



Fisheries Management

Ontario fisheries support recreation, industry and tourism. Working in partnership with all levels of government, nongovernment organizations and OFAH member clubs and individuals, the OFAH strives to sustain and grow our vital fisheries.

Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program



It was another busy year for the program, with over 870,000 fish stocked, 16 habitat projects completed, 46 classroom hatchery programs delivered, and three field crews running from May to December. We also began the transition from Phase I (2006-2010) to Phase II (2011-15) as the year drew to a close.

Partnership Development

In March, we received a signed copy of our Stewardship Agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) under the provincial *Endangered Species Act (ESA)*, allowing the OFAH and partners to continue working on the species. This Stewardship Agreement is the first under the new ESA.

Also in March, the OFAH received the C.D. “Buzz” Besadny Award for Fostering Great Lakes Partnerships from the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. The award came with a \$10,000 contribution from the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) for the program.

OFAH senior managers and Atlantic Salmon program staff worked to secure new sponsors throughout 2010, and identified several hopeful prospects. In May, the LCBO announced its commitment to another five years of the program. Banrock Station may also remain a partner at some level for Phase II, but there was no firm commitment from them as of year end.

In June we learned the Fish For Ever Foundation, which had been sponsoring Fleming College’s involvement in the program, was ceasing operations immediately. Fortunately, for at least one year, Fleming College will fund their students’ involvement in the program, and we are assisting them in finding new sponsors.

Fish Production and Stocking

Approximately 1.9 million green eggs were collected from the LaHave River broodstock for 2010 production. We also had some egg production from Sebago Lake 3-year-olds, the first generation of production fish to be reared in Ontario. In mid-March, yearling stocking began, and over the course of March and April, 98,000 Atlantic Salmon yearlings from the Normandale Fish Culture Station, Credit River Anglers Association, and Fleming College were stocked into the three target tributaries. High school and elementary students from Cobourg and Peterborough stocked 1,000 of these as part of the fourth annual Earth Day clean-up of Cobourg Brook.

In May, approximately 540,000 fry were stocked from Normandale, Harwood Fish Culture Station, and Fleming College, with an earlier 35,000 having been stocked by the Belfountain Hatchery. The Credit River received just over half of the fish, with Duffins Creek and Cobourg Brook splitting the remainder. This effort required 16 days of stocking and we will be looking at alternate stocking methods for 2011. The first day of stocking was combined with a unique media opportunity. The Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources brought 14 journalists from around North America to help stock 12,000 fry in Cobourg Brook. The journalists had previously toured Harwood FCS and were wrapping up 9 days on Lake Ontario.

The OFAH worked with 46 classroom hatcheries in 2010 which stocked their fry during May and June. Toronto Zoo’s Aqualinks Program and Let’s Talk Science (McMaster University) each supervised six classrooms, while the OFAH administered 34 classroom hatcheries. During the second annual Bronte Creek classroom hatchery stocking event with Pioneer Petroleum, the OFAH, Let’s Talk Science, and Trout Unlimited Canada received significant print, online and television coverage.

In October and November, approximately 200,000 fall fingerlings were stocked from the Normandale Fish Culture Station (MNR), Fleming College and the Pine Valley Springs Hatchery. Half of the fish were released into the Credit River and the remainder were split evenly between Duffins Creek and Cobourg Brook. Included in the total were surplus Lac St. Jean strain fish (8,700), from the 2009 broodstock collection.

Production planning for 2010 egg collection occurred in early September. Approximately 2.9 million green eggs were projected from the LaHave River and Sebago Lake broodstock, and over 3

million eggs were eventually collected. The total capacity of all rearing facilities is 1.9 million green eggs (equaling 1.3 million eyed eggs), so egg stocking of the surplus eggs was scheduled for early 2011. Full Sebago Lake strain production was achieved in 2010, although only 4 year-old fish were available. Normandale received half of the Sebagos, with the remainder going to Fleming College, Belfountain Community Hatchery, Pine Valley Springs Hatchery, and Islington's Sportmen's Club. In total, the combined facilities have a production target of 657,000 fry, 190,000 fall fingerlings, and 90,000 yearlings, including allocations for schools and smaller partner facilities.

The fry stocking plan for 2011 is Credit River - 237,000 fry, Duffins Creek - 127,000 fry, Cobourg Brook - 128,000 fry and Humber River - 165,000 fry. The fall stocking will be similarly broken down. Ontario Streams is coordinating this for the program.

The Ministry of Natural Resources undertook a significant rebuild of the Normandale Fish Culture Station in 2010, beginning with the sub-station. The rebuild is expected to be completed by 2012, at a cost of approximately \$14 million. The facility will subsequently house all of Lake Ontario's Atlantic and chinook salmon production.

Water Quality and Habitat Protection and Enhancement

2010 Cobourg Brook Projects

We planted a total of 2,825 trees and 538 shrubs on Cobourg Brook in 2010, encompassing 39,590m² of enhanced habitat, and 924m of restored shoreline.

Projects: 7

Volunteers: 202

Hours: 685

- Laurie Lawson Outdoor Education Centre live shrub staking
- Baker Road headwaters reforestation planting
- Cobourg Conservation Area riparian buffer planting
- Holmes property pastureland reforestation planting
- Holmes property forest maintenance poplar planting
- Hie property pond-to-stream interface reconstruction
- Hie property pond shading and bank stabilization planting

2010 Duffins Creek Projects

A total of 995 trees and 2,363 shrubs were planted in 2010 on Duffins Creek, resulting in 32,844m² of habitat planted. Combined, these projects helped restore 888m of shoreline.

Projects: 9

Volunteers: 339

Hours: 922

- Greenwood Conservation Area (5 projects):
- Failed foot-bridge removal/bank stabilization
- Hydro corridor root wad placement bank stabilization
- Hydro corridor boulder placement
- South area riparian planting
- North hydro corridor riparian shrub planting
- Transport Canada Pickering Lands (3 projects)
- Old farm cedar planting
- Lower Barkey headwaters bank stabilization planting
- Upper Barkey pastureland reforestation planting
- Uxbridge-Pickering Townline Barkey cattle exclusion fencing

The Atlantic Salmon Habitat Working Group (ASHWG) was formed in the spring and had its first meeting in June. ASHWG developed and finalized a Terms of Reference to guide the group, and collected background material to support Atlantic Salmon habitat restoration. They also discussed projects that were planned underway or completed on the Phase I tributaries. The habitat project planning process was also started for the Phase II tributaries - Humber River and Bronte Creek. ASHWG is made up of representatives from partner organizations on the five Phase I and II watersheds:

- Credit Valley Conservation (CVC)
- Halton Region Conservation Authority (HRCA)
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)
- Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA)
- Ontario Streams
- Credit River Anglers Association (CRAA)
- Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC)
- Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)
- OFAH

ASHWG developed a Watershed Based Action Team (WBAT) for each Atlantic Salmon stream to facilitate communication between themselves and on-the-ground watershed stakeholders.

The Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program worked with Transport Canada and other local agencies to identify Atlantic Salmon habitat restoration opportunities on the Pickering Lands. The working group strategically focused their restoration efforts on a single section of Duffins Creek within the Transport Canada property, and compiled a list of potential projects, some of which were completed in 2010.

Research and Assessment

The Science Team met in June to review results from fall and winter work, and to review 2010 plans. DFO confirmed successful spawning (egg fertilization) on the Credit River in 2009, and there were good survival rates from the redds, both from wild fish and surplus broodstock. Thiamine levels in the eggs were also up to six times above the minimum level.

In September, fall field crews electrofished Roger's Creek, where returning adults had been moved in 2009. They documented the first recorded wild-born Atlantic Salmon in those waters since the 1860's. Atlantic Salmon parr were also found in Duffins Creek sites where adult broodstock and eggs were released in 2009 (broodstock) and 2010 (eggs), demonstrating successful reproduction in both tributaries.

Smolt assessment crews began work in May on Cobourg Brook and Duffins Creek, with funding from Human Resources Skills Development Corporation (HRSDC), as well as a grant of \$42,019



from the Species-at-Risk Stewardship Fund. On a trial basis, smolt assessment on the Credit River was conducted using a fyke net.

Reports of significant angler catches of Atlantic Salmon from the south side of Lake Ontario began in April and continued through the year, including fish weighing over 20lbs. New York's creel program observed a greater number of Atlantics than in 2009, and they collected data and tissue samples (for genetic analysis) for us.

Reports of catches from the north side of Lake Ontario were also up over the previous year, and 10 open-water anglers/charter operators collected data and tissue in a project led by the MNR, with permits granted under our Stewardship Agreement under the *Endangered Species Act*.

In early August, summer student smolt crews began to switch over to adult assessment. A grant of \$87,480 was received from the Species-at-Risk Stewardship Fund to help with adult assessment through the fall, with additional support coming from the TRCA. Three field crews were hired to assess returning adults and spawning success on the three tributaries. The Cobourg and Duffins crews built weirs to trap and hold migrating fish. The Credit River crew used the Streetsville fishway, supplemented by electrofishing during the chinook and coho egg collections. The crews also walked the stream to speak with anglers when possible.

Stream angler volunteers were not used in the monitoring process in 2010, as they had been in 2009. Without that data, returns were modest, and expectations were further reduced as significant portions of the returns would have been from the 2007 and 2008 year-classes. Both of these classes were drastically limited by losses at the Normandale Fish Culture Station in those years. These sampling methods do not reveal if the fish are using other tributaries or sub-tributaries (reports of Atlantic Salmon have come from the Humber River, Wilmot Creek, Bowmanville Creek), or are finding suitable spawning habitat below our weirs. Anecdotal angler reports of catches were high in all three target tributaries in 2010, with some fish reportedly up to 15lbs.

In the fall, an MNR crew, working with the Credit River and CVC crews, electrofished that river's spring stocking sites to assess in-stream survival and growth rates. They also marked the parr to assess survival to spring 2011, when the fish should be observed passing through the rotary screw trap being built into the river. This work was funded through Canada-Ontario Agreement monies acquired by the Lake Ontario Management Unit.

Russ Bobrowski's M.Sc. thesis on Atlantic Salmon smolts was defended in May and has since been published. This graduate project was funded by the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Program in conjunction with a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Grant.

Education and Outreach

Thirty-one classes and three outdoor education centres reared Atlantic Salmon in classroom hatcheries under OFAH head office guidance, down from 66 units in 2009. The geographic range is again from Fort Erie to Kingston. An additional six units are administered by the Toronto Zoo, five at schools and one at the zoo itself, and McMaster University's Let's Talk Science node oversaw another six. The Ministry of Natural Resources (Aurora District) had nine units underway. Thanks to contributions from the MNR, Quinte Wildlife Conservation, and the Oakville and District Rod and Gun Club, most schools replaced their older



cooler systems with chillers. Pioneer Petroleum again subsidized school bus costs to transport students to their release sites.

The classroom hatchery program continued without funding for dedicated staff, but did receive support for 14 new units from the Species-at-Risk Stewardship Fund. Approximately 4 of these units replaced older models in current schools and the other 10 went to new schools. The Toronto Zoo acquired five new units for their expanded program.

Program presentations were given to students participating in the classroom hatchery program, Colborne Probus Club, Great Lakes Maritime Museum (Kingston), Banrock Station Wines' sales team, and the 2010 Eco-Health Conference hosted by Fleming College. We also worked in partnership with Port Hope High School on the Environmental and Resource Studies Specialist High Skills Program to complete a Habitat Restoration Certification with 35 students. The certification included a Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program overview and habitat restoration presentation, a day of field work, and a written exam.

Last winter we were invited to sit on a committee preparing a book on fish in the Toronto area, to be entitled "*Fishes of Toronto*," part of the city's biodiversity series. The books in this series will be freely available at public libraries and city offices. Along with Atlantic Salmon, the book covers fishing opportunities in the city, including introduced species in Lake Ontario, threats to fish, invasive species, and a history of the shoreline and streams around the city.

In April, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority held a fundraising dinner, which profiled the program and raised funds for habitat work and adult assessment.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) purchased booth space at the 2010 Tall Ships Festival at the Toronto Harbourfront, and invited the OFAH to attend. Both the Atlantic Salmon and invading species programs had table displays, with live sea lampreys from the GLFC. The festival ran from June 30 to July 4, and thanks to an excellent location, tens of thousands of residents and visitors came by the booth.

The media covered a number of stocking days, including the two millionth Atlantic Salmon event, and CBC Toronto, Rogers TV/CP 24, CHCH (Hamilton), CHEX-TV, and several local newspapers profiled the salmon program throughout the year.

The MNR secured a Bring Back the Salmon ad for the 2011 Fishing Regulations Summary, and an LCBO video production celebrating the release of the two millionth fish was posted on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zjzkiQe1q0)

Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ) Advisory Councils

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) implemented a new Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ) Advisory Council in FMZ 5, this year. While we anticipated FMZs 8 and 15 would also form in 2010, these councils will likely roll out in 2011 along with FMZ 7.

The MNR is still working on an approach for FMZ 16 and it remains unclear how FMZs 1, 2, and 3 will operate. They will not likely follow the existing template, but could be included, in some way, with other far north planning exercises.

In April, OFAH staff hosted a one-day workshop in Peterborough focused on providing representatives with the tools and networking resources necessary to effectively represent the OFAH at FMZ council meetings. In conjunction with the workshop, staff developed an orientation package, which included roles and responsibilities as well as OFAH fisheries policies. There were approximately 30 participants, including the chair persons of many OFAH zones.

OFAH zone executives have been encouraged to compile a list of potential candidates in anticipation of the need for future representatives, especially for those councils which will form in 2011. We fully expect that it will be necessary to seek individuals outside of OFAH zone executives.

FMZ 4

The FMZ 4 Advisory Council spent a considerable amount of time this year reviewing and discussing the Background Information Document: Fisheries Management Plan for FMZ 4. The document along with current fisheries data (e.g. the Board Scale Monitoring) will be used to assist the MNR and the FMZ Council through the process of developing a Fisheries Management Plan, specific to FMZ 4 and its various stakeholder/user groups. One of the challenges identified in the zone is that the current slot size prevents harvesting Northern Pike of a reasonable size for shore lunches. The FMZ 4 Advisory Council is in the process of working with the MNR to draft a new regulation.

FMZ 5

Preliminary meetings for FMZ 5 Advisory Council have been held. The MNR has indicated that they are under financial constraints and advised that the majority of meetings will be hosted via teleconference or webcast to cut down on travel costs.

FMZ 6/FMZ 9

Earlier this year the FMZ 9 Advisory Council was asked to select a preferred option for the restoration of the native fisheries in Black Bay (particularly Walleye) – either leave the Camp 43 dam in place and add a fish trap and sort system, or remove the dam and expand the costly applications of Lampricide, as required.

The OFAH Fisheries Advisory Committee suggested that the MNR assess upstream habitat suitability rather than pressing ahead with either option. There is no sufficient biological information to determine whether either option is a valid investment that will produce more Walleye.

The FMZ 6 Advisory Council met this summer, to discuss the Black Sturgeon River issue. Following a presentation by the MNR and a lengthy debate, the FMZ 6 Advisory Council agreed to support FMZ 9's recommendation to put forward both Option # 3 (Camp 1 as the preferred option) and Option # 4 (Trap and Sort, with the inclusion of the caveats and considerations as summarized in

the Rationale Document) for public consultation under a formal Environmental Assessment process.

FMZ 10

There has been some discussion with respect to increasing protection for Smallmouth Bass. Bass interest groups within the zone would like to see a closed season on bass from September to the end of June and a catch and release approach. We recognize that, although they are not native to the FMZ, they have become a desired species; therefore, the OFAH supports the current regulation of no size limits and six-fish year-round possession limits to reduce impacts on other species, without eradicating the Smallmouth Bass fishery.

The OFAH Fisheries Advisory Committee also supports northern FMZs in an education effort to prevent unauthorized introductions.

FMZ 11/FMZ 12

Although initial steps were taken in 2009 to form FMZ advisory councils 11 and 12, preliminary meetings did not occur until 2010. Challenges have been identified with each council.

FMZ 13/14

Councils have been asked to review *A Revised Lake Trout Rehabilitation Plan for Ontario Water of Lake Huron*. OFAH representatives and staff reviewed the plan and although we support the rehabilitation of Lake Trout, we do not want to see other stocking programs (e.g. Chinook, Rainbow Trout) compromised in the process.



Photo: Mark Majchrowski

FMZ 17

FMZ 17 implemented new regulations as of January 1, 2010. The changes include a year-round season for Yellow Perch, Black Crappie, Northern Pike, and sunfish; a limit of 300 sunfish per angler for a sport license, (30 of which may be greater than 18 cm) and a limit of 15 sunfish per angler for a conservation license. These significant changes provided ice fishing opportunities for the first time in many of the Kawartha Lakes, which the OFAH actively supported through the media and a presentation to Peterborough County Council.

FMZ 17 reviewed coldwater fisheries in the Zone, beginning with an overview of salmon and trout stocking in Lake Ontario, provided by the Lake Ontario Management Unit. The zone has reviewed stakeholder impressions of the state of the coldwater fisheries, and whether any changes to seasons were desired. The OFAH suggested a review of the locations of the "Extended



Season” and “Open All Year” boundaries on tributaries, in order to better rationalize them, rather than using Highway 2 and rail lines. The council also reviewed other regulations on coldwater fisheries; discussed Watershed-based Fisheries Management Plans; consultations on Cobourg Creek and Ganaraska River; as well as the current regulatory framework for coldwater species, including monitoring and assessment, outreach, education and awareness.

FMZ 18

In 2010, the council spent a considerable amount of time reviewing and discussing options for managing Walleye. The MNR is seeking input from the council with respect to achieving a “Walleye management goal” for FMZ 18.

The MNR provided an overview and conclusions from the Southern Region Walleye Stocking Review. The objective of the review was to address concerns with regard to inconsistent stocking practices and identify additional Walleye stocking opportunities in the southern region (e.g. Walleye stocking partnership with the OFAH to enhance the production of fingerlings for Put-Grow-Take).

FMZ 19 (Lake Erie)

Winter meetings of the FMZ 19 Advisory Council focused primarily around Total Allowable Catch (TAC) on Lake Erie for Walleye and Yellow Perch for the commercial fishery. At the annual lake committee meeting, TAC was announced for Walleye at 2.450 million fish, of which Ontario receives 1.055 million; and Yellow Perch was set at a total of 12.012 million fish.

Historical winter Pike spearing seasons continued to be discussed. The MNR Director of Fish and Wildlife Branch provided a series of biological concerns rationalizing maintaining the closure.

There is a growing concern for proposals for wind “farms” on the near shore waters of Lake Erie. Considered as “green energy,” concerns include the disturbance of sediment, closed access to anglers, esthetics, navigational hazards, and oil pollution.

In 2010, the MNR proposed a new perch possession limit of 100, which doubled the existing limit. This was previously requested by the OFAH, and was endorsed by the FMZ 19 Council. According to MNR sources, this new regulation will take effect in January 2012.

The Rainbow Smelt fish kill in late spring was determined to be lake-wide, although most of the mortalities were found on the New York side of the lake in the east basin. Since no pathogen or toxins were detected and only dead smelt were found, it was attributed to a combination of spawning stress, thermal shock, and high winds.

Baitfish continued to be a topic of discussion, since commercial and recreational anglers need to be educated. Most Lake Erie bait dealer operators have not had the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) training, and could not identify an invading species or species at risk. The council is concerned that, unless something improves, bait will be obtainable in limited quantities, bait dealers will be out of business, and license sales will drop.



With reference to commercial fishing, the MNR’s Lake Erie Enforcement found more by-catch this year than was being recorded, as well as a discrepancy between daily catch reports. The question of what to do with by-catch continued to be raised. As with angling, various possession limits have resulted in occasions where anglers have had to release caught fish in a poor state; however, catching ripe female Yellow Perch, when targeting another species still remains a serious issue. Council members would like to see a better by-catch policy to achieve wiser use. Increased enforcement was scheduled for the summer and fall.

FMZ 20 (Lake Ontario)

In 2010, the FMZ 20 Council was divided into eastern and western sub-committees. This was welcomed, as it gave each sub-committee the opportunity to focus on issues in their area, and greatly reduced travel times.

The western sub-committee discussed the effectiveness of stocking exercises in various locations in the western basin. Most sites have done very well, with the exception of the Barcovan site, where a die-off occurred and will likely not be used as a future stocking location. Salmon head collection opportunities during the angling season were also discussed, which will allow further data to be collected from anglers, and provide more information related to the presence of native and stocked fish. The western sub-committee also began discussions related to the communication between FMZ 20 and FMZ 17, as these two zones will need to work together to meet fish community objectives.

The eastern sub-committee continued to discuss Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River fish community objectives, which include nearshore goals such as maintaining existing healthy populations, and protecting, restoring, and sustaining native species and their habitats. The offshore goals include maintaining

the offshore pelagic fish community characterized by a diversity of trout and salmon species, including Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout and Atlantic Salmon, in balance with prey fish populations and lower trophic levels. The committee also discussed a proposed regulation change to allow two lines for Carp fishing. There have been many challenges to this proposal, including how it will be enforced, fishing locations, and accidental catch of other species.

In October, a proposal to change the Rainbow Trout harvest limits was brought forward to the western basin sub-committee, by the Lake Ontario Management Unit (LOMU). The MNR provided associated material to FMZ council members for their recommendations, and OFAH staff presented LOMU's proposal to our Fisheries Advisory Committee for their input. Further to this, the FMZ council will host a Lake Ontario (western basin) symposium on trout and salmon in 2011.

The MNR is also proposing a hold on changes to the stocking targets and net pens for 2011. Current net pen locations include: Port Dalhousie, Port Credit, Bluffer's Park, Whitby Harbour, Oshawa Harbour, Port Darlington, Barcovan (or alternate) and Wellington.

LAKE SIMCOE

The Lake Simcoe Fisheries Stakeholder Committee (LSFSC) met on a regular basis to discuss the development of fish community objectives. A draft of the Lake Simcoe Fish Community Objectives and corresponding Background Document was presented to the LSFSC for review prior to public consultation. The OFAH provided initial comments and recommendations for the two Lake Simcoe Fish Community Objectives documents. Based on a follow-up discussion with MNR staff in December, we are planning to submit a more thorough list of comments and recommendations in January 2011.

There was also significant discussion regarding the potential of reopening the Lake Simcoe recreational Lake Herring fishery. The fishery closed in 2001 to protect the low abundance of Lake Herring in Lake Simcoe; however, recent MNR data shows the presence of at least one strong year-class. This data, coupled with a recent increase in incidental angler catch of Lake Herring has resulted in considerable pressure to reopen the fishery. The MNR remained hesitant to reopen the fishery due to a concern regarding the sustainability of Lake Herring populations limited to one or two year-classes. The LSFSC will continue to discuss a potential recreational fishery, and the OFAH will continue to advocate for its return in Lake Simcoe.

The LSFSC also discussed the perch fishery, muskie restoration, Whitefish and Lake Trout seasons, as well as ideas and options for a Lake Simcoe bait regulation.

Black Bay and Black Sturgeon River

The Black Bay and Black Sturgeon River Native Fisheries Rehabilitation Options Evaluation document did not provide enough biological information prior to finalizing a decision for the future of the Black Sturgeon dam. We sent a letter to the MNR Lake Superior manager requesting that further scientific information be collected and the data be made available to the FMZ 9 Council and the OFAH for review, to which the MNR responded that the information provided was sufficient. The OFAH determined that the response from the MNR was not satisfactory, and a second

letter will be written, indicating that there is a need for spawning studies to gather data. The study should involve document spawning and specific habitat association below the dam, and should take that habitat data above the dam in order to determine what could potentially be available there. The study should be based on several years of data prior to a final decision being made.

Namakan River Hydro Development Project

In 2009, a draft Environmental Report was released regarding the Namakan River Hydro Development Project. We were one of many stakeholders who wrote to the President of Ojibway Power and Energy stating our concerns related to fish, fish habitat, and water management. In the late spring, we were provided with access to the submissions written by the MNR, the Ministry of Environment (MOE), and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) for review.

To further understand the objectives of future hydro development projects in Ontario, we met with MNR Renewable Energy Section staff in Peterborough, and secured maps of Ontario's water management interests in each FMZ. These maps outline the current water control structures and waterpower-generating stations, to further identify possible hydro development projects in Ontario.

North Bala Falls Small Hydro Project

Based on conclusions from the Environmental Review Report, we wrote to the MNR regarding the negative impacts on fisheries values and sought more detailed information in order to further evaluate this hydro development project. Specifically, our concern with this small hydro project was the net negative impact on Lake Sturgeon and Walleye. Both species have great historical, current, and future value in Ontario, and cultural, recreational, socio-economic, and ecologic value in the Moon River.

From a fisheries conservation perspective, this development project will result in negative impacts to fish and fish habitat, specifically lake sturgeon and Walleye. We requested additional information be provided to us for review; however, by year end had not had a response.

Saugeen Ojibway Native Reserve Agreement Update

The OFAH met via teleconference with MNR staff, and local club representatives regarding negotiations for a new fish harvest agreement with the local Saugeen Ojibway Nation. It was the MNR's goal to have a new agreement in place by the end of September; however, if various challenges arise, this deadline may not be met. Topics of discussion that will be addressed in future negotiations include more defined enforcement and what Conservation Officers are capable of enforcing, solutions to by-catch, clear identifications of native nets and locations, possibilities of alternative netting techniques, and illegal sale of fish.

A main concern regarding the new agreement, which was expressed by several individuals, is that it should be made available to the public. It was stated that due to previous agreements not being made available to the public, a level of mistrust has been created between the natives, anglers, and the MNR. In the future, it is unlikely that the entire agreement will be made public; however, even if certain details were published, it would bring back areas of trust between these parties.

Aquaculture Sediment Policy

Various stakeholders and MNR staff hosted a meeting in June to develop a policy for aquaculture sediment. Some of the goals discussed were maintaining a healthy environment, demonstrating social responsibility, complying with legislative requirements, establishing a clear set of goals and objectives for the industry, and complying with the Ontario Water Resources Act (OWRA) and the Environmental Protection Act (EPA), which regulate sources of water pollution. Existing information and further science needs to be shared and researched to provide more information related to areas of interest and concern. The OFAH will continue to monitor this concern as policies develop.

Lake Sturgeon Management

After notification that Lake Sturgeon had been classified by the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO) as threatened in two of three defined areas in the province, we wrote to the MNR's Species at Risk Manager requesting an exemption regulation, and permission to be included on the Recovery Team Committee. This request would allow angling for sturgeon on populations that are considered threatened and would also enable the recovery team to focus on the development of programs to engage anglers in data collection and management efforts.

The MNR responded that an exemption regulation would not be issued at that time, and that the recovery committee had not yet been determined.



Bait

There is growing concern regarding the status of the bait industry in Ontario. Issues such as viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS), transportation of bait, and invading species have many anglers and bait dealers concerned about the future use of live bait. At the April OFAH Fisheries Advisory Committee meeting, an MNR aquatic ecologist reported on the current status of bait in Ontario. A bait advisory committee will be developed to provide advice from various stakeholders. It has not yet been determined who will be on this committee, or when it will actually form.

Ringwood Fish Culture Station



OFAH host club, Metro East Anglers (MEA), under the supervision of the Ringwood Fish Hatchery Coordinator operated the hatchery as it entered its fifth and final production cycle under

OFAH management.

Over 650,000 Chinook were successfully raised. In preparation

for transfer to pen rearing locations, 85,000 Chinook were hand clipped in March, and upon receiving favorable results from MNR disease testing, were immediately released to the pen sites in Wellington, Barcovan, and Whitby.

In addition, 24,000 Coho were stocked as fall fingerlings and approximately 22,000 Rainbow Trout will be stocked next spring. Chinook salmon marking with the autofish sampler from the United States was completed more quickly than anticipated due to the larger and more uniform size of the fish than in previous years; and the skill of the autofish operator (the hourly throughput was higher than the previous two years). The hatchery had great support from volunteers from the Metro East Anglers (MEA), the OFAH, Fleming College, and many others.

Chinook and Coho Egg Collection Fish Health Sampling Protocol (developed by the MNR with input from OFAH staff) was finalized and used for 2010 egg collections. 2010 protocol advised 100% sampling target (i.e. sampling from all adults used). All samples were sent to the Fish Health Lab at the University of Guelph.

OFAH/MNR Memorandum of Understanding

The OFAH/MNR Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) expires in September, 2011, and the MNR has confirmed that it will not be renewing or extending the MOU for the operation of the Ringwood Fish Culture Station. The MNR has indicated that this decision will not impact the Chinook production resulting from the fall 2010 egg collection, as those fish can be stocked out in early spring. The Coho production however, will have to be stocked prior to the expiration of the MOU (a few weeks earlier than usual).

The MNR officially informed us that Chinook production will be transferred to the MNR Normandale Fish Culture Station, and equipment from Ringwood will also be transferred. A major rebuild and expansion of Normandale is now underway (over \$12 million). Normandale will also continue its role as the major production facility for the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program.

Pembroke Outdoor Sportsman's Club Walleye Rearing Ponds

We are pleased to report that the Pembroke Outdoor Sportsman's Club, with financial support from the OFAH, has completed the renovations of their Walleye rearing ponds.

Lake Ontario Coastal Wetlands and Lake Level Regulation

Water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River have been artificially regulated since the 1960's under a regulation plan overseen by the International Joint Commission (IJC). Over the past number of years the IJC has looked at amending the plan to allow for a more "equal distribution of impacts and benefits to the ecological, social and economic features", above and below the dam at Cornwall.

The bi-national Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River (LOSLR) Working Group has been working with the IJC, to evaluate the merits of a new environmental regulation plan (i.e. with the goal of returning the system to a more "natural hydrologic regime" to allow for more periodic flooding or drawdown of coastal wetlands. As part of the LOSLR Working Group, the MNR has committed to developing a primer, illustrating the relationship between Lake

Ontario wetlands and water level regulation. The primer is to be used as a consultation tool in discussions with the IJC. The OFAH was invited to review and provide input on the primer. OFAH comments were provided to the MNR Great Lakes and Water Policy Section, emphasizing that the MNR, prior to submitting the primer to the Working Group, should acquire and further demonstrate the socio-economic importance/values associated with wetlands (e.g. recreation, heritage/culture, biodiversity, etc.) to drive home the importance of maintaining wetland functions and values.

Man-Made Dams

Many early settlement dams have become obsolete and no longer serve their original societal purpose (e.g. power generation, flood control and recreational opportunities). The rationale for maintaining or upgrading obsolete dams is often based on historical and/or social significance (e.g. recreational impoundments); rather than, what is best for the watershed they are located in. Unfortunately, many of these dams continue to cause negative ecological effects (e.g. obstruction of fish movement, degraded water quality, etc.) and should be removed or decommissioned to restore the natural water regime and improve fish migration.

Springbank Dam

Located on the Thames River, the Springbank dam, constructed in 1929 has provided a reservoir/head pond for recreational opportunities in the City of London, however it serves no benefit to local residents for flood control. It has been a topic of debate for years over its negative impacts to fish passage and water quality.

The dam is nonoperational following an unsuccessful and controversial attempt to repair and upgrade it. The City of London is claiming damages and breach of contract by the engineers hired to undertake the project, and proposes to repair the failed dam, thereby continuing a process which has resulted in the harmful alteration of fish migration and reportedly cost taxpayers millions.

In 2010, OFAH staff prepared a petition requesting that the City of London take immediate action to remove the dam, based on its ineffectiveness, cost and negative environmental effects. OFAH Zone J, the Thames River Anglers Association (TRAA), and many other local stakeholder groups were active in obtaining signatures and keeping the issue in the public eye. TRAA was also instrumental in communicating the issue to the City of London's electoral candidates as well as surveying their position on the dam, prior to the fall elections. Many candidates were in favor of cutting losses or engaging in further conversation on the matter.

OFAH Zone J, in partnership with TRAA, will be compiling signatures and preparing a formal submission to Council in 2011.

Misner Dam

The Misner dam, located on the Lynn River, was built in the 1850's as a power source for a mill, and has provided an impoundment of water also known as Silver Lake mill pond in the heart of Port Dover. Norfolk council is proposing a \$1.1 million repair of the deteriorating structure without considering fish passage to maintain the mill pond/reservoir.

OFAH Zone J and the Simcoe Game and Fish Association have been actively urging the Municipal Council to decommission and renaturalize the Misner dam site. The project has been put on hold by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Environment for further investigating.

OFAH Club Survey – CFWIP

In March, OFAH staff prepared a survey to obtain an inventory of the projects our clubs are conducting with financial assistance from the Community Fish and Wildlife Involvement Program (CFWIP). The OFAH is largely responsible for the Ministry of Natural Resources continuing to maintain the CFWIP to fund fish and wildlife projects. The results of the survey will allow us to gauge the response and impact the CFWIP has on OFAH clubs, and their ability to deliver projects in their area. Only 112 (15%) surveys were returned. Results of the survey were presented at the September OFAH Board of Directors meeting, which were that:

- 75 percent of responding clubs had received CFWIP funds for fisheries, waterfowl or wildlife enhancement projects at one time;
- the majority of responding clubs indicated that CFWIP funding was a priority for projects to be accomplished
- Of the 12 clubs that responded, 11 indicated that CFWIP funding alone does not adequately cover hatchery costs; and
- over half indicated that their reliance on CFWIP for their hatchery's overall budget is low.

Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

In late November, the Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy "*The Sweetwater Sea: Strategies for Conserving Lake Huron*" was released. OFAH staff provided input throughout the process, specifically with regard to the identifying and ranking of threats (e.g. invasive species). The report is available online at <http://lakehuron.ca/uploads/pdf/Lake-Huron-Biodiversity-Strategy-2010.pdf>

Regional Municipality of York–Proposal for an Intra-basin Transfer with Return Flow

The Regional Municipality of York is seeking to increase their existing intra-basin transfer from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron watershed communities with the provision of return flow to Lake Ontario as treated effluent to meet their projected growth.

In April 2010 the MNR initiated prior notice and consultation (PNC) with Great Lakes jurisdictions under the 1985 Great Lakes Charter (which remains in force until all jurisdictions have measures in place to implement the new Great Lakes Charter and the Great Lakes Sustainable Water Resources Agreement).

As a member of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement Advisory Panel (AAP), the OFAH was involved in the initial review. OFAH staff submitted comments and recommendations to the MNR, Great Lakes and Water Policy Section in June. The OFAH recognizes York Region's need to ensure continued and uninterrupted water supply to existing residents and to secure future capacity based on population and infrastructure projections for the area (Places to Grow Act, 2005, Master Plans). However, in keeping with the "spirit and intent of all agreements regarding Great Lakes waters" we are concerned that the proposal falls short of maintaining the "biological integrity" of Lake Ontario. For example, the proposal does not identify thresholds and/or assign stress levels for the water reserve in protection of fish habitat and ecological functions.

The OFAH also requested additional clarification to York Region's response to the AAP with respect to its Environmental Assessment and the conclusion that there would be no adverse

harmful impacts to fish habitat or fish in Lake Ontario.

In October, an MNR-MOE letter was issued to the Municipality of York Region indicating successful completion of the PNC process and outlining conditions approved by York Region. The need for developing a common framework for assessing cumulative impacts for future proposals was also acknowledged.



Photo: Ian Deslauriers



Service Canada Summer Jobs Program

2010 was another successful year for providing 28 university and college students with summer employment through Service Canada, an initiative of the federal government. OFAH students worked over 8,900 hours and earned more than \$90,000 in wages. The following lists the locations and programs of our 2010 summer crew.

Location	Program
Aurora	ISAP
Chute a Blondeau	ISAP
Dorset	ISAP
Dorset	ISAP
Espanola	ISAP
Finch	ISAP
Kenora	ISAP
Kirkland Lake	ISAP
Lanark-Hwy. 511	ISAP
Lanark-Plenty Lane	ISAP
Manotick	ISAP
Mississauga	ISAP
Newmarket	Atlantic Salmon
Newmarket	Atlantic Salmon
Nipigon	ISAP
Orillia	ISAP
Oshawa	ISAP
Pembroke	ISAP
Peterborough	CSSP
Peterborough	Heritage Centre
Peterborough	Atlantic Salmon
Peterborough	ISAP
Peterborough	Heritage Centre
Sault Ste. Marie	ISAP
Thunder Bay	ISAP
Trenton	ISAP
Utopia	ISAP
Windsor	ISAP



Community Stream Steward Program



The Community Stream Steward Program (CSSP) is an OFAH hosted, multi-partner conservation and stewardship initiative. With the aim of engaging landowners and communities, the program works to build a network of leaders in stream conservation, restoration, and stewardship across central Ontario.

CSSP provides landowners and community members with the advice, support, and tools required to conduct coordinated stewardship activities along stream reaches within their neighborhoods. The CSSP provides tangible, visible and lasting benefits to the people of Ontario because it empowers local citizens to make positive changes to their environment.

Stream Habitat Restoration and Creation

Projects completed in 2010 were targeted to improving water quality, enhancing riparian and in-stream habitat, and restoring stream and fish habitat to its natural state. Over 60 projects were completed this year, including 27 planting sites, 3 stream crossings for farm equipment or livestock, 12 fencing projects to exclude cattle from streams, and 6 bank stabilizations using live crib-walls, cedar bundles, or erosion control mats. Volunteers participated in almost every project and their involvement in the program allows for projects to be completed quickly and cost effectively: 4,800 trees and shrubs don't plant themselves! These projects all have direct benefits to the 7,600m of stream they protect, and to the surrounding land, by increasing natural cover, shading the water, decreasing contaminants to the water, and providing habitats for fish.

With funding from Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund, CSSP staff were busy with site visits and projects in the Lake Simcoe Watershed. A number of shoreline stabilizations, erosion control, and riparian planting projects were completed during the year. Pefferlaw River landowners were very receptive to outreach and stewardship activities and the CSSP, in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), and other program partners, hosted several workshops and completed a number of projects in the area.

In 2010, the CSSP expanded its habitat stewardship focus to include wetlands and ponds adjacent to stream and river systems. This was made possible through funding support from Wildlife Habitat Canada and the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund (MNR). Exciting new projects included pond enhancement and creation for waterfowl, wetland fencing to provide protected nesting habitats, and turtle nesting site creation. These projects were well received by our funder and the participating landowners.

Free site visits continue to be the program's primary means of engaging landowners, disseminating program materials, and identifying project sites. Referrals from partners, community events, and word of mouth have been effective means of reaching new and interested persons. Over 90 site visits were conducted during the year for landowners with stream or wetland features.

Program Partners

The CSSP was fortunate to receive support and funding from a variety of sources in 2010, including the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund, Wildlife Habitat Canada, the MNR Species at Risk Stewardship Fund



and Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program, Pioneer Petroleum, Ontario Wildlife Foundation, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Northumberland, Peterborough, Victoria and Durham Ontario Stewardship Councils. Collaborations with the Atlantic Salmon Program, Ducks Unlimited, and the Environmental Farm Plan made several projects possible.

Building and creating partnerships within the Lake Simcoe watershed was a priority in 2010. By working cooperatively with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, Maskinonge River Recovery Project, Kids for Turtles, and Lake Simcoe Community Stewardship Program, the CSSP has achieved its objective to implement stewardship projects and activities within that watershed. We hope to obtain funding in the final round of the Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund so that we can continue this work.

Outreach and Training

In order to increase landowner contact and build partnerships, CSSP staff attended events and made presentations within the program range, and increased its exposure through media sources. In 2010, staff attended the East Central Farm Show, Lindsay Woodlot Conference, Peterborough Children's Water Festival, and the Healthy Lands for Healthy Horses workshop. In the spring, CSSP hosted a partnership meeting to reconnect with other conservation and stewardship organizations in the area. Two landowner workshops were hosted in the fall, two for landowners in Campbellford and Ashburn. Both were cohosted by Ontario Stewardship and the local Conservation Authority. Stream Steward Training, a three-day training session for volunteers and members of local organizations, was held in Cannington. The training was well attended and partners including Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and Ontario Stewardship assisted with the delivery of material. The participants spent two evenings in a classroom setting and a full Saturday in the field sampling streams and visiting potential restoration projects.

Program Sustainability

The CSSP is funded through a variety of sources, and actively seeks new funding opportunities every year. With successful grant applications last year, the program was able to expand its on-the-ground efforts and increase staff. Applications submitted for 2011 include Wildlife Habitat Canada, Environment Canada Habitat Stewardship, and the Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund.



Keep All Our Lakes Great!

You can stop invading species

Invading Species Awareness Program

The Invading Species Awareness Program (ISAP) has been a joint partnership initiative of the OFAH and the MNR since 1992; focusing on preventing invasive species introductions to Ontario's forests and waters. In 2010, in collaboration with hundreds of community groups, nongovernment organizations and all levels of government, the ISAP reached millions of Ontarians and engaged their participation in prevention. Hundreds of citizen scientists and professional field staff from numerous agencies participated in our monitoring and reporting programs.

The ISAP made valuable contributions to early detection and rapid response initiatives for invasive species that are threatening Ontario's biodiversity such as Asian Carp, Giant Hogweed, European water chestnut, and water soldier. The ISAP made significant contributions to provincial, national and international initiatives including the Ontario Invasive Plant Council, the U.S. Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species and the Canadian Aquatic Invasive Species Network, and the development of the bi-national Lake Superior Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan.

Partnerships

In 2010, the OFAH and the MNR continued the successful joint delivery of the ISAP, with OFAH staff working collaboratively with staff from MNR's Biodiversity branch, as well as numerous district offices around the province.

Federally, funding contributions were made by Environment Canada's Great Lakes Management and Reporting Section, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Human Resources Development Canada's Summer Jobs Program and Eco-Canada.

Numerous additional organizations made valuable in-kind and financial contributions to the ISAP in 2010. These included: Ontario Wildlife Foundation, Ontario Stewardship Opportunities Fund, Community Fish and Wildlife Involvement Program, Lake of the Woods District Property Owners' Association, OFAH Zone A, Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club, Thunder Bay Stewardship Council, OFAH Zone B, Nipigon Watershed Advisory Council, East Algoma Stewardship Council, OFAH Zone C, Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council, Manitoulin Streams, Manitoulin Tourism Association, Ontario Streams, Kids for Turtles Environmental Education, Nottawasaga, Lake Simcoe, Central Lake Ontario, Credit Valley, Rideau Valley, South Nation, Lower Trent, Mississippi Valley conservation authorities, Ministry of Environment's Dorset Environmental Centre, York University, University of Windsor, Bancroft Area Stewardship Council, Prince Edward Stewardship Council, Hastings Stewardship Council, Halton/Peel Stewardship Council, Victoria Land and Water Stewardship Council, Plenty Canada, Voyageurs Provincial Park, Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, Canadian Power and Sail Squadron and Ontario Marine Operators Association.



Invading Species Communications

2010 was a record year for media interest in the ISAP, with close to 100 interviews in radio, television and newsprint reaching over five million people. Highlights included feature articles in the Toronto Star, Associated Press, Globe and Mail, Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal, Kingston Whig Standard, London Free Press, Peterborough Examiner, and Windsor Star. Radio interviews included provincial programs such as CBC Radio's Ontario Morning, as well as regional programs on CBC Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Windsor. Television interviews included CTV National News, Thunder Bay NewsWatch, and CHEX TV (three times) in Peterborough, and CHEX TV in Oshawa, and a feature story on Asian Carp for CBC Television's *Decouverte*. Programming also included spots on the Aboriginal People's Television Network's *This is Turtle Island*.

Our summer staff were also featured in numerous stories around the province; many staff were invited to write weekly articles on invasive species issues for local newspapers such as the Orillia Packet and Times, Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal and Manitoulin Mid-North Monitor.

Public Service Announcements

Our radio campaign was extremely successful in 2010, with over 54 stations airing our public service announcements (PSAs) featuring the six-part radio series "Adventures of the Green Family" and an ice fishing segment. The ads received over 5,880 plays across the province. Our television PSAs were aired on *Angler and Hunter Television*, and WILD TV included the PSAs in the regular rotation of their outdoor programs nationwide.

Print PSA's were published in Ontario Parks' visitor tabloids, tourism guides such as *Discover the Trent Severn*, Rideau and Georgian Bay publications, and *Ontario OUT OF DOORS*. In partnership with the MNR, bumper stickers featuring the message "Don't Give Invasive Species A Free Ride!" were distributed in Ontario Outdoor Card renewal notices, which were sent directly to 613,200 anglers and hunters in French and English.

Program Outreach Overview

The ISAP conducted outreach to a broad audience in 2010, including anglers, hunters, gardeners, ATV drivers, aquarium hobbyists, schools, bait harvesters and technical field professionals. Staff attended more than 180 events, including the Toronto and Ottawa Sportsmen's Shows, Toronto Boat Show, Canada Blooms, Landscape Congress, Cottage Life Show, Central Canada Outdoor Show, and the International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species, reaching over 303,780 people. Numerous workshops and presentations were also organized, focusing on a variety of topics for bait harvesters, lake associations, garden clubs, landowner groups, tournament organizers, and angling

clubs. These ventures were always collaborative in nature, working with over 170 organizations including stewardship councils, conservation authorities, nongovernment organizations, and community groups. As a result of these initiatives, 672,231 educational materials were distributed provincewide, and program staff fielded direct requests from over 1,300 people to the Invading Species Hotline.

Aquatic Invasive Species Workshops for Technical Professionals

In 2010, technical workshops were delivered specifically for professionals in the resource/environment field. The half-day workshops focused on aquatic invasive species identification, field equipment decontamination and reporting procedures. Four workshops were delivered at Lakehead University, Seneca College, Sir Sandford Fleming College and in Peterborough at the OFAH/Mario Cortellucci Hunting and Fishing Heritage to over 150 field staff from conservation authorities, MNR district offices and academic institutions.

Aquatic Invasive Species – HACCP Workshops for Bait Harvesters

In 2010, ISAP staff worked with the MNR to develop a mechanism to deliver the HACCP courses remotely via webinars to new bait harvesters as they come online.

Invading Species Hit Squad

The Invading Species Hit Squad hit the ground running again, with a record 23 students working to educate and engage their communities in invasive species prevention, monitoring and control activities. Staff worked with local partners in Kenora, Thunder Bay, Nipigon, Sault Ste. Marie, Windsor, Kirkland Lake, Manitoulin, Dorset, Orillia, Alliston, Aurora, Oshawa, Mississauga, Peterborough, Trenton, Picton, Finch, Lanark (2), Ottawa, Pembroke and Hawkesbury. The Hit Squad participated in over 100 events, provided presentations and displays and watercraft inspections at boat launches, and conducted campsite surveys at provincial parks. A continued partnership with Ontario Parks enabled students to attend 33 provincial parks and assist with interpretive programs. Students also engaged numerous volunteers to monitor 102 lakes, and worked hard to attract media attention to invasive species issues, writing articles for local papers and doing media interviews. These initiatives were made possible through funding from local partners, OFAH Zone C and the Canada Summer Jobs program.

Landscape, Nursery and Aquarium Outreach Project

Working with Ontario Streams, the Ontario Invasive Plant Council's Horticulture Outreach Collaborative and Aurora District MNR, significant outreach was conducted; including visits and interviews with over 150 nursery and aquarium retailers to share educational materials and encourage participation in prevention programs. Partners developed a *Garden Smart* brochure and display profiling key invasive species that may be unwittingly utilized in gardens or landscaping.

International Day of Biological Diversity, and Victoria Day Campaign

Celebrating the United Nations' International Day of Biological Diversity's 2010 theme of Biodiversity, the ISAP coordinated two community volunteer events focused on garlic mustard monitoring and control in partnership with the Biodiversity

Education and Awareness Network in May. In association with this effort, the program also launched an awareness campaign with the Ontario Invasive Plant Council, focused on the Victoria Day long weekend, promoting public awareness of invasive species in association with travelling to holiday destinations (i.e. the cottage, the lake, etc.) at Bass Pro Shops in Vaughn. The program attracted media including CHEX and CKWS TV in Oshawa, Peterborough, and Kingston.

Educational Materials

New educational materials were produced in 2010, including: a Garden Smart! brochure and new additions to the Field Guide To Aquatic Invasive Species. Our Grade 4 *Making Waves!* curriculum continues to be popular, and our Grade 6 unit *Invasive Species! A Biodiversity Challenge* was completed and preparations were underway for a provincewide launch in 2011. The curriculum was promoted in classrooms, university preservice teacher programs, as well as at conferences such as the Science Teachers' Association of Ontario annual meeting, and the Environmental Educators of Ontario annual conference.

Highway and Boat Launch Signage

Billboards providing the message "Stop Invasive Species! Inspect Clean Drain", continued to be erected on highways around the province. New billboards were placed in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Temagami, and Bancroft with the assistance of the Ontario Wildlife Foundation, Thunder Bay Stewardship Council, OFAH Zone C, and the Temagami Anglers and Hunters, Invasive Species Research Centre, and the Bancroft Stewardship Council. A reprint of 2,000 Stop Invasive Species boat launch signs were also produced with assistance from the Ontario Wildlife Foundation.



Invading Species Website

The Invading Species website continues to be extremely popular, with over 74,000 visitors in 2010. We anticipate increased traffic in 2011, with the launching of a new website design, and enhanced linkages with the MNR's new invasive species website.

Lake Simcoe-Invasive Species Outreach for the Ice Fishery

A series of activities were organized to promote awareness of invasive species on Lake Simcoe during the winter and summer. Outreach activities during the winter included the placement of billboards for the "ice highway", an invasive species wrap for the MNR snowmobile trailer, and surveys of ice anglers to share information about invasive species. A radio PSA was also distributed specifically directed at ice anglers.

Provincial Angler and Boater Survey

In partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Program staff distributed a provincial survey of 6,000 anglers directed at learning more about their knowledge and participation in invasive species prevention. Focus groups were also conducted at the Toronto Sportsmen's Show. The results of the surveys are very promising, showing significant positive changes in angler behavior as a result of our outreach efforts over the past decade.

Lake Superior Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan

New partnerships with Environment Canada, the MNR and OFAH Zone B were formed to assist in the implementation of the binational Lake Superior Aquatic Invasive Species-Prevention Plan. A project coordinator was hired in November to assist with invasive species outreach on the North Shore of Lake Superior.

Program Monitoring

In 2010, the Invading Species Awareness Program received over 2,000 reports of invasive species; 1,100 of which were confirmed. New species detections included numerous reports of Giant Hogweed throughout southern Ontario, the expansion of rusty crayfish, round goby and tubenose goby in the Thunder Bay area, and detections of a variety of terrestrial invasive plants throughout southern Ontario.

The Invading Species Watch program engaged volunteers and community groups to monitor 112 lakes in 2010, contributing vital information on the presence and absence of spiny water flea and zebra mussels in Ontario lakes.

Invasive Tracking System

The Invasive Tracking System, an online tracking system for invasive species enabling citizens and agencies to enter invasive reports utilizing satellite imagery was launched in 2010 following its pilot development in the Lake Simcoe watershed in 2009. Partners involved include the MNR, Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority, Ontario Invasive Plant Council, Couchiching Conservancy, Kids for Turtles Environmental Education, and the Community-Based Mapping Project. Funding for the project was provided by Environment Canada's Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund.

Invasive Species Road Rallies

ISAP staff launched a new initiative called "Invasive Road Rallies." Rallies were coordinated in Uxbridge, Wolfe Island, Town of Georgina, Brock Township and in the Municipality of Trent Hills. The rallies engaged volunteers and community groups in locally tracking the spread of invasive plants on roads and highways. Partners included Lower Trent Conservation, the Town of Trent Hills, Aurora District MNR, Georgina Sportsmen Alliance, the Friends of Big Sandy Bay and the Beaverton Sportsmen Club. Over 200 invasive plant records were collected during the five rallies. The results were provided to the respective town councils, as a starting point for the development of invasive plant management plans.

Control

Two major control efforts continued in 2010 for the aquatic European water chestnut and water soldier. In the Ottawa River, the ISAP contributed staff and equipment to the summer-long effort to mechanically remove a million European water chestnut from the vicinity of Voyageurs Provincial Park.

The ISAP also contributed to efforts to eradicate water soldier from

the Trent Severn Waterway, near Havelock, in September utilizing the aquatic herbicide known as Reward. The ISAP coordinated community awareness of the project, engaged volunteers in river monitoring, and conducted presentations. Preliminary results indicate that it was successful at removing the majority of the population, however follow up monitoring will be required. Partners included Lower Trent Conservation, North Seymour Ratepayers Association, and Parks Canada.

Giant Hogweed Management Strategy

Program staff contributed to the development of a Giant Hogweed Management Strategy for Ontario, being led by the MNR and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. This project will compile all existing literature on the biology, ecology, distribution and control measures for this invasive plant.



Invasive Plants-Landowner Control Workshop

ISAP staff, in partnership with Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), Halton Peel Stewardship Council, Ontario Invasive Plant Council and the MNR, developed a provincial template for workshops for landowners to teach them how to develop invasive plant management plans for their woodlots.

Asian Carp Management and Control

Efforts to prevent the spread of Asian Carp to the Great Lakes continued in earnest in 2010. The detection of DNA and one individual fish beyond the barrier elevated the issue to the highest levels within the United States, with President Obama's commitment of millions of dollars to the implementation of an Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework. Fisheries and Oceans Canada announced \$415,000 to conduct a comprehensive risk assessment of Asian Carp within the Great Lakes, which will be facilitated by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. The assessment will establish the likelihood of Asian Carp survival in the Great Lakes and identify locations which are vulnerable to invasion. The MNR is leading the development of a rapid response protocol for Asian Carp, engaging all of the key agencies (DFO, MOE, etc.) and organizations such as the OFAH, that may play a role in detection and management/control measures.



Wildlife Management

Conservation is the primary goal of the OFAH. On behalf of our members, we work to ensure that wildlife is protected, restored and managed to yield the greatest sustainable benefits today, while maintaining the potential to meet the needs of future generations.

Big Game

Moose Management

Moose Population Objectives Setting

Moose population targets have a significant bearing on hunting opportunities in the short and long term.

As a result of the Moose Review Phase I, and the subsequent approval of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) new moose policy and management guidelines, the MNR began reviewing individual moose population objectives for each WMU in late 2009. These moose population objectives have not been reviewed since 2001.

In March 2010, the OFAH submitted comprehensive comments and recommendations to the MNR, for all 60 moose WMUs, on this first phase of the population objective review (which is limited to the ecological/biological capacity of the forest habitat to support moose).

Using 25+ years of moose population, harvest, and recruitment trends, OFAH staff submitted recommendations for each of 60+ WMU moose population objectives and posted them on the OFAH website. Some highlights from the OFAH submission include the following:

- the OFAH rejects a view expressed within the MNR Forest Management/ Landscape Stand & Site simulation model that suggests the boreal forest cannot support more than 40 moose per 100 sq km;
- the OFAH has provided the evidence-based science that suggests Ontario forest habitat would be able to sustain more than 100 moose per 100 sq km, were it not for the effects of black bear and wolf predation combined;
- the OFAH has implored the MNR to clearly distinguish between realistic forest habitat capacity, and the more limiting role of predation in its models. The MNR needs to be much more clear about the relative importance of forest habitat and predation in order to effectively manage forests for wildlife;

- where we see moose populations that have been allowed to grow to historic highs *and* where there is a corresponding reduction of recruitment, we have recommended that the MNR use adaptive management to test the hypothesis that if moose populations are reduced in some WMUs, productivity (and adult moose tags) will actually increase.

After the MNR has drafted new moose population objectives based on ecological capacity (i.e. answers “this is how many moose we can grow and sustain”) it will consult with the public about refining those objectives based on the socio-economic (i.e. ask the question “within that range, how many moose do you want us to grow/sustain?”). The OFAH will assist local members with their own submissions, at that stage.

2010 Moose Harvest Plan Review

Through our representation on the MNR provincial Big Game Management Advisory Committee (BGMAC), the OFAH is annually provided with an opportunity to review and comment on draft moose harvest plans and resident tag quota allocations.

In 2010, OFAH staff received the draft harvest plans in mid-March



Photo: Randy Therrien

and in a short timeframe, reviewed and drafted comments on the harvest plans for each of the 60+ moose management WMUs. This information was shared with our representatives attending the BGMAC moose allocation review meeting.

OFAH representatives are seeing our annual efforts positively reflected through BGMAC in many moose harvest plans. Highlights from the 2010 review include the following:

- southern Ontario moose populations continue to prove to be very productive, compared to the northern range;
- southern range moose are supporting high levels of harvest, sustained growth, and good calf recruitment;
- northwestern Ontario continues to support the greatest abundance and densities of moose, but there have been some significant declines in some areas due to factors other than regulated hunting;
- 2010 moose aerial inventories, though limited due to poor snow conditions, have generally revealed some rebound of calf recruitment rates – not to 1990's levels, but an improvement (where the proportion of calves in many populations have been at all-time lows in the last decade);
- concerns exist about high levels of aboriginal harvest and effects of increased predation by wolves and black bears on moose (particularly calves) in some northwest and northeast WMUs;
- previously expressed MNR concerns about the possibility of cows not being bred do not seem well-founded;
- the Northeastern MNR study of cow pregnancy rates does not reveal problems with productivity with current bull:cow ratios;
- Some MNR biologists (e.g. Wawa area) continue to be overly restrictive with moose harvest planning (the OFAH has repeatedly urged some districts to increase harvest to test hypothesis that productivity/recruitment will increase in some WMUs);
- The tourism industry harvest in 2009 was, provincially, 10.2 percent of the total planned harvest, an improvement over several years ago. MNR policy calls for 10 percent tourism allocation;
- Of 8,559 moose planned for harvest in 2009, only 6,074 were harvested by licensed hunters. This represents a significant underharvest (that reflects both conservative planning in some units, but also Metis harvest, and lower recruitment rates in recent years);
- OFAH identified another source of “over-protection” in harvest planning, with regards to the way calf harvests were being projected in 2010;
- Eastern Ontario moose management continued to be highly conservative (moose populations have recovered back to target populations, but the MNR continues to impose low percentage harvest and restrictive calf tag quotas in WMUs 48, 55A, 55B and 57; and
- the OFAH continued to ask for increased transparency and integrity in plans, which we are seeing in many WMUs, but planned and actual harvest should be aligning better.

Proposed Changes to Moose Tag Transfer Policy

In July, we indicated our support for the proposed changes to the provincial Moose Tag Transfer Policy (EBR #011-0111). Under the proposed policy, beginning in 2012, no moose tag group applicant would be allowed to transfer a second tag until he/she accepts one in their own name. The number of tag transfers has been increasing annually, and this is a reasonable step to discourage “padding” of group applications with applicants who do not actually intend to hunt.

On December 30, the decision to adopt the new moose tag transfer policy was posted. This decision was driven in part by feedback from hunters participating in the Moose Program Review of 2009. The OFAH submission can be found at www.ofah.org.

White-tailed Deer Management

Enhanced White-tail Management & Harvest Planning – A New Priority

When provincial deer harvests began to level off and decline for the first time in three decades, the OFAH expressed concern about potential deer overharvest and the need for better WMU-specific population assessment and harvest planning (early 2008). Provincial deer harvests in 2009 declined some 5 to 20% throughout much of the Great Lakes Basin area (on both sides of the border) and accounts from hunters suggest that the 2010 harvest will also have declined in most WMUs in central and eastern parts of southern region.

Questions and theories abound about why – and to what degree the population declines reflect changing weather; planned and/or unintentional overharvest; and/or increased predation by eastern coyotes, which most hunters agree were at all-time highs by 2009. Most agree that the winter of 2007/08 corresponds with the beginning of the new declining trend. Biologists will not have a better picture until the 2010 postcard surveys are summarized. OFAH will scrutinize the 2010 harvest closely.

2010 Antlerless and Additional Tag Reductions

OFAH member representatives on the Eastern Ontario Deer Management Stakeholders Committee were well informed of declining Kemptville MNR District deer population trends and were fully supportive of proactive reductions proposed for 2010 antlerless deer tags. We encourage other districts in southern region to approach deer population assessment and modeling with the same rigour and transparency as Kemptville MNR demonstrated in 2010.

In November 2010, OFAH staff met with MNR Wildlife Policy section staff to urge that deer management, including assessment and harvest planning, receive higher priority in the wake of the recent population changes and declines.



Photo: Ian Deslauriers

Winter Severity Monitoring

Winter 2009/10 was a relatively easy one for Ontario white-tails, with no MNR regions declaring any winter severity that would trigger a need for emergency winter feeding.

Hamilton Region Conservation – Deer Management Advisory Committee

Early in 2010, the OFAH accepted an invitation to participate on a Hamilton Region Conservation (HRC) Deer Management Advisory Committee (DMAC) on the strengths of the (then) clear terms of reference provided in advance, which included:

- HRC acknowledgement of a deer overabundance problem in conservation lands of the Dundas Valley- Ancaster area, based on 2009 MNR assessment of unsustainably high deer densities (up to 100+ per sq km in some CAs);
- the understanding that the committee would be made up of diverse stakeholders, would be technical in nature, and make science-based recommendations for effective deer management to the HRC Board.

Unfortunately, the scope of the DMAC mandate was soon reduced to only one conservation area, Iroquoia Heights, and even after several meetings, the committee could not even reach consensus on the deer over-abundance problem. As a result, the OFAH withdrew from the ineffective process.

The event that compelled HRC to create the DMAC was a 2009 unplanned and municipally noncompliant deer harvest in the urban Iroquoia Heights Conservation Area by members of the Grand River Haudenosaunee First Nations. In December 2010, the aboriginal hunters took their harvest to a different area in the Dundas Valley, which was beyond the mandate of the DMAC. The MNR estimated deer densities in that area to be 6 to 10 times what is known to be ecologically sustainable.

Elk Restoration & Management

Elk Management Plan & Implementation

The OFAH applauded the Minister of Natural Resources for approving the provincial Elk Management Plan for Ontario in early 2010. The Elk Management Plan lays the foundation for transitioning from elk restoration to science-based elk management and regulated hunting, area by area, as elk population growth becomes self-sustaining.

The OFAH had made recommendations for a sound science-based Ontario-made elk harvest management approach that we felt were well reflected in the five elk management policies and guidelines. Positive progress was made in 2010 toward the creation of Ontario's first modern day regulated elk hunt.

The proposed provincial policies included draft guidelines for:

- Elk Harvest Allocation System (EBR #011-0741)
- Elk Harvest Management planning (EBR #011-0744)
- Elk Population Objective Setting (EBR #011-0743)

The OFAH fully supported the direction included within these three provincial elk management policy pieces, on the basis of their strengths, which included:

- quantitative elk population objective setting that reflects both ecological capacity of the land, and social-economic considerations;
- elk population assessment, objective setting, harvest management, and allocation at a fine scale (sub-WMU level to facilitate more optimal management and better achievement of multiple elk management goals);



Photo: Jim Markou

- guidelines provide clear, logical and adaptive directions to district biologists (without being overly prescriptive; i.e. encourages informed professional judgement);
- encourages transparent harvest planning and consultation with affected stakeholders;
- includes mandatory hunt reporting;

As a result of further discussions at the request of the MNR, the OFAH anticipates some modification to the proposed elk lottery/application procedure. We expect:

- the cost for entering the lottery will remain low, and the cost of a license will remain comparable to a resident white-tail or moose hunting license;
- lottery draws will be WMU-specific; i.e. hunters will not be 'assigned' to a WMU that they did not identify on their application;
- the MNR will structure the application such that hunters either apply as individuals or as groups of 2 to 4, but that individuals will not be allowed to apply for more than one group (a significant departure from what was proposed);
- elk seal transfers will probably be allowed within the group, similar to moose tag transfers.

Also included in the MNR elk proposals were **Elk Population Objectives for the Bancroft-North Hastings Area Herd** (EBR #011-0742)

The OFAH has raised concerns that the draft population objective for the Bancroft-North Hastings herd falls short of the expectation/direction within the provincial elk population objective setting guidelines. Specifically we believe that the population objective of 500 +/- 100 elk is adequate for 2011 harvest planning, but we strongly recommend this be reviewed after the first harvest year. (The OFAH has suggested that a population objective of 700 +/- for 2015 including more detailed herd-specific population targets and herd-specific bull:cow ratio objectives. the OFAH believes, based on current population estimates, this higher population objective could be easily met with an annual harvest of approximately 7 to 8 percent or more).

Subsequent discussions with MNR district and wildlife policy

staff have increased our confidence that elk population objectives for the Bancroft herds will be reviewed and detailed to the sub-WMU level, based on the most current elk population assessment.

Also included in the MNR elk proposals was the Draft Policy for Protecting Agricultural Property from Elk (EBR # 011-0745);

The OFAH is not necessarily opposed to the proposed elk harassment and removal authorization policy, providing it is strictly adhered to, and is used sparingly and wisely at the district level. It has been the implementation of the Deer Removal Authorization (DRA) policy, not the policy itself, that has caused OFAH concern about DRAs.

The elk removal authorization is tighter than the deer removal authorizations. For implementation:

- there needs to be demonstration of ineffective use of preventative techniques before issuing harassment authorizations. No-kill permits unless preventative methods and harassment have not worked;
- the MNR should investigate the feasibility, costs and benefits of relocation of elk from farm conflict areas;
- damage assessment needs to be quantified and significant (a higher standard for tolerance of elk damage is expected);
- there is an assurance that ERAs will not be used to manage elk populations (and recognition in the policy that elk management is achieved through fine-scale harvest planning and hunt management);
- we must be assured that elk heads and antlers from ERA-killed elk must be forfeited to the MNR;

The OFAH has sought additional assurances, beyond what has been proposed. We expect some modification of agent criteria to ensure that agents are reasonably local.

Our hope is that the MNR uses the elk harvest management policies and tools they are creating to demonstrate to farmers that elk and public elk hunting can be a valuable natural asset. At the same time, we have encouraged the Ministry to earmark some of the elk license revenues for elk habitat and damage prevention demonstration sites.

The sixth proposal in the Elk Management suite included the Draft Elk Hunting Regulations (under the FWCA) EBR #011-0746).

The OFAH supports the proposed amendments, which include the following recommendations:

- restrict elk hunting to licensed Ontario resident hunters only;
- require elk hunters on private land to carry written landowner permission;
- make reporting mandatory for each hunter who receives an elk seal;
- allow elk hunters to use rifles, shotguns, muzzle-loaders or bows.

This is history in the making—the first regulated hunt in almost a hundred years for a new big game species!

OFAH Support for Bancroft-North Hastings Elk Population Research & Monitoring

The OFAH provided its third of three \$10,000 OFAH Provincial Fish & Wildlife Fund contributions to the Bancroft-North Hastings elk population monitoring and research project in 2010. The results of the monitoring project will have a direct application to the first elk harvest plan.



Photo: Randy Therrien

Black Bear Management

Enhanced Black Bear Management Framework – 2010 Implementation & Outreach

The OFAH supported the development and approval of the new (2009) Enhanced Black Bear Management Framework, because it lays the foundation for: a) improved black bear population management at the WMU level; and b) increased community input into black bear population targets and management.

Based on previous discussions with the MNR, and our understanding of the first step in implementing the approved Black Bear Enhanced Management Framework, the OFAH had anticipated that each MNR district in bear range would produce and distribute a series of Black Bear Resource Reports for each WMU, with a notice requesting stakeholder input into black bear population densities/objectives. This did not happen, however, as the MNR advised us that they were making slower-than-expected progress in implementation and outreach. We look forward to being more engaged in local black bear management discussions with the MNR in 2011. OFAH staff and the OFAH Big Game Advisory Committee, we are working toward developing a comprehensive proposal to the MNR on hunt camp party hunting for black bears during moose and deer gun seasons.

OFAH Resolution – Proposed Black Bear Camp License

A preliminary discussion between the OFAH and the MNR regarding the feasibility and benefit of a new type of group black bear hunting license helped the OFAH frame the details that need to be considered and included in such a proposal.

Fish & Wildlife Conservation Act & Regulation Changes

Bill 212 (Omnibus Bill/Fish & Wildlife Conservation Act)

New amendments to the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* provide the MNR with new regulatory abilities in two areas: ministerial authority to regulate wildlife feeding, and ministerial ability to issue Elk Harassment, Capture and Removal authorizations for protection of property.

Wildlife Feeding: Regulation Development

Bill 212 gives the Minister the ability to regulate the feeding of wildlife. This is not to be confused with baiting for the purposes of hunting, which the Lieutenant Governor in Council has had the ability to regulate for many years; i.e. through the *Fish & Wildlife Conservation Act*.

The OFAH sees MNR priorities for wildlife feeding regulations limited to:

- Regulating the supplemental feeding of elk (including prohibition) to reduce disease potential, and to prevent the creation of “nuisance elk” conditioned to hay and humans;
- Regulating the supplemental feeding of white-tailed deer in winter, as part of CWD prevention;

“Wildlife Feeding” for the purposes of regulation, should not include planted croplands, residues, wildlife lure crops, wildlife food plots, or baiting for the purpose of hunting. No immediate changes are anticipated.

OFAH Response to Proposed FWCA Hunting Regulations (EBR #011-1052)

In November, OFAH staff responded to a number of proposed amendments to the Ontario hunting regulations, under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*. Several of the proposed changes were supported by the OFAH, including:

Muzzleloader Definition:

- updated definition of ‘muzzleloader’ to include modern in-line and electronic muzzleloaders. We also anticipate clarification of the definition of what is unloaded (e.g. percussion cap removed, battery removed.) The effect of this proposal is to make muzzleloaders legal for hunting

Muzzle energy .22 rimfire vs .220 Swift:

- updating of wording from unquantifiable ‘projectile power’ to quantifiable “muzzle energy,” measured in ft/lbs, the industry standard. The effect of this proposed change will be to clarify for enforcement, the regulation limiting rifles used for small game hunting during big game hunting seasons to .22 rimfire

Offense to overharvest snapping turtles and/or bullfrogs:

- Proposal to correct oversight and make it an offence to give effect to harvest limits on snapping turtles and bullfrogs

“Residency:”

- clarifies that Canadian armed forces members stationed overseas does not lose ‘residency’ status for hunting and fishing;

Long Point Provincial Park – Game Possession:

- proposal allows for possession of game harvested in a special hunting area in Long Point Provincial Park.

One proposal was not supported by the OFAH.

Hunter Orange for Pop-up Ground Blinds:

- proposal requires hunter orange on manufactured ground blinds (e.g. camouflage pop-up tents). The OFAH is not convinced of the safety need or benefit, and has urged education and promotion of common sense instead of regulation.

Deer & Elk Farming

Farmed Deer – Escapes

North Bay Red Deer

Early in 2010, the OFAH was very concerned to learn about a prolonged and ongoing escape of farmed red deer in the North Bay/Nosbonsing. We immediately met with MNR district staff

seeking a satisfactory explanation and MNR plan of action to cull the threat. We agreed to give the MNR the time needed to do the job, but early attempts to cull out the exotic red deer proved disappointing.

As part of their action plan, North Bay District MNR contacted landowners, local hunt clubs, and the Ontario Hunt Camp Association about the red deer escape situation. By late 2010, the MNR was baiting what they believe to be the bulk of the red deer with the aim of a more successful removal effort. The MNR does not know the numbers or age structure of the escaped herd, but has asked local cooperators to report any killed. The MNR says it has “no indication” that the escaped red deer are “in close proximity” to the restored French River elk, but it is somewhat concerned about the potential of the public shooting elk instead of red deer. The MNR needs to address this problem this winter.

Other Escapes

The OFAH learned of three other likely incidents of escaped farmed deer in the last several months, including an elk in Essex, reported to Chatham MNR in July; the alleged ongoing escape of fallow deer from a farm in the Cambridge area; and an escaped bull elk in Noelville. There are also unconfirmed reports of a persistent population of escaped/feral hogs in Beverley Swamp/Flamborough.

Our knowledge of escapes from Ontario deer farms since 2003 is far from complete, but we are aware of at least 67 escape incidents, and an unknown number of game farm animals which remain unrecovered and unaccounted for.

Coyotes & Wolves

Nuisance Coyote Issues

Throughout 2010, high coyote sightings were reported in many rural and urban communities. Hunters, farmers and others reported very high numbers of coyotes, and bold coyotes, based on community knowledge, which is supported by record high livestock predation compensation payments from Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).

As a result, OFAH members and head office were engaged with farmers, trappers, houndsmen, and their associations in 2010, to help find and promote effective community-based solutions.

The OFAH advocates a two-pronged approach to the problem of livestock predation: give trappers and farmers better tools and means of targeting those coyotes that have become livestock killers; and promote general hunting and chase of coyotes to keep them wary of people and our facilities/habitat.



Great Lakes Basin Wolf Stewards Symposium

The OFAH received a rare and welcome invitation to attend the Annual Northeastern North American Wolf Stewards symposium hosted by state and provincial wildlife management agencies, including Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and New York, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Some helpful case studies and research were presented about canids, including coyotes, eastern wolves, grey wolves, and the mixed breed that is evolving. To generalize, many American state biologists envy Ontario's unendangered wolf status and comparatively open hunting and trapping regulations. The states that have succeeded in reintroducing wolves, and have met population objectives which should have allowed delisting and management through hunting and trapping, have been less successful at transitioning from species restoration to regulated wolf management because of on-going animal rights challenges.

Algonquin area wolf/coyote hunting & trapping ban

Neither the OFAH nor the Algonquin Wolf Advisory Group supported the political 2002 decision to ban wolf/coyote hunting and trapping in the townships around Algonquin Park. We know the ban is counter-productive and should be lifted. At a minimum, the ban should have been lifted when the provincial wolf management plan was put in place in 2005. We continue to urge government to review this poor decision.

Provincial Wolf Management Plan

The OFAH remains skeptical of the 'conservation value' of the provincial wolf management plan, including the northern harvest limit and license requirement. In 2010, we urged the MNR to summarize wolf hunter harvest and effort data, with the view to better understanding the potential impact on wildlife, however the MNR has not yet reviewed the conservation impact of the management plan.

Coyote/Wolf hunting License Availability

Acting on the request of members who have difficulty purchasing coyote-wolf hunting licenses because of limited license availability among issuers, the OFAH urged the MNR to make these licenses more widely available in 2010.

OFAH Draft Discussion Paper: Coyote Population Biology & Management Brief

OFAH staff began work on a draft coyote population biology and management discussion paper to help inform OFAH policy development. We are continuing to review the best scientific and evidence-based literature to help determine the relative effectiveness of selective removal of livestock killers; nonselective hunting and trapping; 'bounties' and other incentives, and the possible effects of increasing coyote numbers on white-tailed deer populations. We know that general hunting of coyotes is effective at preventing coyote-human conflicts because it keeps coyotes wary of people and our facilities/farm enterprises. What is far less clear is whether coyote populations can be effectively reduced by levels of hunting and trapping higher than what currently occurs in Ontario.

The OFAH paper will have a strong focus on hunting, trapping, predation management, and coyote-human conflict reduction to help inform policy and programs.

Falconry

Falconry – Proposal for Regulated Use of Wild Raptors

The OFAH responded to a letter from the MNR to reiterate our full support for the recommendation of the Provincial Falconry Advisory Committee for the Regulated Collection and Use of Wild Raptors by Falconers in Ontario.

The regulated capture and training of wild birds of prey for use in falconry is a goal that the OFAH member club, the Ontario Hawking Club (OHC), has been patiently seeking for several years. We have encouraged the Minister of Natural Resources to move forward with changes that would allow licensed falconers to collect and use approximately 25 individual birds from the most common species of raptors.

The Provincial Falconry Advisory Committee met in October 2010 to address any concerns with this modest proposal. It is fully consistent with the goals and objectives of Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy, and Ontario is currently one of the last jurisdictions in North America that does not permit the regulated collection and use of wild birds of prey in falconry.

Small Game Hunting and Conservation Issues

Provincial Small Game Policy and Program Review

The OFAH reviewed and updated its small game policies in 2010 to prepare our members and staff to provide the Ministry with constructive advice and recommendations when the province undertakes a review of its many outdated regulations, and identifiable policy and program gaps. Due to more pressing priorities within the MNR Wildlife Policy Section, however, we were informed that the provincial small game program and policy review has been put on hold.

Wild Turkey

Additional Opportunities for Fall Turkey Hunting

With two years of harvest data collected, confirming that the fall hunt will not negatively impact wild turkey numbers, and considering the annual harvest reporting results for the fall turkey hunt where fall harvest totals were 427 in 2008 and only 370 in 2009, we believe that the next logical steps should include additional fall hunting seasons to enhance opportunities, improve turkey management and better distribute fall harvest.

As a result, the OFAH provided the following recommendations "next steps" to the MNR in April, reiterating OFAH's 2008 position on the proposed amendments to implement a fall wild turkey hunting season:

• Additional Fall Hunting Seasons

- Add a second week of wild turkey gun hunting in the week prior to Thanksgiving; or add a second week in the third week of November, after the deer gun hunt;
- Add a bowhunting-only season - either three or five weeks in addition to the two-week open firearm season (opportunity for hunters to harvest wild turkey concurrent with the deer bowhunting season).

• Additional Fall Wildlife Management Units

- Add WMUs 70, 71, 72 and 95 to the existing list of seasons

The MNR Wildlife Policy Section has indicated that they will consider proposing changes to the list of open WMUs for 2011 based on the outcome of this year's spring season hunt (following Ontario's Wild Turkey Management Plan criteria for



determining where/when fall hunting seasons might be opened) and input from MNR field staff. In addition to their internal review, the MNR indicated that they'd be reviewing the analysis and recommendations OFAH provided and welcomed any opportunity to further discuss possible season changes with us.

There were no WMUs or season changes in 2010. Spring reported harvest was down again this year (9,086). Fall harvest also declined slightly from 2009 (361).

Ontario Wild Turkey Working Group

The Ontario Wild Turkey Working Group, which includes representation from the MNR, the National Wild Turkey Federation and the OFAH, met in November for the first time since the release of the Wild Turkey Management Plan in 2007.

The group reviewed wild turkey-related program activities since completion of the plan, as well as seasons and harvest results for this year. The OFAH submission to the MNR requesting additional opportunities for fall turkey hunting was also discussed with the group and was well received overall. The OFAH applauds the MNR for reconvening the working group after a long hiatus.

Wild Turkey Proposal for Manitoulin Island

The MNR is considering the OFAH proposal to make the spring opening date for wild turkey earlier and we hope that this will occur for 2012. The MNR is also still examining our recommendation for changes to the fall hunting seasons (eg. more locations).

We have no new information on the MNR's proposal of more than a year ago, that an Environmental Assessment (EA) be conducted regarding the proposal to place more wild turkeys and ring-necked pheasants on Manitoulin Island. We've inquired about the status of the proposal and the MNR has responded that it is in the hands of the Ministry of the Environment, which has responsibility for EAs.

MNR Proposal for Shortened Pheasant Clean-up Hunts for Pelee Island (EBR #011-1087)

The OFAH looked to the Pelee Island Sportsmen Association (PISA) for direction in our response to a November proposal to eliminate two of four late season 'clean-up' hunts on the island, and further, eliminate Saturday hunting from the remaining two clean-up hunts. The OFAH opposed the proposal on the basis of PISA's response, which believes the rationale is flawed and the results would be counterproductive.

Migratory Game Birds

Waterfowl

In 2010, changes were made to the Migratory Birds Hunting Regulations, to increase the possession limit to "3 times the daily bag limit for all migratory game birds that do not currently have a possession limit equal to or higher than 3 times the daily bag." The changes were implemented to increase hunting opportunities for waterfowlers across Ontario.

Mourning Doves – Request for Ontario Hunt

In October, OFAH staff wrote to the Canadian Wildlife Service with strong biological and social rationale for opening a mourning dove hunting season in southern agricultural Ontario.

Sandhill Crane Research

In 2010, the OFAH provided a significant financial contribution to the Long Point Waterfowl research project titled "Population Size, Productivity, and Migratory Habitats of Sandhill Cranes Staging and Breeding along the North Shore of Lake Huron, Ontario". The OFAH remains highly supportive of this research.

Greater Snow Geese Hunting – Eastern Ontario

With support from the OFAH, CWS issued a notice of intent that, beginning in March 2012, special conservation measures to permit the taking of Snow Geese by hunters in spring be put in place in eastern Ontario. The measures will be limited to Wildlife Management Unit 65 where recent surveys have shown that approximately 5 to 10 percent of the Greater Snow Goose population now stages during the spring, and are intended to help provide additional management through hunting. These measures have been in effect in Quebec since 1999.

Agriculture & Wildlife Issues

Agricultural Wildlife Damage Assessment Manual

The advice and knowledge of Ontario wildlife and agricultural specialists was tapped into in 2010 to produce a draft Agricultural Wildlife Damage Assessment Manual. The manual will help producers, wildlife and conservation agency staff, agricultural specialists, hunters, and others better identify what species are the site-specific cause(s) of wildlife damage of crops, orchards and livestock, and help distinguish wildlife damage from other natural causes of yield reduction.

The manual will be distributed in early 2011 and will fill a need that has been identified by provincial wildlife and agriculture agencies/organizations. Funding assistance for this project was provided by the Victoria MNR Stewardship Council.

Ontario's New Provincial Animal Health Act (OMAFRA Decision March 2010 EBR 010-0696)

The provincial *Animal Health Act* was passed in 2010, and is expected to be the new legislative/regulatory tool that Ontario needs in order to regulate deer and elk farming issues, as they relate to livestock and wildlife health and disease prevention. The OFAH provided comments on the discussion paper, and we hope to be engaged in future discussions concerning the protection of wildlife from disease and additional regulation of deer and elk farming.

Agricultural Elk 'Kill Permits'

When talk of agricultural elk 'kill permits' emerged in June, the OFAH acted quickly to secure regulated hunting, authorized

elk harassment, regulated elk feeding and other more effective alternatives.

In the wake of discussions between OFAH and Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) representatives, and subsequent discussions with MNR Wildlife Policy staff, the OFAH developed and submitted an alternative to issuing agricultural elk removal authorizations to the MNR. The subsequent MNR elk management and harvest plan for a 2011 regulated hunt is a far better resource management and conflict prevention strategy.

Livestock-Wildlife Damage Compensation Discussion Paper

The OFAH responded to an Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) discussion paper on proposed changes to the Livestock-Wildlife Damage Compensation Program.

The OFA has been seeking changes and a general updating of the provincial *Livestock & Honey Bee Damage Compensation Act* and compensation schedule for many years. The proposed changes reflect some OFA interests, but certainly not all.



Photo: Jody Sheffield

The OFAH supports the farm community in most of the proposed changes, including expansion of some kinds of livestock predation as 'eligible', but we oppose extending compensation to farmed deer and elk. If there is predation of farmed deer or elk happening to any degree in Ontario, this represents a much bigger problem. That issue would need to be addressed through strict regulations to eliminate the chance of predators or scavengers from potentially spreading CWD or TB from deer or elk farms.

Other proposed changes are generally positive, including awareness that hunting and trapping are effective wildlife management tools for reducing wildlife damage. The province is proposing best management practice workshops as part of its new program. We encouraged future OFAH involvement in the development of predator hunting workshops.

Human-Wildlife Conflict Advisory Group

The OFAH has been represented at each of the eight meetings of the provincial Human-Wildlife Conflict Advisory Group since its first meeting in June 2009. It is a diverse group of representatives from the hunting, trapping, farming, municipal, academic, animal welfare and animal rights sectors. The group was established to advise the interprovincial steering committee on preventing and reducing human-wildlife conflicts.



Photo: Mark Majchrowski

Species At Risk (Provincial & Federal)

OFAH Submission to Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario - Snapping Turtle (Provincial)

Early in 2010, the OFAH wrote to the Director of the Species at Risk Branch (MNR), to express our concern over the recent listing of the snapping turtle as "Special Concern" under the *Endangered Species Act (ESA)* by the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO). Snapping turtles are a common sight in Ontario, especially to anglers and hunters south of the Boreal forest. We heard from many members who questioned the listing.

Under COSSARO's own assessment criteria at the time of the assessment, the listing is highly questionable. A species may be designated "special concern" if it occurs in 50 or fewer locations in Ontario; occurs in no more than 75 locations and has experienced a 'noncyclical' decline of more than 25%; or is imperiled in at least 25% of its northeastern North American range. This is not a species that is in any immediate risk in northeastern North America. No other eastern province or state considers them imperiled, and Ontario has, by all accounts, an abundant and wide-spread snapping turtle population through virtually every watershed within its natural southern and central Ontario range.

A federal assessment of snapping turtles suggests they may be at risk in the prairies, where they are much less common.

Bobolink classified as "threatened species" (Provincial)

The 2010 COSSARO listing of Bobolink as a provincially "threatened" species has significant counterproductive and economically disastrous implications for hay producers in Ontario. Ontario farmland supports a healthy population of 400,000 breeding pairs distributed over four million acres of primarily hay production fields. This is not a reasonable or helpful classification for a species so relatively common. The OFAH believes that this assessment is scientifically unjustified and that the Minister should send it back to COSSARO for reassessment and delisting to, at most, "special concern."

This flawed listing and the challenges it will present to MNR staff and to landowner-producers, and the damage it may ultimately do to wildlife habitat, demonstrates why we did not support the *Endangered Species Act*, as worded, in 2007.

OFAH Submission – Cerulean Warbler Recovery Strategy (Federal)

In December, the OFAH submitted comments in response to the draft Recovery Strategy for Cerulean Warbler, a federal Species-at-Risk consultation.

The OFAH noted that the draft Recovery Strategy was deficient insofar as it did not recognize that white-tailed deer overabundance, as occurs in many so-called “protected areas” of southern Ontario, is one of the most concrete and demonstrated stressors of Cerulean Warbler nesting habitat. Deer overabundance results in loss of forest diversity, loss of forest tree regeneration, and eventually loss and degradation of intermediate canopy and forest bird nesting and feeding habitats.

Woodland Caribou Recovery Strategy (Federal)

OFAH staff attended the first of four federal stakeholder workshops concerning the National Woodland Caribou Conservation Plan in March, and staff in turn briefed OFAH members who attended subsequent workshops.

The national strategy follows the federal designation of boreal woodland caribou as “threatened species,” although the mandate of the federal government in Ontario is limited to federal lands.

The national strategy, however, could have some bearing on the implementation of the provincial Woodland Caribou Conservation Plan, which is of greater concern to the OFAH

Woodland Caribou Conservation Plan (Provincial)

At issue in both the national and provincial plan is scientific uncertainty about what distinguishes boreal forest-dwelling woodland caribou from tundra-dwelling woodland caribou; what constitutes Ontario woodland caribou habitat and current population range; what the relative risks are of various human and natural mortality factors, including unregulated harvest; and how will implementation of the provincial Woodland Caribou Conservation Plan impact on northern forest management, moose management, and northern communities and economies.

Woodland Caribou Conservation Plan – Implications for Moose Habitat and Population Management

In April, MNR staff gave a preliminary presentation on the implications of moose habitat and population management on the woodland caribou conservation plan. Subsequent to that meeting, the OFAH submitted a lengthy list of questions to the MNR for further discussion and clarification.

This was followed by a meeting of the OFAH and the MNR, intended to increase our understanding of how the MNR will manage for both woodland caribou protection and moose, where the ranges overlap. Not all OFAH questions were addressed, however, we were pleased to hear that the MNR will be making staff available to attend OFAH zone and club meetings to provide greater clarity in the near future.

Conservation Land Tax Reduction Program

The OFAH supports provincial stewardship tax incentive programs such as the Conservation Land Tax Reduction Program (CLTIP) and the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP).

Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) – MNR Policy Proposal

In response to a 2010 EBR request for input into proposed changes to the MNR’s policy for the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP), the OFAH submitted a number of policy-specific comments, and the following key recommendations:

- Expand CLTIP eligibility to include the habitat of Endangered and Threatened species;
- The CLTIP model should be reviewed with a view to more effective delivery, much like the Managed Forest Tax

Incentive Program (MFTIP). Eligible landowners in MFTIP are required to take stock of the natural features and general health/condition/threats; and learn about and commit to a 10-year stewardship/management plan that will meet their land conservation objectives;

- Under the current CLTIP program, landowners who own parts of endangered species habitat, provincially-significant wetlands, or a life-science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) can receive a 100% tax reduction through the CLTIP without actually engaging in the stewardship/management of the natural heritage feature of concern;
- The OFAH supports the CLTIP in principle, but has additional concerns about the proposed prescriptive approach of specific land use, including permitted activities, activities that may be permitted with MNR approval, and activities not permitted, and how that would be efficiently administered.

Although many of our recommendations were beyond the scope of this review, the OFAH has invited more dialogue with the MNR on this issue, as we believe that there is a more efficient and effective way for the MNR to achieve its CLTIP objectives.

Hats for Hides Steering Committee

The OFAH and its members are proud supporters of the Hats for Hides program, which has expanded in the last year to see more hunter-harvested deer and moose hides shipped to James Bay aboriginal communities for craft and commerce, as well as more hunter-harvested hides being distributed among southern Ontario First Nations for use by community artisans, craftworkers, powwows and healing circles. See <http://hatsforhides.com/>

Hats for Hides is a unique partnership between hunters, First Nations, federal and provincial governments and the private sector which receives support from the Canada Ontario Resource Development Agreement.



Ontario’s Biodiversity Strategy

Ontario’s Biodiversity Strategy (OBS) is up for renewal at the end of 2010. The Ontario Biodiversity Council has been tasked with leading a review of the strategy and its implementation, and the preparation of an updated strategy (OBS Action 8). The Biodiversity Council is made up of a broad membership, which includes OFAH representation. The development of OBS 2010-2015 (based on 2004/05 process) should begin this winter (2011) with Public Consultation (EBR) sometime in late February/early March. Release planned for late spring (May 22, 2011). A subcommittee has been formed (OBS Renewal Team) to initiate the renewal of the OBS.

Ontario Invasive Plant Council



Invasive plant species have become one of the most pressing biodiversity issues of our time, and have been recognized as one of the greatest

threats to biodiversity, second only to habitat loss. Ontario has the highest number of invasive plants in Canada causing significant impact to our economy and environment.

The Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC) is a coalition of government, nongovernment, First Nations, academic institutions, and other organizations working to develop a coordinated approach to the threat posed by invasive plants. The OIPC works through its four committees: Policy, Communications, Research/Control, and Horticultural Outreach.

The OFAH has taken a lead role in the development of the OIPC by providing housing and administration for the council coordinator, as well as contributing a council board representative. In 2010, the OIPC finalized its terms of reference and elected two members-at-large. The council moved from an interim board to an official board and an executive committee was elected, consisting of a chair, vice-chair and treasurer.

“Look before you leave” campaign

This campaign was targeted to members of the public who travel to cottages and other summer destinations, and explained how invasive species can unknowingly be transported across the province. The campaign was launched on the Victoria Day long weekend and included a media release, radio, and television coverage, as well as a “Look before you leave!” poster which was posted at Ontario provincial parks.

Giant Hogweed

In 2010, much media attention was brought to Giant Hogweed and invasive plants in general, and the OIPC gave several radio, television, and newspaper interviews regarding invasive plants. OIPC worked with the National Invasive Species Working Group to find an effective way to manage Giant Hogweed in Ontario, and across Canada. The MNR approached the OIPC to write the components of a Giant Hogweed Best Management Practices document, which will be posted on the EBR when complete. The OIPC, along with partners, also developed a survey of companies conducting Giant Hogweed removal, and will be posting this information on the OIPC website.

Landowner workshops

The OIPC worked with partners to develop a workshop template. The format was structured to inform landowners about how to assess their property and prioritize actions to control invasive plants. A manual to accompany the workshops is in production.

Fourth OIPC Annual General Meeting

The annual meeting, held in London, was a great success with over 120 people attending over two days in October. The first day consisted of well-attended workshops and field tours, and the second day featured speaker sessions on research and control, education and outreach, policy, and horticulture.



Volunteer field work

The OIPC participated in a variety of field projects including the Invading Species Awareness Program (ISAP) garlic mustard pull events, water soldier reconnaissance, and the Alderville First Nation invasive plant pull. The OIPC also took part in all of the invasive species road rallies hosted by the ISAP. These events were attended by partners from the MNR, Lower Trent Conservation, Brock Township and Beaverton Sportsmen’s Club.

Media and Horticultural Industry Invasive Plant Tours

The OIPC Horticultural Outreach Collaborative held two invasive plant tours, one for members of the horticulture industry and the other for media in the landscape industry. Each participant received an invasive plant kit with information developed by the OIPC and its partners. Both tours were well attended.

Presentations/Events

The OIPC conducted presentations at a variety of events, including the 2010 Weeds Across Borders Conference, the Midwest Invasive Plant Network Annual General Meeting, the National Invasive Alien Species Forum, the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space Systems council meeting, and several Master Gardeners club meetings. Media interviews were conducted with *Ontario Nature Magazine*, CBC Radio, the Canadian Press and CHEX TV.

Website/Newsletter/Educational Materials

The OIPC website (www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca) continued to provide a range of council materials, including information, educational materials, strategic documents, links to other invasive plant sites, Board activity notes, and more. We also distributed monthly updates to over 600 individuals. The OIPC and its partners have printed, and continue to distribute, a variety of educational material, including fact sheets, a “GardenSmart! in Ontario” brochure, an ID guide and invasive plant trailhead signs.

Leadership and Coordination

The OIPC is committed to working with a variety of partners; therefore, it is part of the National Invasive Species Working Group, which is comprised of various invasive species committees and working groups across Canada. As well, the OIPC is on the board of the Midwest Invasive Plant Network, a group formed by a number of Great Lake states and Ontario.

The OIPC works hard to ensure that information on invasive plants is readily available to the public and those working in the industry, and that the policy makers are well aware of the issues caused by these plants. It will continue to grow and pursue its goals of dealing with invasive plants in a collaborative and effective manner.



Land Use Management & Access

Routes and access points to Crown land are increasingly being closed or restricted in Ontario, and as a result, traditional activities such as fishing, hunting and trapping are being prohibited on lands that belong to all of us. The OFAH is a strong advocate for fair access, determined through science-based conservation management of our natural resources.

FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Impacts of Caribou Conservation Plan

The long overdue release of the Boreal Landscape Guide and Endangered Species Act (2007) Habitat Regulation for Woodland Caribou are expected to provide guidance for caribou habitat management. In the interim, the Caribou Conservation Plan (CCP) provides the majority of policy direction for caribou habitat management and is implemented through the forest management planning process. Caribou habitat management has the potential to drastically alter fish and wildlife values, as well as the accessibility of hunting and fishing opportunities within the caribou recovery zone.

Caribou habitat management is associated with a number of concerns regarding the ecological and economic sustainability of forest resources. Management focuses on creating large tracts of even-aged conifer dominated stands that will provide a continuous supply of habitat through time and space (a strategy commonly referred to as the caribou mosaic). The connectivity of these forests makes them more susceptible to natural disturbances (eg. forest fires, insect infestations, etc.). This becomes even more troubling when you consider that natural disturbances are projected to increase in number and severity due to the effects of climate change. In addition, the regeneration of the desired forest compositions needed to create caribou habitat often requires significant post-harvest treatments (and associated resource investments).

Caribou habitat management also influences access to hunting and fishing opportunities through road use management strategies. Forest management planning is used to meet caribou habitat management objectives by reducing road densities and decommissioning roads immediately following the completion of forestry operations. This is important because roads built for

forestry purposes often provide the primary access point for Crown lands. Hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, berry picking, fuelwood collection and many other activities occur in Crown forests. The public accessibility of Crown lands is fundamentally important in providing many social, economic and cultural benefits of forest resources to local communities.

The OFAH continues to review forest management plans with potential caribou implications to provide comments, concerns and questions related to the impacts of caribou habitat management on the sustainability of the ecological, social, economic and cultural values of Crown forests. Concurrently, we continue to seek answers from the MNR to our questions regarding the impact of provincial caribou policies on wildlife habitat and harvest management for other species (particularly for moose). The OFAH is closely monitoring the implications of new and existing caribou policies to ensure that they do not compromise the quality or accessibility of fish and wildlife values or hunting and fishing traditions in Ontario.

Lac Seul Forest, Forest Management Plan 2011-2021 (OFAH Zone A)

In October, the OFAH provided a submission outlining questions and concerns regarding the draft 2011 – 2021 Lac Seul Forest Management Plan (FMP) that was posted to the EBR. The caribou recovery zone now covers 89% of the Lac Seul Forest under the 2011 FMP (up from 72% in 2006). Many of our concerns were related to the potential ecological and socioeconomic implications of woodland caribou management on other important forest values such as moose habitat. In particular, the OFAH does not support the southward expansion of the caribou recovery zone in the Lac Seul Forest, especially into areas that are not currently occupied by woodland caribou and/or support a productive moose population. Additionally, the OFAH did not support the scheduled abandonment of forest access roads immediately following the completion of forestry operations. The OFAH recommended that roads should be retained for at least 20-40 years in order to provide the ecological, social and economic benefits associated with forest access. In particular, road access would facilitate moose harvest and assist in the management of moose densities (and their associated predators), which is believed to be an important factor in woodland caribou recovery.

Black Spruce Forest, Forest Management Plan 2011 - 2021 (OFAH Zone B)

In November, the OFAH provided a submission outlining questions and concerns regarding the draft 2011 – 2021 Black Spruce Forest Management Plan that had been posted to the EBR. Similar to the Lac Seul Forest, the OFAH does not support the southward expansion of the caribou recovery zone in the 2011 FMP; however, we were encouraged by the fact that some road networks in southern blocks of the caribou zone of the Black Spruce Forest were retained as a method of maintaining moose harvest and providing a buffer to higher density moose, deer and wolf populations. We were also encouraged to see that there was an emphasis on moose management throughout the entire noncaribou zone (i.e. not limited to small areas of emphasis). Although we were encouraged by the obvious attempts to provide multi-cervid management, it is not clear why only a select number of road networks were chosen as opposed to the entire southern boundary of the caribou zone. Similar to the Lac Seul Forest, the OFAH emphasized the importance of maintaining forest road access after forestry operations have ceased, particularly for moose harvest. The Black Spruce Forest also has a discontinuous caribou zone that is intended to provide connectivity between continuous caribou zones. The OFAH requested biological rationale to support caribou management in discontinuous zones where no resident caribou populations currently exist.

Sudbury Forest, Forest Management Plan 2010 - 2020 (OFAH Zone D)

We successfully addressed the access restriction on the Spanish Arm Road during the Issue Resolution with the District Manager in December 2009. This stemmed from the installation of a gate at Frog Creek restricting all public access on the road. In early 2010, other interest groups representing cottagers, remote tourism and the forest industry, appealed this decision and requested Issue Resolution with the Regional Director.

As part of the Issue Resolution process, we met with the Regional Director in late January and stated our rationale for removing the gate, while employing localized restrictions to either preserve remote values or protect lake trout Areas of Concern (AOC). The Regional Director's decision was received in March and was generally supportive of the District Manager and our recommendations. The gate would be removed and localized restrictions would be enacted on lakes that had either remote tourism values or lake trout AOC's.



Pineland Forest, Forest Management Plan 2011 – 2021 (OFAH Zone D)

In December, the OFAH provided a submission outlining questions and concerns related to the draft 2011 – 2021 Pineland Forest Management Plan that had been posted to the EBR. The OFAH had a number of concerns with the draft that were mostly related to road access management. We were concerned that the commitment afforded to the resource-based tourism industry may compromise the accessibility and quality of public fishing and hunting opportunities within the Pineland Forest. The OFAH reiterated its position on maintaining a balance of opportunities for all forest users.

In recent years, there have been declining moose populations in the Pineland Forest, despite a large supply of preferred moose habitat. The 2011 – 2021 draft FMP proposes the use of Moose Emphasis Areas (MEA) to manage habitat and human access to benefit moose. The proposed MEAs are based on relatively new direction provided by the Stand and Site Guide (2010). Based on the limited knowledge on MEAs, the OFAH questioned their specific intentions, rationale and objectives on the Pineland Forest. We are particularly concerned with the potential for this type of management strategy to effect hunting and fishing access.

Bancroft Minden, Forest Management Plan 2011 – 2021 (OFAH Zones E/F)

In December, the OFAH provided a submission outlining questions and concerns related to the draft 2011 – 2021 Bancroft Minden Forest Management Plan that had been posted to the EBR. The OFAH was primarily concerned with proposed road access management. Almost 180km of primary and branch roads are planned for decommissioning during the term of this plan. We believe that this is a complete misuse of public funds used to establish and/or maintain these roads through the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry (MNDMF) Provincial Roads Funding Program. In addition to road decommissioning, there is no new road construction scheduled during this plan, which results in significant loss of forest access. We are concerned with the significant loss of forest access and asked a number of questions related to the rationale for road access management strategies used on the Pineland Forest and their potential implications.

Crown Land Use Area Harmonization Project

The Crown Land Use Area Harmonization (CLUAH) project has been underway for several years in the Wawa area. From the beginning, the O.F.A.H. has actively worked with the MNR and other stakeholders, and in January we participated in a focus group session pertaining to the overall management direction of land use prescriptions for General Use Areas, Recreational Enhanced Management Areas and Wildland Areas. The OFAH advocated for a more balanced approach that avoids unnecessary access restrictions to the public, in favor of remote-based tourism. We also recommended that the unique Moose Management Areas be removed, and instead, the existing tag system be utilized. There was no further activity through the duration of the year.

Northumberland County Forest

In November 2009, County staff proposed that hunting in the Northumberland County Forest be restricted to the lands east of the County Road 45 and further, be limited to deer hunting only.

The OFAH immediately requested that County staff provide us with the empirical evidence to support their proposed restrictions on hunting in the Northumberland County Forest. Their position was based on public safety concerns and the findings of a survey that identified deer as the primary game species in the forest, despite the fact that it was only administered during the two-week gun season for deer.

The OFAH recommended that hunting activities should remain status quo in the forest, which would have resulted in all tracts remaining open for all game species as they have been in the past (under the regulation of the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*). In addition, we requested that motor vehicle use for the purpose of hunting be the same as for provincial Conservation Reserves which allow off-trail retrieval of big game species with ATVs. Despite our concerns with the proposed hunting restrictions and our request to maintain status quo, in mid-February the County Council agreed to the recommendations proposed by County staff.

Nature Conservancy of Canada

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is in possession of a considerable area of land in Ontario. Hunting access is restricted on some NCC lands due to public safety concerns, ecological values and the wishes of financial or land donors; however, hunting is currently permitted on the majority of NCC lands in accordance with existing laws and regulations (and with NCC's conservation goals). In November, the OFAH met with the NCC to discuss hunting access on some of their Ontario properties, and is further planning to meet with OFAH zones to discuss the potential of partnering with OFAH zones or member clubs to assist with the facilitation of hunting on NCC lands.

Brighton Provincial Wildlife Area

An EBR posting in early March sought public comment on the Issues and Options document for the Brighton Provincial Wildlife Area (BPWA). The document provided direction for the draft management plan, which is currently being prepared by the MNR. It is expected that the BPWA draft management plan will be completed by the spring of 2011, after which it will be reviewed by MNR staff, the BPWA Advisory Committee, then posted to the EBR for public consultation. OFAH Zone E represented the OFAH on the BPWA Advisory Committee.

National Marine Conservation Area - Lake Superior

In December 2009, the OFAH sent a letter to the Nipigon District Manager, requesting representation on the Interim Management Advisory Board for the National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) - Lake Superior. As per the 2001 document, "*Recommendations for a Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area*," we also requested that a few of the islands exceeding 100 hectares be excluded from the NMCA, because the values used for rationalizing their inclusion were either not unique or no longer present. The OFAH also emphasized the need to maintain traditional hunting and fishing opportunities within the NMCA. We were told that the Interim Management Advisory Board was the responsibility of Parks Canada and our request for representation would be forwarded. As of year end, the OFAH is not represented on the Interim Management Advisory Board, but we continued to pursue this issue with Parks Canada.

In March, the OFAH had an additional opportunity to reiterate its objections to the inclusion of these islands via an EBR posting regarding the transfer of Crown land to the Lake Superior NMCA. We also reemphasized the importance of maintaining traditional hunting and fishing opportunities in the NMCA.

RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Birds and Bird Habitats: Guidelines for Wind Power Projects

The OFAH submitted a response to the Birds and Bird Habitats Guidelines posted to the EBR. These guidelines (along with the Natural Heritage Assessment Guide for Renewable Energy Projects) provide the criteria and procedural guidance to prepare and/or evaluate natural heritage assessments as it relates to birds and bird habitats. We had some serious concerns with the preconstruction monitoring requirements outlined in these guidelines for the assessment, identification and evaluation of bird habitats during the Renewable Energy Approval process. We were also concerned that these guidelines provide inadequate postconstruction monitoring requirements for the identification and mitigation of impacts to birds caused by windpower projects. The Natural Heritage Assessment Guide for Renewable Energy Projects was posted to the EBR in December.

For more on wind power, see Advocacy.

Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act Technical Guidelines

The OFAH responded to an EBR posting of the Technical Guidelines and Requirements for Approval under the provincial *Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act*. Upon a review of these documents, the OFAH identified concerns regarding the section on fish passage. In particular, the OFAH was concerned with the apparent transfer of responsibility to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for implementing fish passage requirements. The *Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act (LRIA)* exists to assist in the protection of fish and fisheries, providing a fundamental tool for the province to do so. It was emphasized in our response that the OFAH strongly opposes any proposal like this that would ultimately weaken the use of the *LRIA* to protect and enhance our fish and fisheries.

Provincial Policy Statement

The OFAH submitted comments to a recent EBR posting for a review of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 (PPS). The PPS provides policy direction for land use planning and development (mostly within municipalities) that is of provincial interest. Our review determined that natural heritage policies under the PPS were inadequate to provide sufficient protection for fish and wildlife values. In particular, we were concerned with the terminology and definitions used in the PPS, which ultimately exposes all natural heritage features (i.e. provincially significant wetlands, significant wildlife habitat, etc.) to a 'no net loss' approach. In other words, development and site alteration can occur as long as mitigation efforts result in no net loss of the natural heritage features. We reiterated our strong opposition to the hypothesis that mitigation is an appropriate replacement for natural heritage protection. We also recommended that Adjacent Lands under the PPS should incorporate a more precautionary and dynamic buffer around natural heritage features or areas.

Southeast Leamington Sustainable Management Strategy

Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) commissioned a study to develop a sustainable management strategy to address the long-standing socio-economic concerns associated with the flood and erosion prone areas of Southeast Leamington.

In January, the OFAH Zone J Executive and OFAH staff reviewed the strategy and provided comments. The OFAH supports habitat restoration and the naturalization of the proposed area as long as public access and long-standing traditional activities, such as hunting and fishing, are maintained throughout the process.

Due to significant interest by various stakeholders, in April, ERCA held a special meeting to discuss the issues relating to Southeast Leamington, which the OFAH attended. The decision was made by the municipality of Leamington to continue with the status quo, which allows fishing and hunting.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Quetico Provincial Park

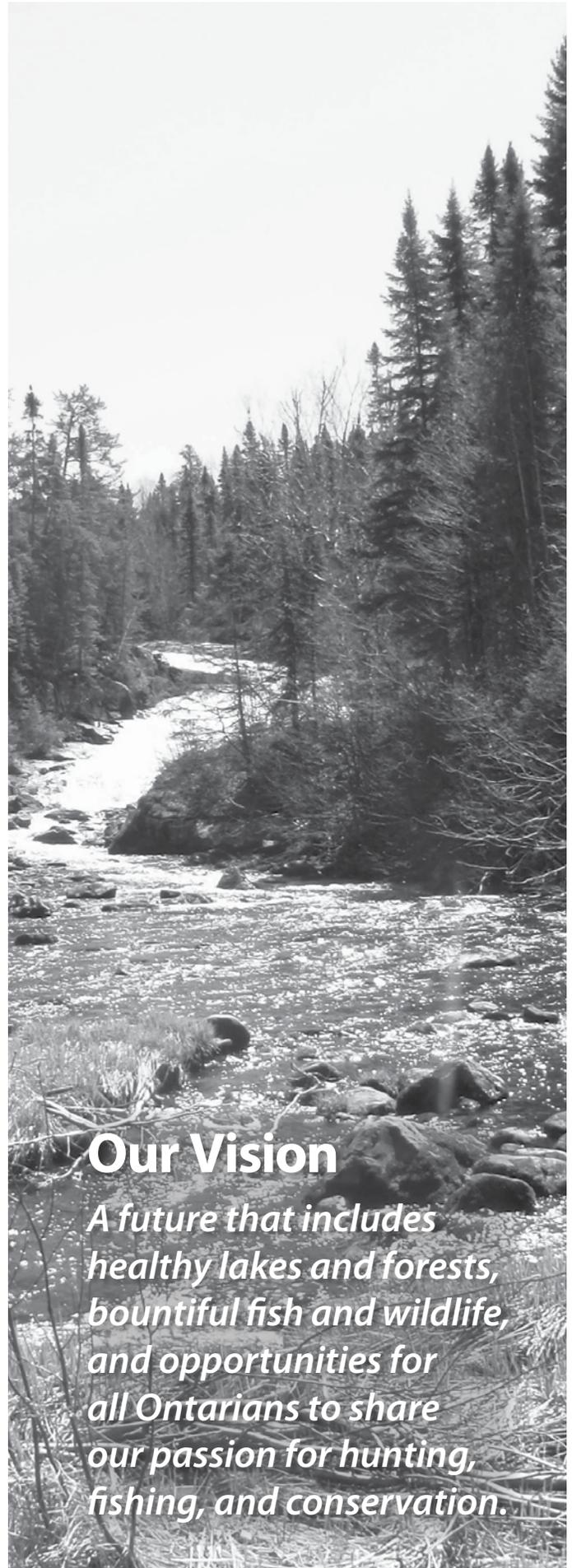
The OFAH submitted comments and recommendations regarding the proposed Management Options for Quetico Provincial Park that were posted to the EBR. We were disappointed to learn that active wildlife management had not been included as a potential management option for the park. In our response, we recommended that active wildlife management must be considered as a strategy in the forthcoming Preliminary Park Management Plan. Although hunting is not a typical recreational activity in wilderness class provincial parks, there is strategic direction outlined in the Living Legacy Land Use Strategy (1999) that states it will be considered in the park planning process if there is demonstrated local support. The OFAH has advocated for hunting opportunities for various wildlife species in Quetico Provincial Park; however, our recommendation focuses on the management of an overabundant white-tailed deer population that threatens the overall ecological integrity of the park.

Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park

In a meeting of the Stakeholder Groups of the Kawartha Highlands, attended by the former Park Superintendent and Acting Park Superintendent, we were encouraged to hear that hunting and fishing activities are alive and well within the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park. We continue to monitor initiatives in the park, especially those relating to hunting and fishing. The current focus is on finalizing the existing road and trail network, and establishing permitting programs for boat caching and ATV use within the park.

Presqu'ile Provincial Park

In 2009, Ontario Parks released the Presqu'ile Resource Management Implementation Plan (High Bluff and Gull Islands) that outlined strategies for cormorant management. The preferred alternative proposed in this plan was to employ the full suite of management activities, including culling. The plan was scheduled for implementation starting in 2010; however, no active cormorant management activities occurred. Previous management activities (2003-2006) resulted in the decline of nests to 2,500, but have since increased to 6,000 (well above the carrying capacity of 1,500-2,000 nests). The OFAH submitted a letter to Presqu'ile Provincial Park to request an explanation of why cormorant management did not occur in 2010, but had not received a reply by year end.



Our Vision

A future that includes healthy lakes and forests, bountiful fish and wildlife, and opportunities for all Ontarians to share our passion for hunting, fishing, and conservation.