

# MOOSE MESSAGE

With fewer adult validation tags for licensed moose hunters this fall, OFAH members are left wondering whether the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) really has a good handle on moose management in Ontario. Lack of confidence in moose aerial inventory results, missing information, outfitter tag allocations and lack of consistency in management across the province are just a few of the concerns that need to be addressed.

OFAH senior wildlife biologist Mark Ryckman submitted a comprehensive letter of recommendations to MNRF's Wildlife Policy Section identifying concerns about the tools the Ministry uses for moose management. The complete submission (*OFAH response to significant decline in moose hunting opportunities for 2014*) can be found at [www.ofah.org/ofahcomments#hunting](http://www.ofah.org/ofahcomments#hunting). This page highlights OFAH's main recommendations:

## 1) RE-EVALUATE POPULATIONS

MNRF should provide greater funding for Moose Aerial Inventories and the province should re-fly Wildlife Management Units (WMU) 8, 13 and 28 in 2015 because they did not receive a representative evaluation in 2014.



## 2) GIVE RESIDENT HUNTERS PRIORITY

Resident moose hunters must be given a higher priority allocation than non-residents by ensuring that Tourist Industry Allocation is calculated consistently and fairly across MNRF regions and districts.



## 3) MAXIMIZE HUNTING

Maximize moose hunting opportunities in each WMU by conducting a complete review of WMU-specific moose population priorities, followed by meaningful public consultation.

## 4) REDUCE PREDATORS

Reduce bear predation on moose by reinstating the spring bear hunt for residents and non-residents across all of bear range in Ontario. Reduce wolf predation on moose by loosening restrictions on predator hunting in northern Ontario.



Photo: Lantapix/Dreamstime

## 5) MANAGE MOOSE, NOT HUNTERS

MNRF should discuss moose harvest estimates with all First Nation and Métis communities so that it can be effectively incorporated into moose management. MNRF should publicize the results of the two moose management questionnaires that were distributed to moose hunters in 2013. There should also be public consultation on MNRF proposed moose management tools such as season length, season timing and calf tag allocations, beginning immediately across the province as moose hunters are growing frustrated by the lack of progress on the MNRF "Moose Project."

We have just learned the Moose Project has begun. Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry Bill Mauro has written to the OFAH to ask for our insights into "how we can work together to collectively ensure the long-term sustainability of moose." Your Federation will use the Moose Project to reiterate the need for the MNRF to manage moose and not just moose hunters.

"For too long, MNRF has relied solely on licensed hunters to manage moose populations. We believe it's time for the ministry to get back to managing actual moose populations."

- Mark Ryckman, senior OFAH biologist

## 6) CREATE QUALITY HABITAT

MNRF should identify areas where moose habitat is insufficient for moose and re-evaluate fire suppression policies in those areas. By allowing select burning, moose habitat could improve in these areas.

Current forestry practices should create high-quality moose habitat and forest regeneration should include tree and shrub species that are beneficial to moose. The forestry industry should be following timber management guidelines and should undergo auditing to ensure high-quality moose habitat is being created in areas where moose are the priority.

## 7) MANAGE DEER MORE EFFECTIVELY

Ensure white-tailed deer populations within core moose ranges are maintained at low densities.

# SURPLUS FRUSTRATION



Most hopeful moose hunters attempting to purchase surplus moose tags on August 18 ended up with a frustrating busy tone and a myriad of technical issues instead.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's (MNRF) toll-free line was open for 3.5 hours and received an overwhelming 87,000 calls from hunters trying to secure moose hunting opportunities.

Callers were outraged to receive multiple different error messages, dead air and busy signals without getting through.

All told, a mere 792 calls made it through and only 543 surplus moose tags were issued.

The OFAH heard from many frustrated members after the lines closed and contacted the MNRF to question the cause of the technical difficulties and pass along the concerns of our members.

The MNRF provided a punctual response explaining their phone service provider has difficulty handling large call volumes in a short period of time. (See our Q&A with MNRF posted online at: [www.ofah.org/news](http://www.ofah.org/news)). This year's problem was likely compounded by having the same number of moose hunters as in previous years competing for fewer moose tags because of tag cutbacks.

The technical issues are a reoccurring issue and MNRF said it is exploring opportunities to improve customer service. The OFAH has initiated conversations with the MNRF on how they could improve the surplus moose tag system to better serve moose hunters in the future.