ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS AND HUNTERS

ANNUAL REPORT 2020
Our Mandate

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters takes action on outdoor issues, supports fish and wildlife conservation and outdoor education at the grassroots level, and stands up for the traditions of fishing, hunting and trapping.

We are the VOICE of anglers, hunters on all issues related to fishing, hunting, and fish and wildlife conservation management to...

**LEAD** the fishing and hunting community as champions of conservation

**RESTORE** fish and wildlife populations and the habitats that support them

**SUPPORT** grassroots community involvement in conservation

**COMMUNICATE** conservation issues

**ADVOCATE** for evidence-based fish and wildlife conservation management

**INFLUENCE** government decisions to benefit anglers, hunters and conservation

**CULTIVATE** the next generation of conservationists

**PROTECT** the rights and traditions of anglers and hunters

**PROMOTE** the wise use of our fish and wildlife resources

**ENHANCE** the quantity and quality of sustainable fishing and hunting opportunities

**ENGAGE** youth and the public in fishing and hunting

**EDUCATE** and provide awareness on the benefits of fishing and hunting

**ENCOURAGE** safe and responsible participation in fishing and hunting

**INVEST** in conservation, science and research

Visit www.ofah.org/finance to view the 2020 financial summary
After a 21-year long advocacy effort by the OFAH, the MNRF finally announced the full return of the spring bear hunt in March 2020. We can all celebrate, whether you hunt spring bears or not, the collective accomplishment of bringing back an opportunity that many believed was lost forever. With that in mind, the OFAH will ensure that black bear management in the province is science-based, and results in maximum sustainable hunting opportunities while guaranteeing healthy black bear populations for future generations.
PROTECTING ONTARIO FROM CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Long-standing OFAH pressure to prevent CWD from entering Ontario resulted in some significant progress in 2020:

- The MNRF adopted a new CWD Prevention and Response Plan which included many of OFAH’s recommendations; and,

- The MNRF is also going to clamp down on the movement of animals in the deer farming industry and further regulate high-risk animal parts and products.

We have been advocating for these changes for decades, so this represents a major accomplishment in the fight to keep CWD out of Ontario. All OFAH members should be proud knowing their voice helped drive this change.
Where does the OFAH stand on the firearms ban introduced in early 2020, you ask? It’s question we heard a lot last year. The answer is simple: "It criminalizes legal firearms owners, will negatively impact businesses, and do nothing to address gun violence in Canada."

Among our advocacy efforts in 2020, we:

- Addressed member and supporter questions about the firearm bans and what it means for them in a list of frequently asked questions made available to the public;
- Undertook a comprehensive analysis of the prohibitions and scrutinized its flaws in a letter to Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Bill Blair; and,
- Surveyed firearms owners across the country to gain a better understanding of how the newly prohibited firearms are used. This information was used in a report to address the misconceptions about how prohibited firearms were previously used.
The OFAH constantly advocates for more sustainable opportunities to fish and hunt across the province, so we were pleased to see the MNRF announce they would open WMU 72 for fall turkey hunting.

“The OFAH is constantly engaging the MNRF to make sure that sustainable wild turkey hunting opportunities are not being left on the table,” OFAH Wildlife Biologist, Dr. Keith Munro, explained when the announcement was made. “We’re excited for the new opportunities this proposal would bring.”
ENHANCE the quantity and quality of sustainable fishing and hunting opportunities

PROMOTING WATER QUALITY

Water quality has a direct effect on the health of fisheries, which is why the OFAH spent time in 2020 advising on issues like harmful blue-green algal blooms. We represented anglers in a bi-national initiative to protect and enhance the Great Lakes and we also made recommendations on lake management plans and supported student research to improve water quality.

TACKLESHARE STAYS STRONG

The TackleShare Program received a renewed sponsorship from Ontario Power Generation in 2020 to continue providing free opportunities to go fishing in Ontario. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the program was still able to provide new anglers across the province with the knowledge and loaner gear to get started in fishing.
ENGAGE youth and the public in fishing and hunting

The OFAH led another successful Camo Day and National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day in September 2020. People showed their outdoors pride by wearing camouflage to school or work to raise awareness and shared many of their photos online to help raise awareness. The OFAH #camoday social media campaign reached more than a half a million online users in 2020 and we even sold some swag to supporters across the province through the OFAH ProShop.

The Ontario Hunter Education Program unveiled an online hunter education course in 2020. Students had the opportunity to do their learning online and then complete their hunter education exam with a qualified instructor through virtual platforms, like Zoom.
The OFAH and its partners proudly hosted two separate internships in 2020 -- the OFAH/Fitzsimons Financial Group Fish & Wildlife Conservation Internship and the OFAH/BrokerLink Fish and Wildlife Conservation Internship. Interns gained valuable experience working closely with our policy and program teams, both in the field and at the desk, throughout the year.

The OFAH | Mario Cortellucci Hunting and Fishing Heritage Centre turned a decade old in 2020, while the OFAH also celebrated 10 years of family ice fishing on Family Day. The Heritage Centre, through a transition to virtual learning, and our family fishing events, remains a core element to OFAH youth outreach.

Three OFAH/partner research grants were awarded in 2020 to support students and their research. This year grants were awarded to research on Atlantic Salmon, cervid pathology/disease and waterfowl conservation. Their science will help inform and support sound fish and wildlife conservation management in Ontario.
ENCOURAGE safe and responsible participation in fishing and hunting

Municipal Angling Toolkit

KEEP COMMUNITIES FISHING

The OFAH has developed this toolkit to help municipalities target unwanted behaviour, avoid fishing bans and access restrictions, and to keep communities fishing.

LITTERING
- Provide accessible garbage and recycling bins with frequent pick up and removal
- Signage in known angling and/or problem locations
- Molok Waste Containers
- Coordinated cleanups (fishing clubs, community groups)
- Fish cleaning stations

TRESPASSING
- Clear signage, in multiple languages with graphics, indicating where fishing is restricted
- Additional lighting
- Fencing and gated entry
- Docks, fishing nodes, and piers
- Provide contact information for enforcement (Crime Stoppers 1-800-222-8477, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry TIPS line 1-877-847-7667)

PUBLIC URINATION/DEFECATION
- Provide public washrooms or portable toilets
- Social media clean-up campaigns (i.e. responsible/respectful angling outreach)

NOISE
- Implement stricter noise bylaws
- Increase enforcement presence
- Social sanctioning campaigns and programs – “see something, say something”
- Encourage anglers to advocate for responsible behaviour through online forums, social media platforms, and angling clubs

PARKING
- Provide accessible parking lots in key locations
- On-street parking meters
- Smart parking and parking apps
- Regular public transit route
- Implement parking bylaws for problem areas
- Increase enforcement of parking bylaws

BANK DEGRADATION
- Plant riparian vegetation such as native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers to stabilize the bank
- Section off and restrict access to critical areas
- Foster meaningful community connections by engaging local stakeholder groups in stewardship and habitat improvement projects
- Collaborate with Conservation Authorities, and where applicable, ALUS Canada on restoration initiatives
- Create areas designated for people to get down to the water’s edge, so they don’t continue to use the bank

INVASIVE SPECIES
- Education and outreach signage at municipal boat launches, docks and other access points
- Distribute fact sheets on invading species and best practices for anglers to prevent the spread of invasive species
- Collaborate with the Invading Species Awareness Program
- Document and submit invasive species observations using the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDMaps)
- Provide bait disposal area/containers

OTHER IDEAS AND RESOURCES
Create a working group. Working groups are a proven strategy for finding mutually beneficial solutions to common problems. Have regular meetings and seek input from stakeholders including residents, angling clubs, enforcement, municipal staff, the MNRF, and the OFAH. Publish an accessible municipal map of key locations, including garbage receptacles, public washrooms, where to fish, rules, etc. OFAH video: Respectful Fishing - What Not to Do OFAH video: Be a Responsible Angler

OFAH UNVEILS MUNICIPAL ANGLING TOOLKIT

The Municipal Angling Toolkit was created and promoted as a resource to assist municipalities in dealing with some of the common issues relating to fishing access, by-laws, trespassing, invading species and more. The OFAH hopes it will be a tool to help avoid fishing bans and access restrictions, and ultimately to keep communities fishing.

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The OFAH provided critical information about keeping you and your family in the outdoors in many ways throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Liaised with local public health units to gather information and share relevant communications
- Compiled a list of frequently asked questions about COVID-19 and the impacts on fishing and hunting and made it available online
- Provided advice on how to hunt and fish safely during a pandemic
- Monitored and provided up-to-date information about local closures and restrictions
- Advocated for municipal and provincial governments to allow fishing and hunting to continue throughout COVID-19. These outdoor activities promote mental wellness for individuals and help stimulate the economy in Ontario
- The OFAH also remained connected with members, holding the Annual General Meeting, Board of Directors’ meetings and Zone meetings in a virtual format for the first time ever

STAY CONNECTED AT WWW.OFAH.ORG/ENews
Each year, Lyme disease awareness month falls in May, and in 2020, the OFAH ramped up communication efforts around Lyme disease and how it affects anglers, hunters, and outdoor enthusiasts. Our focus was on prevention and providing anglers and hunters with examples of what they could do to reduce the risk of being bitten by a tick.
As a service to our members and supporters, the OFAH helped moose hunters navigate through the new MNRF moose tag allocation system by speaking with hunters 1-on-1. We also explained the steps involved in the new process and detailed it within the pages of Ontario OUT of DOORS Magazine, with some assistance from MNRF staff, who provided some clarification and attempted to answer the many questions hunters had about the changes.
The OFAH partnered with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) to produce a two-minute video on the benefits that the Great Lakes provide. The video focused on the biodiversity of the Great Lakes, its economic impact and job creation, among other things. You can watch the video through the OFAH YouTube Channel.
The Invading Species Awareness Program (ISAP) received continued funding in 2020 to address the increasing threats posed by invasive species in Ontario — and the year was a busy one with the program responding to emerging threats and reaching millions of people with information about invasive species prevention, monitoring, early detection, and management in Ontario.

Highlights of 2020 include:

- The Invading Species Hotline and EDDMapS Ontario handled thousands of calls and reports of invasive species received from the public;
- Great Lakes (e.g., Asian Carps) messaging and campaigns;
- Lake Simcoe and Rainy River-Lake of the Woods watersheds aquatic invasive species (AIS) messaging;
- New videos for high profile species and/or pathways in Ontario;
- Participated in the Green Shovels Collaborative — a new coalition of conservation organizations working together to build/deliver conservation focused projects — to develop a citizen science Wild Pig Surveillance Program;
- With Ontario Trillium Foundation funding, the ISAP developed a new Water Steward Program to train volunteers to assist the ISAP with encouraging recreationalists, such as boaters, to take deliberate actions to prevent the spread of AIS; and
- Worked with Parks Canada to continue monitoring water soldier in the Trent-Severn Waterway with the ultimate goal of eradication through annual herbicide applications.
RESTORE fish and wildlife populations, and the habitats that support them

The ALUS Peterborough program’s efforts in 2020 helped to re-naturalize, or protect, 69.4 acres of marginal farmland across the region, while helping to provide ecosystem services in producing cleaner air, cleaner water, better biodiversity, and enhanced habitat for wildlife.

A new population of invasive water soldier near Kingston was identified, assessed and treated by the OFAH’s Invading Species Awareness Program staff and partners. This rapid response effort was key in stopping the spread.

ALUS CONVERTS MARGINAL FARMLAND

RAPID RESPONSE TO WATER SOLDIER
The Community Hatchery Program continued supporting its hatcheries during COVID restrictions. At a minimum, it helped keep insurance, hydro, and rent paid, even if hatcheries were unable to raise fish. The CHP also received funding to continue supporting community hatcheries for the next two years and has continued to produce support materials (e.g. videos) to create a Community of Practice amongst the volunteer-run hatcheries.
The Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Program persevered through the COVID-19 pandemic, and found ways to deliver the classroom hatchery and habitat restoration programs despite the challenges of 2020. Additionally, our partners at the MNRF were able to raise and stock fish during the COVID global pandemic.
ADVOCATE for evidence-based fish and wildlife conservation and management

Fierce OFAH advocacy triggered action on wild pigs with MNRF committing to a pilot project to control and manage wild pigs under the Invasive Species Act. They also committed to working with Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and their farmers to prevent escapes.

OFAH advocacy led to changes for wolf and coyote hunters by making an exception to small game calibre firearms restrictions. Wolf and coyote hunters can now use centrefire rifles and shotguns loaded with slugs or shot larger than #2 during big game seasons. Hunters are also no longer required to purchase a big game licence (if they don’t want to) just to comply, while hunting wolves and coyotes during a big game season.

GOVERNMENT ACTION ON WILD PIGS

CHANGES FOR WOLF AND COYOTE HUNTERS
Ontario drops plan to remove Black Sturgeon River dam

The future of the dam has been under study since 2013.

Mar 30, 2020 3:34 PM By: TBNewsWatch.com Staff

The Camp 43 dam was built in 1959 for Great Lakes Paper Company logging operations (MNRF photo)

THUNDER BAY — The Camp 43 Dam on the Black Sturgeon River, northeast of Thunder Bay, will be repaired rather than demolished.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks announced the decision after engineers examined the 60-year-old structure and found that it was "at high risk of failure," according to a recent letter to stakeholders.

Given the risk to property and the environment downstream, the ministry says the dam needs "urgent and critical" repairs.

"Consequently, the ministry will not be proceeding with the proposed partial demolition of the Camp 43 dam...nor will it be carrying out any further steps under the related class environmental assessment," the letter states.

The Black Sturgeon River Dam received emergency repairs in 2020 after long-term OFAH advocacy. Since the beginning, the OFAH has been pushing for the dam to have fish passage to keep invasive Sea Lamprey out, while allowing for the passing of native fish species.

DAM REPAIRS TO BENEFIT FISH

CLUPA ADDS SOUTHERN ONTARIO TO ONLINE MAP SYSTEM

The OFAH was pleased to hear that the MNRF’s Crown Land Use Policy Atlas will be updated to include southern Ontario after years of OFAH advocacy to improve the cumbersome online mapping system.
The OFAH partnered with the Ontario Hawking Club to advocate for improvements to falconry in Ontario. Increasing the number of wild take permits by licensed falconers and adding Northern Goshawk to the list of species that can be captured, were approved and are being added to the Ontario hunting regulations.

For decades, the OFAH has been advocating for better management of cormorants in Ontario and in 2020 we saw the first official cormorant hunting season. The OFAH had hoped the government would implement a targeted control program but they have decided (against our cautionary recommendations) to only move forward with a hunting season.
The year that was in 2020 was chock full of challenges for the OFAH as a whole, but especially at the Zone level, due to the situation and uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic. The normalcy that we were used to with our grassroots activities was upended in a way nobody expected. In 2020, we couldn’t host our annual youth camp weekends or get involved in the countless fishing derbies or shooting range days that our members are accustomed to participating in. Our youth hunts, many external committee meetings and National Archery in the Schools days were impacted, and so too were many of the habitat enhancement projects we had planned, the award presentations we would normally put on, and of course, our in-person club and Zone meetings. These things just couldn’t happen the way we were used to. And unfortunately, those examples listed above are only just some of the things that were impacted by the situation we faced in 2020. In saying all of that, sometimes though with challenge, comes opportunity -- and that is important to remember, especially in this situation.

COVID slowed us down, but it certainly didn’t stop us in following through on our commitment to conservation and spreading the message of the OFAH across the province. Even though we couldn’t connect with our members face-to-face from March on in 2020, that didn’t stop OFAH Zones from keeping in touch and reaching the membership in new ways through virtual meetings on the Zoom platform, while also utilizing the power of social media to stay connected. Being able to reach out and connect with folks through the click of a button provided new and necessary exposure for the organization and allowed us to continue to shine a bright light on great things we accomplish, not just on a yearly basis as an organization, but a day-to-day basis, at the Zone level and beyond.

We persevered through it all and many more eyes were opened to the great work of the OFAH thanks to those efforts, so even amid the challenges, there’s that to be proud of.
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* as of March 28, 2021