

OFAH ZONE “H” report for BPSA Stu Paterson – May 2020

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



OFAH RAISES ITS VOICE ON LAUNCH RAMPS

1. In early May Ontario Premier Doug Ford released a framework for reopening the province following the COVID-19 PANDEMIC DECLARATION. While fishing and hunting seasons remained open this spring, access was severely reduced in some areas because of closures due to the pandemic.

Following the release of the framework, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) appealed to the Premier to renew our access to the outdoors, including re-opening boat launches, provincial parks, and Crown land camping as soon as possible during the initial stages of this plan. The federation suggestions emphasized provisions for “self-distancing” while taking part in these outdoors pursuits.

The launch ramp at Big Bay was one of dozens in Grey-Bruce closed during PANDEMIC 2020.

As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, OFAH suggested that outdoor activities like fishing and hunting can help jump-start the economy and provide social, physical and mental health benefits for the people of Ontario.

READ FULL OFAH LETTER HERE: www.ofah.org/covid19/phase-1-reopening-boat-launches-crown-land/.

At this writing ramps are opening, marinas are gearing for action. They were among the seasonal businesses allowed to reopen on Monday May 4 provided they complied with strict public health measures and operate safely during the PANDEMIC. Marinas were permitted to prepare for the boating season by servicing boats and other watercraft, and placing boats in the water.

BPSA was well represented during the controversy over ramp openings. President Kevin Harders joined a chorus of those who warned against mass openings that could result in dangerous crowding at ramps with little regard for social distancing. Kevin told the Owen Sound Sun Times all the anglers he had spoken with, are eager to get back out on the water to fish. “People are driving up and down the shorelines trying to find spots that they can actually launch,” he said. One issue he cautioned about is if one municipality opens up its boat launches before others that could result in an influx of anglers showing up at those facilities at the same time. On Victoria Day these anglers found a safe spot to launch along the shore near the Coploy’s Dock. That night theirs was the only boat out on the bay.



2. FEDERAL FIREARMS BAN: OFAH REJECTS OTTAWA'S APPROACH

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters strongly supports measures that would eliminate gun violence in Canada. However it does not support the new approach taken by the federal government.

The OFAH official reaction is “announced prohibitions target law-abiding gun owners rather than criminals and the root causes of gun violence in Canada.”

On May 1, 2020 Ottawa announced a prohibition of the purchase, sale, transport, import, or use of more than 1,500 models of “military grade rifles.” The announcement came during a nationally broadcast news conference led by Prime Minister Trudeau.



Most (1,050) were different types of nine styles of military assault-style rifles that were previously classified as restricted or non-restricted. These include the M16, AR-10, AR-15 rifles, and M4 carbine, Ruger Mini-14 rifle, US Rifle M14, Vz58 rifle, and CZ858 rifle, Robinson Armament XCR rifle, CZ Scorpion EVO 3 carbine and pistol, Beretta Cx4 Storm carbine, SIG Sauer SIG MCX and SIG Sauer SIG MPX carbines and pistols, and Swiss Arms Classic Green and Four Seasons series rifles.

All current and future varieties of those rifles are also now prohibited. The government estimates there are 105,000 affected firearms in Canada.

OFAH Executive Director Angelo Lombardo says Ottawa’s perceptions are “too often based on misleading government statistics and a lack of understanding for Canada’s existing firearms laws. Firearms should be classified or re-classified based on form and function, not by appearance, colour or a curved magazine.”

The government has repeatedly stated on the record that firearms classification should be done by experts and not by politicians. It’s ironic that Ottawa has chosen to reclassify firearms through Cabinet order in contradiction of the classification criteria set out in the Criminal Code.

An OFAH statement says:

“Canada’s law-abiding firearms community wants to see an end to gun violence as much as every other Canadian. Unfortunately, the federal government has created a dialogue that focuses on law-abiding Canadians, distracts from real issues, and creates a false sense of security in a plan that has little potential to reduce crime.

The OFAH has long called for investments that support policing and the justice system to crack down on violent crime and illegal firearms, as well as support programming that will focus on the social determinations and other causes that lead to violence, gun violence and organized crime.

This government announcement does none of that.”

“The OFAH and firearms community will always stand up against a firearms proposal that does nothing to reduce violent crime and everything to attack responsible gun owners,” explains Lombardo. “We have previously called for true government leadership on the issue of violent crime and illegal firearms. This isn’t it.”



ADDED FACTS ON FIREARMS:

- See the full list of banned firearms here.
- There are three main types of firearms licenses in Canada (non-restricted, restricted, prohibited).
- Restricted and prohibited firearms are already required to be registered with the RCMP, and their use is significantly constrained through strict regulation.
- Firearm ownership and related activities are becoming increasingly popular in Canada, with 2.1 million licensed firearms owners; more than 880,000 restricted firearms (April 2019); approximately 4,500 firearm and ammunition businesses; and approximately 1,400 shooting ranges including the BPSA range.
- All firearms license applicants are subject to a background check by the RCMP.
- License holders undergo daily ‘continuous eligibility’ screening.

To get a detailed summary on the OFAH’s position visit <https://www.ofah.org/2020/05/government-ban>.

3. Wild pigs and mountain pine beetles are among 13 species the province wants to officially list as “invasive.” OFAH welcomes the move.

Queen’s Park issued a proposal to do just that on the Environmental Registry (ERO#019-1162). The government suggests changing the Invasive Species Act to make the additions. Ontario’s northern forests appear to be the next feast for the invasive beetle following the path created by a warming climate. A native species in British Columbia, mountain pine beetle has move into Ontario’s vast boreal forests. Researchers worry they could cause massive tree die-offs first witnessed in B.C. and Alberta.

Wild pigs are smart. If they feel threatened by humans, they change their behaviour and become increasingly elusive. They shift their daily routines to being more active at dusk and at night, and they spend their days in areas with dense vegetation that provides cover.

The proposal also suggests new rules governing the movement of boats over land to prevent unwanted introductions.

OFAH says it will ask the province to consider how these Invasive Species Act changes could influence the enjoyment and sustainable use of Ontario’s natural resources. It is always our federation position to support government moves to protect our natural resources, if done in a way that respects the needs of anglers, hunters and boaters.



4. WILD PIGS:



In recent years there have been over fifty confirmed Ontario WILD PIG sightings. There’s a continuing push by the province to identify wild pig locations.

Jolanta Kowalski of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) communications team says there are several species of the beast, as well as hybrids. Wild Pigs have been seen north of Warton and one sighting near Tobermory and Lucknow and in several other locations in our region including in eastern and northern Ontario. Wild pigs eat almost anything, can happily live in virtually any climate, and their nocturnal lifestyle and elusive behaviour can make them very difficult to spot. Often their presence is only indicated by the damage they leave behind. In their search for food, they tear up crops

and pastures, causing tremendous damage to farming areas. They also cause serious harm to sensitive ecosystems by rooting in soil for plants, reptiles, and amphibians.

(wild boars - N.A Nazeer photo)

The MNRF has authorized private landowners and hunters with small game licenses to kill feral wild boars under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. There is still time to manage the problem. That’s why the ministry is looking to us for help by asking us to report sightings of any pig you see outside of a fence. Sightings will help the ministry gather information about the locations, number, and behaviour of wild pigs, and will help determine an appropriate response.



If you see a wild pig or group of wild pigs, take a photo and send it in to the MNRF and BPSA.

The public can report sightings to MNRF by reporting directly to the iNaturalist Ontario Wild Pig Reporting webpage (www.inaturalist.org/projects/ontario-wild-pig-reporting) or by email to wildpigs@ontario.ca.

If you have a Grey-Bruce sighting please send your photos to BPSA at bpsportsmen@gmail.com. Photos will be used on the BPSA website, Facebook Page and a future OFAH report for BPSA. For more information about reporting wild pigs in Ontario, please visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/reporting-wild-pigs-ontario>.

Another reason to reduce wild pig populations? They are highly fertile, and can reproduce two to three times a year, with an average of six piglets per litter.



5. **Due to the Covid-19 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC DECLARATION and with the safety of participants in mind,**



OFAH Zone meetings and conferences including the federation annual conference were postponed while some advisory committee meetings were done remotely. At head office most federation staff are working from home. Says Executive Director Angelo Lombardo “we are making every effort to remain full speed ahead with our conservation workloads. We are working to enhance the OFAH digital experience to keep you connected. Our OFAH Annual General Meeting will be a virtual experience. This annual board

meeting runs on-line June 18 at 7pm. Details can be found at www.ofah.org/agm”.

Lombardo notes “OFAH is proud of everyone in our outdoors community for staying strong during tough times.” The federation will advise when the zone sessions are re-scheduled.

6. Community Hatchery Program volunteers recognized: Postmedia and the Warton Echo weekly newspaper and other Grey-Bruce media have paid tribute to the men and women of the 300-member Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen’s Association (BPSA). In recent editions, the media reported on the volunteer effort of raising and stocking fish at the BPSA hatchery. The occasion was NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK and the articles referred to the 13-million Canadian volunteers who deserve “our coast-to-coast cheers for their dedication and generosity”. National Volunteer Week is designed to celebrate and thank Canada’s 13-million volunteers for their hard work on behalf of hundreds of communities.

During this week Volunteer Canada and the Ontario Community Hatchery Program recognized the hundreds of volunteers who run the provinces 37 community based hatcheries including the BPSA facility west of Warton. The BPSA hatchery is the longest operating community hatchery in Ontario since the sixties producing trout for the sports fishery.



BPSA volunteers gathered in November to stock rainbow trout at Gleason Brook.

On left, BPSA veteran stocker Gord Smith in action helping plant rainbow trout for the sports fishery. And Fish Committee Chair Ray Marklevitz and BPSA VP Mike Smith get yearlings ready for stocking. Since the sixties BPSA volunteers have stocked more than 4-million fish with each fish estimated to be worth 30 dollars to the community where it is stocked.



Earlier in Peterborough John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry described the Bruce Peninsula club as “a Community Hatchery Program supported group with 51 volunteers who donate over 1,500 hours a year to raising and stocking 74,645 Rainbow Trout fingerlings, 23,078 Rainbow Trout yearlings and 27,270 Brown Trout fingerlings a year” in southwest Georgian Bay.

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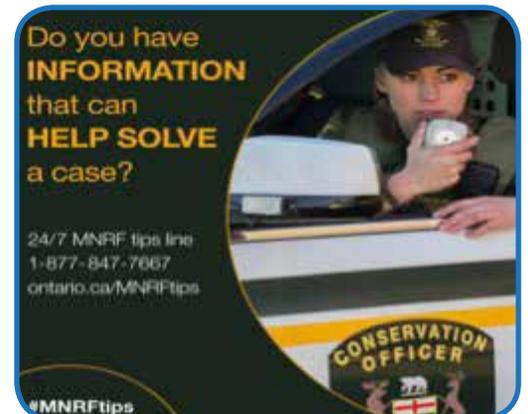
The Community Hatchery Program is funded by the province and operated by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Half of our BPSA hatchery costs are covered by the CHP.

See the Saugeen Times version here

<https://saugeentimes.com/volunteers-are-vital-to-ontario-fish-hatcheries/>

- If you see someone fishing in a sanctuary, don’t hesitate to call the MNRF Tips Line. Help protect our fish and wildlife! From April 1, 2005-March 31, 2019 the TIPS line received 109,811 calls which generated 58,749 reports for our officers to investigate.

The tips line is available 24/7/365. Every call to the MNRF TIPS line is reviewed by a Conservation Officer. All information is valuable and appreciated. ontario.ca/mnrftips



- In wake of the PANDEMIC 2020 declaration the summer Zone H meeting scheduled for Orillia, one of five federation meetings I cover every year for BPSA, is cancelled. The federation annual board meeting runs on-line June 18 at 7pm. Details can be found at www.ofah.org/agm.

At our last BPSA club meeting it was an honour to again be confirmed as your OFAH representative. You realize it is important for us to be at the table when our outdoors interests are discussed. I have been working on this file since 2005 and find it a valuable learning experience and very rewarding. We welcome your continuing input on these reports which are designed to be of interest to BPSA members. So at least for the next year, I will be on the job reporting on OFAH for BPSA.

Thanks for your support!!! And thanks to the editors who help make this report possible!!!

Yours in conservationStu Paterson.

Photos: Princecraft Boats, Paterson Media, OFAH, MNRF.

