

**OFAH ZONE “H” report for BPSA
Stu Paterson – December 2016**

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



This report includes coverage of the annual Zone H meeting November 19, 2016 in Orillia.

1. Conservation officers in Grey-Bruce came under fire at the annual meeting for “using poor manners in dealing with boaters and anglers”.

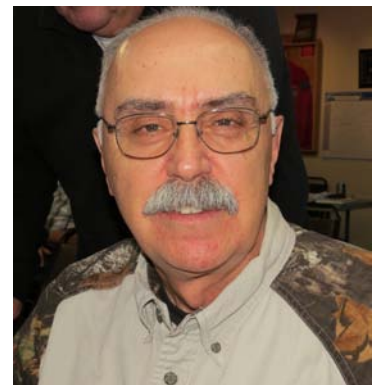


Zone Chair Wayne Forgrave told the story of a father and his two young children down-rigging during the 2016 Salmon Spectacular Fishing Derby. They were stopped by conservation officers and threatened with a fine because the kids were “too young and not able to operate two lines and downriggers”. The offices said the man was violating the rules and could be charged with using two lines illegally, when legally he was allowed to use only one. The angler Dan Bermanschlager was really angry saying he was just trying to get his youngsters involved in the outdoors. An inquiry into MNRF enforcement proved the CO’s were misinformed. A child does not have to be able to operate the lines and other equipment. The children were crying as they told their dad they thought they were going to jail. Chairman Forgrave asked “is this any way to get a child interested in fishing”?

Discussion of this took up a half-hour at the annual Zone H meeting. Delegates agreed the ministry should have apologized for the behavior of the conservation officers on this occasions.

Former OFAH President John Ford noted the ministry lost a lot of credibility due to these action by “overzealous conservation officers”.

OFAH Director Mike Evers, a former CO, reminded us there are a “few bad apples” in every organization.





2. Zone treasurer Wally Motz reminded us that there is OFAH money available to support conservation projects involving fish and wildlife such as stream rehabilitation, or to replace hatchery equipment. Clubs must clearly justify the value of each project and send him the completed application. I can provide you with his contact info.



Wally reminded clubs that have had OFAH funding for projects that they must (a) thank the zone in writing and explain how the funding was used and (b) if they want the same grant the next year they must apply again for the money.

In 2016 the BPSA Kids Fishing event received a 400-dollar OFAH Zone H grant. I will draft a thank you letter for President Jim and include the request for another grant to cover the event for 2017.

3. There was a long discussion about the massive moose shortage in Northern Ontario. Delegates expressed concern that first nations folks are allowed to fish and hunt in the 2 million acre Chapleau Crown Game Preserve. see this backgrounder

<http://www.northernontario.travel/algoma-country/chapleau-crown-game-preserve-one-of-the-ultimate-wildlife-adventures-in-the-world>



Moose hunters, just back from that region report hearing about one aboriginal boasting about shooting eleven moose. This as the MNRF sits back and can't seem to get a handle on native destruction of our natural resources. Canada's Supreme Court gives first nations and metis unfettered access to year round fishing, hunting and trapping with no limits set and no thought about future populations of creatures they are harvesting. Zone Director Jack Doherty reported a group of Southern Ontario

native hunters hoped to travel to remote reserves up north to hunt, but changed their plans when they learned of the moose shortage.

In one wildlife management unit (WMU 38) 170 moose tags were available last year.

This year the number was down to only 29. Delegates at this meeting urged the MNRF to sit down and talk to native leaders about this unregulated hunting in hopes of saving our resources for the future.

All delegates agreed "Ontario moose are becoming endangered".

4. From OFAH head office there is major concern by our federation over the lack of reporting on harvested moose as expressed in a report by the Provincial Environmental Commissioner

From the Peterborough Examiner:



In her recent Environmental Protection Report entitled "Small Steps Forward", the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Dianne Saxe, called upon the government to put words into action to monitor biodiversity, combat wildlife declines, control invasive species, and follow through on better forest fire management?

The large-scale loss of biodiversity is a crisis in Ontario and around the world. Ontario's most "at risk" species are snakes, turtles and freshwater mussels. However, many freshwater fishes, birds and mammals are also experiencing alarming declines. In addition, when you include species that may be at risk, we also find mosses, amphibians, lichens and many vascular plants. Overall, about 30 per cent of all species groups in the province are either sensitive, maybe at risk or already at risk.

Moose

Ontario's moose population has dropped by almost 20 per cent in the past decade. Declining populations are being observed across North America, including Manitoba and Quebec. Although no single cause has been identified, there appear to be common pressures across the continent that are driving the declines. These include habitat degradation, disease and parasites (e.g., winter ticks), hunting, predation and climate change. The latter is especially important.

Climate change is contributing to higher parasite loads, heat stress, decreased food availability and even increased predation. The optimal climatic conditions for moose are shifting northward. This is bad news for areas like the Kawarthas, where moose are at the southern limit of their range.

Ticks negatively impact moose in a number of ways, including blood loss. In addition, when the animals attempt to dislodge the parasites by rubbing up against trees, the resulting hairless patches can result in hypothermia.

Among other measures, the Ontario government is placing new restrictions on hunting calf moose by shortening the hunting season. There are about 98,000 licensed moose hunters in Ontario. On average, they harvest about 5,700 animals a year, although serious gaps still exist in the actual reporting of moose kills. Especially when we consider that first nations are not required to report their kills.

The OFAH issued a news release about this crisis-Missed Opportunities on the MOOSE FILE

OFAH replies to the Ontario Environmental Commissioner

Diane Saxe recently [released her first report](#) as Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO).. This year, it's called the Environmental Protection Report.

The ECO's report is an annual opportunity to review, comment on, and, when necessary, criticize various provincial Ministries on their failures to protect the environment. One of the primary focuses of this year's report touches on moose population declines.



On the bright side, non-hunters are finally concerned about Ontario's moose populations. Thanks for jumping on the bandwagon – hunters have been sounding this alarm for years.

However, just like the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), the ECO took the easy way out.

In her report, she slams the MNRF for making management decisions without adequate data and suggests that we need mandatory reporting of moose harvest. Much like voter polling, the MNRF doesn't necessarily need responses from every moose hunter in order to get a reasonably accurate estimate of licensed moose harvest — unbiased responses from a representative sample of moose hunters is all that's required for management purposes. She reminds us that Aboriginal moose harvest is largely unknown, but fails to provide any useful insight into how to address this significant problem. The MNRF could easily implement mandatory reporting, but it's not likely going to solve our moose problems.

She also recommends that the MNRF capitalize on wildfires to generate moose habitat, and to review the effectiveness of forest management practices. Again, these recommendations are nothing new. They echo recommendations that the OFAH has been making for years.

It almost seems hypocritical to, on one hand, commend the MNRF for abandoning their proposal to liberalize wolf and coyote hunting in the north because there was no “evidence that it would improve moose populations”, while on the other hand, to recommend more hunting restrictions, “whether or not hunting is primarily responsible for the decline”.

Let that sink in for a moment — she requires evidence to support more wolf hunting, but doesn’t require any evidence to restrict licensed moose hunting. We can’t ignore the unintended consequences of her recommendation on thousands of families that rely on healthy moose meat to supplement their diets. Her recommendation will also accelerate the decline in moose hunter participation, which will in turn contribute to the decline in funding available for moose management efforts.

The OFAH and moose hunters across Ontario are concerned about the health of our moose populations — the sustainability of the moose resource is paramount. The MNRF has implemented various changes to licensed moose hunting in the past couple years. The OFAH [didn't see merit](#) in all of the MNRF’s management decisions, but in the spirit of adaptive management, we need to give them a chance to work. The government simply can’t make changes every year without critically reviewing their impacts.

The ECO had a prime opportunity to look closely at the state of moose management and to provide some tangible recommendations. Instead, all we got was a regurgitation of concerns and ideas that we, the OFAH, and the moose hunters of Ontario have been discussing for many years. To paraphrase MPP John Vanthof, no one is more concerned about the long-term survival of moose than those of us who have hunting as part of our heritage. Ontario’s moose hunters will continue to do their part to reverse population declines, but it doesn’t appear that the ECO’s recommendations will help get us there, and in fact, will likely make things worse.

We invite the ECO to review the [OFAH's recommendations](#) on our website. We’ve been having this conversation for years with moose hunters and the MNRF – it’s time for the ECO to join that conversation.

5. In brief ...things I learned at this OFAH meeting:
 - natives on Manitoulin claim their treaty rights were never ceded on the Eastern portion of the island and they are requesting compensation
 - 90 per cent of Ontario Algonquin voters voted in favour of the Agreement in Principle of the Algonquin Land Claim
 - net pens that hold salmon before they are released/stocked have doubled the survival rate of chinook salmon stocked in Lake Ontario
 - Zone H OFAH has nearly 12-thousand members up slightly from 2015
 - OFAH now boasts 81,592 members
 - the town of Wasaga Beach has voted to allow housing developments on sensitive and vital provincially significant wetland areas

6. During the zone hatchery report it was revealed that the Sydenham Sportsmen gather salmon eggs for the Bluewater Anglers, the Lake Huron Fishing Club and for the SSA stocking program. The Sydenham club is still searching for a permanent home for its hatchery as the property now has a new owner. They may have to build a new hatchery building depending on where they end up.



7. The next Zone H meeting will be at 10 am on Sunday January 15, 2017 at the Orillia Fish and Game Conservation Club. The Sydenham Sportsmen will host the spring zone meeting on April 23, 2017.
The annual general meeting of OFAH is set for Mississauga on March 17-18-19, 2017.

Stu Paterson OFAH liaison for BPSA

