

# OFAH ZONE "H" report for BPSA Stu Paterson – November 2024

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



## NET PENS FOR BPSA

For nearly a decade BPSA has been lobbying for approvals that would allow our conservation club to launch a NET PEN Pilot Project in Colpoys Bay. The aim is to increase the survival rate of brown trout we raise and stock. Our Fisheries Committee Team members have studied the issue as it would relate to brown trout, and conclude that: *"pen-reared fish returns to where they were released, are two to six times higher than returns of fish directly stocked in the lake...locating pens in harbours or other areas where there are piers, protect the fish from vandals...post hatchery fish in net pens over 6-8 weeks can double in weight resulting in a greater survival rate when released"*



Our partners at the OFAH are on side with what we hope to do. However, as we hear in this report from

ADAM WEIR OFAH Fisheries Biologist, don't hold your breath on fast approval by the MNR of Net Pens for our BPSA Stocking Program.

### -----Net pens in FMZs 13/14-----

Net pens are a hot topic in FMZs 13/14. While the OFAH has gone on record expressing to the Ministry that our members and affiliate clubs are interested in having a net pen program, the first step involves the development of a

Non-Native Salmonid Stocking Plan. This is created in collaboration with the FMZ 13/14 Advisory Council and must go through extensive consultation and engagement with the broader public including Indigenous communities before being finalized and signed off by the Minister. Stocking plans do not happen overnight. It can take years to review the various components, share ideas, expertise, and gather feedback to help shape such a plan. Although net pens won't be implemented any time soon, they're on the MNR's radar and the OFAH will continue to advocate for exploring the possibilities. ADAM WEIR – OFAH Fisheries Biologist

## 2. A WARMING CLIMATE - SPOILED GAME HARVEST

Rob Carpenter The Beckwith Butcher from Carleton Place writes:

*"two many kills are rotting before they get to the butcher....take care of your harvest."*

Every year, hunters lose their precious harvest simply through a lack of understanding of the basic principles in which we, in the Butcher Industry are well versed. Here I share some of the basics that I have learned in over 52 years of experience as a butcher, wild game butcher and yes, a proud hunter. Before the hunt, have your arrangements made for the butcher of your choice. When the sun is setting and you are faced with a long drive home,



is not the time to begin this process. Will they take delivery of the animal on a Sunday or after normal working hours? In what condition do they want the animal delivered? Have this worked out in advance. The carcass must be cooled to 4C within 8 hours, then it must be maintained between 0C and 4C. That can be a real challenge on a warm afternoon, are you prepared? Have your hanging pole ready, lots of ice, a shady spot out of the sun. You may have to cut your hunt short to get your kill to the butcher or a temperature-controlled cooler, asap.

Get the animal to a clean work area. If it is to be dragged, ensure this is done prior to gutting. You must gut the animal ASAP and open its cavity to let it start cooling. When the animal is eviscerated, prop its cavity open to start the cooling process. Hang it to maximize air flow. If you can't get it to a cooler or it is not going down to minimum of 4C, pack it with ice.



### Top mistakes butchers see hunters making:

- Improper cooling. Meat will spoil, turns green
- Not removing the anus and/or bladder, it will drip into your meat. If you cut it on the saw, it will contaminate the saw and then that will need to be cleaned
- Gut shot and not properly cleaned out
- Slashes from removing tenderloins etc. Hunters will also cut into the back-strap while doing these. This can cause bacteria to enter the meat which becomes contaminated and slimy
- Dirt. Keep as clean as possible. Dirt will not wash off and will stick to any wet surface
- Wild game tends to become slimy if washed and not dried. You have worked hard to reach this point of your hunt. Finish the experience on a high note. Treat the animal you have harvested with the respect it deserves.



A common mistake is to hang the animal by the head without opening the chest cavity and removing the esophagus. This causes a tent in which the heat cannot escape. Getting the hide off once it is hung, is a great way to reduce the temperature. Remember, Clean, Cool and Dry.

### 3. COMPULSORY WEARING OF LIFE JACKETS:

Should we be required to wear flotation life jackets in our boats?

A growing number of boat anglers and pleasure boat owners say YES! I wrote earlier this year about moves to require boaters to wear PFD's (Personal Flotation Devices). The OFAH urged boaters to take a Transport Canada survey on the matter.



Making personal flotation devices/lifejackets mandatory for recreational boaters.

The proposal could have a variety of impacts on everything from age requirements, vessel size, and vessel type including potential changes under the Small Vessel Regulations. Our current policies on PFD/lifejacket use are outdated and unclear. So OFAH felt the need to get updated feedback from anglers and hunters to represent them in the most effective way possible. OFAH's survey will help get a better perspective on boaters' opinions and improve your participation in the consultation. The info will be used to gather feedback directly from anglers and hunters who use boats.

Your participation will ensure that our collective voice is part of the conversation as Transport Canada considers these changes. Please complete the survey and distribute it broadly.

#### 4 TWO RODS FOR TROLLING GEORGIAN BAY:

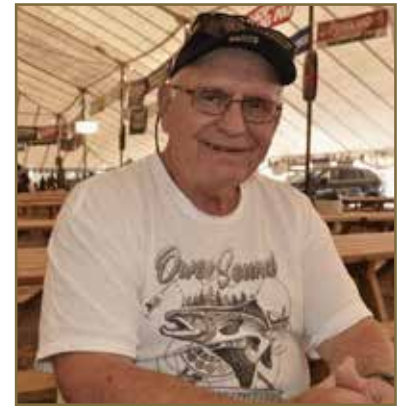
There are renewed calls to allow boat trollers on Georgian Bay to use two rods when fishing for cold-water fish. Speakers at the July Zone H meeting in Duntroon noted the unfairness of allowing two rods on Lake Huron but not allowing double rods per angler on Georgian Bay.

James Meger Vice President of the Georgian Triangle Anglers, spoke out on what he called “an important issue for anglers.” He suggested not allowing two rods per angler on Georgian Bay is totally unfair and should be allowed. He called on the MNR to change the rules and introduce two rod boat fishing for only cold-water fish such as salmon and trout.



Meger and other speakers noted if MNR enforcement is done properly, a two-rod policy would not negatively affect populations of bass, musky, pike and walleye as a conservation officer would see the type of fishing is targeting salmon and trout, not warm water species.

Former OFAH President John Ford said he supports a two-rod policy for in his words “two rods don’t necessarily guarantee more fish, they only increase the chance of catching more fish.” Zone H is already on record encouraging the OFAH Fisheries Advisory



Committee to try to convince the Ministry to allow two rods on Georgian Bay, for only trout and salmon anglers.

#### 5. FLATHEAD CATFISH: more invasives



*“The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is concerned about the introduction and possible establishment of FLATHEAD CATFISH to the Thames River...due to its size and voracious appetite, this species will out-compete and directly predate on our native species, negatively impacting biodiversity.”*

#### OFAH Invading Species Program Coordinator Brook Schryer

Anglers might know it as the fish that some catch by “noodling.” This is a practice where anglers submerge themselves and feel around for catfish, hoping to induce the fish to bite their arm, so that they can wrestle

the fish to the surface. We’re talking about a flathead catfish from Iowa. The invasive flathead, which is a popular sportfish in the southern US, can reach sizes of more than 100 pounds, and put a stress on the ecosystem due to their size, appetite, and aggressiveness.

#### One invasive fish species researcher reported:

*“this fish has a very large mouth and eats fish...in the stomach of a 75-centimetre specimen weighing 13 kilograms, we found 14 gizzard shad measuring 30 centimetres each. we should be concerned about all native species that they eat, but particularly concerned about endangered species in the Thames such as black redhorse and spotted sucker and gamefish such as sunfish, bass, and possibly walleye.”*

The flathead catfish was first observed on this side of Lake Erie in 1978. Two were caught



by commercial fishermen in 2011. After three were found in Lake St. Clair between 1989 and 2003, Fisheries and Oceans research crews found flathead in the Thames in 2016. There were also juveniles found in the Thames between 2016 and 2018 that showed reproduction was taking place. If you suspect you have encountered a flathead catfish, note the location, take a photo, and report it by calling the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711.

## 6. WHY WORRY ABOUT INVASIVE SPECIES?

Invasive species like carp are considered major threats to the Great Lakes' ecosystem. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission lists four Asian carp species — bighead carp, silver carp, black carp and grass carp — as particularly destabilizing. Why?

Because they grow to over four feet long and exceed 100 pounds. At this size they outcompete native lake fish that are much smaller, and have an outsized negative impact on lake vegetation, plankton and mollusks. All four of the species were deliberately introduced to North America over several decades for aquacultural pest control. But escaped into the wild.

None of the four species are currently present in the Great Lakes, but they have become more common in river systems further inland. Nearly 140 invasive species had become established in the Great Lakes since the early 1800s, mostly from Eurasia or the Atlantic coast.



A 2022 report increased that count to over 185 species, with 85 having been introduced via the 1959 opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway. The Seaway connects the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, but dozens of species have also entered the lakes in ocean vessels' ballast discharge.

Besides the damage to local ecosystems these creatures cause, conservationists estimate they cost U.S. and Canadian taxpayers and businesses \$200 million per year.



## 7. SHIP BALLAST:

New ballast water regulations designed to hinder the transport of aquatic invasive species within our Great Lakes will come into effect at years end.

The rules will require ships entering the Great Lakes to transition to modern ballast water systems that cleanse water of organisms before release. Before 2006, a new aquatic invasive species was being introduced to the Great Lakes about every eight months. The problem, which the Great Lakes Commission's Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species has been studying for years, is that Great Lakes vessels which use ballast water are moving these invasive species from one location to another. At the same time the Ontario government is investing \$16 million over three years to protect the economy and environment from the threat of invasives. The grant funding will help municipalities, conservation authorities and Indigenous communities help stop invasive species from establishing or spreading.



**Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources:**

*“Invasive species are one of the main threats to biodiversity in Ontario and they also have a negative impact on our economy...This investment is the latest step our government is taking to protect Ontario’s critical industries as well as our natural environment to ensure we can continue to enjoy the natural beauty in our province.”*

The funding will be administered by the Invasive Species Centre and Nature Conservancy of Canada. The money will support a comprehensive, Ontario-wide plan to fight invasive plants such as phragmites and invasive fish and wildlife.



8.

**Watch for an online showing of “The FISH THIEF”** the new documentary produced by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. The film outlines the importance of the work done by the commission. We had an exclusive Canadian premier of the production this summer at the Galaxy Theatres.

# THE FISH THIEF

A Great Lakes Mystery



The film tells the history of the Commission and outlines in detail the importance of the organizations work to control the sea lamprey. The Fish Thief is a result of nearly eight years of production. Filming took place across the Great Lakes region with the help and cooperation of fisheries biologists, Great Lakes historians, natural resource agencies, conservation and environmental organizations, sport fishing organizations, and concerned citizens. Without the efforts of the GLFC there would be few fish in the Great Lakes

**9. OFAH ON COLLEGE CUTS:**

Lindsay’s Fleming College suspended several outdoor/environmental courses despite holding an open house marketing them four days earlier. Program cuts include third-year Fish and Wildlife Technology and Conservation Law Enforcement. The OFAH is seriously concerned about the impacts of the cancellations at Fleming. For years, the



OFAH and Fleming College have enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship that provided opportunities and encouraged two-way movement of skilled workers.

**The programs being cancelled at Fleming include:**

- Fish and Wildlife Technology
- Ecosystem Management Technology
- Environmental Technician
- Environmental Technology

Graduates from these programs often land in biology and land management jobs with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Conservation Authorities, Ontario Parks, the Canadian Wildlife Service, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, private consulting firms, and non-government organizations like the OFAH. They are sought after by employers due to their expertise in species identification, water quality, waste/wastewater management, habitat restoration, and enforcement.



Another victim of the cuts is the popular Conservation and Environmental Law Enforcement (CELE) program. Ontario has been dealing with a shortage of conservation officers for years and the OFAH has lobbied governments to train and hire more CO's to increase enforcement capacity. The decision to eliminate the CELE program makes it more difficult to recruit high quality candidates into a career as a conservation officer or park warden.



The OFAH's Angelo Lombardo: *"These cuts reduce the pool of qualified candidates needed to fill natural resource jobs...Canada's biodiversity is facing increasing threats from climate change, invasive species, habitat destruction, and pollution and we are going to need more educated professionals to help steer our country through these problems, not less. The loss of these educational opportunities will be felt across Ontario."*



**10. BPSA PRAISED FOR BRUCE TRAIL PROJECT:**

Our club volunteers have installed two new BOOTSCRUBBER units in the Dyers Bay Road and Dyers Bay Nature Reserve section of the Bruce Trail, two of thirty installed on the trail by BPSA. The Bruce Trail Conservancy group welcomed the scrubbers: "We extend our sincere thanks to the BPSA for their continued support and to the land stewards for maintaining these valuable tools." The Association urged trail users to use the scrubbers to help prevent the spread of invasive plants. BPSA introduced the Boot Scrubber program ten years ago. Along with the scrubber brush, each unit includes a colour weather-proof billboard outlining the various invasive plants that are spreading in Grey-Bruce. BPSA has installed one hundred scrubber units so far across our region.



## 11. BIG BAY PIGS:

In October two 150 pound black pigs escaped from their pen in Big Bay. If they remain on the loose this could be the start of a major wild pig invasion which could easily get out of control. As the OFAH has pointed out “Pigs reproduce quickly, can have two litters per year with 4-10 piglets each time....they destroy ecosystems, damage plant communities and compete with native wildlife for food and habitat decreasing biodiversity.”

Wild pigs are expensive to control. In the US, they cost more than \$1.5 billion annually to the farming industry through crop damage, livestock predation and damage to equipment. They can spread disease such as brucellosis, trichinosis, hepatitis, African Swine Fever. So when I told a hunting friend about the escape, he suggested we hunt them.

I replied “*that’s not the way to go.*”

Hunting is not the solution to this problem and will make things much worse. Research and management experience from provinces and states that have been dealing with wild pigs for years, have shown that hunters removing individual pigs has minimal effect on the population and instead breaks up groups of pigs and makes them very wary. If you see a wild pig, any pig outside of a fence or have information about a sighting, please report it using one of the following methods:

Email: [wildpireportinggs@ontario.ca](mailto:wildpireportinggs@ontario.ca) or

call: 1-833-933-2355 or contact iNaturalist Ontario wild pig reporting iNaturalist Ontario wild pig



## 11. NEW BALL GAME AT OFAH:



The vote by OFAH members to bifurcate or separate the OFAH into two distinct organizations, passed with 95% support during a Special Members’ Meeting on October 3, 2024. With this confirmation from members, OFAH moves forward to establish two distinct entities:

### **OFAH Membership and OFAH Foundation.**

As was explained during the member consultation process, this new structure will allow the OFAH to better focus on member services and charitable efforts.

**From the OFAH Executive Director:**



*“We will provide more information on what this means for you as a member, and how each entity will serve the broader mission of OFAH, but I want you to know that no action is required by you. I want to take the opportunity to say thank you to everyone involved. This marks a major milestone for the OFAH and we couldn’t have gotten here without your involvement and support. Whether you attended either of the online town hall sessions, called or e-mailed with your questions, reviewed the proposals to stay informed, or simply continued to show your support of the organization – thank you. I appreciate your commitment to helping us shape the future of OFAH. We have great things ahead and we are happy to have you on this journey with us. Stay tuned for more!”*

Yours in conservation,  
Matt DeMille, M.Sc. Executive Director  
Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

**I hope to have one more OFAH report for BPSA before Christmas.**

In the meantime enjoy your fall hunting and fishing outings. Whether it be for rainbow trout, walleye, pike, deer, elk, moose, caribou, ducks, geese or wild turkeys. Some feel that hunting and fishing are not necessarily about harvesting. These outdoors pursuits are about appreciating being outdoors, enjoying the fresh air and the scenery and about sharing the experience with other like minded individuals.

That’s all for now.

*Stu Paterson OFAH rep for BPSA since 2003.*

