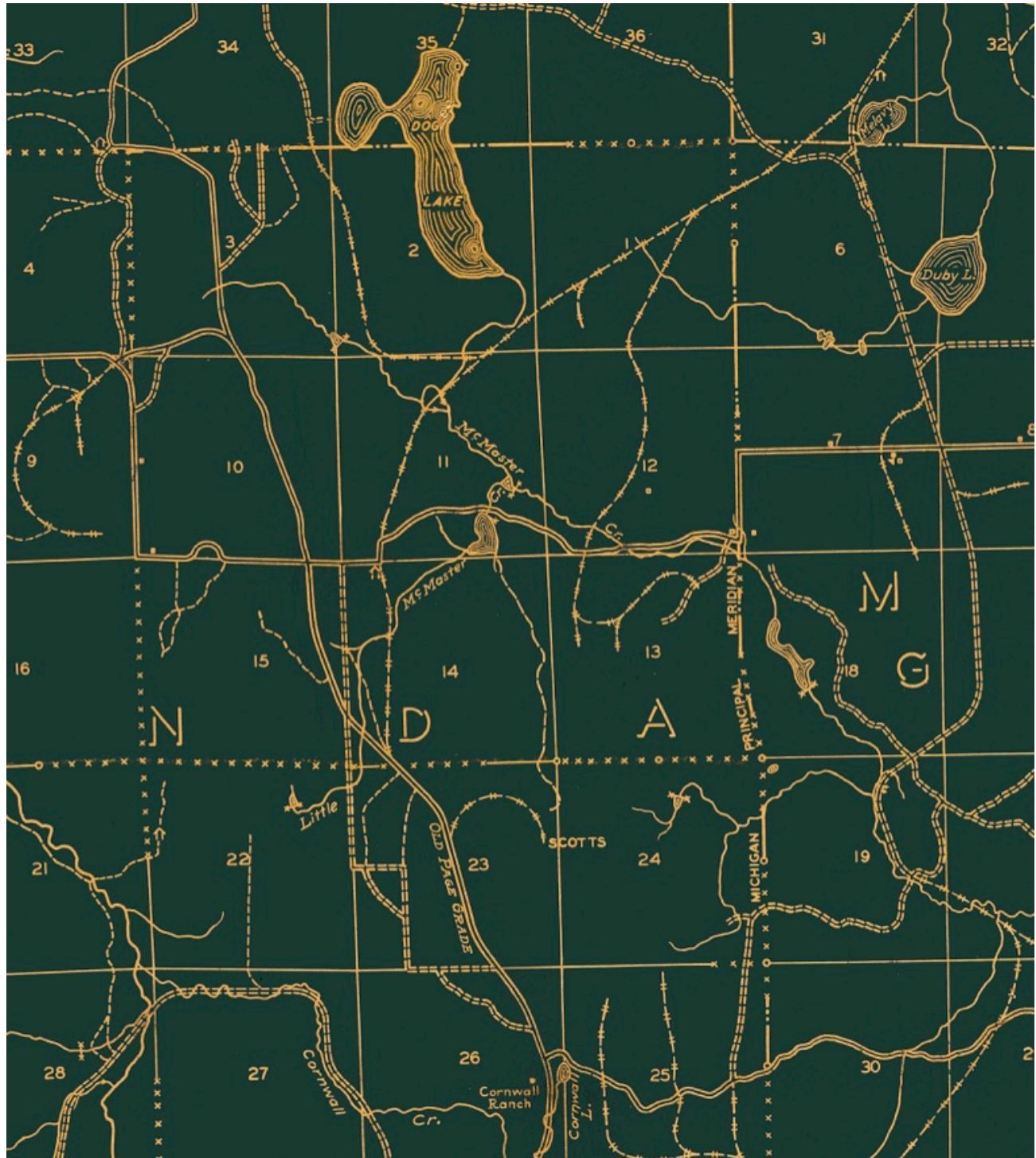
--Joe Jarecki

A 1932 map offers paths to history

In 1919 P.S. Lovejoy, looking at the bleak effects of timbering and fire, solemnly observed that "one third of Michigan is today bankrupt." The following year he again cautioned Michigan's Academy of Science that the cutover and burned woodlands of the state were being falsely promoted as farm opportunities even when the soils and climate were unfavorable for converting those acreages.

In his homespun language adopted to say things plain, Lovejoy said he proposed to "trick people into considering their own land and the neighbor's affairs on the basis of fact instead of on the basis of mere and polite assumption of whatever seems most optimistic." He wanted to introduce scientific understanding of our natural resources by slow degrees so as not to leave either officials or the public behind in understanding what the resources really are. Among the things being done based on inadequate information were the fires being set to clear cutover timber lands of remaining brush and stumps.

He described the timbered lands of the Great Lakes as "geologically, economically, agriculturally, and politically a mess, marked by a devastated, underdeveloped, rapidly changing mixture of black stumps and fire weed, bleaching



Bottom center shows “Cornwall Ranch” about where Inspiration Point is located now. This 1932 map also identifies what we now call Osmun Road as “Old Page Grade,” providing some clues for history sleuths.

snags and clover, scraggly brush and sweet fern, virgin forest and ex-forest, ... lonely deserted farms with the roofs caved in, deep rich loams and yellow, hungry sands, and land owners; and settlers, land buyers, land agents, land corporations, land hungry people who want a home, land-hogs and land sharks who want a profit.”

Lovejoy wrote: “We are all of us not a hair from destruction and the game is to make the old hair last out our allotted span of life.”

His wife, Ruth Lovejoy, said he “wanted every person to know, to enjoy, and to realize the worth of this great God-given domain. He wanted them to know how to live in it ... and most of all, he wanted them to understand their responsibility to it and their almost sacred duty to maintain it.”

By 1922 the forester and former academic was heading up a Michigan Land Economic Survey to look closely at the soils, water, geology, and botany of those lands in order to make good choices about how to use them. The survey work started in Charlevoix County in 1922 and ended, due to lack of funds in the Depression, 16 counties later, in Cheboygan County in 1933.

A base map for parts of Cheboygan and Otsego counties that included Pigeon River Country was prepared in 1932 and a copy hung in the Pigeon River forester’s office for some years. The forester’s son Lyle Horsell retrieved it from hanging in his family’s pole barn in 2017 and donated it to the Pigeon River Country Discovery Center, where a just-restored digital copy now hangs again in the old forester’s office. (Partial map image on previous page.)

The map offers anyone interested in tracing some history of this land a treasure of hints and clues to the recent past. One that has intrigued Sandra Franz of the steering committee is three miles north of Pigeon River Country boundaries, at the top left of the full map, designating “Silver Top Gardens Dance Hall” about a mile east of the Pigeon River. A mile and a half south of the dance hall is “Old Elmer Dam” on the Pigeon. The 1932 map also outlines the shape of the pond at what was Lansing Club and subsequently Song of the Morning Ranch, where the Pigeon River now flows free of the old dam, while the pond has reverted to forest cover.

The old map shows Cornwall Lake but no Cornwall Flooding, which formed on the upstream side of a dam erected on Cornwall Creek some four decades later. That dam is about to be replaced. (See next article.)

The 1932 map is a tangible element in Lovejoy's crusade to nurture what we call Pigeon River Country. He reasoned that land held in state ownership could benefit all the public by paying attention to its wild features. The map is labeled "Pigeon River Project," consistent with plans he presented the year before to the state's Conservation Commission recommending that it be used as an example of sound land management.

The map shows Pigeon River State Forest Headquarters where it had been built in 1919 a mile downstream from present headquarters. In 1936 the log residence built by the Civilian Conservation Corps opened as the forest's new headquarters, putting the map out of date four years after it was issued.

Lovejoy labored his whole adult life on behalf of places like his beloved Pigeon River Country, always with serious purpose, but also with a touch of lightness in the face of opposition, intended or otherwise. When he spoke of us being "not a hair from destruction," his advice for what to do about it was: "If we do all this with a certain sense of humor and not too much seriousness, we slide along as if greased. If we worry all about it and try to do too much to help it, we get a rupture from the strain and that is about all."

In fact, he suffered a stroke in 1931 and underwent brain surgery, afterward curtailing his official activities while continuing to express himself about good conservation. He died in 1942. His ashes were scattered at the Pigeon River; the site along Twin Lakes Road is marked with a monument. Some displays in the Pigeon River Country Discovery Center are about him and there is a Lovejoy chapter in our book, *Pigeon River Country*.

Lovejoy quotes are in "Michigan's Cantankerous Conservationist" by Norman J. Schmaltz, Journal of Forest History, April 1975; copy in our Discovery Center files.

Popular fishing site to get a dam replacement

Cornwall Creek Flooding will be partially drawn down to allow for a new dam to replace the one installed in 1966 along Cornwall Creek, which flows into the Pigeon River about a mile downstream. The work is expected to take place in 2020.



Fishing on Cornwall Creek Flooding.

Photo by Dale Franz

The 160-acre impoundment is the most popular fishing site in the PRC despite its remote location. Water depths are between 10 and 20 feet, and about 25 feet at the dam. The bottom is mostly muck, with some sandy portions, and the bottom littered with logs and stumps from logging days. The water is dark from natural tannin. Conifer and hardwood trees surround the pond right down to the shoreline.

It is located on Cornwall Creek, which flows northwest from a wetlands on the east side of Osmun Road known as the spreads, crosses Osmun (sometimes flooding the roadway) and continues to the dam, consisting of a 400-foot levee, an overflow riser structure and outlet pipe. From the dam at the downstream north end of the pond, the narrow creek flows about a mile to the Pigeon. That

mile is the only place in the creek where wild trout have been documented. The flooding has been closely studied to evaluate the effects of stocking it with various fish and the fishing activity over the years. Its panfish community has recently been dominated by bluegill.

The small public access site on the north shore has a boat ramp for launching small boats, kayaks, and canoes. It accommodates about six vehicles with boat trailers. Gas powered motors are not allowed on the water. The site does not permit camping, but there are a few dispersed



**Cornwall impoundment and levee access
(creek flows right to left).**

Photo by Lisha Ramsdell

camping spots along the shoreline. A small forest road called Tin Bridge accesses the northern end of the flooding, while a smaller two-track accesses the south end. These roads are not plowed, so access is seasonal.

Tim Cwalinski, senior DNR fisheries biologist, explains department reasoning that this dam, unlike those on mainstreams, has only minimal impact in warming the creek water that arrives already warm. There are no turbines or storage-and-release operations that play havoc with aquatic life in natural rivers. Cornwall's dam has a flow of about 5 cubic feet per second, compared with the

old Lansing Club dam's 60 to 70 cubic feet per second on the mainstream Pigeon, so the impact of the Cornwall dam on the river is small, while providing a valued resource for anglers with a quality fishing pond in the heart of the PRC.

It was built with two-thirds federal funds and one-third funding from the State Fish and Game fund. The replacement is a project of the DNR, which is providing a special one-time appropriation of \$360,725 and an additional \$50,000 through the Dam Management Grant Program; of Wade Trim engineering, and Huron Pines and DNR Fisheries Division project management. The duration and timing is still being worked out. The DNR is expected to route a temporary detour for the equestrian Shore-to-Shore riding trail, which crosses the levee.



Dam on Cornwall Creek to be replaced next year.

Photo by Dale Franz

An “Old Cornwall Dam” on the mainstream Pigeon River a mile east of Grass Lake is notated on the 1932 Pigeon map (see article above) about two miles southwest of the current flooding.

A detailed report from 2012 on the current flooding is available online at https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2012-151_410165_7.pdf or by searching for the term *Cornwall Impoundment*.

Golden opportunity to get involved

Stewart Smith, president of Pigeon River Country Association, has issued the following invitation:

Saturday July 20 is the date for the Pigeon River Country Association annual meeting in the Discovery Center, 9984 Twin Lakes Rd Vanderbilt MI 49795, directly behind the DNR Forest Headquarters building.

Come out and spend the afternoon meeting other PRCA members, meeting the PRCA officers, representatives from the Michigan DNR, and even the PRCA intern. During the public comment period feel free to give the association your thoughts on the past activities, and more importantly, the future activities that you'd like to see emphasis placed upon.

At 12 noon we will start with a build-it-yourself sandwich lunch buffet featuring delicious Boar's Head meats and cheeses, fresh breads, roll-up tortillas, assorted chips, fresh fruit, vegetables and juices, coffee, tea, both hot and iced cold, water, and soda.

At 1:00 p.m. we will begin the annual meeting with reports from our treasurer, state forest manager, Discovery Center Steering Committee members and others, plus the public comment period. Before the meeting wraps up we will hold election of officers for 2019-2020 year.

You are a member, or could be, of a unique association in the State of Michigan. There is no other state forest in Michigan that is governed by a Concept of Management and guided by an Advisory Council as the Pigeon River Country State Forest is. Come out and show your support and interest in keeping the PRCSF the "Big Wild."

Thank you for your continued support and hope to see you on Saturday, July 20th.

--*Stewart Smith*
616 540 0092

You are invited!

Pigeon River Country Association
Annual Meeting

Saturday, July 20

12:00 noon: Sandwich Lunch Buffet
1:00 pm: Annual Meeting and
Election of Officers

Discovery Center
9984 Twin Lakes Rd
Vanderbilt MI 49795
(directly behind the DNR Forest
Headquarters building)



**Mount of a bear cub has just arrived
at the Pigeon River Country Discovery Center,
on loan from Hartwick Pines.**

Photo by Sandy Franz

Membership renewal reminder

Membership dues help provide a scholarship to a student intern who assists the forest manager in the summer, and help us protect the wild character of the PRC. Your membership expiration date is on your mailing label or email sending this newsletter. Please keep your membership current. Thank you!



Visit our websites at www.pigeonriver.org
<https://pigeonriverdiscoverycenter.org>

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