

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

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



This report includes coverage of the winter OFAH Zone H meeting in Georgian Bluffs.

1. At the January Zone H meeting, zone Fisheries Chair Dennis Wiseman reported that according to his sources: “relations between fish stocking clubs and First Nations in Grey Bruce are among the worst in Ontario.” Dennis made the comment sourcing it from a Fisheries Management Zone Council meeting in late 2019. Dan Elliott Chair of the OFAH Indigenous Relations Liaison Committee and Vice Chair of the OFAH told me this subject was recently discussed by OFAH and MNRF representatives.



After the meeting OFAH’s Matt DeMille reported:

“There continues to be conflict between members of the commercial sustenance fishery and non-Indigenous resource users. Although tensions remain high on all sides over real and perceived disagreements about fishery management, there is no obvious indication that the degree of conflict is on the rise. In fact, in many cases there is more and better dialogue today, particularly between the MNRF and SON, that will hopefully lead to better long-term outcomes (and a reduction in conflict). The Ministry is currently undertaking consultation on the development of a plan for stocking non-native species and Lake Trout in Lake Huron. This consultation will include discussions with SON, Metis Nation of Ontario, other First Nations, FMZ 13/14 council, and the general public. The goal is to merge these five consultation streams together to finalize these two plans. The hope is to do this within 36 months. The MNRF continues to advise all stakeholders and First Nation communities involved to exercise patience and participate in these discussions with an open mind and willingness to find a path forward.



The MNRF Upper Great Lakes Management Unit is also benefitting from two Indigenous Advisors who are working to improve relationships between the MNRF and First Nations with a particular focus on Lake Huron.”

2. **BEAR HUNT CHANGES:**

We had until February 18 to comment on Bear Hunting proposals that the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) calls “long overdue.”

The Province is suggesting a shorter spring bear hunt and bear trapping season on the Bruce Peninsula. It also hopes to scrap the Peninsula fall bear hunt. The plan was issued along with a proposal to continue the spring black bear season beyond 2020 for residents and non-residents in all Wildlife Management Units where there is a fall black bear season. The spring season would continue to run annually from May 1st to June 15th (except for WMUs 82A, 83 and 84).



MNRF studies show a decline in black bear numbers in our region. Ministry biologists recommend cutting back bear hunting on the peninsula to support what it calls “this genetically isolated population”. The Ministry proposal would reduce the Bruce Peninsula spring bear hunt season to one week from May 1 to May 7 in WMU’s 82A, 83 and 84. It also wants to CLOSE THE FALL SEASON. The proposed shortened season would “continue to allow for a limited hunt, while reducing human-caused mortality, particularly on female bears. These changes would take affect this year.



OFAH is being cautious on the Bruce Peninsula aspect of the bear hunt proposals. Federation biologist Keith Munro:

“The OFAH will thoroughly review the proposed changes to black bear seasons on the Bruce Peninsula. We have already requested the needed information from the MNRF to conduct that review. We want to ensure the long-term conservation of the Bruce’s black bears while at the same time ensuring that sustainable hunting opportunities are not being left on the table.”



Martyn Obbard a retired MNRF research scientist who studied bear populations for 28 years says “if the government wants to get serious about the Bruce Peninsula population, it ought to cancel the season all together.” Interviewed by Post Media he estimated black bear populations on the Peninsula at over 3-hundred, with less than 100 in or around the national park. But he said he understands numbers are dropping.

Province-wide there are an estimated 85-105 thousand black bears. Bear hunting of up to 10 per cent, is considered sustainable.

Under the proposals province-wide, most rules related to the spring season would be maintained. For example, the province wants to continue to prohibit the harvesting of cubs or females accompanied by cubs. Also, bear licenses and tags would be valid for both the spring and fall seasons. The completion of a mandatory hunter report would still be required. However, the MNRF is proposing to simplify reporting deadlines for resident bear hunters by having one reporting deadline in the fall.

The proposal includes rule updates to improve fairness. The ministry hopes to eliminate special black bear hunting opportunities for non-resident landowners and non-resident immediate relatives of Ontario resident hunters. The ministry would also require individuals or businesses to have a ‘License to Provide Black Bear Hunting Services’ to provide guiding services to residents within a Bear Management Area.



OFAH called on the outdoors community to support these proposed changes. Biologist Munro said we need to “move past any lingering misconceptions and finally achieve a fully restored spring bear hunt across Ontario.” Would should soon see the results from this consultation on the bear hunt.

3. At the winter Zone H meeting there was discussion about trespassing charges laid against a hunter whose dogtwo miles away....wandered onto private property. The case is before the courts in the Hanover area. It was pointed out that a conservation officer can arrest the dog owner if the owner’s dog does trespass. The message was “hunters with or without dogs, must get the permission of the property owner before hunting on that property.”



OFAH Sporting Dogs Advisory Committee chair Joe Wilson suggested our federation work up a pamphlet for hunters to clarify the rules on this issue. Joe suggested hunters need to do a better job of getting permission to use private property.

The Ontario Fish and Wildlife Act does give property owners the right to detain a trespasser until a CO or Police officer arrives. But the act urges landowners to be very careful when dealing with armed hunters.

For more on this issue please check:

<https://ofa.on.ca/resources/trespass-problems-tips-on-how-to-deal-with-trespassing/>



4. Still with the issue of trespassing a proposed provincial bill would go a long way toward protecting farmers and their livestock from trespassers. Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, and Bill Walker, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP, met recently with Grey-Bruce farmers to discuss Bill 156. The bill would protect farmers, farm businesses, food workers, farm animals and Ontario's food supply, against the risks of on-farm trespassing and interfering with livestock. Under the bill a trespassing hunter who mistakenly shoots a cow could face a heavy fine of up to \$15,000 and up to \$25,000 for later offences. It would protect farmers from civil claims by people who were hurt on the farm while trespassing.

Postmedia covered the story

<https://www.thepost.on.ca/news/local-news/ag-minister-holds-farm-trespass-bill-meeting>

5. The OFAH Chief Biologist Matt DeMille has outlined the federation position on the widely circulated petition protesting federal firearms proposals. This is the most signed petition in Canadian History. Matt DeMille:

The petition directed at Ottawa suggests any new firearms laws, bans, buyback programs or changes to licensing, go before the House of Commons to be debated.

The petition highlights how Canadian firearms owners feel about the government's plan: it targets law-abiding firearms owners, it will siphon serious government funds away from where it is needed most, and it won't take firearms away from criminals.

Says DeMille "we expect law-abiding firearms owners to receive open, transparent and respectful treatment from our federal government".



The full OFAH position is outlined at this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/ontario-federation-of-anglers-and-hunters/more-details-on-ofah-meeting-with-minister-blair-on-firearms/2047881381916026/>



6. At the winter zone meeting Zone fisheries Chair Wiseman reported provincial government financial restrictions are slowing development of the new Fisheries Management Zone 16 council. This council will oversee a huge inland lake and river zone from Tobermory to Windsor east to Toronto and Orangeville.

There is no word on whether the Community Hatchery Program (CHP) and OFAH involvement in it, will be extended by the province beyond March 31st 2020. BPSA gets more than half of our hatchery funding from the Community Hatchery Program.

The Ontario Community Hatchery Program (CHP) has issued its 3rd video spotlighting members and their fish rearing activities. This year the CHP which is operated by OFAH, boasts 38 members including BPSA. This latest video is about raising walleye:

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=299361634365170&external_log_id=34bf0b6e11b0a0c860bc163843df8819&q=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fcommunityhatcheries%2Fvideos%2F299361634365170%2F



7. OFAH Directors are watching with interest bills that would ban commercial perch fishing on the US side of Lake Huron.

The Michigan State House bills are on their way to the Senate. If given final approval they would ban commercial fishing of yellow perch, reserving the tasty fish for recreational anglers. The bills also would also ban commercial fishing for walleye and lake trout. The bills also aim to increase enforcement of regulations on the Michigan commercial fishing industry. The bills are a victory for sports fishers and conservationists, who hope to see the proposals become law to preserve the Great Lakes' fisheries. But the bills' are deeply troubling to Michigan's commercial fishermen, who worry the legislation would put them out of business.

OFAH reps say it is unlikely that such a bill would succeed in Ontario.



8. Our 2020 OFAH Zone H executive is as follows:

- Chair - Wayne Forgrave - Midhurst - on OFAH board**
- 1st Vice Chair - Mike Evers - Innisfil - on OFAH board**
- 1st alternate -2nd Vice Chair - Wally Motz - Port Elgin**
- 2nd alternate Director - John Ford - Owen Sound**
- Secretary/Treasurer - Dennis Wiseman - Owen Sound**

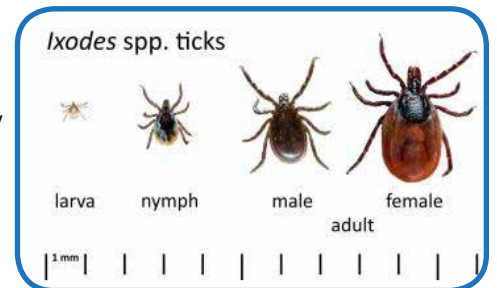
9. OFAH Zone H has just over 12-thousand members. That's up 2 per cent over last year. Our zone has 11,555 members who have been with the federation for over 25 years. The overall OFAH membership is 78,070.

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 on April 13th.



The focus at the annual will be on tick-borne illnesses such as Lyme disease which are a threat to us all. Delegates will urge governments to be more focused on detection and treatment.

There will also be the usual committee reports such as the Fisheries Advisory and other committees that focus on hunting, firearms legislation and invasive species and their effect on our fish and wildlife.



Thanks to the folks behind these reportseditors Jim Martell, Bruce Beacock, Al Hunter, Kevin Harders. And to the tech genius Kat McCulloch who puts together the final product you see today.



More OFAH news in March.
With files from MNRF, OFAH, Paterson Media, The Manitoulin Expositor, Postmedia

Stu Paterson reporting on OFAH for BPSA