

OFAH ZONE "H" report for BPSA Stu Paterson – January 2020



“opinions expressed in this report are not necessarily those of BPSA, its members or directors”

1. **Grants Policy:**

OFAH has re-designed its policy related to handing out grants. I am told that from now on, groups and individuals officially affiliated with OFAH will get preferred treatment. This could affect the annual KIDS FISHING DAY grant BPSA has received for the last ten years from OFAH Zone H. This new grants policy was revealed at the winter Zone H meeting in Georgian Bluffs.

2. **Dedicated Fish Biologist:**

The new MNRF proposal to issue stocking clubs a pre-authorization (Licence to Collect Fish) for a club to move fish stranded during the spawning migration using specific guidelines that would provide a blanket approval over spawning time with minimal reporting required, is seen as a temporary and unsatisfactory solution to the issue of having a fisheries biologist nearby in Owen Sound. At the zone meeting hosted by the Sydenham Sportsmen we were told 75 spawning rainbow trout perished last spring because volunteers could not get the necessary approvals to move them to safety. This was due to the departure of the Owen Sound based ministry fisheries biologist and the fact that no ministry biologist was locally available to grant the necessary approval.

Outdoors Adventures member Doug Murdoch told the meeting “the MNRF is cutting left and right, poaching is out of control, Dufferin County has had no CO for years.”

Rob Robb, Sydenham Sportsmen’s Association hatchery manager stated “we need a full time biologist immediately to fill the needs of our clubs. Ours is the only zone where Ministry biologists are not allowed out of the office on field trips. We need an Owen Sound based biologist dedicated to our stocking clubs.”



3. **Wild Pig Threat**

After pressure from OFAH, the province has committed to taking new action on wild pigs.

As if crop damage and the risk of spreading disease aren’t bad enough, wild pigs harm the game species we hunt. They eat deer fawns and the eggs and chicks of grouse, woodcock, and wild turkey. If their populations expand wild pigs will push wildlife off food sources. By ripping up plants as they feed, wild pigs destroy the habitats that many animals rely on, especially small game and upland birds.

By 2018, we heard more stories of wild pig sightings and realized that we needed to take action. We had sightings north of Warton and in several other spots in our region including Mount Forest. Two recently escaped pigs were seen days ago in Lucknow.

OFAH asked members to share their sightings and immediately got reports from across southern and eastern Ontario. Our federation used those sightings to press the Ontario government into tracking sightings themselves.



The MNRF is asking us to report sightings of Wild Pigs directly to the Ministry or to iNaturalist Ontario Pig reporting View the Wild Pig Fact Sheet here and kick-started a conversation in the media about the threat of wild pigs to Ontario. As the number of reports kept growing, OFAH notified John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, laying out what we believed should happen.

Our message was that the “MNRF needs to devote serious resources and staff to eradicate wild pigs before they gain a foothold in the province”.

Hunters have an important role to play in reporting sightings but hunters can’t eradicate pigs and can actually make the situation worse. How ? The pigs quickly learn, they change their behaviour to avoid hunters, and scatter across the landscape.



Report a sighting

If you see a wild pig or have information about a sighting dead or alive, please report it to:

- [iNaturalist Ontario wild pig reporting](#)

- wildpigs@ontario.ca

If you believe you have seen a wild pig or signs of a wild pig, please include the following if you can:

- Note the date, and time of the sighting
- Note the location (intersecting roads, landmarks or GPS coordinates)
- Take pictures or a video, if possible
- Note the number of pigs and whether piglets are present
- Identify whether this was an isolated sighting or whether the same individual(s) has been seen multiple times

In addition, please email wildpigs@ontario.ca if any dead wild pig is found. The Ministry is interested in obtaining samples (e.g., hairs with roots attached) that can provide valuable information about the status of wild pigs in the province.



Current sightings of wild pigs

Information collected through [recent observations](#) indicate that wild pigs are present in some parts of the province. To date, the majority of reported sightings are from southern and eastern Ontario.

In recent weeks Minister Yakabuski acknowledged the serious threat that wild pigs pose to Ontario and committed to several key actions including:

- 1) a pilot study to determine how to detect and control wild pigs in Ontario;
- 2) looking at options to manage wild pigs under the Invasive Species Act; and
- 3) talking with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) about measures to prevent future escapes from farms.

Read the Minister’s full response [here](#).

“These actions are a major step in the right direction and give us hope that the MNRF will do what is necessary to wipe out wild pigs in Ontario,” said OFAH wildlife biologist Dr. Keith Munro. “We want to ensure the results of the pilot are used as the basis for a broader eradication program. OFAH will work with OMAFRA to ensure wild pig populations are not supported by a steady trickle of farm escapes.”



4. Government Firearms Buyback-Handgun Ban

OFAH has reacted to the latest federal firearms moves.

.....“banning firearms that are already restricted, is not only a financial disaster that will rival the failed long gun registry....it will do nothing to curb gang-related violence“

Brian McRae OFAH Partner Relations:

McRae continues “The Liberal government is moving ahead with its campaign promise of a buyback of “assault rifles,” which further allows municipalities to ban handguns.”



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's mandate letter to Public Safety Minister Bill Blair included instructions to:

- ban and buyback all military-style assault rifles
- work with provinces to give municipalities the ability to further restrict or ban handguns
- update firearms license requirements for ammunition imports.
- strengthen safe-storage laws
- develop a mechanism for suspending licenses for those who pose a danger to themselves or others
- continue to build a national system that allows for the flagging of bulk purchases of firearms
- impose stronger penalties for gun smuggling
- provide the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) with additional resources to detect and stop gun smuggling
- work to limit by regulation the glorification of violence in firearms marketing and sales “

Yet, the prime minister's letter ended with instructions to “Continue to protect the rights of hunters and farmers. There will not be a return of the long-gun registry.”



The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) remains deeply concerned about the new rules.

“The government's failure to tackle the root causes of firearm related violence in Canada is extremely worrisome,” said OFAH Senior Advisor, Community and Partner Relations, Brian McRae.

“Canadians expect more from their government; Canadians deserve more. Banning firearms that are already restricted, from licensed firearms owners, is not only a financial disaster that will rival the failed long gun registry, but it will also do nothing to curb gang-related violence or violence associated with illegal guns.

Asked why there was a larger focus on law-abiding gun owners than illegal guns, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness spokesperson Scott Bardsley answered, “Military-style assault rifles have been used tragically to target women and students. For more than four decades, police chiefs in Canada have been advocating for restrictions on assault weapons, and we have listened. As promised to Canadians in the recent election, we will ban military-style assault rifles.”

With the definition of “military-style assault rifles” being vague, there are additional concerns that semi-automatic hunting rifles, such as the Remington 7400 and Browning BAR, will also be banned.

Asked about this, McRae responded, “It is extremely ironic that the Liberals, who have openly stated that firearm classification should be done by the experts and not by politicians, appear now to be intervening and politically re-classifying firearms to fit their own narrative. Firearms should be classified or re-classified based on form and function, not by appearance, colour, or a curved magazine.”

McRae notes the need for a united front against Ottawa's moves.

“The government and ban guns advocates hope that hunters, target shooters and gun collectors are outnumbered, divided or silent,” McRae said. “OFAH membership makes sure we are not. All gun owners need to stick together. Our firearms future depends on it.”



The OFAH President added his concerns:

Rob Hare: “I am an honest law abiding gun owner. The Federal governments new legislation targets gun owners like myself and fails to address the problem of guns and gangs. The government plan to buy back guns is NOT spending money (my tax dollars) wisely. I am extremely confident that no gang members will voluntarily turn in their guns for cash. How will municipalities enforce a no handgun bylaw? The government could be forcing people who legally own handguns, to relocate in order to keep their legally acquired handguns. If the government is serious about criminal gangs with handguns, they must stop the leaking border. This must include native reserves!”



On the Ontario Out of Doors Facebook page firearms owners spoke up:

Mike Hoffman: How long will law abiding sportsman and gun owners be villianized by liberal governments and victimized by an erosion of rights for responsible ownership? PM Trudeau has a long history of appeasement to causes that do nothing to make Canada or North America safer.

Phil Smith: Thank you OAFH for speaking up. It's not just target shooters targeted by the government. It is all of us who have PAL's. We are the most vetted and law abiding citizens in the country . They are using us as scapegoats to pretend they are doing something about the issues of crime in the cities.

4. Federation Welcomes Action on CWD:

The province is ramping up efforts to keep chronic wasting disease (CWD), a progressive, fatal brain disease, out of Ontario. CWD affects deer, elk, moose, and caribou.

The Ford government released a NEW ACTION PLAN to control CWD. Conservation groups such as the Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association and OFAH welcome this action on a potentially serious issue.

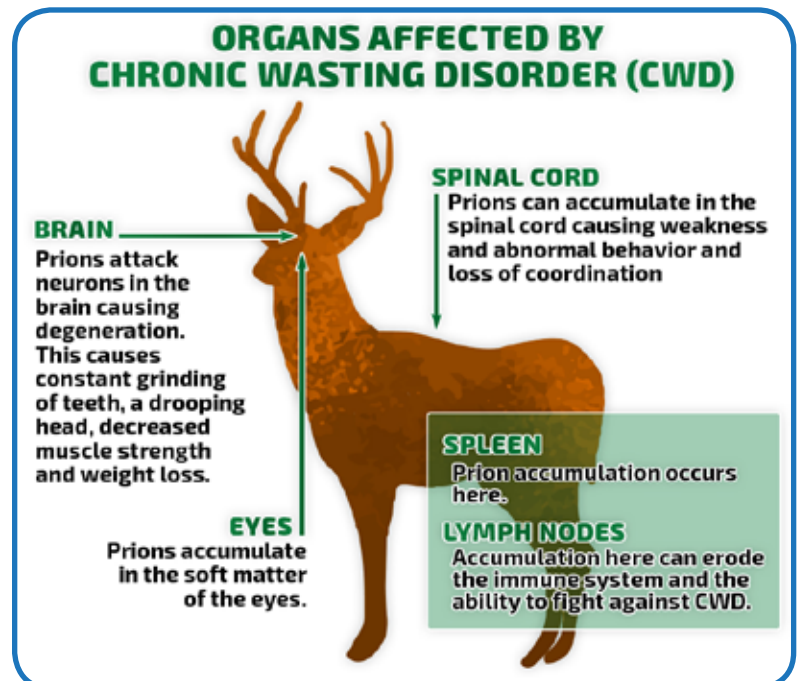
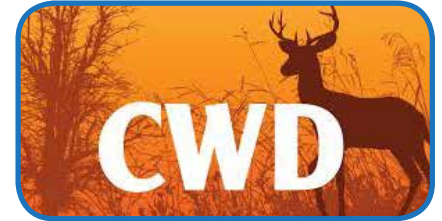
Rob Hare the OFAH President told me "This is very welcome news. The Ontario Government realizes the severity of this chronic wasting disease problem and is taking steps to ensure that Ontario is prepared should it ever arrive here. If it were not for the efforts of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and their partners, I'm not sure that the Ontario government would have reacted as quickly. I would like to believe that the actions of this government were driven by last year's OFAH conference on CWD."

Much of our 2019 OFAH Annual Fish and Wildlife conference was devoted to CWD. As a result OFAH helped form a multi organization coalition which launched a public information campaign to spread the word on the dangers of CWD.

Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry John Yakabuski announced the NEW CWD ACTION PLAN. It involves new laws. Queens Park passed legislation and developed a response plan should CWD and other similar diseases be discovered in Ontario. Yakabuski made the announcement after visiting the CWD testing facility at Peterborough's Trent University. The tour included viewing a mobile necropsy trailer used for sampling deer.

This new legislation will allow the government to create response zones in areas where hunters would be required to submit animals for testing. It would also allow licensed hunters to dispatch symptomatic wildlife in certain areas, while creating restrictions on the movement of live animals out of areas where CWD has been detected.

"These amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act are incredibly important because we know that a rapid response is needed if CWD is detected and these changes give the government the power to mount this response," says OFAH wildlife biologist, Dr. Keith Munro. "We are also very pleased that the Minister has committed to working with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs on the issue of deer farms, which are the major source of risk for CWD being introduced into the province." Dr. Munro says. "Prevention remains the most important priority as it is much easier to prevent CWD from arriving in Ontario than trying to respond to it once it arrives, but the announced changes make some real improvements that will help keep CWD out of the province." The province, which conducts an annual CWD surveillance program, has tested more than 13,000 wild deer and elk for CWD since 2002, all with negative results.





Recreational deer hunting generated some \$275 million for the province's economy in 2017. A great deal of the new CWD Prevention and Response Plan will involve engaging hunters, Yakabuski said, calling them the government's best partners for protection and eradication.

"We applaud the government for enacting these changes that will enable it to respond quickly and decisively to a detection of CWD," Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Executive Director Angelo Lombardo said. "This is a necessary component of keeping Ontario CWD-free and something the OFAH has been seeking for years."

The OFAH has been pushing for the elimination of deer farms in Ontario since 1991. Deer farms concentrate the animals and help spread CWD through their saliva and urine.

Asked what the government plans, Yakabuski noted deer farms are governed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. He said the MNRF will work closely with OMAFRA.

The OFAH publication Ontario Out of Doors has more on the latest provincial action on CWD:

<https://oodmag.com/news/province-announces-plans-to-thwart-cwd/>

For several years OFAH has been spreading the word about chronic wasting disease.

OFAH wildlife biologist, Dr. Keith Munro, recently spoke with eight different Ontario radio stations about the CWD threat. To listen to Dr. Munro's interview with CBC's Ontario Morning with Wei Chen, click here: <https://www.cbc.ca/.../15752884-ontario-morning-monday-decemb...>



Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

5. Zone H Chair Wayne Forgrave reported on an increase in the number of ATV owners trespassing with their units on private property and in country forests during the fall deer hunt. He advises ATV users to check the regs for ATV use in your local forests to ensure you have the legal right to travel there. Also make sure you get the owner's permission before driving an ATV on privately owned land.

6. If you know a student studying outdoors issues affecting hunting, fishing, trapping, the environment etc. tell them they may be eligible for help from OFAH.

Our federation and its partners are committed to supporting students and their research, which provides the science needed to inform and support sound fish and wildlife conservation management in Ontario. This year we are awarding three different research grants worth \$4000 each to university students researching fish and wildlife topics that are helping to improve resource management.

Please get them to check the link below

Visit www.ofah.org/grants for details.

The deadline is January 31, 2020



7. So far there's no word on the possible renewal of the COMMUNITY HATCHERY PROGRAM (CHP) by the Ford government. It expires this spring. The CHP is funded by the province and operated by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. It helps cover half of our annual BPSA hatchery costs.
8. The next two OFAH meetings I will attend on your behalf are the annual conference May 26-28 and the spring Zone H session at the Orillia Fish and Game Conservation club that's on April 13th.



The focus at the annual will be on tick-borne illnesses such as Lyme disease which can threaten all of us. This conference will bring together many groups and individuals concerned about the threats of ticks, Lyme disease and other tick-related illnesses. Discussion will be on scientific preventative solutions. Delegates will urge governments to be more focused on detection and treatment. Taking part will be representatives from healthcare, research, recreation, government, public health, outdoor education, pet health, tick prevention organizations and outdoors groups like ours.

There will also be the usual committee reports such as the Fisheries Advisory and other committees that focus on hunting, firearms legislation, invasive species and their effect on our fish and wildlife as well as an annual report on OFAH relations with first nations.

*...." It's not about the number of fish, it's about the smiles "....
Paterson 2020*

Stu Paterson reporting on OFAH for the Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association



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