

OFAH ZONE "H" report for BPSA Stu Paterson – July 2025

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



1. OFAH HAMMERS AWAY ON FIREARMS ISSUE - calls for "evidence-based gun policy reform"



OFAH Executive Director Matt DeMille has written to federal Minister of Public Safety Gary Anandasangaree, calling for a shift toward evidence-based firearms policy that actually improves public safety.

Key points in the OFAH letter:

- Focus resources on border security
- only 1 in a million rail cargo containers are inspected
- Invest in proven crime-fighting initiatives like youth diversion and gang reduction Program
- End the costly compensation program that

diverts billions from real public safety solutions

- Restore trust with Canada's 670,000+ licensed gun owners who have exemplary safety records

DeMille points out that Hunting, Fishing, and Shooting Sports contribute \$13.2 billion a year to Canada's economy and support 107,000 jobs. The OFAH Executive Director says our community deserves policies based on evidence, not politics.

He calls for meaningful dialogue to find solutions that tackle gun violence at its source, while respecting the rights of law-abiding Canadians.

Read the entire letter at: <https://www.ofah.org/.../ofah-reiterates-position-on-.../>



2. PROVINCE UNDER FIRE OVER WILDLIFE PROTECTIONS:

"It's a developer's dream, an environmental nightmare"

The OFAH has joined a chorus of nays on the Ford Government's legislation to fast-track industrial development.

Premier Doug Ford made the announcement about BILL 5 suggesting:

"IT IS GOOD FOR ONTARIO."

Bill 5 passed in the legislature in early June. What's inside Bill 5?

On the eve of a holiday long weekend, the Ontario government quietly tabled Bill 5: the "Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act." The Bill repeals the Endangered Species Act, leaving in its place a shell that contains no meaningful rules for species protection. The Bill also hands



unlimited power to the Provincial Cabinet, through the proposed Special Economic Zones Act. Bill 5 is a threat to Ontario's land, wildlife, and democracy. Several environment groups suggest Ontario is trying to gut species protections, fast-track industrial projects, and silence Indigenous and public voices.

Bill 5 provides Cabinet with the power to decide which species deserve protection, effectively making protection a political choice, not a scientific one.

OFAH CONDEMNS BILL 5

OFAH says the government is severely weakening the endangered species act:

"The basic effect of this revised act is to weaken and replace the existing act reshaping how we do conservation. This legislation is misaligned with the priorities of anglers & hunters. These changes concentrate power with the Minister and Lieutenant Governor. We strongly recommend the province re-draft this legislation and work with the OFAH and other groups to draft a framework for the protection of Ontario's biodiversity."

And OFAH on the amendment to the Mining Act to "Build a More Prosperous Ontario."



OFAH biologist Matthew Robbins has studied this legislation:

"we are very concerned that new Ministerial powers will be used only with economic benefits in mind and not with due consideration for the environment."

In a letter to the Ontario Species At Risk Branch of the Ontario Environment Ministry, federation Fish & Wildlife Biologist Robbins states:

"Ontario's Endangered Species Act has been a shining example of the province's commitment to conservation. ...the basic effect of these changes it to weaken and reshape how we do conservation...for this reason the proposals are misaligned with the priorities of anglers, hunters and trappers in Ontario."

From the OFAH Foundation:



Our OFAH Foundation places great emphasis on the health of Ontario's ecosystems. We are extremely concerned that these changes are too lenient and accommodating to industry. OFAH Foundation recommends that this law be adjusted so that the intent of the act incorporates the following:

"Must be to a degree that is consistent with the protection of Ontario's economy, society, and environment. Ontario does not need to sacrifice environmental protections to achieve economic

development. Sustainable growth is best supported through transparent, inclusive and evidence-based decision making, not through unchecked discretionary authority."

OFAH Foundation appreciates the government's desire to prioritize the economic health of our province, but this simply cannot come at the expense of our ecology and, especially, of our most vulnerable species. As a conservation-based organization, OFAH Foundation is extremely concerned by the level of open disregard for imperilled organisms and habitat contained within this proposal.



For nearly 20 years, Ontario's Endangered Species Act (ESA) has been a cornerstone of environmental protection. It required that species at risk — and the habitats they rely on — be protected from harm. But Bill 5 repeals the ESA and replace it with a weaker, hollowed-out, and Orwellian-named Species Conservation Act.

Bill 5 provides Cabinet with the power to decide which species deserve protection, effectively making protection a political choice, not a scientific one. Right now, developers must apply for permits when projects threaten species or their habitat. These are reviewed by environmental experts and come with requirements to reduce harm.



Under Bill 5, that process is replaced by an online registration form. Once a company clicks "submit," they're free to start building. This includes killing species and destroying the remaining protected areas like dens. No review, no obligation to consider safer alternatives. It's a developer's dream and an environmental nightmare.



If you agree with OFAH on this file, contact you MPP and express your opinions. Don't hesitate as Ontario throws out planning rules to speed up development projects.

3. DERBY SEASON - MORE BROWNS CAUGHT:

Volunteer clubs that stock brown trout suggest their stocking seems to be working. Above average numbers of brown trout have been caught in recent Grey-Bruce derbies in Georgian Bay and Lake Huron.

BPSA member James Thompson was cheered when he caught this 28-inch brown on Colpoy's Bay near Wiarton.



For decade my home club the Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, has had a successful brown trout and rainbow trout stocking program.

4. DEER TICK SEASON – LYME DISEASE:

"Provincially there are 1800 confirmed cases of Lyme disease reported a year...That's 11.7 cases per 100,000"

At our latest OFAH Zone H meeting Zone H Chair Mike Evers drove home the facts about LYME DISEASE caused by tick bites.

Mike reminds us to dress properly and be aware that this is Prime Deer Tick Season. Wear long sleeves, tuck pants into your socks, shower after a hike, inspect for ticks.



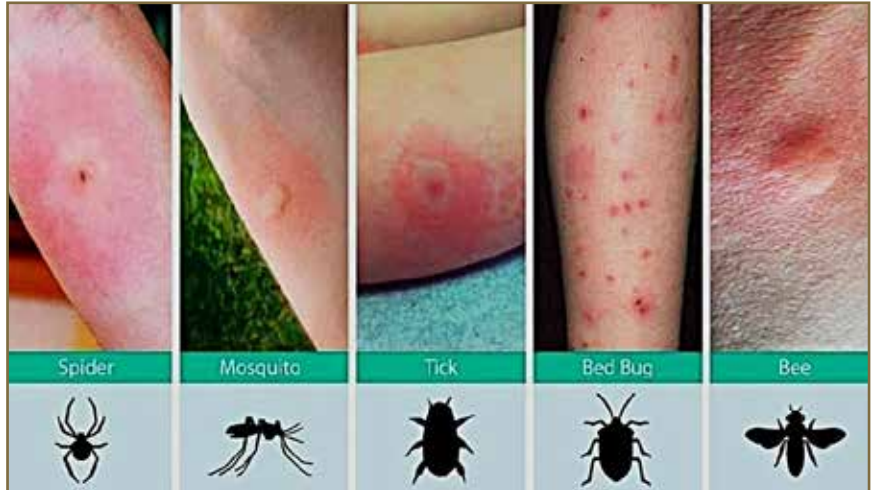


Deer Tick activity is primarily during the warmer months when temperatures are above freezing, typically from spring (April) to fall (November). Ticks are found throughout the year when the temperature is consistently above freezing. The most active time for nymphal ticks, which are more likely to transmit diseases, is from May to July.

This what various insect wounds look like.

It's important to take precautions when in wooded or grassy areas, especially during spring and summer. This includes wearing long sleeves and pants, using insect repellent, and checking for ticks after outdoor activities.

A significant area of Grey-Bruce is considered a place where blacklegged ticks have been identified or are known to occur in Public Health Ontario's established risk area map. Public health notes "it is important to know that blacklegged ticks can be found throughout Ontario, as they feed on and are transported by migratory birds."



You May not be aware that the OFAH has Lyme disease insurance coverage as well as medical and travel expenses coverage. The insurance will pay \$2500 to the member after a confirmed diagnosis of Lyme disease, and will also help with travel expenses for Lyme disease treatments. OFAH is pushing governments at all levels to make the investments needed for prevention, timely and effective diagnosis, and proper treatment of Lyme disease. Visit our web page to read up on Lyme disease and to help raise awareness among the hunting and outdoors community www.ofah.org/lymedisease.

You can upload photos of ticks for identification to the eTick website or mobile app.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS:

5. At the latest OFAH zone H meeting hosted by the Sydenham Sportsmen we had special guests. Several Former OFAH Presidents and Federation Directors joined us to discuss dozens of issues facing anglers and hunters.



Left to right: Rob Little, former Chair OFAH Zone H, former Zone H Chair, Wally Motz former Zone H secretary/treasurer, John Ford, former OFAH President, Bill Blackwell, former OFAH President, Maya Basdeo, Chair OFAH Foundation, Joe Wilson, OFAH Director-at-large, Rob Hare, former OFAH President, Wayne Forgrave, former Zone H Chair, Stephen Huntley, OFAH treasurer, Jack Osadzuk, former OFAH Director-at-large

One issue of discussion, was concern that Online Firearms Training, known as Hunter Ed. is turning out shooters who have not learned proper gun handling procedures. One experienced firearms instructor said *"The general education in the online program is totally lacking, while it is not lacking in the power point program we use as in person instructors."* He noted *"MNR is only concerned with getting more people hunting as opposed to getting quality hunters who are somewhat knowledgeable about hunting."* He suggested those who only take online training *"miss the guidance necessary from experienced instructors...a computer screen cannot give them that guidance or the benefit of their experience."*



Speakers emphasised that we need to return to traditional in-person training, so firearms users are better informed. One delegate suggested allowing Hunter Ed to be done online, seems to be doing away with Ontario's Hunter educators. He noted *"Ontario had one of the best Hunter Ed. Programs, but not now."*

6. DEVOURING POLLUTING PLASTICS:

OFAH is closely watching this valuable research.

University of Waterloo round-breaking research has found a way to change bacteria so that they consume microplastics. One of the sources of microplastics is wastewater plants as the plastic particles are not able to be removed in the treatment process. A Chemical Engineering PhD candidate, found a way to change common bacteria found in wastewater plants to consume polyethylene terephthalate (PET), a common plastic found in clothes, carpet, and food containers.

This is the first time that bacteria from an environmental sample have been engineered to degrade plastics.



While the impact of microplastics in natural waterways is not completely understood, research has shown that tiny plastic particles in human drinking water and fish can cause cancer, insulin resistance, and antibiotic resistance.

The Great Lakes are heavily contaminated with microplastics with 90% of samples containing levels that are not safe for fish and aquatic wildlife.

The University says *"We would need to demonstrate the efficacy and safety of the technology in field trials before considering general release of this system."*



7. OFAH ENDORSES BIRD FLU STUDY

Attention hunters, trappers, and wildlife professionals.

Sunnybrook Health Sciences and the University of Toronto are conducting a province-wide study on avian influenza (AIV) exposure – and they need your help.

If you're 18+ and have regular exposure to dead or living birds or other animals, either domestic or wild, you may be eligible to take part in this important research.

Your involvement will help scientists better understand the risks of AIV and shape strategies to protect both human and animal health in Ontario.

For more info or to get involved, contact:
aionehealthstudy.dlsph@sunnybrook.ca

THE THREAT FROM BIRD FLU CONTINUES:

Highly pathogenic avian influenza continues to be a significant cause of morbidity and mortality for wildlife, since its first detection in Ontario in 2022. This winter, the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative (CWHC) had reports of deaths of wild birds throughout much of southern Ontario. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAIV) has been associated with many of these outbreaks, and we are continuing to detect HPAIV in wild birds across southern Ontario. Scientists see mortality events associated with HPAIV in waterfowl, particularly Canada geese, and some scavenging species, including crows. They are also seeing individual cases in numerous raptor species. Prior to death, many of these birds are exhibiting neurological signs, including lack of coordination, swimming in circles, and tremors.



The Wildlife Cooperative continues to monitor the situation and share information with provincial and federal partners. Data from cases submitted to the CWHC are used to help track the spread and evolution of HPAIV across Canada

In addition to causing disease in wild birds, HPAIV can cause disease in poultry, wild and domestic mammals, including cats, dogs, and livestock, and humans. The risk for the general public is still considered to be low.



If you encounter sick or dead wildlife in Ontario, please contact the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative by phone (866-673-4781), or report online (https://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/report_and_submit.php).

8. COLPOYS DRAMA:

Wear your life vest and don't go boating in chilly rough weather.

That was the message after a drama played out on the May 24 weekend at the Big Bay Dock east of Wiarton.



I witnessed a continuous flow of rescue boats bringing kayakers ashore suffering from shock and hypothermia. The four were involved in a kayak drama. One kayak flipped sending its occupants into plus 4 C / 40 F water. The OPP marine unit, fire department personnel and the Coast Guard were involved plucking the boaters from the water and rushing all four to waiting ambulances. None were wearing life jackets.



The kayakers were treated at nearby hospital with no long terms effect except for the memory of the chilly water.



Fifty-six paddlers were among the 131 people who lost their lives in boating incidents on OPP-patrolled waterways in the last five years.

Between 2020-2024, 34 of those who died in marine incidents were canoeists, and 17 were kayakers. With capsized vessels and falling overboard the top contributing factors in boating deaths every year, a significant number of lives stand to be saved if boaters, personal watercraft users and paddlers wore a lifejacket or personal floatation device.

9. Did you know that as an OFAH Member you have access to OFAH Stream?

It is an on-demand video library featuring the best in outdoors content from trusted professionals. Simply log in to your member account and enjoy hours of fishing hunting and outdoor video!

10. As we wrap up this report...A quick suggestion to help ensure that OFAH continues its effective advocacy on behalf of millions of Ontario Anglers, Hunters, Tappers and Conservationists.

Act Now for Conservation.

Join our mission to protect and enhance Ontario's natural environments. Your support through donations, pledges, volunteering, or partnerships drives crucial conservation work.

Our federation has a proud record of success-
OFAH years established - 96

Members over 70k

Clubs over 700

Make a donation here [Donate to the OFAH Foundation](#)

So ends another OFAH report. We are taking time off this summer and should return with three more Zone H OFAH reports this fall. Your comments on these reports are welcome. We try to deal with issues of interest to anglers, hunters, sports shooters and conservationists.

Have a safe outdoorsy summer. Enjoy our beautiful province. Thanks again to Kat McCulloch, Al Hunter and Jane Beggs at OFAH headquarters for helping complete these reports.

*Stu Paterson - Director Zone H OFAH
- Outdoors writer living in Grey-Bruce*

Photo credits: OFAH, Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen, Paterson Media, Canadian Coast Guard, Bob Hilscher photography, Government of Ontario

