

OFAH ZONE "H"

report for BPSA

Stu Paterson – May 2025

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



1. **SAVED - THE GREAT LAKES LAMPREY FIGHT**

Efforts to control Great-Lakes sea lamprey, on the U.S. side of the Great Lakes are a go, more than a month behind schedule – after the Trump administration reversed thousands of firings that had threatened the program.

The news came as a relief for the sports and commercial fisheries communities.

Every year treating the region's rivers with lamprey-killing chemicals is the only way to keep the eel-like invasive fish from eradicating Great Lakes species such as whitefish, walleye, salmon and trout.

It was quite a drama.

Soon after U.S. President Trump took office, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's control program was caught in the crosshairs of Trump's deploying Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency to "significantly reduce the size of government."

14 US Fish & Wildlife Service employees who implement the lamprey control program were fired in a Valentine's Day weekend purge that also affected thousands nationally. The agency was also forbidden from hiring dozens of seasonal workers for the lamprey program, prompting officials who oversee it to question whether control efforts could take place at all this year.

However, the effort was saved after a U.S. federal judge ordered the rehiring of thousands of federal workers, ruling that the mass firings were illegal. The Trump team insists that a glut of federal workers is ballooning the national debt, so it is appealing to the US Supreme Court.

The Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel hailed the reversal: "We spoke up and fought back. Now critical programs are being reinstated."

Greg McClinchey is the legislative affairs and policy director for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Can-AM body that oversees lamprey control efforts: "Our teams are putting on their running shoes and running as hard as they can to get what must be done, done."

The lamprey control program relies on an army of Canadian Fisheries and Oceans Canada workers and US Fish and Wildlife Services technicians.



They are specially trained fanning out across hundreds of rivers each year, dosing them with a chemical called TFM that kills lamprey while sparing other species. Usually, crews begin treating rivers in April. This year, the program in early April began re-hiring fired staff.

McClinchey said *“Not only are we trying to figure out how to best overcome the loss of six weeks of programming preparation, but we also have to determine how many of those people will come back.”* *“So we’re cautiously optimistic, but where we are right now is assessing where we’re at, assessing what staff resources will actually be available, and then what the program will look like going forward.”*



The work of the commission protects a multibillion-dollar fishery that would collapse if lamprey were allowed to proliferate. The Canadian lamprey control schedule has gone ahead and was not affected by the Trump antics.

2. FISH SHUT DOWN BRUCE NUCLEAR UNIT:

An estimated 5 to 6 million gizzard shad clogged water intakes at the giant Bruce Nuclear Plant, forcing a shutdown of the plant’s Unit Two generator for a week-and-a-half.

The plant’s water intake system was overwhelmed by the fish which are attracted to warm temperatures.

Now environmentalists including biologists at OFAH, are questioning Bruce Nuclear about “potential impacts to aquatic life due to the artificial environment at the Bruce site.”



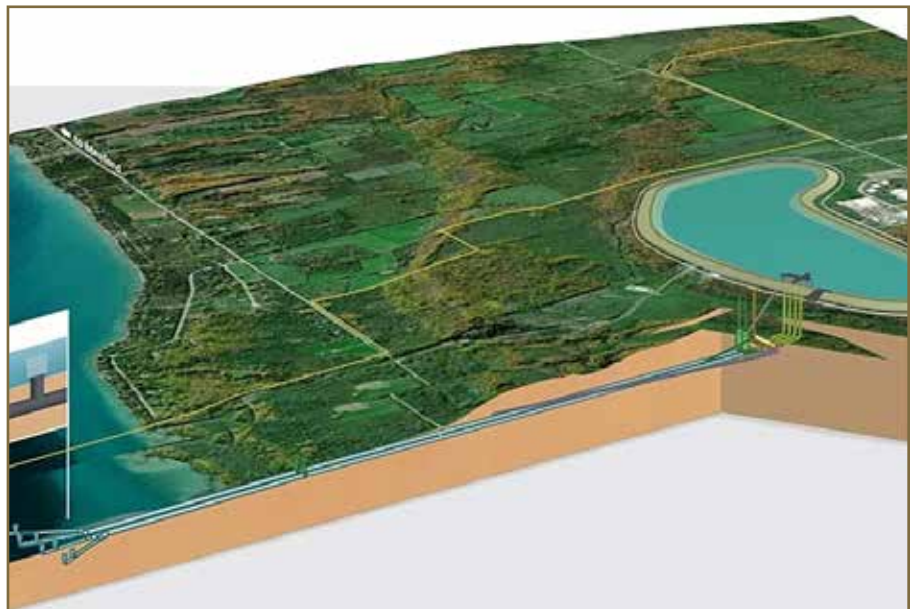
Large numbers of Gizzard Shad were seen in recent years in Lake Huron including around Bruce Power. This is related to their high rate of reproduction and warmer lake water temperatures in the lake and near the plant.

Gizzard Shad are naturally sensitive to cold temperatures and can experience mass die-off in the wild.

Bruce Power says: “the station’s water intake structure draws in lake water which cools steam in the plant’s condensers...the steam propels turbines to spin and in turn, generate electricity...despite barriers fish do still make it into the forebay...most fish bigger than 20 millimetres are able to swim out of the current created by the inflow....some fish may still be drawn down the intake tunnel and into the pump house, where they get stuck on screens used to catch debris.”

One environmentalist Clair Balfour points out that the Bruce Nuclear Plant is 48 percent owned by TC Energy which hopes to build a giant pumped storage electric plant at the Meaford Military Base.

Balfour and Save Georgian Bay have voiced concerns about harms to aquatic life in Georgian Bay from the pumped storage plant. They point to a massive fish kill at a similar plant in Michigan where a lawsuit stopped 1.5 million fish a year from being sucked into that plant’s intakes.



Gizzard shad are a deep body fish that is a member of the herring family. The silver fish get their name because they have a gizzard, a sack filled with rocks or sand that helps break down food. The fish is common across the U.S. and parts of Canada, including Lake Huron, living along the shores of big lakes, bays and large rivers. They spawn in large numbers and form vast schools.

They are sensitive to prolonged cold and water temperature changes, which result in a physiological shock response that has led to large population level die-offs in cold winters.

One unanswered question remains. How many fish of the types desired by the sports-fishing community, such as trout and salmon, are killed each year by the Bruce-Power intake system.



3. FISHERIES & OCEANS UNDER FIRE FOR SLOPPY CLEANUP:

Pike Bay, Ontario, Howdenvale Dock-

For the fourth time in a year, a commercial fishing boat sank in waters north of Wiarton. The sinkings in 2024 cost taxpayers over 50-thousand dollars for the cleanup.

The commercial fisher involved in one of last year's sinkings claimed he could not afford the cost of the cleanup.

It is well known that the owners of these commercial vessels are not popular in this region as annually, they gill net thousands of fish stocked for the sports fishery.

There is no word on how much fuel or oil leaked in this latest event which was a partial sinking.

Resident Pat Flennicken spoke out for Pike Bay residents living near the Howdenvale dock as well as those who use the water for drinking, fishing and boating.

"Look at the mess left behind from the removal of this boat. Garbage absorbing pads floating in the water. The place still stinks of diesel fuel. I have forwarded these pictures to my contact at ocean and fisheries Canada. I won't be letting my kids fish off this dock in the spring. People should definitely not eat the fish. And when the ice melts the contamination will spread through the bay. How do they do a proper clean up of the fuel when there's ice. Our poor bay"!!!

If the boat owner can't afford the cleanup of spilled diesel fuel, under law, taxpayers will pay.

The Canadian Coast Guard couldn't say if this latest sinking was sabotage or a maintenance issue.

Photos Pat Flennicken



4. ATTRACTING VOLUNTEERS FOR FISH STOCKING:

The Community Hatchery Program (CHP) held a one-day seminar in Kincardine on how community hatcheries can improve their methods of attracting and retaining volunteers.

BPSA member Scott Seibert and yours truly attended.

The session, which included representatives from a dozen regional volunteer-run hatcheries, is another example of the good work done by the Community Hatchery Program. Scott will share some of the wisdom he gained from the consultants who conducted the meeting.



40 community hatcheries are part of the hatchery program. It provides partial operational funding as well as improvement grants for member hatcheries. Queen's Park is spending \$1,045,500.00 in funding over three years to support the CHP. \$348,500 per year allows the program to continue supporting community hatcheries such as ours at BPSA as well as those of the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association, the Lake Huron Fishing Club and the Georgian Triangle Anglers. CHP is funded by the Province, and delivered by the OFAH.



CHP co-ordinator Matt Burley promises more meetings of member hatcheries. One that would be welcomed, would be on how we can improve the survival rate of fish we stock. Our 40 CHP hatcheries stock between 5 and 8 million fish a year.



5. ILLEGAL ACTIONS BY COMMERCIAL FISHERS

OFAH confirms that the Ontario government continues to safeguard Lake Huron fish populations by ensuring commercial fishers obey the rules and follow their licence conditions.

The Purvis Bros. Limited of Gore Bay pleaded guilty to failing to comply with the conditions of their commercial fishing licence. The company was fined \$3,755.

Anthony Bell of Little Current and Kenneth Smith of Kagawong, boat captains who were employed by The Purvis Bros. pleaded guilty to the same offence. Bell was fined \$615 and Smith was fined \$1,130.

The court heard that a conservation officer conducted an audit of the daily catch reports submitted by The Purvis Bros. Limited for the 2022 commercial fishing season. The



audit identified numerous commercial fishing licence conditions that were not met. A Justice of the Peace heard the case in the Ontario Court of Justice, Gore Bay.

To report a natural resource problem or provide information about an unsolved case, you can call the ministry TIPS line toll free at 1-877-847-7667. You can also call Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-TIPS. For more information about unsolved cases, please visit ontario.ca/mnrtps.



6. FISH TAGGING - Georgian Bay / Lake Huron

Help the Ministry of Natural Resources with its fish research.

You can report a tagged fish you have caught. When you report a fish tag, the Ministry will ask you to provide the following information:

- when and where you caught the tagged fish
- the fish's unique tag identification number
- whether you harvested (kept) or released the fish

This important information allows biologists and researchers to better understand our fish populations and develop science-based policy, fishing regulations and conservation initiatives.

Caught a tagged fish? Please report it using the following form:

Report a fish tag

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/fish-tags>



7. OFAH CONSERVATION AUCTION A SUCCESS:

It was "a love-in for conservation."

OFAH supporters and those who back the conservation efforts of the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association (SSA), gathered in March for a fun-filled fund-raising evening. It was the 28th Annual OFAH/Owen Sound Conservation Dinner and Auction.

The Rutherford Room at the Bayshore Community Centre was jammed for this joy-filled evening with hundreds of items up for bid and available in several draws. There were raffles, live and silent auctions, top quality door prizes and tons of outdoors stories shared.

Outdoors folks came from as far away as Midland, Orangeville and Kincardine to take part. Attendees won hundreds of fishing, hunting, boating, camping and other items related to the outdoors lifestyle. There were kayaks, canoes, trolling motors, down-riggers, fishing and hunting equipment, fishing and hunting trips and outdoors art.

Years-ago province-wide, there were dozens of these OFAH sanctioned Conservation Dinners and Auctions. The federation's Giselle Hatton told me *"This is the only one, the only surviving Conservation Dinner in the province. We at OFAH are very encouraged with the enthusiasm we have witnessed every year at these Owen Sound events."*

The OFAH Executive Director Matt Demille noted *"Money raised at these events help local conservation projects. Each federation event benefits the community by providing outdoor education and recreation for people of all ages."* DeMille

thanked all involved and invited anyone keen on launching an OFAH Conservation Dinner in their community, to contact him at Federation headquarters in Peterborough.

It does take an army of volunteers to stage events like this.



Sydenham Sportsmen's Association Vice-President Chris Geberdt told those gathered for the fund raiser "we couldn't mount a successful event like this without our volunteers, our sponsors and you who invest your time and money in the cause of conservation."



The 600 member Sydenham Sportsmen's Association operates many outdoors related programs including three volunteer run fish hatcheries. The club's Fish Culture Program dates back to 1982. In March one hatchery building suffered a roof collapse after a heavy snowfall. Insurance would not cover the full cost of repairs.

A community-based hatchery roof repair fund raiser was launched. By the time the Conservation Dinner was over the hatchery rebuild fund

totalled over \$10,000.00 (update needed) had added several thousand dollars. And several Conservation Dinner prize winners donated half their winnings back to the SSA to support the hatchery repairs.

Each year the SSA Salmon Spectacular Team visits 30 trade shows promoting the big derby, which is known as the largest event of the year in Grey-Bruce.

One member of the Spectacular traveling promotion team Earl Jack....was honoured at this year's Conservation Dinner.



SSA mounts the 2025 annual Salmon Spectacular Derby starting August 22nd.

8. WIARTON HARBOUR TO BE DREDGED:

"we are going ahead with dredging this year". That's what South Bruce Peninsula Mayor Jay Kirkland announcement at the annual Wiarton District Chamber of Commerce "Breakfast With The Mayor." Kirkland said our town council knew the sandbar at the end of the park dock had been building up since the last dredging. In wake of plunging water levels, it's only one foot deep at one section. Most boats that use the harbour need at least two feet to allow them to move from the launch to the big water. The Mayor told the meeting: "we are waiting for several approvals, and we don't know how long that will take."



This dredging comes as a relief to anglers and boaters who use the Warton ramp and harbour which gives them access to Colpoys Bay. The Bluewater Park harbour and launch ramp see thousands of boat launches and retrievals each year. By the way one wonders why the ramp docks are not installed the moment the ice disappears from the Bluewater Park harbour. And oh yes, the Mayor says the town is considering re-introducing a “fee system” for boat launching at the park. If you oppose this, speak up now!



9. OFAH 2025 TORONTO SPORTSMEN'S SHOW

More than 45,000 outdoors folks, a record, attended this year's giant Toronto's Sportsmen's Show. It was show number 77. Our federation had 40 volunteers and staff on duty at the big event at the International Centre near Pearson Airport. The aim? To showcase the work we do for anglers and hunters and to attract new members.



Executive Director Matt DeMille was on the job engaging youngsters with various promotions including colouring and lure making.

OFAH staff introduced hundreds of youngsters to the art of lure making.

Archery, one of Canada's fastest growing outdoors sports, was very popular again this year.



The OFAH was joined by Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Minister Graydon Smith where he spoke with staff, and learned about what we're doing to protect and promote hunting and fishing. Minister Smith talked about the importance of OFAH programs and their impact on Ontario's outdoors. "It's incredibly important for biodiversity here in Ontario," he said. "The more we can work together on it the better."

During its four-day run, we experienced Canada's largest hunting, fishing, and outdoors show — hundreds of vendors touted knowledge and wares. Categories included guiding and outfitters, camping, boating, firearms safety and powersports.



There were multiple seminar stages, casting and fishing ponds, firearms displays and dog retrieval areas. The OFAH offered Hunt, Fish, and Conserve zones with several activities for all.

As OFAH noted:

“Whether you joined our federation or renewed your membership, helped your kids create a lure or tried archery, bought a 50/50 ticket, or simply stopped by and chatted with staff, we hope everyone left feeling a sense of stewardship to the outdoors.”

I thanked the Sportsmen’s Show sales/communications team for the comp ticket they sent us for BPSA members.

10. NEW MNR MINISTER:

Not long after Minister Smith visited the Sportsmen’s Show, there was a change at the top. MPP Mike Harris was named Minister of Natural Resources on March 19 as Premier Doug Ford unveiled a new cabinet following the Conservative government’s Feb. 27 election to a third consecutive term.

This was the announcement:” Mike Harris, MPP for Kitchener-Conestoga, will replace Graydon Smith as Minister of Natural Resources. Smith, re-elected MPP for Parry Sound-Muskoka, was named Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.”

Harris, the son of former Ontario Premier Mike Harris, previously served as the minister of red tape reduction following a 2024 cabinet shuffle. The 40-year-old assumed office in 2019.



In 1999 his dad, Premier Mike Harris gave in to a well-funded and sharply focused political attack. The spring bear hunt was cancelled. The move was orchestrated by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and backed financially by the Schad Foundation, run by businessman Robert Schad, founder of Husky Injection Moulding.



11. SUNDAY GUN HUNTING-

Sunday gun hunting provides tremendous opportunities for Ontario hunters. That said, due to the existing rules around maximum allowable days for migratory bird seasons (107 days), the addition of Sunday gun hunting in some parts of southern Ontario has resulted in a loss of the late February goose season.

If you are interested in the prospect of a late goose season in southern Ontario, please complete the survey below from OFAH and Delta Waterfowl on possible solutions.

Visit <https://ofah.us11.list-manage.com/track/click...> to complete the survey and share your feedback.



12. CALL FOR NXT-GEN AMBASSADORS:

If you are between 18 and 29 and you are outdoors oriented, here is your invitation.

OFAH is in its 4th year with the federation's NXT-GEN program created to encourage younger anglers and hunters to contribute to the future of the OFAH with their perspectives and energy.

BPSA member and NXT-GEN ambassador Natalie Machelko, who is active with numerous organizations, has been appointed to the OFAH Foundation Board. That's quite an honour.

Several other NXT-GEN ambassadors now sit on federation Membership and Foundation boards and advisory committees. The application window is open until June 1, 2025.

at www.ofah.org/about/staff/nxt-gen



13. NEXT ZONE H MEETING:

ON May 25, 2025 at 10 AM you will have a chance to share your thoughts on hunting, fishing and conservation issues at our upcoming Zone H OFAH quarterly meeting. And you don't have to be an OFAH member to attend. This session is at the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association clubhouse at 82535 Sideroad 6 Derby Township south of Owen Sound in Georgian Bluffs. Issues and concerns aired at these meetings are often passed on to OFAH advisory committees for further action. Quarterly meetings provide an opportunity to share valuable conversations with like minded outdoors folks.

Your feedback on these reports is appreciated. Be reminded that you can check Ontario Out of Doors and the many online opportunities our OFAH provides for outdoors news and information. All now available online.

Thanks to Kat McCulloch, AI Hunter and Jane Beggs at OFAH head office, for their help and guidance in the preparation of these reports.

Stu Paterson - Director Zone H OFAH

- OFAH rep for BPSA since 2003
- member BPSA Community Relations Team
- outdoors writer living in Georgian Bluffs

Photo credits: Paterson Media, OFAH, The Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Sydenham Sportsmen's Association, The Bruce Trail Conservancy, The Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, Pat Flenniken Photography, Government of Ontario.

