

OFAH ZONE "H" report for BPSA Stu Paterson - June 2020

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

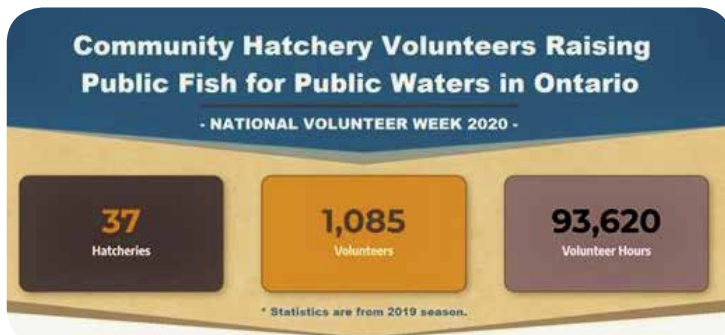


Community Hatchery Program-RENEWED!



There's good news from OFAH headquarters in Peterborough. Ontario's COMMUNITY HATCHERY PROGRAM (CHP) will be renewed for three years. BPSA is one of dozens of fish stocking clubs that belong to the CHP. It provides us with more than half the funding of our hatchery program. CHP also provides us with expertise and seminars aimed at improving the survival rate of fish we stock. According to CHP Co-coordinator Matt Burley the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) is working with OFAH on a funding agreement to support the program until at least until 2023.

CHP members have continued to show what Burley calls "perseverance, ingenuity and dedication to getting the job done under difficult circumstances". Our federation promises to look for ways to keep all community hatcheries strong during these challenging times, so they can continue to make their important contributions to Ontario's fisheries. Since the sixties BPSA has stocked more than 4-million fish to benefit the sports fishery in Grey-Bruce.



As you see it takes a village of CHP members province-wide to get the job done.

2. HATCHERIES ADJUST TO COVID-19

Community hatcheries such as the one operated by BPSA, have implemented modified work schedules to practice social distancing while raising and stocking fish in 2020.



Ontario fish culture facilities already practice hand and boot sanitation upon entering the hatchery. Surfaces are sanitized daily to prevent fish diseases. Modified fish stocking schedules, social distancing and continued sanitation practices have allow hatcheries to continue to release public fish into public waters in Ontario.

Hatchery Manager Al Sutter reports "BPSA has had three stocking sessions in recent months with a small number of participants taking part well masked and in safe socially distancing mode".



At Gleason Brook on May 8 we stocked 9,520 yearling Rainbow Trout.

On May 29 with help from the Barrow Bay Sport Fishing Association, we stocked 5,100 yearling Rainbow Trout in Little Lake. At Colpoys Creek on the same date we stocked 6,622 yearling Rainbow Trout. We didn't get the opportunity to fin clip our yearling Rainbows this year. Total yearling Rainbow stocked so far this year just over 21,000. We have approx. 8,000 Rainbows left in the hatchery to be stocked later.

Al emphasizes "a BIG thank you goes out to Mike Smith, Kevin Harders, Dean Lobban, Gord Smith and Ray Marklevitz for helping get the job done in what was often horrible weather".

Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association Vice President Mike Smith (left) and treasurer Dean Lobban were part of the 4 member rainbow trout stocking team masked and practicing safe distancing at Gleason Brook.

Our Brown Trout have been moved to a larger tank in the Hatchery and are growing in good health.

This spring rainbow trout egg taking sessions for many hatcheries were cancelled due to social distancing requirements. In coming months some hatcheries will have no fish to raise. Soon at BPSA our rainbow trout tanks will be empty until next spring when hopefully egg taking will resume.

One of our neighbouring groups the Lake Huron Fishing Club managed to get its spring salmon stocking in before the COVID shutdown. On May 7, in advance of the COVID-19 PANDEMIC DECLARATION, Brian Lang, Chantry Chinook Salmon Derby Chairman (left) and Kelly Mullen, LHFC President completed the task. BPSA usually gets our rainbow trout eggs with the help of Lake Huron Club volunteers. But this spring COVID-19 restrictions forced the cancellation of egg taking.

3. In recent months OFAH has spent much time and effort studying Ottawa's latest firearms laws.

The verdict?

The moves by the Trudeau government won't reduce gun crimes. In its latest report on the situation OFAH analysis highlights "severe flaws" in the new laws which include gun bans....

This is the report by OFAH staffers:

Many OFAH members and supporters have asked what we have been doing related to the Government of Canada's firearms prohibitions announced on May 1.

Much of what we've been doing on this issue has been behind the scenes, helping to set a stage that will allow us to continue to advocate on behalf of the entire firearms community.



Since the announcement, OFAH has:

- met with Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair;
- engaged in regular dialogue with government officials from Public Safety Canada and the RCMP to get much needed clarity on the regulations;
- published a FAQ to help firearms owners understand what is happening; remain connected with the industry to understand the ongoing and future concerns for the entire firearms supply chain;
- talked to hundreds of concerned OFAH members; and,
- completed a full-scale analysis of the amended regulations.

This has culminated in a comprehensive OFAH letter sent to Minister Blair.

[OFAH analysis on firearms ban](#)

This letter does not take a position of being 'for' or 'against' the firearms that have been prohibited by the amended regulations. Our analysis looks at the policy, its development, and the implications it will have for the firearms community and society-at-large.

Admittedly, the letter is long, and at times dives deep into the technical weeds. This is a complex discussion and this was all necessary to truly and fully represent the broad interests of our diverse membership.

In the coming weeks, you will see additional communications from us that will break down and update our comprehensive analysis and advocacy submission into more manageable pieces to help everyone follow along.

A lot has been discussed, debated and declared since the prohibitions were announced. Even if you have already made up your mind about the prohibitions or even the OFAH's positions and approach to them, we urge you to read this letter to see the full extent of OFAH advocacy.

4. An employee of the MNRF Tips Line reported she had "lots of calls on this issue" after a 200 foot gill net was installed on May 21, 2020 at the mouth of Colpoys Creek east of Warton.

The net was set up for 24-hours in a sanctuary contrary to conditions for net setting outlined in the latest SON Commercial Fishing Agreement. A young First Nations man told me at the scene he was involved with the netting. He laughed at my expressions of concern saying "we don't have to follow any fishing agreements, we can fish anywhere at any time". These agreements are simply agreements and not law. The Governance Council overseeing these commercial fishing agreements seems unwilling to penalize those responsible for such netting.

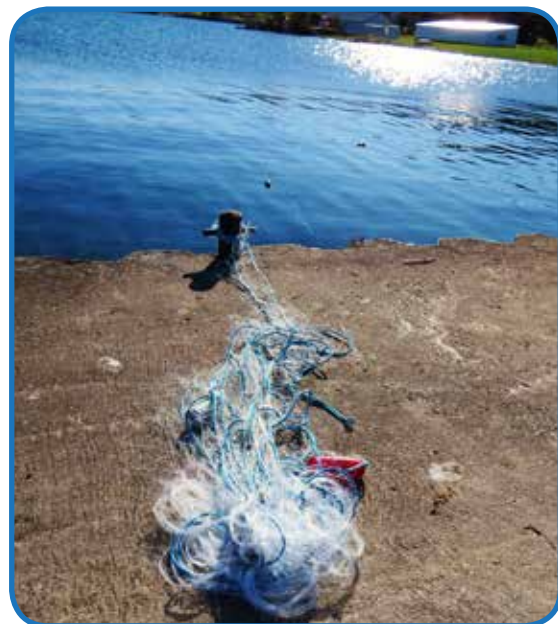
An OFAH executive member who is an expert on Aboriginal Affairs and Aboriginal relations with fish stocking groups told me "unfortunately the political pendulum has swung too far to the right. It is not politically correct to call First Nations out on issues like this. It appears that most politicians are reluctant to address concerns over the misuse of the natural environment for fear of losing their seats.

The Governments, Federal, First-Nations and Provincial, deal government to government and feel they do not need to consult with the public. If non First Nations people break laws or agreements, they are charged. Obviously not the case here..... I know First Nations have rights however some politician has to stand up and say enough is enough.

With regard to the First Nation person who said they can set nets where ever they want. He is pushing the envelope and establishing a precedent for the future. If DFO or MNRF ignore this latest net issue, you can expect this to escalate".

There has been no reaction to the netting from our Provincial or Federal Grey-Bruce representatives.

A retired MNRF employee told me "they did this because they know they can get away with it...they do it because they can.



OFAH President Rob Hare joined the chorus of condemnation. “We feel it is important for our outdoors community to know about these issues which keep on going year after year...the governance council which controls these commercial folks appears to do nothing to keep them following the rules”.

At a past OFAH annual conference a top MNRF official defended the SON Commercial Fishing agreements as being fair to all parties concerned. By the way the young man who laughed over the netting was reacting to a comment that “this is a slap in the face and an insult to the hundreds of volunteers who have stocked over 4-million fish in these waters”.

Our Bruce Peninsula club is 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. We boast the longest operating community based volunteer run fish hatchery in Ontario. The value to the economy where each fish is stocked is estimated at 30-dollars per fish.



5. How will COVID-19 impact fall hunting?

It’s a question on the minds of hunters “How will COVID-19 affect the fall seasons?”

OFAH has been asked this question hundreds of times and staff are working to get our members as many answers as we can. We have been in regular discussion with the MNRF about how COVID-19 will impact seasons, draw application deadlines and licensing services.

MNRF has responded and you can read the full statement at www.ofah.org/covid19.

The key points are:

- As of right now the MNRF is planning to go ahead with the fall hunts as scheduled
- The draw deadlines for moose, antlerless deer and elk have not been extended
- If the fall seasons are closed due to public health restrictions, the MNRF is considering options for reimbursement or credit.

While Ontario is currently in the process of re-opening, it is difficult to say what the situation will be in the fall. How hunters take part in the fall seasons will likely be affected by any physical distancing and public health guidelines that are in place. Some things can’t be answered right now.

The OFAH will continue to work to keep hunters up to date with information and advice on how we can all hunt and fish safely this fall and throughout the year.

6. Wild Pigs

These feisty rapidly multiplying beasts could become a major problem if populations are left unchecked. There have been wild pig sightings in our Grey-Bruce region. Please send your wild pig photos to BPSA at bpsportsmen@gmail.com. Photos will be used on the



BPSA website, Facebook Page and a future OFAH report for BPSA. Include a brief report on your sighting. For more information about reporting wild pigs in Ontario, please visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/reporting-wild-pigs-ontario>.

7. New Ontario records in two fish categories have been announced in Ontario Out of Doors (a division of OFAH).

Dominic Touchette of Summerstown, Ontario, caught a 2.52-pound yellow perch on Jan. 30, 2020. He was fishing on Lake St. Francis, which is part of the St. Lawrence River, when the 15.75-inch fish struck his McGathy's Slab Grabber lure. Its girth was 12.25 inches. Touchette's fish replaces the previous record, a 2.46-pound yellow perch caught by Joseph-Ryan Schnauss on Lake Erie, near Crystal Beach on May 27, 2018. That fish had a 13-inch girth and was 15.25 inches long.



Bryan Low of Ajax set a new provincial record for white bass with a 3.44-pound fish caught on a minnow. It was 17.75 inches in length with a girth of 14.5 inches and was caught in Lake Ontario near Pickering on Dec. 28, 2019. That replaces the previous record caught by Jim Zhang in Sturgeon Falls. That fish weighed 3.07 pounds and was 17.7-inches long with a girth of 14.4 inches.



For more info check out Ontario Out of Doors magazine.

8. The 2020 OFAH annual meeting

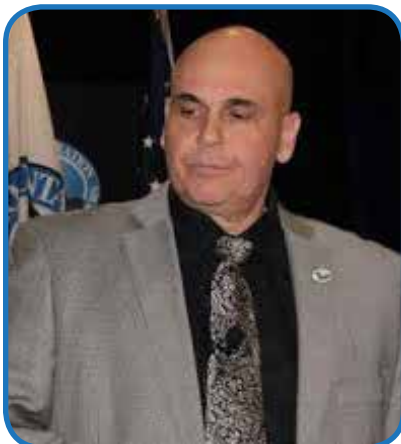
Which I usually attend on your behalf and which was slated for Huntsville, was switched to a “virtual meeting” due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. I covered this meeting on-line. Look for news from this meeting in a future report.

With the safety of participants in mind, OFAH Zone meetings were postponed while some internal meetings were done remotely. The summer Zone H meeting scheduled for Orillia, one of five federation meetings I cover every year for BPSA, is cancelled. 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 was a virtual experience on June 18. Lombardo says “OFAH is proud of everyone in our outdoors community for staying strong during tough times.”

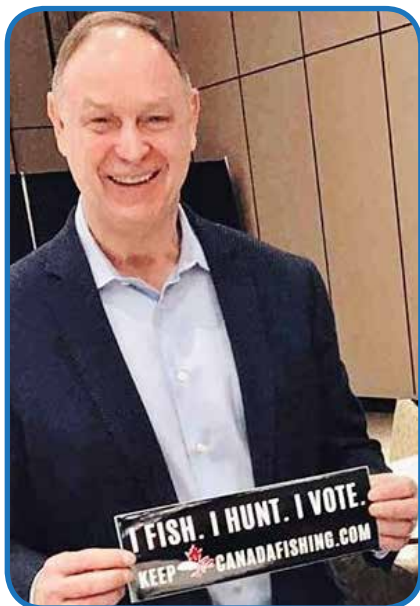
The federation will advise when the zone sessions are re-scheduled.



9. Volunteer Canada and the Ontario Community Hatchery Program recognized the hundreds of volunteers who run the provinces nearly 40 community based hatcheries including the BPSA facility west of Warton.

The BPSA hatchery is the longest operating community hatchery in Ontario. Since the sixties BPSA volunteers have stocked more than 4-million fish. The value to the economy where each fish is stocked is estimated at 30-dollars per fish.

John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry described our 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.

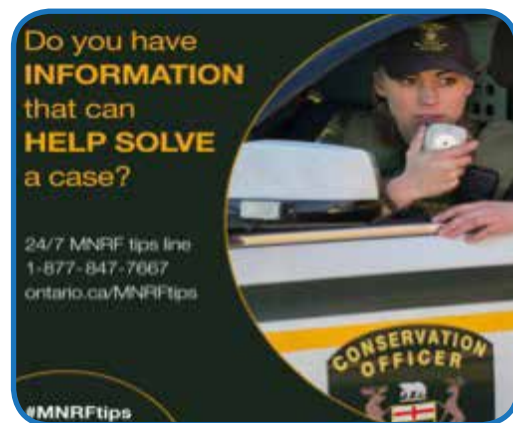


National Volunteer Week was designed to celebrate and thank Canada’s 13-million volunteers for their hard work on behalf of hundreds of communities.

Ontario MNRF on Twitter: “Do you have information that can help ...

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

10. At our last BPSA club meeting it was an honour to again be confirmed as your OFAH representative. It is important for us to be at the table when our outdoors interests are discussed. We have said many times “BPSA not being tuned into to OFAH would be like Canada not taking part in the United Nations”. I have been working on this file since 2005. It is a valuable learning experience and very rewarding and good for our club. 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 reporting on OFAH news for BPSA.

Thanks to the editors who work hard to make this report possible.
Yours in conservationStu Paterson.

Files from MNRF, Kevin Harders,
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