

OFAH ZONE “H” report for BPSA Stu Paterson – Aug/Sept 2020

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



CORMORANT HUNT IS GO!

1. For decades BPSA, OFAH and many other conservation groups have lobbied for this hunt. We pleaded to different Cabinet ministers arguing these birds have a major negative affect on fish populations.

On July 31, 2020 the MNRF announced a province wide fall season for cormorants from September 15th to December 31th. The daily bag limit is 15 birds under the authority of your small game license. Hunters are required to remove dead birds.

See the MNRF’s decision notice for full details, at www.ero.ontario.ca/notice/013-4124

The OFAH welcomes the fact that the government is finally recognizing the problems caused by cormorants.



OFAH says “It is encouraging to see that the MNRF has made adjustments to the original proposal in response to concerns expressed by the OFAH and others. Provincial government action on cormorants has been a long time coming for many OFAH members, and reinforces the need for persistence and determination when there is a conservation concern that threatens our fish and wildlife.”

BPSA policy on this issue is that we saw no need to wipe out these birds. But we have for some time pushed for controls such as this new controlled hunt.

Populations of double-crested cormorants are increasing in number and distribution across Ontario’s shorelines. Where cormorant numbers are high, they can negatively affect terrestrial habitats by chemical and physical means through corrosive acidic waste (guano), and stripping/ breaking tree branches. In some cases, cormorant colonies have destroyed entire island ecosystems. Many people and groups including those such as BPSA that stock fish, have repeatedly expressed concern over the impact cormorants have had on fish populations and angling opportunities.

The new regs. stipulate that “hunters can use shotguns, including muzzle-loading shotguns, not larger than 10 gauge with non-toxic ammunition, but cannot use a shotgun loaded with a shell containing a single projectile. Hunters can shoot double-crested cormorants from a stationary motorboat, meaning the motorboat is not in motion and the power to the motor has been turned off.





All other relevant federal, provincial and municipal laws/rules related to hunting apply (for example trespassing, municipal discharge of firearms bylaws, federal firearm licensing requirements).

When it comes to retrieval or disposal of the dead cormorants, hunters must follow additional rules, including having the adequate means of retrieving any bird that is shot; immediately retrieving the bird; dispatching the bird if it is alive when retrieved; and including that cormorant in their bag limit.

If a hunter chooses to not use the birds they harvest, they must dispose of the carcass either by delivering the bird to an approved waste disposal site that permits the disposal of dead animals; delivering the bird to a disposal facility, or using the services of a licensed collector, under the Disposal of Deadstock Regulation (Ontario Regulation 105/09) made under the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001; or burying it on private land owned by the hunter, or on private land occupied by the hunter with consent of the land owner.

2. FEDERAL FIREARMS BAN:

It's been over four months since the Trudeau government introduced a massive ban on firearms by amending regulations on May 1, 2020. There has been a significant level of misunderstanding about how these banned firearms were used, especially those that were previously non-restricted.

This summer OFAH launched an online survey of firearms owners across Canada. Now there is a report on the early findings to better inform the general public, political, and clarify legal discussions happening on the ban, which you can find at the link below:



The Preliminary Report on the Canadian use and value of non-restricted firearms prohibited under SOR/2020-96 This is the only comprehensive and cohesive examination of the uses and value of previously non-restricted firearms banned by the amended regulations. OFAH urges you to read this and share it.

This report is only based on initial results of the survey. If you have additional information that would help to expand the list of non-restricted firearms covered in the report, you can fill out the survey or email firearms@ofah.org or reply to this email.

Most of the firearms (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 has said that 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, so 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.

OFAH states:

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

3. The Ontario Community Hatchery Program (CHP) to which BPSA belongs, is an award winner. CHP has been presented with the DOUG CLARK MEMORIAL AWARD. It’s a Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) honour. This award was founded in 1982 in memory of C.H.D. Clarke, who devoted his career to the philosophy, science and art of wildlife management. At the time of his death in 1981, he was a director of the Wildlife Federation. This award is presented to a CWF affiliate for the most outstanding conservation project completed by its clubs or members during the previous year.



It was in 2013, that THE ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS AND HUNTERS, working with Ontario’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), launched a program to provide financial and technical support to community fish culture stations across the province in their essential work enhancing angling opportunities and species rehabilitation. Over the past seven years, the program has expanded its capacity, funding and outreach to community-run hatcheries: in 2019, it distributed \$150,000 in provincial operational and capital improvement grant funding to organizations from 37 communities that engaged 1,085 volunteers.

They raised and stocked eight million walleye, chinook salmon, coho salmon, rainbow trout, brown trout and brook trout into Ontario waters. CHP members do species restoration work with lake trout, Atlantic salmon and muskellunge. By sharing knowledge and technical expertise among small community hatcheries, the program provides support for fish health testing, proper egg collection, and rearing and stocking procedures.

Member hatcheries such as ours at BPSA rely on the program’s technical support, in addition to the much-needed provincial funding. CHP manuals and how-to videos on the operation of hatcheries are invaluable. The CHP website is a valuable service that enables all member hatcheries to share fish raising knowledge.

In recent days we learned the CHP has been renewed by its partners OFAH and MNRF, for another 3 years. CHP coordinator Matt Burley reported “We are pleased to confirm that the OFAH has a new three-year CHP Transfer Payment Agreement with MNRF ending in March of 2023.” More than half of the costs of operating our BPSA hatchery are covered by funding from CHP.

4. Wild pigs and mountain pine beetles are among 13 possible species to be listed as invasive species in Ontario. 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.



This proposal also suggests new rules governing the movement of boats over land to prevent unwanted introductions of invasives. 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 moved into Ontario's vast boreal forests. Researchers worry they could cause the kind of massive tree die-offs we've seen 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.

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.



5. WILD PIGS: you can legally kill them

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. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) says there are several species of the beast, as well as hybrids. Wild Pigs have been seen north of Warton, 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 behavior 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.



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 behavior of wild pigs.

If you see a wild pig or group of wild pigs, take a photo and send it 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.

6. **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 board meeting were postponed while some meetings were done remotely. The summer Zone H meeting scheduled for Orillia, one of five federation meetings I cover every year for BPSA, was cancelled. At head office most federation staff were working from home. Executive Director Angelo Lombardo noted “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”.



The OFAH Annual General meeting was a virtual experience which I covered for BPSA. See my report at this link: <http://bpsportsmen.com/ofah-report/> There’s no word yet on when the zone H OFAH quarterly sessions will resume.

7. Community Hatchery Program volunteers recognized:

At the next OFAH Zone H meeting I will report on positive publicity given the Community Hatchery Program (CHP) and BPSA. Postmedia, the Wiarton Echo weekly newspaper, Grey-Bruce This Week, the Bruce Peninsula Press, and the Saugeen Times news site, paid tribute to the men and women of the 300-member Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen’s Association (BPSA).

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

In recent editions, these media outlets reported on the volunteer effort of raising and stocking fish at the BPSA hatchery

It 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”. This thank you campaign celebrated and thanked Canada’s volunteers for their hard work on behalf of hundreds of communities.

See the Saugeen Times version here

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

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.

In Peterborough 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 celebrated and thanked Canada’s 13-million volunteers for their hard work on behalf of hundreds of communities.



Murray Garniss is one of dozens of volunteers who keep our fish hatchery operating. Here Murray is the final link in the stocking process. This photo is pre-PANDEMIC.

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.

8. 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

An advertisement for the MNRF Tips Line. It features a woman in a green uniform and cap talking on a mobile phone. The text reads: "Do you have INFORMATION that can HELP SOLVE a case?" Below this, it says "24/7 MNRF tips line 1-877-847-7667 ontario.ca/MNRFtips".

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9. I will report on this netting action at the next OFAH Zone meeting. An employee of the MNRF Tips Line reported she had "lots of calls on this issue" when a 200 foot gill net was set up in a sanctuary at the mouth of Colpoys Creek on May 21, 2020. It remained in position for 24 hours. Two First Nations men laughed when questioned about the action, then claimed responsibility for the setting saying they had the right to do it.

A MNRF conservation officer played down the netting saying "oh well they give some of the fish to the food bank."

The OFAH President Rob Hare was quick to react. "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....you may recall about 3-4 years ago at the annual we openly discussed the "unlimited net length" issue where the MNRF guy danced around trying to defend unlimited lengths ...disgraceful."

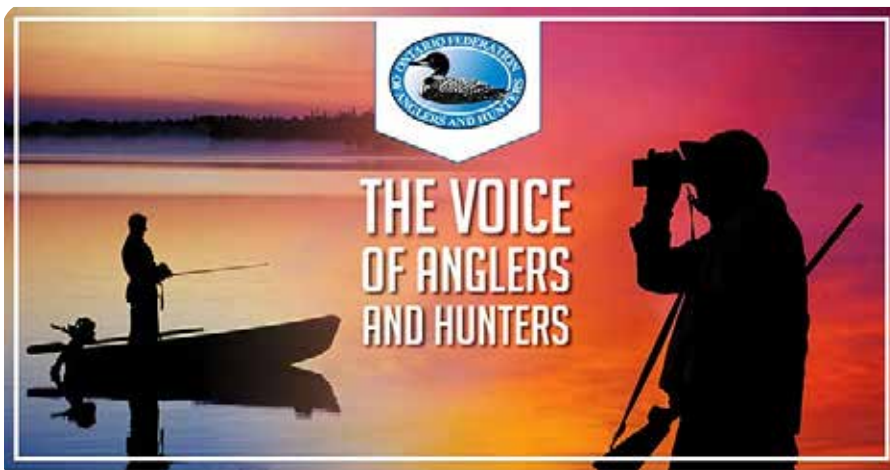
Another OFAH director familiar with First Nations issues said: "unfortunately the political pendulum has swung too far to the right. It is not politically correct to call First Nations out on issues like this. It appears that most politicians are very reluctant to address concerns over the miss use of the natural environment for fear of losing their seats. The Governments, Federal, First Nation and



Provincial deal government to government and feel they do not need to consult with the public. 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.”

This action was in a sanctuary where non-natives would be severely punished for fishing there.

It is clear that this First Nations action tore the scab off the already touchy relationship between fish stocking clubs and First Nations leaders. If non First Nations people break laws or agreements they are charged. Obviously not the case here. Our First Nations neighbours have the right to do such net setting. However some politician has to stand up and say enough is enough. This was not a very neighbourly thing to do.



I have been working on this OFAH file for BPSA since 2005. I find it a valuable learning experience and very rewarding, as well as being good for our club to be plugged in to what OFAH is doing.

BPSA saved some dollars this summer when the federation decided to hold its annual meeting on-line and not in-person as it has done for decades. So far there have been no announcements about the resumption of Zone H OFAH meetings which I attend on your behalf. So for the time being, we continue to monitor and report back to you as usual.

Thanks for your support!!!
Yours in conservationStu Paterson.

