

SPORTING DOG ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT
DECEMBER 2023

Conservation Authority Property for Use of Dog Training:

The next area of focus we plan to explore concerns Conservation Authority properties for the use of dog training.

This long-standing goal of the SDAC is to work on an agreement with CAs to allow for dog training on CA properties. CAs own large swaths of land (approximately 150,000 hectares) in the province, and this would provide more opportunities for dog handlers to train their dogs. There needs to be emphasis on the fact that it is dog training, not hunting, when approaching CAs.

This long overdue project has been initiated and a special meeting of the SDAC was held on Thursday, November 2, 2023 to discuss this major undertaking. The SDAC has several members who have extensive experience in dealing with Conservation Authorities. A special committee will be formed within the SDAC to spearhead the advancement of this initiative. This group will formulate a plan as to how we should proceed with this in order to communicate with the board of directors of individual Conservation Authorities and the head office for Conservation Ontario, rather than dealing with the Conservation Authority staff.

This project has been discussed for several years but other projects have taken precedent and have been successfully completed. Now is the time for engagement and action regarding this area of interest for sporting dog enthusiasts.

Training and Trialing Areas:

The Ontario government has recently passed legislation that will allow for the construction of new Training and Trialing Areas, and for the transfer of existing licences to new owners if the current owner passes away or the property is sold. The application process for new construction will be open for a 90-day period sometime in early 2024. A date in 2024 has not yet been established. The regulations presently governing Training and Trialing Areas in the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (1997) will remain the same as in the past.

Big Game Blood Trackers:

Several committee members have worked on a proposal to change the regulation wording in the FWCA regarding tracking wounded big game, with or without a tracking dog, after legal hunting hours with or without a light. The proposed wording would be as follows:

(5) A person who uses a leashed dog to track a bear, elk, deer or moose already wounded in a hunt may do so without a licence to hunt despite subsection 6 (1) of the Act and without carrying an outdoors card and after legal hunting hours provided they are accompanying the licensed hunter who wounded said animal. A licensed hunter without a dog may also track a bear, elk, deer, or moose already wounded after legal hunting hours despite subsection 6(1) and not in possession of a bow or gun capable of killing the animal being tracked. In addition, anyone who is engaged in the lawful tracking of a lawfully wounded animal is exempt from the use of light prohibition 20(1) (c) of 665/98 and the application of a closed season 25 (2) (b) of 665/98.

This regulatory change was reviewed by the OFAH Big Game Advisory Committee and was passed by the OFAH Board of Directors at its September 7, 2023 meeting. This wording will be reviewed by OFAH staff and then be presented to the MNRF for their approval.

Farewell:

The SDAC was saddened by the news that Kirsten Snoek, our staff liaison, will be leaving the employment of OFAH on November 17, 2023. We were anticipating working with Kirsten on our new Conservation Authority Project as she is an excellent organizer and researcher bringing cohesion to our committee. She will be greatly missed but we wish her all the best in her move back to her previous employer.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Wilson, DVM
Chair