MNRF’s Proposed Strategic Policy for Bait Management in Ontario

What’s happening?
The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has developed a Strategic Policy for Bait Management in Ontario that is accompanied by a number of significant proposed changes to the way anglers can harvest, move and use bait in Ontario.

*Please see the attached MNRF information sheets for more information on what is being proposed.*

What’s at stake?
Overall, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) thinks the proposals are too restrictive, and will make fishing with bait (baitfish and leeches) much harder in the future. If anglers and bait suppliers are restricted as proposed, it could result in serious baitfish supply and demand issues in some areas of the province.

What can I do?
It is critically important that you tell the government how this affects you before June 27, 2017.

**Online:**  [www.ontario.ca/ebir](http://www.ontario.ca/ebir) (Reference number 012-9791)

**By email:**  Send your comments to bait@ontario.ca

**In person:**  Attend one of MNRF’s public information sessions (see attached schedule for dates, times and locations)

**By mail:**  **If you are not able to provide your comments electronically,** please send comments to:

Scott Gibson  
Senior Fisheries Biologist  
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry  
Policy Division  
Species Conservation Policy Branch  
Fisheries Section  
300 Water Street  
Peterborough Ontario  
K9J 8M5

**To have your comments included as part of the public consultation, you must include the EBR reference # 012 – 9791**

For more information:
For more information on the Strategic Policy for Bait Management in Ontario or the OFAH’s position on this proposed policy, please contact:

Tom Brooke  
OFAH Fisheries Biologist  
705 748-6324 Extension 208  
tom_brooke@ofah.org
I Harvest My Own Bait

The harvest and use of live bait has been an important part of Ontario’s fishing industry and culture for nearly a century. The harvest, use and movement of bait, however, are linked to the spread of diseases and invasive species and pose a significant threat to Ontario’s fisheries and biodiversity. As a result, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has been reviewing its provincial policies related to baitfish and leeches.

The outcome of this provincial bait review is the proposed Strategic Policy for Bait Management. These new rules are intended to maintain some flexibility for anglers and industry while minimizing the potential ecological risks associated with the use of bait, and ultimately protect the health of Ontario’s aquatic ecosystems.

What type of bait would I be allowed to harvest and use?

• You would still be allowed to use many of the same species, but a new, reduced list of legal species will make it easier to distinguish legal baitfish from non-legal baitfish. For example, species that have spines or teeth, such as sculpins, stickleback and darters, will not be considered legal baitfish.
• You could possess up to 120 baitfish and/or leeches (these limits remain unchanged) regardless of whether personally harvested or purchased from a commercial bait dealer.

Where would I be allowed to use personally-harvested bait?

• There would be no overland transport of personally-harvested bait across the province, with the following exception:

  • In Northern Ontario, personally-harvested bait would be allowed to move within a Bait Management Zone (BMZ), as shown in the map.
  • This would only be allowed with accompanying form of bait documentation.

What other considerations should I be aware of?

• Given the sensitivity of Brook Trout populations to the introduction of new species, the harvest and possession of bait would not be allowed in native Brook Trout lakes. This is consistent with current regulations across much of Central Ontario.
• Anglers would not be permitted to harvest or possess bait of any kind in provincial parks, except for Recreational Class Parks (e.g. Sibbald Point, Rushing River, Finlayson Point).

When can I expect these changes to come into effect?

• If approved, these new rules would require changes to federal and provincial regulations; and would not be implemented until such changes can be made (i.e. 1-2 years after this policy is finalized). Anglers would be informed when these changes take place.

How can I provide feedback on the proposed policy?

• Anglers are encouraged to provide feedback by visiting the Environmental Registry (www.ontario.ca/environmentalregistry, #012-9791). For more information or clarification, you can contact bait@ontario.ca.

Pour obtenir de l’aide en français, veuillez faire parvenir un courriel à Bait@ontario.ca.
I Buy Live Bait

The harvest and use of live bait has been an important part of Ontario’s fishing industry and culture for nearly a century. The harvest, use and movement of bait, however, are linked to the spread of diseases and invasive species and pose a significant threat to Ontario’s fisheries and biodiversity. As a result, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has been reviewing its provincial policies related to baitfish and leeches.

The outcome of this provincial bait review is the proposed Strategic Policy for Bait Management. These new rules are intended to maintain some flexibility for anglers and industry while minimizing the potential ecological risks associated with the use of bait, and ultimately protect the health of Ontario’s aquatic ecosystems.

Where would I be able to buy bait?
• You can continue to purchase bait from a licenced commercial operator.

What type of bait would I be able to use?
• You would still be allowed to use many of the same species, but a new, reduced list of legal species would make it easier to distinguish legal baitfish from non-legal baitfish. For example, species that have spines or teeth, such as sculpins, stickleback and darters, would not be considered legal baitfish.
• You can have up to 120 baitfish and/or leeches (these limits remain unchanged).

Where would I be able to use bait?
• You can buy, use, and move bait within the same Bait Management Zone (BMZ), which are based on current Fisheries Management Zones, as shown on the map below. You would generally not be allowed to move bait beyond the boundaries of a BMZ.

There would be a few exceptions to these movement restrictions:
  i) You would be able to move bait from BMZ A, into BMZs B, C and D (but not back into BMZ A)
  ii) You would be able to move bait from BMZs C, D, E and F into the adjacent Great Lake.
  iii) Bait used in the Ottawa River must originate from the BMZ (D, E, or F) where you accessed the river.

• Given the sensitivity of Brook Trout populations to the introduction of new species, the possession and harvest of bait would not be allowed in native Brook Trout lakes. This is consistent with current regulations across much of Central Ontario.
• You would not be permitted to possess or harvest bait in provincial parks, except for Recreational Class Parks (e.g. Sibbald Point, Rushing River, Finlayson Point).

What other considerations should I be aware of?
• To implement the proposed movement restrictions, anglers would be required to keep a copy of their receipt from the commercial retailer. The receipt will be valid for a period of two weeks.

When could I expect these changes to come into effect?
• If approved, these rules would require changes to federal and provincial regulations; and would not be implemented until such changes can be made (i.e. 1-2 years after this policy is finalized).

How could I provide feedback on the proposed policy?
• Anglers are encouraged to provide feedback by visiting the Environmental Registry (www.ontario.ca/environmentalregistry, #012-9791). For more information or clarification, you can contact bait@ontario.ca. *Pour obtenir de l’aide en français, veuillez faire parvenir un courriel à Bait@ontario.ca.
I Fish In Parks And Conservation Reserves

The harvest and use of live bait has been an important part of Ontario’s fishing industry and culture for nearly a century. The harvest, use and movement of bait, however, are linked to the spread of diseases and invasive species and pose a significant threat to Ontario’s fisheries and biodiversity. As a result, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has been reviewing its provincial policies related to baitfish and leeches.

The outcome of this provincial bait review is the proposed Strategic Policy for Bait Management. These new rules are intended to maintain some flexibility for anglers and industry while minimizing the potential ecological risks associated with the use of bait, and ultimately protect the health of Ontario’s aquatic ecosystems.

Specific provisions were developed in the Strategic Policy for Bait Management aimed at reducing the risks to the ecological integrity of protected areas (provincial parks and conservation reserves), while maintaining opportunities for the use and commercial harvest of bait.

Would I be allowed to use bait in provincial parks and conservation reserves?

- You could only use and possess bait in recreational class provincial parks (e.g. Sibbald Point, Finalyson Point and Rushing River Provincial Parks) and conservation reserves. The use and possession of bait would not be permitted in other provincial parks.

Would I be allowed to personally harvest bait in provincial parks and conservation reserves?

- If you harvest in a recreation class park or conservation reserve, you must use the bait in the same waterbody it was collected from.

When could I expect these changes to come into effect?

- If approved, these rules would require changes to federal and provincial regulations; and would not be implemented until such changes can be made (i.e. 1-2 years after this policy is finalized). Anglers would be informed when these changes take place.

How can I provide feedback on the proposed policy?

- Anglers are encouraged to provide feedback by visiting the Environmental Registry (www.ontario.ca/environmentalregistry, #012-9791). For more information or clarification, you can contact bait@ontario.ca.

Pour obtenir de l’aide en français, veuillez faire parvenir un courriel à Bait@ontario.ca.