

OFAH ZONE "H" report for BPSA Stu Paterson – March 2026

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



1. BEARS ON THE BRUCE: MNR REJECTS TRANSLOCATING



In January, OFAH issued an advisory about the deadline for comments through the environmental registry, on the MNR's new plan to manage black bears with specific suggestions for the Bruce Peninsula. That deadline has ended. All zone H members also had a chance to comment on bears at the first OFAH Zone H meeting of the year. It was a Zoom session on Sunday, February 22nd.

Black bear experts have been discussing the possibility of "translocating" bears from Northern Ontario to improve the gene pool on the Bruce Peninsula.

Biologist Martyn Obbard is one of them. When he spoke to the Owen Sound Field naturalists no decision had been made on the translocation proposal.

Former OFAH Wildlife biologist Kirsten Snoek spoke to me about "bears on the Bruce" at a Zone H meeting. While there are an estimated 105,000 bears in Ontario, she reported a decline in the number of bears north of Wiarton to around 300.

Our bears are genetically isolated and the population is at high risk. She said the MNR is concerned that current harvest rates may contribute to a further population decline.

So, the MNR closed the peninsula fall bear hunt here and chopped the spring hunt to one week. Now we learn that based on MNR proposals and related discussions with OFAH and other stakeholders, Ontario is not planning to translocate bears to the

Bruce Peninsula to improve the gene pool. Instead, the province is focusing on strengthening the genetically isolated, low-density population through harvest management and reduced hunting.



The current situation on the Bruce:

Research confirms the black bear population on the Bruce Peninsula is genetically distinct and isolated from mainland populations, primarily due to habitat fragmentation. Experts indicate that the population is small (estimated at roughly 270 individuals) and at risk of poor health due to inbreeding. To address these concerns, the ministry has proposed reducing hunting pressure in Wildlife Management Units 82A, 83, and 84, including significantly reducing the spring season and closing the fall season.

The approach to increasing genetic diversity is focused on allowing for natural population growth rather than moving new bears into the area. The government's goal is to see the population grow from its current low levels toward a healthier, more sustainable target (roughly 400–600 bears.)

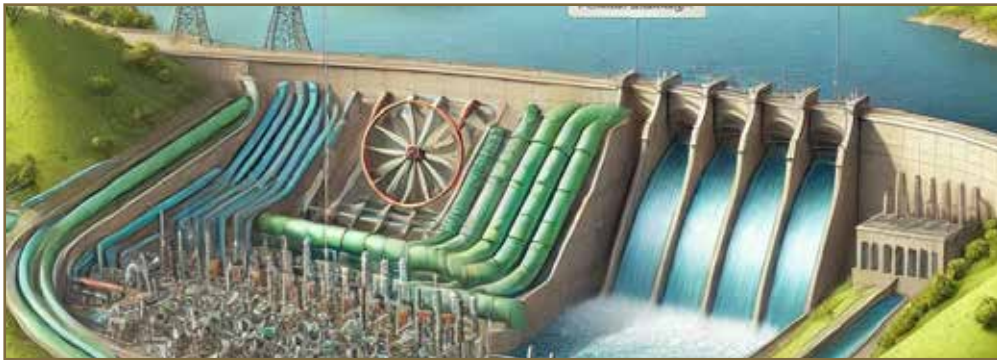
Read more on the issue here: [OFAH responds to proposed changes to black bear harvest management | OFAH Membership](#)

2. PUMPED STORAGE CONTROVERSY:

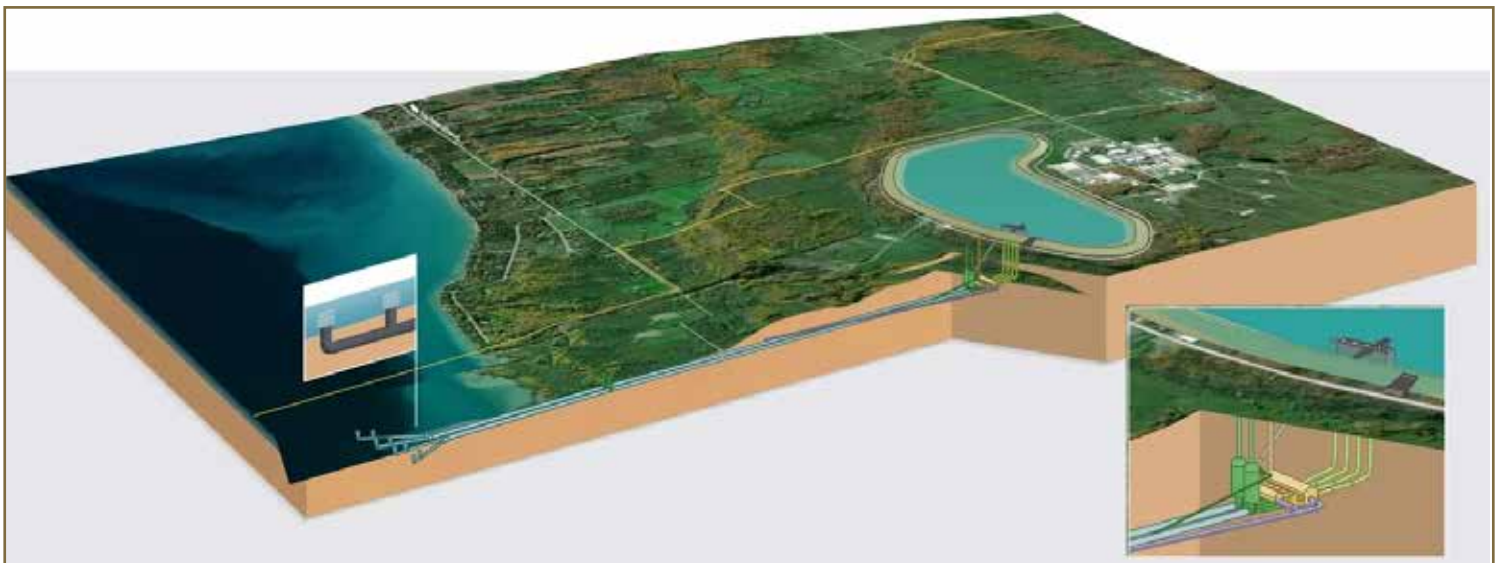
It was a full house at an open house in Meaford where discussion raged on about a huge power plant. 300 people attended in person and on-line.

TC Energy is proposing a 7-billion dollar Pumped Storage Project claiming "Ontario is facing rapid growth in electricity demand and needs reliable, clean, and flexible solutions to meet long term needs. Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator projects electricity demand will increase 65 per-cent by 2050."

The proposal would see a 375-acre reservoir built on the Department of Defence lands at Meaford's 4th Canadian Division Training Centre.



Citizens groups including SAVE GEORGIAN BAY were out in full force at the meeting listing opposition to the project which would provide up to 1,000 megawatts of electricity, enough to power one million homes for up to 11 hours.



SAVE GEORGIAN BAY POINTS OUT:

- more than 40,000 people have signed petitions against it.
- the province is pushing this project without the protections we all deserve as residents of Ontario.
- Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator has twice rejected the proposal, saying it doesn't make economic sense for ratepayers
- we remain concerned about the short notice given for the meeting and suggested it could be the only formal environmental review of the project.
- building the projects huge reservoir will spread tons of toxics from exploded ordinance buried at the military training center
- the project threatens the environment, including to drinking water and fish, as well as to public health and safety

**GEORGIAN BAY
PUMPED STORAGE PLANT**

SAY NO

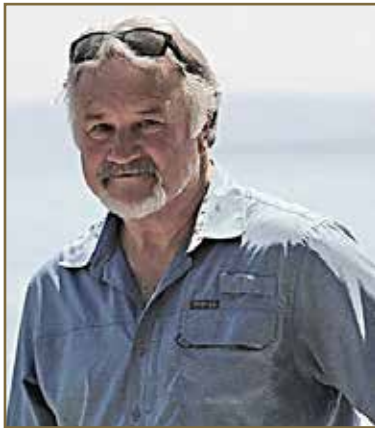
Destroying **BLUE** Does NOT = **GREEN**

savegeorgianbay.ca

The groups claim the project threatens the Niagara Escarpment and Georgian Bay and its marine life, as well as the health and safety of the population around the bay. It says "pollution studies will be conducted by TC Energy itself so it is essential that opponents learn how we can communicate the true and very real threats to the environment and public safety."



"TC Energy and its supporters on Meaford Council have claimed that an environmental impact assessment would deal with any threats to the environment, including to drinking water and fish, as well as to public health and safety. But under new fast-track federal and provincial legislation, this IAAC process may be the only opportunity for scientific studies to highlight the dangers this project poses to the Niagara Escarpment, to Georgian Bay and its marine life as well as to the health and safety of the population on Georgian Bay."



Save Georgian Bay director Tom Buck: "People all around Georgian Bay will be affected, and it feels like the public is being left out of the decision-making process." He points to a similar project in Michigan.

"We started looking into what Ludington was like and we were horrified. We were horrified that it was killing millions of fish a year and the way it muddied up the water and we couldn't conceive of that happening on this bay"

From United Press International: "Ludington Pumped Storage Plant -- the world's second largest plant of its kind -- has killed 150 million fish every year since its startup in 1973. Most of the dead fish are young so the kill-off has hurt sport fishing and the natural food chain in the lake."



If approved, the construction of the Meaford Project is expected to take four years.

3. FEDERAL FIREARMS CONTROVERSY RAGES ON:

Program wasteful: OFAH

Some 2,500 makes and models have been banned since 2020. More than 12,000 prohibited firearms collected from businesses from November 2024 to April 2025 have been destroyed.

The so-called buyback program is strongly opposed by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) and the Conservative Party of Canada. Both argue that law-abiding gun owners are being punished.



OFAH Director of Policy Mark Ryckman:



"Like the long-gun registry, this 'buyback' program is wasteful and ineffective, diverting much needed resources from proven public safety initiatives and much-needed enforcement programs."

**Here Mark testifies on firearms in Ottawa:
OFAH Manager of Policy Mark Ryckman testifies at SECU on Bill C-21 | OFAH Stream**

Matt DeMille – OFAH Executive Director

"Confiscation. Compensation. Expropriation. Buyback. Call it what you want, it's a waste of money and doomed to fail in every practical way that matters – fiscal responsibility, good government, and public safety."

"As new firearms policy discussions emerge, OFAH's measured voice and evidence-based approach will be essential to ensuring our members' interests are represented in a way that can actually influence outcomes."

Not all gun owners will agree on what to do, but all can rely on the OFAH for timely and accurate information. If you want to know if any of your guns are prohibited, we can help you find out. If you want to turn in your guns for compensation, we'll get you the information you need. And if you have no intention of participating, we won't try to change your mind.

Whatever you plan to do, take someone hunting. Take someone shooting. Show them how safe and enjoyable it is. Only when we change public opinion in our favour will we get this target off our backs."



Canadian Coalition for Firearms Rights

We are *"in Shock and Dismay"* over Ottawa's refusal to pay for only 150,000 firearms in their buy-back program, when there are over 2-million firearms that are now restricted.

RICK MOORE – OFAH President

"In 2025, the OFAH continued to push back against threats to fish and wildlife, Crown land access, and wasteful firearms legislation. We know that pressures on wildlife habitat are increasing. Credible voices for conservation are needed now more than ever. And we know that every member of our federation matters, because your membership gives us the strength to influence decisions that affect us all.

Let's carry forward the momentum we've built together. Let's keep advocating for fact-based decision making related to firearms, and pushing for the interests of the next generation of hunters, anglers, and conservationists. The OFAH is ready for the work ahead.



With your support, we'll continue to deliver real results for Ontario's outdoors. Thank you for standing with us. Here's to a year of progress, passion, and protecting what matters most.

4. SANDHILL CRANE HUNT:

Is southwest Ontario a proposed Sandhill crane hunting zone?

The answer...NO!

After years of advocacy by the OFAH, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) proposes a sandhill crane season in parts of northern and central Ontario. The government opened a 30-day consultation period for Proposals to Amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations, including the following suggestions:

Sandhill crane hunting season:

ECCC is proposing to establish a sandhill crane hunting season in Ontario in the Hudson and James Bay District, as well as portions of the Northern (WMUs 23, 24, 27 to 30, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, and 45) and

Central Districts (WMUs 42, 43, 47, and 48). With a daily bag limit of one (1) and a possession limit of one (1) crane, this 14-day season will open on September 1 in the Hudson and James Bay District and will open on the first Saturday following September 11 in the Northern and Central Districts.

Manitoulin Island is included in the proposed hunting zone. Studies suggest if 10% of sandhill crane populations are taken in an Ontario hunt, that hunt would not negatively affect crane populations.

To review the full proposal, including changes to bait restrictions, Special Measures Seasons, and more, visit: [Proposals to amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations - 2026: consultation document, hunting seasons 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/proposals-amend-the-canadian-migratory-birds-regulations-2026-consultation-document-hunting-seasons-2026-2027-and-2027-2028-2026-2027-and-2027-2028-Canada.ca)

To take part in this consultation you had to submit your comments to MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca by February 15, 2026.

Review the full proposal details here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/proposals-amend-the-canadian-migratory-birds-regulations-2026-consultation-document-hunting-seasons-2026-2027-and-2027-2028-2026-2027-and-2027-2028-Canada.ca>

5. PERCH SCOOP

It happened for the second year. Four BPSA members watched as a 22-foot outboard carried SON commercial anglers to the Bluewater Park Dock. It was loaded with fish, most of them perch. There were several tubs filled with mostly 12-inch perch. Why is this interesting?

By the fifties and sixties perch had been extirpated from Colpoys Bay. In recent years these tasty fish had been making a comeback.



However, after two years of gill netting there are concerns that any comeback has been delayed.

The SON angler said his pre-Christmas perch catch would get him \$17.00 a pound from the Wiarton fish store. This store in turn sold the perch for \$25.00 a pound. The commercial fisher said he wouldn't be well rewarded for the other fish his gill nets caught, but noted the perch were his prize.



Is there any way we can stop these perch scoops? A Provincial Conservation officer said "I can't do anything about this."

6. WILD PIGS in Ontario:

Our FORD GOVERNMENT gets full CONGRATS as it tries to control these beasts.

In order to help prevent wild pigs from becoming established in Ontario, we have the provincial government's "Strategy to Address the Threat of Invasive Wild Pigs." There are two key steps under this strategy, a major issue for the Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters (OFAH):



1. list wild pigs as invasive species
2. phase out Eurasian wild boar farming

Wild pigs have been listed under the Invasive Species Act as a restricted invasive species. This means that no one is permitted to allow a pig to be released into the wild in Ontario. It is also prohibited to hunt for or trap wild pigs in Ontario unless you have authorization from the Minister or are protecting property.

It is now illegal to possess a Eurasian wild boar in Ontario.

The OFAH's wild pig advocacy traces back to 1991, when we conducted a review of conservation issues surrounding the farming and ranching of wildlife. Through this review, we identified wild boar as a major threat, specifically when you consider the potential for pigs to escape, go feral, establish wild populations, and inflict damage on native wildlife and habitats.



What You Can Do:

If you believe you have seen a wild pig or signs of wild pig: Note the date, and time of the sighting; Note the location; Take pictures or a video, If possible;

REPORT the sighting to the iNaturalist web page (note: you will be required to set up a free online account), or via email at wildpigs@ontario.ca

For more information, visit ofah.org/issues/wild-pigs-in-ontario/Wild Pigs | Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program

www.invadingspecies.com/invaders/wildlife/wild-pigs-2/

7. WHY BELONG TO OFAH?

I am often asked that. So, first of all, we have excellent club insurance and benefits.

Industry-Leading Insurance Coverage \$5M – Paid by OFAH, covering a broad range of activities + Director & Officer insurance, shooting range and new commercial insurance ensuring your club's activities are protected and secure. Personal Excess Public Liability Insurance – covers your members' fishing and hunting activities.

- Run your club your way – No OFAH involvement in the internal structure of your club.
- Advocacy & Policy Support – Access to experts to help clubs tackle resource management issues.
- Networking & Collaboration – Connect with other clubs to share best practices & grow together.
- Club Growth and Support – NEW! Community Engagement Program exclusively for clubs
- Individual OFAH Benefits for your Club Members
- Voting Rights – Elect OFAH directors, and help shape the future of the OFAH (for those 18 years and older).
- Ontario OUT of DOORS Magazine annual subscription.
- Lyme Disease Diagnosis and Medical Expense Coverage
- Personalized Digital Membership Card
- Discounts and Preferred Rates at Mark's, The Brick, Havelock Metal, and preferred rates for home and auto insurance with BrokerLink.

My bottom line on the OFAH:

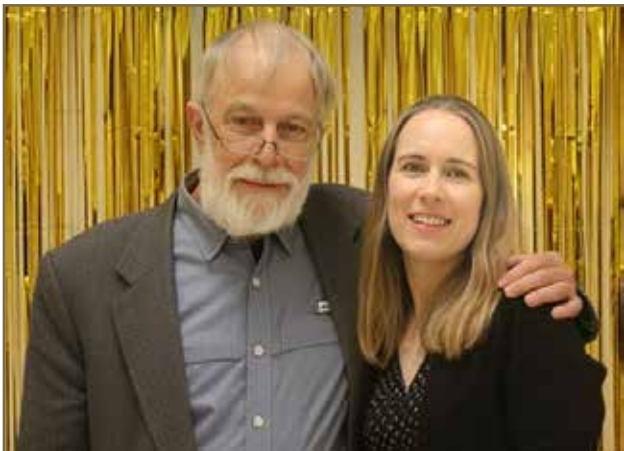
“NO OTHER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTS THE INTERESTS OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS IN SUCH AN EFFECTIVE WAY”

Thanks for asking.

8. PRESERVING FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT:

-VanDorp family donates property to Nature Conservancy-

Pictured are Doctors Jon and Nelvia VAN Dorp.



Warton's Van Dorp family has donated 46 hectares (about 114 acres) of ecologically sensitive land near Warton, to the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). The donation is part of the federal government's Ecological Gifts Program designed to protect this area as a vital part of the Bruce Peninsula's ecological corridor, safeguarding forests, wetlands, and habitat for species at risk and all kinds of fish and wildlife including black bears and nesting bald eagles.

Location: Near Warton between Warton and Owen Sound, next to Mountain Lake.

Ecological Significance: The land features forests, wetlands, and regenerating fields, forming a crucial link for wildlife movement, an ecological corridor, on the Bruce Peninsula.



Benefits: Strengthens regional resilience, safeguards clean water, supports pollinators, and buffers communities from extreme weather.

This property combines forests, wetlands, and regenerating fields that were previously valued for recreation and nature appreciation. The land also connects to surrounding conservation areas, which form a vital corridor for wide-ranging mammals and migratory birds.

And more good news!



The Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy announced the permanent protection of 120 acres of land on the Bruce Peninsula through the creation of two new nature preserves. Through the donation of the properties' owners, the EBC has created the 20-acre Tamarack Corner Nature Preserve near Miller Lake and the 100-acre Alguire Nature Preserve near Stokes Bay.

These properties are part of a network of protected lands supporting threatened species like the Massasauga Rattlesnake, Eastern whip-poor-whil, Hill's thistle and Midland painted turtle.



Its forest cover provides cover for black bear, fisher, white-tailed deer and porcupine. The Conservancy says *"The ecological significance of these properties is remarkable, but so too is the generosity of the donors who entrusted us with their care."*



9. MOOSE HUNTERS CONVICTED:

Five hunters from Mississauga have been fined \$37,000, plus \$9,250 in victim surcharges. Conservation officers, along with the Ministry of Natural Resources Intelligence and Investigations Services, conducted a special investigation into illegal moose hunting north of Pickle Lake. At trial the MNR stated "As a result of the investigation, it was found that Paul Markewycz unlawfully discharged a firearm from a motorboat at a bull moose on the Otokwin River. Miroslaw Markewycz invalidated his tag on an illegal moose harvested by another member of his hunt group when he was not present."

- Michael Lamanna, Piotr Markewycz, and Vitaliy Shevchenko were all found to have made false and misleading statements to conservation officers during the investigation.
- Paul Markewycz of Mississauga pleaded guilty to discharging a firearm from a motorboat. He received \$20,000 in fines and a three-year hunting license suspension.
- Miroslaw Markewycz of Mississauga pleaded guilty to unlawfully invalidating a tag with respect to an animal killed by another person. He received \$2,000 in fines and a two-year hunting license suspension.
- Piotr Markewycz of Mississauga knowingly making a false statement to a conservation officer. He received \$6,000 in fines and a one-year hunting license suspension.
- Vitaliy Shevchenko of Mississauga knowingly making a false statement to a conservation officer. He received \$5,000 in fines and a one-year hunting license suspension.
- Michael Lamanna of Milton pleaded guilty to knowingly making a false statement to a conservation officer. He received a \$4,000 fine and a one-year hunting license suspension.



To report a natural resource problem or provide information about an unsolved case, members of the public can call the ministry TIPS line toll-free at 1-877-847-7667.

10. 2026 TORONTO INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW (TIBS):

Once again, we had a chance to check out new fishing boats (in case we win a lottery) at this year’s big boat show. In spite of terrible weather, attendance was strong at 47,286 visitors over the nine-day show which took place from January 17 – 25 at the Enercare Centre in Toronto. Boat dealers report brisk sales and there was a sense of optimism among exhibitors. Why? The Canadian boating industry is celebrating the recent advocacy success of having the federal Luxury Tax on boats eliminated as of November 2025.



This marks a turning point for many in the manufacturing and sales sectors which supports more than 80,000 good-paying skilled jobs, benefiting boat dealerships and local businesses. Ontario’s marine industry contributes more than \$4.5B a year to our economy.

Canadian-made Legend Boats held its 40th Anniversary celebration at the Show to debut its 2026 products. The company said “Legend wrapped up another strong Toronto Boat Show, an event that



continues to play a key role in our business. Despite the weather, a standout highlight was the second Saturday which delivered a surge of highly qualified buyers.” I thanked the TIBS staff for the comp tickets they sent again for BPSA members. BPSA folks who took in the show gave it “two thumbs up” for helping put some summer in their winter.

11. HUNTER SURVEY RESULTS:



An MNR survey completed by 6,304 individuals found most hunters were concerned about land access and local population declines.

Key takeaways:

- 137,358 individuals (48.3% of resident small game hunting licence holders) hunted small game.
- The average experience level of a small game hunter is 21 years
- 77% of small game hunters target grouse, followed by rabbits and hares (10%). Southern Ontario hunters focus on a much greater variety of species than in the north
- Small-game hunting generated an estimated \$241 million in 2020



- Approximately 17% of small game hunters use dogs, most live in southern Ontario
Most of the small game hunting occurs on Crown lands. A third of southern and central hunters almost always hunted private lands
- Hunters recognize habitat problems as being major in the south and think more needs to be done for grouse and rabbits



Wild turkey hunter survey was completed by 1,122 individuals.

Key takeaways:

- 45,520 Ontario residents hunted turkey
- Hunters had an average of 10.5 years of experience turkey hunting
- 85% of turkey hunters use a shotgun. 29% sometimes use bows, and 0.5% use a muzzleloading shotgun
- Access to land was ranked as the biggest barrier and the most common source of dissatisfaction
- Turkey hunters contributed approximately \$33 million dollars to the economy in 2021
- The spring hunt is far more popular than fall
- 82% of turkey hunters indicated satisfaction with their experience

OFAH Fish & Wildlife Biologist Matthew Robbins

“This research provides great insight into both hunting as an activity and, perhaps most uniquely, the hunters themselves ... The results show how important small game and turkey hunting are in Ontario and, for our part, will help the OFAH tailor our efforts towards the issues hunters care most about.” The full results are available at: ResearchGate.net

Thanks to Kat McCulloch and Al Hunter of BPSA and Jane Beggs and Mark Ryckman at OFAH head office for their contributions to this report. There are hundreds of subjects I could tackle in these reports. Hopefully the subjects we covered this time around are of interest to anglers, hunters, sports shooters and conservationists across Zone H.

**Stu Paterson - OFAH rep for BPSA since 2003
- Director Zone H OFAH**

