



Fisheries Management

Ontario fisheries support recreation, tourism and associated industries. 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 for the benefit of all.

Fisheries Management Zone Advisory Councils

The OFAH has supported the development of Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ) Advisory Councils, whose function is to provide advice to MNR staff in fisheries management decisions. We value the opportunity for our representatives to continue to provide input into this process. FMZ Advisory Councils are currently established and operating in FMZ's 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20.

There are still several FMZ advisory councils expected to form, including 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 east subcommittee, 15, and 16. The establishment of Advisory Councils in the Far North (FMZ 1, 2, and 3) has been deferred until the MNR can determine the "appropriate scale of planning" in these northern zones. As for the remaining inland zones, the MNR is unable to confirm a timeline for their roll-out, as the planning processes are still ongoing.

Coaster Brook Trout Workshop (FMZ 9 – Lake Superior)

The Upper Great Lakes Management Unit - Lake Superior, held a two-day workshop in March in Thunder Bay with FMZ 9 Advisory Council members, as well as members from the original Coaster Brook Trout Lake Wide Committee in attendance. The workshop was part of MNR's commitment to complete a five-year review, addressing the lack of knowledge associated with Coaster Brook Trout ecology and the fishery.

A series of presentations were provided to discuss the status of Brook Trout populations. Angler observations revealed a strong indication that the population is growing and expanding into new areas, which would be considered "marginal" habitat. The MNR agreed that more work needs to be done.

Although many of our original concerns were represented in what was discussed, our position remains the same. We did not support the size limit changes (20" to 22") and were not in favor of Lake Nipigon and the Nipigon River being included in the regulation changes. In our opinion, the regulations were too conservative

to manage the species without the appropriate science to deem it necessary. OFAH Zone B provided a written submission to the Upper Great Lakes Management Unit – Lake Superior reiterating our concerns, as well as suggestions for areas where further research is needed.

Put-Grow-Take Walleye Management (Pilot) - FMZ 17

As part of a pilot put-grow-take (PGT) Walleye stocking program, the MNR stocked 28,000 Walleye fall fingerlings into Crowe Lake and Little Lake this year. The program was aimed at diverting angling pressure from lakes with self-sustaining Walleye populations, while enhancing angler opportunities in FMZ 17.

The FMZ 17 Advisory Council, which includes OFAH representation, was actively engaged in the screening criteria and ranking process for choosing these lakes. The criteria and ranking system considered certain social and ecological factors. There was general consensus for Crowe Lake and Little Lake based on their overall ranking (i.e. high social value and angler opportunities).



Lake Ontario Trout and Salmon Symposium (FMZ 20 - Lake Ontario)

In April, the MNR and FMZ 20 Advisory Council hosted the Lake Ontario Trout and Salmon Symposium in Port Credit. Over 300 were in attendance for the presentations on the state of Lake Ontario's ecosystem and fisheries, restoration efforts in the watershed, and fishing tips. The OFAH gave an overview of Bring Back the Salmon (also known as the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program) and exhibited a display. The Invading Species Awareness Program, Community Stream

Steward Program, clubs, nongovernment organizations and government agencies also hosted displays. Minister Jeffrey gave a welcoming address, and the local MPP attended as well.

Ringwood Fish Culture Station



The OFAH/MNR Memorandum of Understanding for the operation of Ringwood expired on September 28, 2011. We fulfilled all of our obligations associated with the

agreement, that saw us successfully raise all of Lake Ontario's Chinook Salmon for stocking over the last five years.

Many thanks to our hatchery coordinator and the dedicated volunteers from the OFAH host club, Metro East Anglers (MEA). The hatchery had great support this spring from MEA and OFAH volunteers, as well as others. Approximately 580,904 Chinook Salmon were stocked in various tributaries from St. Catharines to Wellington.

On behalf of the MEA, we asked the MNR if it would be possible to keep MEA's volunteer hatchery activities continuing after our departure, so we were pleased that the MEA entered into a 13-month agreement to operate the hatchery and the Coho Salmon stocking program. In the fall, the MNR and MEA stocked 68,000 Coho fall fingerlings into the Credit River.

Halton Fisheries Management Plan

In partnership with the MNR and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Conservation Halton is developing a Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) which will encompass the watersheds of the Conservation Halton jurisdiction (FMZ 16). The process will be guided by a Technical Steering Committee and a Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and the OFAH is represented on both.

In February 2011, Conservation Halton hosted a facilitated stakeholder workshop to introduce the CAC to the FMP process and to outline their roles and responsibilities. CAC members were asked to identify their issues, areas of specific concern and interests. Participants also identified priorities for action. The workshop was well represented by OFAH Zone J.

It is expected that the CAC will meet every two months throughout the development of the FMP, and approximately five times a year during the plan's implementation.

Recovery Strategy for American Eel

The American Eel is an integral part of Lake Ontario's biodiversity, and was once abundant throughout the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario tributaries. Unfortunately, eels have been declining since the 1980's due to a variety of threats, including habitat loss and fragmentation, man-made barriers (e.g. dams) which impede movement upstream, and hydroelectric turbines that kill or injure adult eels during their downstream migration to spawn.

The American Eel is listed as "endangered" under Ontario's *Endangered Species Act, 2007 (ESA)*, which prompted the development of an Ontario Recovery Strategy. Under Canada's *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*, the American Eel is designated as "special concern."

We reviewed the Draft Recovery Strategy, and were pleased with most aspects of the strategy; however, the associated compendium which was also provided to us, contained additional scientific information that was absent from the strategy. We

recommended that the compendium be included in the strategy itself. Specifically, at minimum, sections one through four. We submitted our response to EBR Registry #011-1606 in February.

Disposition of American Eel – MNR Public Notices for Existing Hydroelectric Stations

There have been several localized public notices with respect to the disposition of American Eel for individual hydroelectric facilities on the Gananoque, Ottawa and Mississippi Rivers, inviting the public to comment through the Class EA for MNR Resources Stewardship and Facility Development Projects. The disposition of American Eel is facilitated by the Waterpower Agreements under Ontario Regulation 242/08 of the ESA. We provided comments/recommendations for five of the public notices, and while we appreciated the opportunity to do so, we were disappointed with the lack of wider public notice (e.g. use of the EBR). It is our opinion that these notices were not adequately communicated, which brings to question the effectiveness of the MNR's consultation process on these matters.

Unfortunately, most of these agreements and their associated five-year implementation plans are being signed prior to the finalization of the Recovery Strategy for American Eel. Furthermore, it appears that the agreements show little alignment with the Draft Recovery Strategy. For example, the strategy recommends that planned mitigation of upstream and downstream passage be provided by hydroelectric facilities on all key watersheds; whereas, the proposed mitigations for American Eel are fairly ambiguous using terms such as "temporary eel ladders" and "consider." It is not clear whether the MNR is committed to the safe passage for American Eel.

Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem

The current Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) signed on June 25, 2007 was extended until March 31, 2011 to accommodate the process to amend the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA); however, negotiations to amend the latter are still ongoing. The governments of Ontario and Canada are considering a further extension of the term of COA through to June 24, 2012 (EBR Registry #011-1929).

We supported the governments in seeking a further extension to the current agreement to ensure that COA-related partnerships and efforts to restore the Great Lakes Basin ecosystem are maintained while the GLWQA is being amended. We have had numerous long-standing partnerships with the government of Ontario which have delivered on COA priorities, such as aquatic invasive species prevention and native species restoration (e.g. Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon).

While we appreciate and support this extension process, the governments are also proposing amendments to the GLWQA to update and refresh certain specific commitments under the current agreement (e.g. nearshore framework, harmful pollutants, spills prevention and response), but these are not the only priorities, and other existing priorities (e.g. native species restoration, invasive species) must be maintained.

With respect to the proposed amendments under the nearshore framework, we also recommended a review or development of an open water (offshore) framework to be completed. An OFAH response to EBR Registry #011-1929 was submitted in February.

Waterpower/Hydroelectric Generating Stations

Given the history of hydroelectric development on rivers where fisheries values have not been adequately protected, we have made several submissions to the MNR regarding waterpower/hydroelectric facilities.

Proposed Mitigations for Waterpower Agreements under Ontario Regulation 242/08 under the Endangered Species Act, 2007 (ESA)

The waterpower agreement process outlined in Regulation 242/08 of the ESA requires hydroelectric generating stations to enter into an agreement with the Minister of Natural Resources. Hydroelectric generating stations have three years from the date the species is listed “threatened” or “endangered.” The agreements are supposed to provide a description of how mitigation and monitoring are to be implemented in order to meet the objective of “not jeopardizing the recovery and survival” of species at risk.

We agree that the waterpower agreement process outlined in Regulation 242/08 is one means of ensuring mitigation, and in general, there is support for the intent of this regulation. However, it is our opinion that the supporting information provided by the MNR to critically evaluate these agreements was inadequate, and there seem to be considerable differences (e.g. inconsistency) with respect to the language used across the agreements.

We expressed concern with the MNR’s lack of specific detail in the description of implementation (e.g. mitigation, monitoring). In the absence of any details, it was very difficult for us to critically evaluate whether the process is justifiable. Overall, the link between the agreements and certain important guiding government legislation and policy (e.g. Lake and Rivers Improvement Act, Fisheries Act), was not evident.

Furthermore, we do not agree with the proposed 30-year agreements without first amending the proposed mitigations and agreements to:

- include mandatory safe upstream and downstream passage;
- describe how adaptive management approaches will be implemented;
- integrate specific targets for reductions in turbine mortality;
- incorporate effectiveness monitoring programs associated with all mitigation; and
- address cumulative effects.



Lake Erie Angler Diary Program

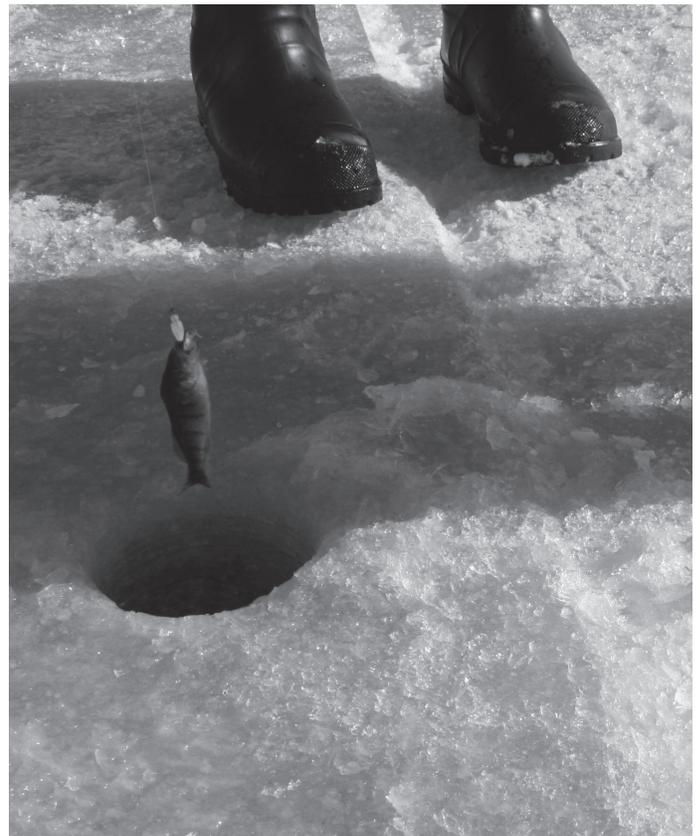
We were contacted by the Lake Erie Management Unit in the spring to discuss the status of their Lake Erie Angler Diary Program. The program, which at one time had up to 400 participants (Lakes Erie and St. Clair), in more recent years has declined to about 80 participants. The diary information is an important assessment tool, and the Lake Erie Management Unit would like to see participation increase again.

Recognizing the importance of this program, we agreed to assist with promoting the diary this summer through our magazine (Hotline), radio program, and OFAH website. We also provided 200 hats to assist with the MNR’s initiative, providing participants with an incentive for submitting their diaries. OFAH support for the program was acknowledged on the back of the hats.

Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group

The Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group LEPMAG is a partnership between the Lake Erie Committee (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ontario MNR, and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission) and Lake Erie fisheries stakeholders, which includes OFAH representation. The group was formed early in the year as the result of an effort to increase stakeholder involvement in the development of management plans for Lake Erie Walleye and Yellow Perch.

The LEPMAG met through a series of workshops this year, that were designed to identify some common fisheries management objectives among the stakeholders, and potential management options. Next steps include discussion of alternative assessment strategies as well as developing a model for Lake Erie Walleye.



Bring Back the Salmon

Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program

Partnership Development



In 2011, Ontario Power Generation (OPG) became the lead sponsor of Bring Back the Salmon (BBTS), which is also known as the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program. An event celebrating the launch of BBTS Phase II (2011-2016) was held in mid-May. The LCBO continues to support the program at \$50,000/

year through Phase II and Banrock Station Wines contributed another \$50,000 for 2011/12 and discussions were continuing to try to arrange a longer-term commitment from Banrock Station.

Toronto Tourism/City of Mississauga also contributed \$50,000 in 2011/12 for fish production and habitat restoration on the Credit River. A grant of \$50,000 for one year was received from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation (TDFEF) for habitat projects in 2011, with an opportunity to secure a commitment for the next four years at \$50,000/year. In December, we were invited to apply for another year of habitat project funding from TDFEF. Smaller grants were also received from Jiffy Lube (\$2,500), TransCanada Pipelines (\$8,000), and Green Side Up Environmental (\$2,000). The Ontario Wildlife Foundation (OWF) funded 15 habitat restoration project signs at the sites of our 2011 restoration projects.

In late 2011, we received word that Canadian National Sportsmen's Shows is providing the program with a grant of \$10,000 in 2012.

BBTS continues to evolve strong working relationships with our partners at Transport Canada, the Toronto Zoo, Ontario Streams, and four conservation authorities (Toronto and Region, Credit Valley, Ganaraska and Halton), as well as the provincial government through the MNR, Canada-Ontario Agreement, and Community Fish and Wildlife Involvement Program (CFWIP).

Fish Production and Stocking

In the fall of 2010, over three million green eggs were collected from the LaHave River and Sebago Lake broodstock strains for 2011 production stocking.

In March and April, just under 100,000 yearlings from the Normandale Fish Culture Station (FCS) and Fleming College were stocked into our three Phase I target tributaries, completing Phase I fish production and stocking. High school students from Cobourg and Peterborough stocked 1,000 of these from Fleming College at the fifth annual Earth Day clean-up of Cobourg Brook.

In May and June, approximately 550,000 fry were stocked from Normandale FCS, Harwood FCS and Fleming College. Earlier 50,000 were also stocked by the Belfountain Hatchery and Islington Sportsmen's Club. As the largest of the four current target tributaries, the Credit River received approximately 40% of the fish, with the Humber River, Duffins Creek and Cobourg Brook splitting the remainder evenly.

This was the first year for stocking the Humber River with production fish. A launch event was held on May 30 at the Albion Hills Conservation Area, in partnership with the TRCA and the MNR. Local politicians, students, and media were present. Much of the Humber River stocking was assisted or led by staff from Ontario Streams.

Approximately 2,000 fry were stocked into Cobourg Brook by 13 journalists touring Lake Ontario with the Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources (IJNR). The journalists had toured Harwood FCS earlier in the day and were wrapping up nine days on Lake Ontario.

In September, all strains of the three-year-old broodstock had their identification microchips (Passive Induced Transmitter tags) implanted. These are a key component to our research and assessment programs, which use genetic signatures to track the fish. In October and November, approximately 187,000 fall fingerlings were stocked from the Normandale Fish Culture Station (MNR) and Fleming College Hatchery. The majority of the fish were released into the Credit River and the remainder were split evenly between Duffins Creek and Cobourg Brook, with the Humber River receiving about 500 fall fingerlings from a surplus LaHave River broodline and about 490 yearlings from a Lac St. Jean backup broodline.

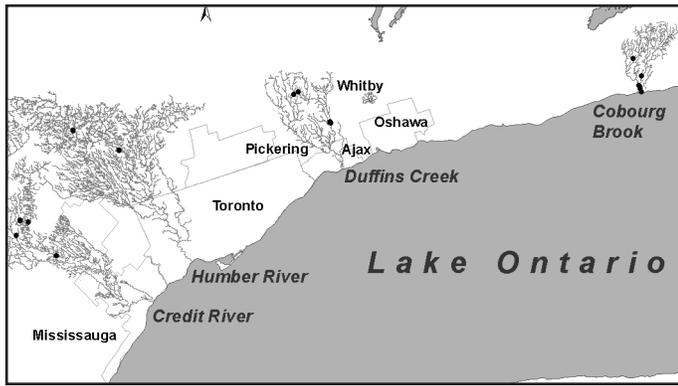
Approximately 2.95 million green eggs are expected from the LaHave River, Sebago Lake, and Lac St. Jean broodstock. This is the first year of full Lac St. Jean strain production. Some eggs, including the majority of the first Lac St. Jean production total will be reared as part of two PhD programs funded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) at the University of Western Ontario and the University of Windsor, in partnership with the MNR. All facilities combined have a production target of 696,000 fry, 190,000 fall fingerlings, and 90,000 yearlings for the 2012-13 stocking cycle. Allocations for schools and smaller partner facilities (e.g. Credit River Anglers Association and Islington Sportsmen's Club) are also included.

Water Quality and Habitat Protection and Enhancement

The BBTS habitat restoration component completed 23 projects, while other partners, such as the MNR, conservation authorities, Ontario Streams, Credit River Anglers Association, and Trout Unlimited Canada completed another 13, typically larger, projects. In all, 36 projects were completed in 2011.

At the fifth annual Earth Day clean-up of Cobourg Brook, a group of Peterborough high school students and teachers planted 143 eastern white cedar trees and 70 red osier dogwood shrubs to stabilize the stream bank in the Cobourg Conservation Area. Another 100 high school students cleaned up 1,300 meters of urban shoreline.





2011 Habitat project sites (depicted by black dots)

In May, three TD Friends of the Environment Foundation volunteers and 25 high school students planted over 50 large trees and 115 shrubs in the Cobourg Conservation Area. With the help of Fleming College Ecosystem Management placement students, the Community Stream Steward Program and Northumberland Junior Farmers, we completed a large planting project of 1,490 trees and 199 shrubs. This planting was funded by the Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA). In June, BBTS staff, in partnership with the Community Stream Steward Program, completed a headwater shrub planting along the northwestern branch of Cobourg Brook.

In late November, a Peterborough area Scouts Canada group collected and planted 500 live willow shrub cuttings in Sinclair Park, part of the Cobourg Conservation Area. In total, Cobourg Brook projects involved 171 volunteers who contributed 394.5 hours of labor.

On Duffins Creek, BBTS worked closely with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to complete five habitat restoration projects. Work got underway in August with a bank stabilization project involving logs and root wads anchored to 33 meters of stream bank in the Greenwood Conservation Area on the Rodar property. The project was later completed with help from six Aurora District MNR Stewardship Rangers and a college volunteer, who planted 200 shrubs and completed a boulder placement project to provide instream habitat for Atlantic Salmon. Two live willow shrub staking projects in late November completed our 2011 work at the Rodar property.

Also on Duffins Creek, in the fall, BBTS worked on the Transport Canada Pickering Lands and with help from TRCA staff and a group of 45 high school students, we planted 850 trees and shrubs at a decommissioned pond site. As well, 100 Fleming College students planted over 850 trees and shrubs at a wetland creation site on the Pickering Lands. Volunteer contributions to 2011 Duffins Creek habitat restoration projects totalled 259 volunteers and 536 hours.

As part of the BBTS Hatchery Program release day at Silver Creek Conservation Area on the Credit River, 30 Brampton elementary school students planted a demonstration site with trees and shrubs. The project was funded by Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) in partnership with the Dufferin-Northern Peel Anglers and Hunters Association.

BBTS staff, with help from 50 high school students and staff from Credit Valley Conservation, planted 250 trees and shrubs at the Terra Cotta Conservation Area on the Credit River along the berm of a decommissioned pond. A second planting was

completed at McNab Park in Norval by OFAH and MNR staff. In November, local school groups completed two more planting projects, one at Forge Park in Terra Cotta and the other in the Terra Cotta Conservation Area. Credit River habitat restoration projects in 2011 involved 157 volunteers contributing 249.5 hours. We started work on the Humber River watershed in 2011 with the TRCA as our lead restoration partner on the ground. In September, with help from Aurora District MNR staff and the TRCA, we completed a large-scale bank stabilization project using large anchored logs and root wads on the Bolton Resource Management Land Tract. We planted trees and shrubs as well as live willow stakes later in November, and we planted along the riparian buffer corridor and shoreline at the Nashville Resource Management Land Tract. Humber River habitat restoration projects involved 52 volunteers contributing 81 hours.

In total we completed an impressive 23 projects with the help of 639 volunteers who contributed 1,261 volunteer hours planting 2,424 trees and 8,853 shrubs over 37,296m².

Research and Assessment

The BBTS science team met twice to review the summer and fall research/assessment efforts, as well as to review stocking practices and to plan for Phase II.

The OFAH did not receive any Species-at-Risk funding for smolt assessment, and replacement funding could not be arranged in time for the smolt run. The MNR and CVC, with COA funding, were able to assess smolts on the Credit River from April to June using the new rotary screw trap. Large numbers of Atlantic Salmon smolts were observed, including those marked last fall in the upper reaches of the river. The field crew was also able to make important observations of other species, including sport fish and invasive species, which validated the screw trap and its operation as a valuable tool for fisheries management on the river.

Once again, reports of significant angler catches of Atlantic Salmon from the south side of Lake Ontario began in April, including fish approaching 20 pounds in weight. Results to date for New York's open-water creel show high catch levels similar to 2009, although not quite up to 2010 totals. For the third straight year, wild Atlantic Salmon have been observed in New York's Salmon River. New York's creel program is also collecting data and tissue samples for genetic analysis for us, as are a subset of anglers in Ontario. Anecdotal reports of catches from the north side of Lake Ontario were also up this summer, including increased numbers off the Port Credit Pier and in the Credit River itself (estimated 300-500 fish). Some local anglers believe a small pier fishery has been created for Atlantic Salmon, based on an increased number of anglers seen on a daily basis in 2011 relative to past years.

Through the winter, the program partnership, led by the MNR and the Credit River Anglers Association, completed the reconstruction of a fishway at Norval. Full operation of the fishway began in late August, but we were able to leave the Streetsville fishway open during the summer (and after Chinook and Coho Salmon runs in the fall) and counted Atlantic Salmon at Norval, where temperatures are lower in the summer and the fish do not need to be moved overland to spawning habitat. In late July, three Atlantic Salmon adults were observed in the pools below the Norval dam.

Without Species-at-Risk Stewardship Fund grants, the MNR (Lake Ontario Management Unit and Aurora District) had to

take a lead role in assessing the Credit River, and supported the OFAH's adult assessment efforts on Cobourg Brook. On Cobourg Brook, a crew of two (with additional staff help as needed from the OFAH, Peterborough District MNR, Lake Ontario Management Unit and Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority), operated weirs on both branches, which was a first for the west branch. Numbers were similar to previous years. We received angler reports of several additional Atlantic Salmon pooling below the dam on the east branch, and one photo of a caught and released Atlantic from the Cobourg Conservation Area.

Observations made during the summer and fall suggest Atlantic Salmon are moving into the streams as early as June, much earlier than expected. We are looking at ways to get the crews out earlier in the summer for 2012 as assessment crews were not yet in place in 2011 and fish were missed as they moved upstream to find holding pools. In the fall, an MNR crew working with CVC electrofished the Credit River's spring stocking sites to assess in-stream survival and growth rates. They also marked the parr to assess survival to spring 2012, when the fish should be observed passing through the rotary screw trap being built into the river. They also caught and released two adult Atlantics spawning in the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park. Canada-Ontario Agreement funds acquired by the Lake Ontario Management Unit supported this work.

In November, we met with the MNR and Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority staff to discuss a fishway for Pratt's Dam on Cobourg Brook, which will make adult assessment and fish passage much easier.

Three NSERC-funded studies are underway, examining Atlantic Salmon genetics, behavioral traits and competition with other species. Late in 2011 we learned from the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) that funding was available for a resistance board weir for adult assessment on Duffins Creek, which is a more efficient weir that can handle fall water levels. The grant comes with funding for a TRCA crew for three years.

Education and Outreach

In 2011, 40 classes and four outdoor education centres reared Atlantic Salmon in 2011 in classroom hatcheries under OFAH head office guidance, up from 34 units in 2010. The geographic range is again from Fort Erie to Kingston. An additional 11 units were administered by the Toronto Zoo, 10 at schools and one at the zoo itself, and McMaster University's Let's Talk Science node supervised another six. The MNR Aurora District and Ontario Streams oversaw another nine units. All of the units now have chiller units, thanks to contributions from the 2010 Species-at-Risk Stewardship Fund. This year saw the best success rates yet, typically 80-95%, and the fish were released by the students in May and June. The classroom hatchery program operated without funding for dedicated staff and the classroom stocking days were handled by the program coordinator and habitat technician.

While the classroom hatchery program as a whole was without dedicated funding, the Ontario Wildlife Foundation committed to cover staff travel over the winter and Pioneer Petroleum subsidized the school bus costs for eight classes that attended the third annual Bronte Creek release day.

The classroom hatchery program received recognition as a teaching tool in *Natural Curiosity*, a publication from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of



Toronto. The book is a resource for elementary teachers interested in enhanced environmental education, and is being distributed throughout the province and online at www.naturalcuriosity.ca.

Communications

BBTS gave 25 presentations to classes, as well as to audiences at the Pickering Environmental Leadership Forum, Pickering Environmental Volunteer Recruitment Expo, Lake Ontario Trout and Salmon Symposium, and several anglers' clubs. The MNR and Fleming College staff and academic researchers also presented on BBTS, including a presentation at the 6th World Recreational Fishing Conference in Berlin, given by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, a BBTS partner.

BBTS attracted TV, print, online and radio media coverage in 2011. CHCH-TV, CITY-TV, CHEX-TV the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *The Grid* magazine (formerly *The Eye Weekly*) and several other local and regional media sources. The Cobourg Earth Day event and journalism tour both received local coverage. The OFAH's own *Angler & Hunter Radio*, *HOTLINE* also featured BBTS initiatives.

A film crew from Chicago, working on a documentary for PBS on the Great Lakes (www.makingwavesdocumentary.com), attended two days of stocking in the spring, including a classroom hatchery event. When completed, the documentary will focus on native versus invasive species in the Great Lakes.

The program will once again be advertised in the provincial fishing regulations and posters have been developed for the program. A quarterly newsletter was distributed via email and was posted online on the program's redesigned website. Four OPG generating stations received BBTS displays and brochures for onsite use.

Throughout the year, BBTS staff connected with program stakeholders and the general public through social media, including Facebook and Twitter. www.facebook.com/ontariosalmon and twitter.com/ontariosalmon.

Community Stream Steward Program



The Community Stream Steward Program (CSSP) had another productive year, providing advice, support and project implementation on stream and wetland conservation initiatives across its program region.

In total, 75 site visits were conducted to provide landowners with face-to-face advice and support; staff attended 81 festivals, workshops, and events to promote the program and its activities; and 45 projects were completed which protect and enhance streams and wetlands through tree and shrub plantings, livestock exclusion, and bank stabilization.

Lake Simcoe Watershed

Three major bank stabilization projects were implemented along the Pefferlaw River, near the mouth of Lake Simcoe. Existing river banks at these sites included metal and wood break walls, eroding banks, and little bank vegetation. With support from Environment Canada's Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund, Ministry of Natural Resources (Lake Simcoe Community Stewardship Program and Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program), and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, these projects now feature gradually sloping banks and native shrubs, and will serve as demonstration sites of naturalized shorelines and promote their functionality and beauty to other residents of the river. In November, CSSP and Environment Canada staff conducted a tour of a number of projects that were completed around the lake.

Farm Stewardship

Farm stewardship projects, such as livestock fencing along streams and wetlands and stream crossings, were implemented throughout the fall with support from the Kawartha Farm Stewardship Collaborative (KFSC), a group of organizations that work together to provide project support through technical advice, project planning and financial incentives. KFSC members include representatives from the CSSP, local Environmental Farm Plan, conservation authorities, and other nonprofits. In total, over 40 projects were completed in 2011, with a value of over \$450,000. CSSP participated in 24 of these projects and provided funding to farmers through Wildlife Habitat Canada, CFWIP, Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund, and Ontario Wildlife Foundation. The Collaborative was recognized through the Minister of the Environment's Award for Environmental Excellence in the Community category.

Cold Creek Stewardship

In August, Environment Canada notified us that we had received funding through their EcoAction Community Funding Program. The two-year funding (2011 and 2012) allows us to implement educational workshops and restoration projects within targeted watersheds of Central Ontario. We began by targeting efforts on Cold Creek in Northumberland County, with the City of Kawartha Lakes and Durham Region projects planned for 2012.

In November, we held stream steward training within the watershed for 15 eager participants. They spent two days learning about stream ecology, flow, and restoration projects, including aspects of regulations and funding sources. These individuals returned to their communities with the tools necessary to steward their local waterways. Lower Trent Conservation, Ministry of Natural Resources (Species at Risk) and Northumberland Stewardship Council helped deliver the workshop.

Colborne Creek

In August, we hosted *Lend a Hand for Colborne Creek*, a community event which featured a bank stabilization project with fish habitat features at a new pedestrian bridge in Colborne. Our instream efforts enhanced fish habitat and stabilized the existing stream banks. This project partnership was led by CSSP and was supported by the Rotary Club of Colborne and MNR's CFWIP.



Program Promotion & Workshops

The CSSP website was updated in 2011 and is now a much more valuable resource to those volunteers and landowners who are looking for support and resources for stream stewardship. Project profiles showcase the types of projects completed by CSSP and the associated benefits to fish and wildlife. Bank stabilization, riparian buffer planting, farm stewardship, and turtle nesting sites are included in the profiles.

Our newsletter, *Streamside News*, was revived and distributed to landowners, partners, and volunteers for the first time since 2008. The newsletter highlights our efforts and should serve to reestablish contact with many volunteers and landowners.

CSSP staff gave a presentation to the Cold Creek Fly Fishers in Belleville, a club with an interest in both fishing and conservation. We had a booth at the Lindsay Woodlot Conference in February and the East Central Farm Show in March, events which together drew over 2,600 attendees. During the March break, staff provided stream ecology lessons to grade school students at the Uxbridge event *The Brook Never Sleeps*.

CSSP achievements were highlighted at *Connecting Land and Lake Conservation - A Lake Huron Workshop*, which was hosted by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and Environment Canada.

We hosted two *Planting Trees for Wildlife* workshops in Udora and Little Britain respectively, which provided landowners with ideas and advice around increasing wildlife habitat in their backyards. We also hosted *A Landowner's Guide to Ponds* workshop in partnership with Kawartha Conservation, Scugog Connections and Victoria Stewardship Council. Wildlife Habitat Canada funded the workshop, which was well attended.

Funding

Program funding was challenging, with the provincial and federal elections causing many delays. The final 2011 budget included funding from Environment Canada's Lake Simcoe Clean-up Fund, EcoAction, Science Horizons Internship Fund, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Ontario Wildlife Foundation, and Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program (CFWIP) Fund. The program continues to operate without any long-term core funding or salary support.

Invading Species Awareness Program



ONTARIO'S
**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 2011, 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 preventing the spread of invasive species. 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 (OIPC), the Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network, and the Canadian Aquatic Invasive Species Network.

Partnerships

In 2011, 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 across the province.

Federally, funding contributions were made by Environment Canada's Great Lakes Management and Reporting Section and Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Human Resources Development Canada's Summer Job Program.

Numerous additional organizations made valuable in-kind and financial contributions to the ISAP in 2011. These organizations included: Ontario Invasive Plant Council, OFAH zones and affiliated clubs, Community Fish and Wildlife Involvement Program, Ontario Streams, Federation of Ontario Cottager's Association, Thunder Bay Stewardship Council, Voyageur Provincial Park, Dorset Environmental Science Centre, Queen's University, York University, Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council, South Nation Conservation Authority, Lake of the Woods District Property Owner's Association, Kirkland Lake MNR, Plenty Canada, Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority, Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, Credit Valley Conservation Authority, Kids for Turtles Environmental Education, Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, Georgian Bay Stewardship Council, Pembroke MNR, Sault Ste. Marie MNR, Lower Trent Region Conservation Authority, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, Couchiching Conservancy, Prince Edward County Stewardship Council, Peterborough Stewardship Council, University of Windsor, Wisconsin Sea Grant, and the Minnesota Sea Grant.

Communications

ISAP staff were successful in attracting media interest around invasive species in 2011. Their efforts resulted in over 80 media/promotional contacts with the program being profiled in newsprint/web (63), radio (15) and television (5), reaching

over three million people. Highlights of media included stories profiling the outreach efforts of members of the Invading Species Hit Squad, as well as our scheduled Invasive Plant Road Rallies. Regular articles were submitted for publication by the Invading Species Hit Squad, and were published in the Orillia Packet and Times, Lifestyles and the Alliston Herald.

Our efforts in the Lake Superior basin also received a considerable amount of media attention. The Lake Superior Invasive Species Outreach Coordinator was interviewed on CBC Radio in regard to aquatic invasive species. Shaw TV aired a segment on aquatic invasive species and how to help stop their spread, and Thunder Bay Television conducted an interview with ISAP staff about Rusty Crayfish. As well, Lake Superior-specific radio public service announcements have been aired on several local radio stations.

Program Outreach Overview

The ISAP conducted outreach to a broad audience in 2011, including anglers, hunters, recreational boaters, gardeners, ATV users, aquarium hobbyists, educational institutions, bait harvesters, technical professionals, and the general public. Staff attended more than 220 events, including the Toronto and Ottawa Sportsmen's Shows, Toronto International Boat Show, Outdoor Adventure Show, Canada Blooms, Landscape Ontario Congress, Spring Cottage Life Show, and the Central Canada Outdoor Show, reaching over 300,000 people. Numerous workshops and presentations were also delivered by ISAP staff, 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 hundreds of organizations, including stewardship councils, conservation authorities, nongovernment organizations, and community groups. As a result of these initiatives, over 320,000 educational materials were delivered provincewide, and ISAP staff fielded direct requests from over 365 people to the Invading Species Hotline.

Aquatic Invasive Species Workshops for Technical Professionals

The ISAP receives funding from Fisheries and Oceans Canada to deliver Aquatic Invasive Species Workshops for technical field professionals working across the province. In 2011, ISAP staff delivered 10 workshops, training over 300 technical professionals. Workshops were held in Lindsay (4), Peterborough, Aurora, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, and Timmins. Participants included natural resource college students, college professors/staff, field technicians and biologists, conservation officers, and natural resources administration staff. The workshops train participants in the identification of priority invasive species, such as Asian Carp, and demonstrate preservation of specimens, and reporting procedures.

Early Detection Network

ISAP staff are working to establish a volunteer-based invasive species Early Detection Network for Ontario by training citizen scientist volunteers and industry professionals across the province in invasive species identification, sampling/preserving, and reporting, in order to increase Ontario's capacity to respond to invasive species and better understand their distribution across Ontario. As well, the Early Detection Network will be educated on how to coordinate, or be involved in, activities to stem the spread



of invasive species and prevent the establishment of new invasive species in Ontario. In 2011, ISAP staff established a provincial technical committee to guide the development of materials, and to provide recommendations for citizen science organization contacts.

HACCP Workshops for Bait Harvesters

In 2011, ISAP staff worked with MNR staff to deliver 11 Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) courses remotely to new bait harvesters via online webinars.

Invading Species Hit Squad

The summer was extremely successful for the Invading Species Hit Squad. Following a two-day training workshop held at the OFAH/Mario Cortellucci Hunting and Fishing Heritage Centre in Peterborough, our team of 21 summer staff working in partnership with ISAP staff, MNR district offices, stewardship councils, conservation authorities and nongovernmental organizations hit the ground running again, attending over 150 community events. Events included boat launch inspections, presentations, and interpretive programs in provincial parks. Over 250 bait retailers, tourist information centres, resorts, marinas, and garden centres were visited by members of the Hit Squad who shared educational materials with the clients of these businesses.

Invading Species Hit Squad staff were successful in attracting media interest for the invasive species issue, resulting in 52 media profiles in radio, television, and newspaper. Regular articles were submitted by students for publication in the Orillia Packet and Times and Lifestyles, the local newspaper for the Parry Sound area.

Aquarium, Landscape and Water Garden Outreach

Over the summer, a total of 99 garden centres were visited and surveyed, along with one pet store within the counties/regions of Middlesex, Oxford, Hamilton, Halton, Waterloo, Peel, Dufferin, Toronto, Durham and Kawartha Lakes. Over 2,600 educational materials were distributed as a result of this outreach. The results from the store visits have been compiled in a database of Ontario retailers, and to date, 924 inventories of pet stores and garden centres are present in this database. This project was conducted in partnership with Ontario Streams and Aurora District MNR, along with funding from Service Canada Summer Jobs Program. ISAP staff are contributing to the Horticulture Outreach Collaborative, a committee of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council. Key projects of this collaborative include the promotion of the *Grow Me Instead!!* alternatives guide for gardeners, as well as the development of a similar guide for northern Ontario.

Educational Materials

ISAP staff worked closely with MNR and OIPC staff to produce new educational materials, including a brochure on Asian Carp, the *Grow Me Instead!* guide for southern Ontario, and Water Soldier and Water Chestnut watch cards and fact sheets. Our grade six curriculum kit *Invasive Species! A Biodiversity Challenge* was reviewed by Curriculum Services Canada (CSC); and ISAP staff are currently working on incorporating CSC's feedback into the curriculum. Upon completion, ISAP staff will develop a strategic plan for promoting the new curriculum kit through teachers, university pre-service teachers' programs, and conferences, such as the Science Teachers' Association of Ontario's annual meeting and the Environmental Educators of Ontario's annual conference.

Compendium of Education and Outreach Initiatives & Factsheet Development

Through funding received from the Invasive Species Centre, ISAP staff are developing factsheets for key aquatic and terrestrial invasive species and upon completion, they will be translated into French and formatted for desktop publishing with the intended purpose to be posted and shared online. ISAP staff are also developing a compendium of education and outreach projects for invasive species, and will coordinate a review of the compendium by agencies involved with invasive species (both government and nongovernment). As with the fact sheets, the compendium will be formatted for desktop publishing with the intended purpose to be posted and shared online.

Highway and Boat Launch Signage

With permission from Canada Border Services, "Stop Invasive Species" signs were installed at the Pigeon River and Sault Ste. Marie border crossings. They have also allowed outreach materials to be placed at the border crossings. The Invading Species Hit Squad were able to post over 70 boat launch signs in locations across Ontario. Over 325 invasive species boat launch signs have been distributed this year.

Lake Simcoe Outreach

In partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources, the ISAP implemented the Community-Based Social Marketing project for Lake Simcoe in 2011. From May 14 – June 6, three boat launch locations on Lake Simcoe were staffed to engage the public in invasive species outreach. Baseline data was collected in the first week to better understand the boating and angling habits of people using the different boat launches, followed by hands-on demonstrations and direct public engagement through the use of boat wash equipment and bait disposal stations. The final week was used to monitor any changes in boating or angling behaviors. A series of on-ice outreach events promoting awareness of invasive species during the ice fishing season were delivered on Lake Simcoe in partnership with staff from the MNR Aurora District MNR office. Staff conducted on-ice surveys with anglers, and distributed educational materials (promotional ice fishing lures). Other outreach tools for the on-ice outreach included the production and installation of billboards for the "ice highway," and the dissemination of a radio public service announcement specifically directed at ice anglers.

Lake Superior Outreach

Education and outreach initiatives for Lake Superior and the North Shore were well received by the public and our partner organizations. Through the Lake Superior Invasive Species



Outreach Coordinator, the ISAP was represented at a number of community events, presentations and meetings, and significant progress was made in community and agency engagement. The Lake Superior Invasive Species Outreach Coordinator actively participated on the Emerald Ash Borer communications committee and in an EAB branch sampling course. Our outreach coordinator was invited to attend the Canadian Wildlife Society Annual General Meeting to discuss the subject of invasive species. The coordinator's position was funded by the OFAH and Environment Canada.

Invading Species Information Management

In 2011, ISAP staff handled more than 850 calls to the Invading Species Hotline. There were 485 sighting reports for a variety of invasive species and 365 requests for information, which resulted in the distribution of over 320,000 educational materials.

Giant Hogweed was frequently reported to the Invading Species Hotline, with 57 confirmed reports. Aquarium and water garden releases may have been the source for a Red-Eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) that was discovered by one of our summer students in the Payne River near Finch.

In 2011, the Invasives Tracking System received over 160 reports of potential invasive species; 112 of these reports were confirmed to be invasive species. ISAP staff continue to promote the Invasives Tracking System to government and nongovernment organizations interested in reporting invasive species.

Invading Species Watch

Interest in the Invading Species Watch program continues to be strong across the province. With the assistance of volunteers from lake associations, as well as our Invading Species Hit Squad, over 120 lakes were monitored across the province for the presence of Zebra Mussel veligers and Spiny Waterflea.

Invasive Species Road Rallies

In partnership with staff from the OIPC, ISAP staff coordinated three Invasive Species Road Rallies in 2011: on August 17 in Oro Medonte in partnership with Couchiching Conservancy; on August 25 in King Township in partnership with staff from the Aurora District MNR office; and on October 5 in Peterborough County in partnership with the Peterborough Stewardship Council. These road rallies resulted in the addition of hundreds of invasive plant sighting records to our Invading Species database.

Water Soldier Control

Efforts to control Water Soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*) in the Trent River continued in the summer of 2011. ISAP staff assisted the MNR in monitoring the Trent River between Healey Falls and Hastings, and in the manual removal of Water Soldier from the shallow invaded bays of the Trent River in mid-August.

In July, ISAP staff coordinated over 25 people in a volunteer monitoring day for Water Soldier on the Trent Severn Waterway between Healey Falls and Hastings. Volunteers were representatives from the OFAH, MNR, Trent University, Fleming College, Lower Trent Conservation, and the general public. This surveillance resulted in the detection of Water Soldier in new areas of the river, as well as the collection of information to provide more detail about the distribution of Water Soldier populations in the Trent River.

Water Chestnut Control

ISAP staff travelled to Voyageur Provincial Park in August to assist MNR and park staff with their Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*) monitoring and control efforts. Staff manually removed small Water Chestnut populations, as well as assisted with the collection of plants that had been cut prior to their arrival.

Service Canada Summer Jobs Program

OFAH summer students racked up more than 8,700 hours of labor working in positions made possible through funding provided by the Canadian government and partnerships with local host organizations. College and university students were spread out across Ontario, and gained invaluable on-the-job experience in their chosen fields of study.

OFAH summer students contributed to OFAH programs in the following communities:

Invasive Species Awareness: Aurora, Chute a Blondeau, Dorset, Espanola, Finch, Kenora, Kirkland Lake, Lanark, Manotick, Mississauga, Orillia, Oshawa, Parry Sound, Pembroke, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Trenton and Utopia. **Bring Back the Salmon** (Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program): Peterborough. **Communications:** Peterborough. **Community Stream Steward Program:** Peterborough. **OFAH/Mario Cortellucci Hunting & Fishing Heritage Centre:** Peterborough. **TackleShare:** Peterborough.





Wildlife Management

Moose Management

The MNR has launched a new moose website, www.ontario.ca/moose, which includes information on moose biology, MNR's Moose Management Program, related specific hunter and harvest information for the past five years, and information pertaining to the resident tag draw.

MNR's development of draft WMU-specific moose population objectives are underway (the number of moose desired in a particular area, including ecological and socio-economic factors). The OFAH has provided a summary of preliminary recommendations for new WMU moose population objectives.

Moose harvesting management strategies are also underway by the MNR (e.g. allowable harvests, harvest management) and consultations should begin in 2012.

The OFAH will continue to seek assurances from the MNR that the frequency and quality of Moose Aerial Inventories (three-year cycle for most WMU's) continue to ensure the best possible assessment data, and will advocate for sub-WMU moose management, since the Bancroft-Hastings elk hunt has demonstrated its feasibility.



Photo: Jim Markou

Bancroft-Hastings Elk Hunt

Draw

- 4,422 applicants with a fee of \$16.95 each, resulted in \$75,000 in revenue to the Special Purpose Account;
- 70 elk seals were available;
- 42 groups of four, seven groups of three, seven groups of two and 14 individuals were successful;
- 65 out of 70 successful draw applicants claimed their seal.

Harvest

- 20 elk (11 bulls, 9 cows) from 70 seals (24 bulls, 46 cows);
- 18 of the 20 harvested elk were brought to voluntary check stations;
- 64 of 65 mandatory reports were submitted (the information is being analyzed and will be summarized);
- the largest bull weighed 600 pounds and was estimated to be five years old;
- 75% of the elk harvested were taken from the two WMU's in which conflict with agriculture occur; and
- 50% of hunters hunted on private land in the hunt area, which was comprised of 50% Crown land and 50% private land.

Next Steps

- complete analyses of detailed harvest reporting;
- continue herd/population monitoring, assessment and research;
- a population survey is planned for early winter 2012, and new tracking collars will be put on additional elk; and
- decisions regarding harvest for the 2012 hunting season will be determined in the spring of 2012 after population assessment and full harvest assessment are completed.

Top Photo: Sabourin



Photo: Randy Therrien



Deer Management

We had hoped that MNR Southern Region would seek our input for the 2011 white-tailed deer antlerless tag allocations; however, our advice was not sought. We had been assured that the MNR Districts in the Southern Region were comfortable with the 2011 allocations, which did not change greatly from 2010 (with the exception of southeastern Ontario that saw roughly a 30-40% increase in tag allocations over 2010).

Elsewhere in the Southern Region, antlerless tag quotas were up 20-30% in central Ontario (WMU's 41, 45, 46, 48, 49, 53A); slightly up (approximately 15%) in WMU's 50, 55B; and down in 43A, 43B, 54, 56, 67, 76, 77 and 81.

In northwestern Ontario, antlerless quotas were decreased in WMU's 6 and 7B; and in northeastern Ontario, antlerless quotas increased in WMU's 28, 36, and 43A and 43B (Manitoulin Island).

We had expected more conservative allocations in 2011 following two consecutive years of significantly reduced harvest, and at least anecdotally reduced numbers of deer encountered by hunters. We have confidence in MNR District biologists' professional judgment, but we will be watching the harvest closely, hoping to have more input in the 2012 allocations than we did in 2011; and we will continue to advocate for improved deer density assessments.

Black Bear Management

We had expected MNR District offices to begin local stakeholder consultations regarding local WMU-specific black bear population estimates and draft objectives in association with the implementation of the Enhanced Black Bear Management Program; but we have had no indication that the districts have begun this important step toward enhanced black bear management. Dialogue with MNR Wildlife Policy Section continues on the topic of the development of a black bear camp license.

Woodland Caribou

Habitat Regulation for Woodland Caribou: Proposed Approach (OFAH Zones A, B and C)

In early 2011, the MNR posted a proposed approach for regulating woodland caribou habitat to the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry (EBR). The OFAH submitted a response that outlined our concerns with the proposed approach of regulating habitat throughout the entire continuous caribou zone (as delineated in the Caribou Conservation Plan). The OFAH agreed that woodland caribou habitat should not be regulated in the discontinuous zone and also strongly opposed the regulation of habitat throughout the entire continuous zone. We recommended that management should focus on the factors that are actually limiting woodland caribou herds and furthermore, that habitat

should only be regulated in areas where it is limiting woodland caribou productivity. The OFAH emphasized the importance of using direct wildlife management for alternative prey (moose and deer) and predators (wolves and black bears) where predation or disease is a limiting factor. This includes the recommendation for maintaining roads that are critical for wildlife management.

The OFAH also submitted a letter to the MNR's Caribou Conservation Section expressing our continued skepticism and concern about current provincial forest management strategies that direct silviculture regeneration toward more uniform conifer stands within the continuous caribou zone. The focus of the letter reiterated our previously stated concerns regarding the threat of invasive forest pests, particularly the mountain pine beetle. The recent conclusion that mountain pine beetle will arrive in Ontario in the next two to three decades underlines the contradiction – and fundamental flaw – of an Ontario forest management direction with the objective of creating, or restoring, large uniform conifer (jack pine) stands for future caribou habitat.

An Alternative Approach for Managing Woodland Caribou in Ontario (OFAH Zones A, B and C)

The OFAH has produced a document, The OFAH Alternative Approach to Managing Woodland Caribou (Boreal Population) in Ontario, which has been widely distributed to relevant bureaucratic and political decision makers, as well as other interested stakeholders. The OFAH has routinely expressed its concerns regarding the management of boreal caribou in Ontario. We have submitted numerous recommendations to the MNR and Environment Canada on how to manage woodland caribou in a manner that minimizes impacts to other traditional activities in northern Ontario. The OFAH Alternative Approach reiterates our long-standing concerns, discusses relevant scientific literature and makes sound, biologically-based recommendations that form a cohesive and comprehensive approach for managing woodland caribou in Ontario. OFAH recommendations are intended to outline strategic direction that will help to prioritize and focus woodland caribou management in a way that optimizes conservation and the multitude of benefits (ecological, economic and social) of other natural resource uses that sound wildlife management can bring.

Federal Recovery Strategy for Woodland Caribou (Boreal Population) in Canada

The OFAH is currently reviewing the Federal Recovery Strategy for Woodland Caribou (Boreal Population) in Canada and will submit its comments and concerns in early 2012.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs' Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict Strategy

Proposed Wildlife Damage Compensation Program

In April, we responded to OMAFRA's proposed new and updated Wildlife Damage Compensation Program/Conflict Strategy (EBR #011-2677). This consultation follows former consultations with stakeholders through the Human-Wildlife Conflict Advisory Group and with the Agricultural Wildlife Conflict Advisory Committee. At its core, the proposal included expanding the list of livestock that would be eligible for compensation to include: sheep, cattle, horses, donkeys, mules, rabbits, hogs, goats, elk, poultry, deer, bison, fur-bearing animals, llamas, alpacas, ostriches, emus, and rheas. It proposed to update maximum

compensation payments, as current schedules are approximately 25 years old, and expand the list of wildlife. The program would compensate producers for livestock killed or injured by coyotes, wolves, bears, foxes, fishers, cougars, lynx, bobcat, ravens, eagles, hawks, crows, turkey vultures, weasels, raccoon, mink, or elk.

To summarize our response:

- we supported the proposed expanded list of eligible livestock (with the exception of farmed deer and elk);
- we supported the proposed expanded list of wildlife (i.e. cause of damage) with the exception of turkey vultures, suggesting that they include black vultures instead; and
- we supported and echoed the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's (OFA) recommendation that livestock guard dogs be added to the list of eligible livestock.

Announced Wildlife Damage Compensation Program

After the new Wildlife Damage Compensation Program was announced (June 30, 2011), to the surprise of OFAH representatives who had been involved, the program included several alarming species additions that were never part of the original stakeholder consultations, not part of the 2010 Wildlife Damage Discussion Paper, and not part of the EBR (#011-2677) consultation:

- “eligible livestock” includes our native grouse and ptarmigan species;
- “eligible livestock” includes both turkeys (expected) and “wild turkeys;” and
- “eligible livestock” includes lynx, fisher, marten and raccoon.

No one farms these species in Ontario. Their inclusion without disclosure is unacceptable for two major reasons: 1) they were not explicitly mentioned in the consultation; and 2) we are especially concerned about the potential negative impacts, such a “blurring” of the distinction between what is wild and what is farmed could have for wildlife conservation. We subsequently wrote to the Environment Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) to express our concerns, and to request that the ECO join us in convincing the Minister to make these necessary changes to the program as soon as possible.

Big Game Retrieval Using Leashed Dogs

There is nothing that prevents a hunter doing this with leashed dogs in moose WMU/seasons (dogs are allowed in most of these, but must be licensed). However, a large number of southern deer WMU's do not currently allow the use of dogs in hunting, and that has prevented the use of leashed tracking dogs.

We have been having very positive discussions with the MNR to change this situation.

Coyote Biology and Management

We have been very actively involved in coyote hunting and management issues throughout 2011. Though the OFAH is the strongest advocate for effective coyote hunting in the province, views among some houndsmen, trappers, producers and others can be polarizing.

We have been working to help defend community-based coyote hunting contests from the campaigns of several animal rights groups who claim that these contests are “illegal” under s.11 of the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

Proactively, we are working to help producers and trappers obtain new tools for predator control and management, such as enhanced coyote hunting, incentives for coyote hunting, and research into



Photo: Randy Therrien

the value of relaxing cable restraints (nonlethal snares) through a pilot project, which we are confident would demonstrate the value of these for targeting livestock predators in the April 15 to October 15 period.

Our intent to develop a coyote biology and management discussion paper to inform policy has been outpaced by current coyote issues in the media. Emerging case studies and new scientific information about coyote predation and management will be helpful, and will be included in a draft OFAH discussion paper.

Eastern Ontario Coyote/Predation Management Research Pilot

During stakeholder discussions intended to solicit support from producers, municipalities, fur managers, and hunters for a pilot research project to test the effectiveness of trappers using relaxing cable restraints (nonlethal snares) to manage livestock-killing coyotes in southeastern Ontario, OFAH staff and OFAH Zone F representatives have remained steadfast that our position (i.e. support for their use from April 15 to October 15) is the most reasonable middle-ground position.

The implementation of the producer-hoped-for pilot research project has been delayed due to current lack of stakeholder consensus (between trappers involved who want a year-round pilot, and the houndsmen involved who oppose any use of snares).

Falconry – Use of Wild Raptors Proposal

We have worked with the Provincial Falconry Advisory Committee and our member falconers in the Ontario Hawking Club for several years to get Ontario's falconry policy modernized. In May 2011, the Minister of Natural Resources obliged us with a formal EBR proposal to allow for the modest collection and use of common wild birds of prey by falconers who hunt with birds of prey (EBR #011-3058).

Once approved, the policy will allow Ontario's community of licensed falconers to collect and train up to 25 wild raptors



Photo: Martin Geleynse

(total) from five common species. This level of take is well within sustainable limits, and will have absolutely no potential impact on wild populations.

For falconers who hunt with birds of prey, the policy change is very welcome. It brings Ontario's hunting regulations in line with virtually every other North American jurisdiction, it provides falconers with superior birds and birds from species not available through breeders, and it preserves a traditional practice in falconry.

The policy includes a number of important principles:

- captured wild birds are for recreational use only – trade or commerce is prohibited;
- raptors taken from the wild will be identifiable by a permanent leg band; and
- conditions regarding reporting, location of collection, timing, release, etc., will apply.

Raptors would be collected either from nests or trapped on their first migration, using the trapping techniques of bird-banders.

In December, a decision was made to proceed with the proposal (EBR 011-3058) to allow the capture and use of wild raptors for use in falconry practices to hunt small game. The EBR response was significant and overwhelmingly positive (452 responses).

The final policy was amended to address some concerns raised about potential human/wildlife conflict associated with the release of raptors that have been kept for falconry; and thus allow for the "refusal of requests to release some birds used for falconry." In addition, an amendment was made to remove northern goshawk from the list of species allowed to be taken.

Ontario Youth Waterfowl Heritage Day

At the recommendation of the OFAH Board of Directors, we sent a letter to the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) recommending that they designate the Saturday or Sunday before the regular opening of the waterfowl hunt as Ontario Youth Waterfowl Heritage Day.

Waterfowler Heritage Day(s) are presently in effect in a number of provinces across Canada to enhance youth hunting opportunities, and we believe there are substantial benefits to initiating a Youth Waterfowl Heritage Day in the Province of Ontario.

Rationale

- Promotes Youth Hunting Heritage: Encourages the involvement of young people in waterfowl hunting to help ensure the future of hunting for generations to come;
- Recreational: The proposal would provide additional sustainable waterfowl hunting opportunities to young hunters in Ontario;
- Wetland Conservation: Young people introduced to waterfowl hunting at an early age will develop a greater understanding and appreciation of wetland conservation; and
- Safety: Helps ensure a safe and meaningful waterfowl hunting experience for new young hunters.

Ontario Waterfowl Advisory Committee

The Ontario Waterfowl Advisory Committee (OWAC), which includes representation from the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), the MNR, and the OFAH meets annually to discuss management issues relating to hunted species of migratory birds (e.g. waterfowl), and to assist with the development of recommendations to senior management of the CWS and the MNR.

In advance of the meeting in the fall, the CWS prepared and provided a concise assessment on the feasibility of reinstatement of a mourning dove hunting season in Ontario. The assessment



Photo: Dave Allen

not only concluded that a hunt is biologically feasible, it seems to be well supported by many Ontario residents.

Our submission for designating the Saturday or Sunday before the regular opening of the waterfowl hunt as Ontario Youth Waterfowl Heritage Day was also discussed, and there seemed to be general support for designating the Saturday prior to the regular opener.

Wild Turkey Harvest

We met with MNR staff in November to discuss the 2011 wild turkey spring and fall harvest results, mandatory harvest reporting, as well as monitoring and assessment. The MNR indicated that the number of fall wild turkey licence sales has been declining, but this has also been seen in many other United States jurisdictions with a fall season. Overall, the spring and fall wild turkey harvest totals are down again this year, which brings into question whether this is an issue with mandatory harvest reporting compliance or wild turkey biology. We are mutually concerned that mandatory harvest reporting compliance may not be what it used to be.

We will continue to work with the MNR to increase hunter awareness on the importance of harvest reporting through our various media outlets (e.g. *Ontario OUT OF DOORS*, *Angler and Hunter HOTLINE*, *Angler and Hunter Radio*, etc.).

Biodiversity Strategy 2011

We contributed significantly to the development of Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy (OBS) 2005-2010, and since that time, have been an active participant on the Ontario Biodiversity Council, the body largely responsible for implementation of the 2005 Strategy.

Through our representation on the Ontario Biodiversity Council, we were involved in the process of renewing the 2011 Strategy and participated in a number of meetings, as well as stakeholder workshops, to solicit comments for updating the strategy. We also submitted written recommendations throughout the process.

In June, we received the final draft for review and endorsement; however, there were still certain aspects of the final draft with which we were not comfortable. We notified the Ontario Biodiversity Council indicating that we would not endorse the document until our concerns were addressed, which prompted a discussion between the OFAH and the Secretariat (MNR). In the interest of reaching a resolution to some of our concerns, specific changes were made to the final document.

There are still statements in the renewed strategy that we find to be, if not misleading, less helpful than they could be; however, we do support certain aspects of the 2011 Strategy. We expect that next steps will include an Ontario Government Response Statement, which will identify items for action within MNR's own biodiversity planning, and provide additional opportunity for public response to the strategy.

Ontario Invasive Plant Council



The OIPC was created in 2007 and is a coalition of government, nongovernment, first nations and academic institutions. The goal of the

OIPC is to enhance communication and partnerships, and increase invasive plant prevention, detection and management in Ontario. Before the inception of the OIPC there was no coordinated provincial response to deal with this issue. The OFAH has taken a lead role in assisting with the development of the OIPC by providing housing and administrative support for OIPC staff, as well as contributing a council board representative. Over the past year, the OIPC has completed the review and revision of its Terms of Reference and Strategic Plan, and has voted to become an incorporated legal entity in 2012.

OIPC Committees

The OIPC has always worked well to meet its objectives through its committees, each working within their area of expertise to move the goals of the council forward. These committees are Policy, Communications, Research/Control and Horticultural Outreach Collaborative. In 2011, a fundraising committee was developed to assist the OIPC in gaining long-term funding support to ensure the sustainability of the council.

Grow-Me-Instead Booklet

The very successful *Grow Me Instead!* (GMI) campaign includes a guide booklet for gardeners which showcases a number of invasive ornamental plants and provides suggestions of noninvasive plant alternatives. Five thousand (5,000) copies of the GMI booklet were printed in March 2011, and distributed at Canada Blooms and through partner organizations. The success of this guide demanded that two additional reprints be made. The first 10,000 copies were quickly delivered to partners for distribution and the second run of 20,000 copies was completed in December 2011. The OIPC also received funds through the Invasive Species Centre to broaden this campaign, and is working to create a northern Ontario edition of the guide.

Canned Landowner Workshops

In partnership with Credit Valley Conservation, the OFAH/MNR Invading Species Awareness Program (ISAP) and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), OIPC developed a “canned” landowner workshop to assist landowners in creating invasive species management plans for their properties. Two workshops were held in 2011 in partnership with Victoria Stewardship Council, City of Kawartha Lakes Environmental Advisory Committee, MNR, ISAP, Northumberland County, Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority and Northumberland Stewardship Council.

Input on Provincial/Federal Documents

The OIPC responded to requests for input from the provincial and federal governments and provided comment on the renewed Ontario’s Biodiversity Strategy, Provincial Giant Hogweed Best Management Practices document, Invasive Alien Species Strategic Plan for Canada, and phytosanitary measures and risk management documents for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). The OIPC was also invited to appear before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable

Development to discuss the importance of a collaborative approach to controlling and managing invasive plants.

Best Management Practices Documents

The MNR contracted the OIPC and partners to lead the development of Best Management Practices (BMP) documents for understanding the biology, identification, and control of several invasive plant species. Following the completion of the Phragmites BMP, documents have also been developed for Giant Hogweed and Dog-strangling Vine, and a Buckthorn BMP is underway.

OIPC 5th Annual General Meeting and Invasive Plant Symposium

The 5th OIPC Annual General Meeting was held on October 13 and 14 at the Isaiah Tubbs Resort in Prince Edward County. The event was a resounding success and helped to enhance partnerships and increase knowledge of invasive plants in Ontario. This year’s event included four field tours, an evening social and a second day filled with speaker presentations and networking opportunities.

Funding

The OIPC Fundraising Committee secured over \$100,000 in core and project funding through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Invasive Species Centre, and Environment Canada’s Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program. The OIPC also received corporate donations from Hydro One and True North Specialty Products.

Social Media/ Newsletter

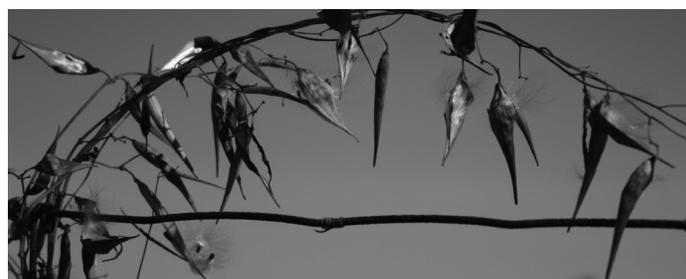
The OIPC continues to distribute monthly updates to a network of over 600 individuals who appreciate receiving information about invasive plant research, control projects, educational material, job postings, conferences, etc., that are being conducted across the province.

The OIPC website (www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca) provides users with up-to-date information including: downloadable educational materials, strategic documents, events calendar, links to other invasive plant sites, Board activity notes, and more. The OIPC also provides daily updates to followers through the OIPC Twitter page (www.twitter.com/OIPC1).

Partnerships

The OIPC partners regularly with over 100 stakeholders in order to develop and deliver the various programs mentioned above. The OIPC knows the importance of collaboration and is therefore proud to be a part of the National Invasive Species Council, which includes representatives from across Canada to deal with invasive species, as well as the Midwest Invasive Plant Network, a group formed by a number of Great Lakes States and Ontario to reduce the impact of invasive plant species in the midwest region.

The OIPC achieved many of its goals and objectives set out in its strategic plan, pursued new partnerships, and continued to move forward to its target of becoming a stronger, more sustainable organization.





Land Use Management & Access

Forest Management Planning

Mazinaw-Lanark Forest, draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan (OFAH Zone F)

The OFAH submitted a response to the EBR posting for the draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan for the Mazinaw-Lanark Forest. Our concerns were focused on the lack of recognition for hunting and fishing. As a result, an OFAH socioeconomic analysis for big game hunting activities in the forest was incorporated into the forest plan. We were also concerned with road management objectives (e.g. road decommissioning) and its potential to adversely impact the accessibility of fishing and hunting opportunities.

Martel Forest, draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan (OFAH Zone C)

The OFAH made a submission to the EBR posting of the draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan for the Martel Forest. The rationale, criteria and cost-benefit analysis of establishing Moose Emphasis Areas (MEA) was the focus of our response. In addition, we expressed strong opposition to using public access restrictions as a substitute for sound fish and wildlife management. The OFAH provided additional socioeconomic information on hunting in the Martel forest that was subsequently included in the final Plan.

Nagagami Forest, draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan (OFAH Zone C)

The OFAH made a submission to the EBR posting for the draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan for the Nagagami Forest and expressed our serious concern with the existing imbalance of road access. The current plan identified eight road use management strategies that restrict access to the Nagagami Forest, including five that directly reduce fishing and hunting opportunities. Current forest road access policies and guidelines are overly restrictive to the public and create an imbalance favoring remote tourism values. Furthermore, we expressed concern with the impact of caribou habitat management on other forest values, particularly moose productivity and Crown forest accessibility.

Lake Nipigon Forest, draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan (OFAH Zone B)

We submitted a response to the EBR posting for the draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan for the Lake Nipigon Forest. The Lake Nipigon Forest contains both continuous and discontinuous

caribou zones (as described in the Caribou Conservation Plan). As a result, many of our concerns focused on the impact of caribou habitat management on other forest values. Moose productivity, Crown forest accessibility, natural disturbance emulation patterns (e.g. clearcut sizes and residual forest patches) and the approach used to establish desired levels and targets for wildlife habitat were among our primary concerns.

Ottawa Valley Forest, draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan (OFAH Zone E)

The OFAH reviewed and submitted comments on the draft 2011 – 2021 Forest Management Plan for the Ottawa Valley Forest. We were primarily concerned with forest road use management strategies, mainly proposed access restrictions and the decommissioning of forest access roads. We were encouraged to see that the plan recognized geographic differences in the productive capacity of the landscape and were managing white-tailed deer and moose habitat according to these differences. In addition, the OFAH was pleased to see specific references to hunting as the rationale for habitat management decisions in the draft plan. We have continuously emphasized the importance of considering the ecological, social and economic importance of hunting and fishing in forest management planning throughout the province; however, it is a relative rarity in the forest management planning process for hunting and fishing to be considered beyond being mentioned as a recreational use of Crown forests.

Lakehead Forest, 2007 – 2017 Forest Management Plan (OFAH Zone B)

The OFAH submitted comments for the review of the proposed operations for the second term of the Forest Management Plan for the Lakehead Forest. Our submission was focused on an area that contains a cluster of naturally reproducing Brook Trout lakes within the Moose Lake Corridor. Timber harvest in the Moose Lake Corridor had originally been proposed for the first term of the plan (2007-2011), but Greenmantle Forest Inc. deferred operations until the second term to provide the Ministry of Natural Resources with time to provide the research and assessment information and/or professional advice on how to proceed. The deferral of operations was due in large part to inadequate direction on groundwater recharge areas (important for Brook Trout reproduction); however, concerns of Brook Trout overharvest and the introduction of invasive species have also been raised by no road/road restriction proponents. The OFAH

recommended that enforcement of existing regulations (e.g. fisheries) and current education programs (e.g. Invading Species Awareness Program) would be the most effective and appropriate mechanisms to protect Brook Trout values in the Moose Lake Corridor. We also recommended that any constructed road in the Moose Lake Corridor should remain open for public use.

Management Guidelines for Forestry and Resource-based Tourism

The OFAH, represented by members of OFAH Zones A, B, C and D, participated in focus group sessions hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources in Sudbury and Dryden to review the Management Guidelines for Forestry and Resource-based Tourism (Tourism Guide). Information collected from these focus group sessions and other information (forest audits, survey of practitioners, etc.) will be used to report to the Provincial Forest Technical Committee (PFTC) that will act as a review board and advise the MNR's Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Division on how to ensure that MNR's forest management guides are kept current with respect to scientific knowledge and management practices. Using input from the representatives and the OFAH Land Use/Access/Trails Advisory Committee, we made a comprehensive submission that outlined the OFAH concerns with the existing Tourism Guide, as well as recommendations on how it could be improved.

Crown Land Use Planning

The Guide for Crown Land Use Planning (2010)

The OFAH submitted a response to the EBR posting for the Guide for Crown Land Use Planning (2010). This guide establishes standards and recommended practices for land use planning carried out by the Ministry of Natural Resources for Ontario's Crown land. This new guide primarily consolidated and updated existing policies and practices of Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy (LUS), as well as provided some new direction. We were concerned with the new policy direction for Enhanced Management Areas (EMA) presented in the guide, particularly Crown forest accessibility and changes related to renewable energy development in EMAs.

Crown Land Use Atlas Harmonization Project (OFAH Zone C)

Since 2006, the OFAH has participated in a land use planning exercise – the Crown Land Use Atlas Harmonization (CLUAH) project that is reviewing the existing land use management direction for all unregulated lands and waters in the MNR's Wawa District. In addition, the project intends to develop a major amendment to the Crown Land Use Policy Atlas that will consolidate the existing land use policies into clear and consistent management direction. Following a year-long hiatus, the project was reengaged in March, 2011 to develop additional option(s) for consideration. The Steering Committee and Working Group developed three additional management options that were posted to the EBR and presented during five public open houses in July 2011 for Phase III public consultation. The options are focused on the designation of two types of EMA – Recreation Access EMAs and Remote Access EMAs.

The OFAH submitted a comprehensive list of recommendations in response to the proposed management options of the EBR posting. The OFAH has long recognized the need for better

recreational land use planning for Ontario's Crown land and has actively worked with the MNR and other stakeholders since the beginning of the CLUAH process. We maintain our support for exercises like CLUAH that attempt to reduce resource user conflicts, but caution the MNR from endorsing a management option that will eventually polarize resource users even further.

We highlighted our concerns regarding the proposed management options and provided recommendations that would reduce the conflict and improve the quantity and quality of hunting and fishing opportunities in the Wawa District. Our comments and recommendations were posted on the OFAH website prior to the end of the EBR comment period for our members to review and use in their personal responses. The final approved management option (selected by the Minister of Natural Resources) was tentatively scheduled to be posted for public comment in the fall of 2011, but the provincial election stalled the project until 2012.

Renewable Energy Development/Natural Heritage Protection

Offshore Windpower Development

In early 2011, the Ontario Government announced that no renewable energy approvals for offshore projects had been issued and no development would proceed while further scientific research is conducted. Current offshore windpower project applications for the Feed-In-Tariff program have been suspended and no new applications are being accepted. The increased incentives afforded to renewable energy projects through the *Green Energy and Green Economy Act* had resulted in a major push to implement the policy and regulations needed to facilitate offshore windpower development. We continue to monitor this issue and advocate for further ecological impact assessments and additional research that will help to fill in existing knowledge gaps related to the impacts of offshore development on freshwater ecosystems.

Natural Heritage Assessment Guide

The OFAH submitted a response to an EBR posting for the Natural Heritage Assessment Guide for Renewable Energy Projects (NHA Guide). The OFAH considers the identification, evaluation and mitigation measures of natural heritage assessment requirements for the proposed NHA Guide to be inadequate. We recommended that the MNR strengthen the requirements for natural heritage assessment confirmation to reduce the current reliance on proponent-driven protection.

Kawartha Region Conservation Authority Watershed Planning and Regulations Policies Manual (OFAH Zone E)

The OFAH submitted comments and recommendations for the Watershed Planning and Regulations Policies Manual for the Kawartha Region Conservation Authority (KRCA). In response to our comments and recommendations, the KRCA added a section that outlines policies that specifically address Significant Wildlife Habitat (SWH). Although SWH has not been identified in the region, the new policies will assist with any SWH identified in the future.

The Kawarthas, Naturally Connected Project (OFAH Zone E)

The OFAH is represented on the Scenario Planning Team for "The Kawarthas, Naturally Connected" project. This project

brings together a diverse group of stakeholders to develop a Natural Heritage System for the Kawarthas. This process will help to create strategies that will focus, prioritize and coordinate conservation efforts on a landscape scale to ensure the long-term maintenance of ecological goods and services provided by healthy, functioning ecosystems. The results of the project will provide greater clarity on how natural heritage features (e.g. significant wildlife habitat, significant woodlands, etc.) are connected and where they are located on the landscape. The results will inform municipalities, conservation authorities and other organizations on the protection of natural heritage features in Ontario.

Parks and Protected Areas

Presqu'île Provincial Park (OFAH Zone F)

The OFAH submitted a letter to Presqu'île Provincial Park and requested an explanation of why active cormorant management did not occur in 2010, as was recommended in the Presqu'île Resource Management Implementation Plan for High Bluff and Gull Islands.

The Ministry of Environment (MOE) received 12 requests for individual environmental assessments. The requests were declined, but the projects within the plan were allowed to proceed with certain conditions, including a statement that culling will be the last method to be used, restrictions on where cormorant management could occur and specific direction to encourage ground nesting. Ontario Parks reissued the final approved Presqu'île Resource Management Implementation Plan with the amended conditions in May 2011.

The OFAH is concerned that these amendments will result in major alterations to cormorant management, which has the potential to have significant adverse ecological impacts, particularly for colonial nesting waterbirds and vegetative communities. A report on Tree-Nesting Colonial Waterbird and Vegetation Monitoring in Presqu'île Provincial Park was released in May 2011. This report shows that cormorant numbers are now similar to 2003 (prior to initial management efforts) and describes their devastating impacts on colonial nesting waterbirds and vegetative communities. We continue to seek answers on this issue and advocate for increased management of cormorants in Presqu'île Provincial Park and throughout Ontario.

Darlington Provincial Park, Controlled Waterfowl Hunt (OFAH Zone E)

OFAH Zone E administers the controlled waterfowl hunt at Darlington Provincial Park. In July 2011, OFAH Zone E submitted a proposal to increase the number of blind locations used for the hunt from seven to nine. The proposed blind locations would provide additional opportunities (up to four hunters per day), unique hunting opportunities (i.e. for diving ducks) and increased

benefits (i.e. revenue). The proposal intended to help maintain participation in the hunt further into the season, because diving ducks visit Darlington later in the fall than most dabbling ducks. The proposal was reviewed and rejected by Ontario Parks.

McLaughlin Bay (Darlington Provincial Park) Restoration Project (OFAH Zone E)

The steering committee for the McLaughlin Bay Restoration Project held multiple meetings between April and October 2011. This project has an overall goal of restoring habitat and improving water quality in McLaughlin Bay. The OFAH sits on the steering committee since McLaughlin Bay is the site of the OFAH-administered controlled waterfowl hunt at Darlington Provincial Park. This hunt represents one of the few remaining public hunting opportunities within the Greater Toronto Area and we want to ensure that project objectives and activities are consistent with maintaining or even enhancing the existing hunting and fishing opportunities in McLaughlin Bay.

Slate Islands Provincial Park (OFAH Zone B)

The OFAH recommended the maintenance of public fishing opportunities associated with the Slate Islands Provincial Park. We asked for quantification of socio-economic contributions of recreational fishing to local communities and recommended that park zoning exercises should not unjustifiably restrict existing fishing opportunities or access to them. The OFAH also recommended that park management planning should include specific population objectives for woodland caribou to ensure the sustainability of the herd and protect the vegetative communities that are impacted by their overabundance. We suggested that overabundant caribou herds on the Slate Islands could be translocated to supplement existing mainland herds, so long as it does not impact hunting and fishing opportunities.

Steel River Provincial Park (OFAH Zone B)

The OFAH recommended the maintenance and enhancement of public fishing and hunting opportunities associated with the Steel River Provincial Park. Furthermore, we recommended that park management planning must quantify the socioeconomic contributions of recreational fishing and hunting to local communities and that park zoning exercises should not unjustifiably restrict existing opportunities or access to them. We also asked questions related to Ontario Parks involvement with the waterpower projects on the Steel River because any future development on the Steel River has the potential to adversely impact the quality of hunting and fishing opportunities inside and outside of the Park. We received reconfirmation from the Honourable Linda Jeffrey, then Minister of Natural Resources, at the OFAH Annual Fish and Wildlife Conference in March 2011 that no waterpower development will occur on the Steel River.

Draft Framework for Canada's National Network of Marine Protected Areas

The OFAH submitted a letter outlining questions and concerns regarding the Draft Framework for Canada's National Network of Marine Protected Areas, particularly the inclusion of the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes already have a comprehensive suite of regulatory mechanisms in place to protect fish and wildlife values, including federal legislation (*Fisheries Act – Ontario Fishing Regulations, Migratory Birds Convention Act, Species at Risk Act*) and provincial legislation (*Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act, Endangered Species Act*). We



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believe that Marine Protected Areas (MPA) are redundant in the Great Lakes and will not provide any added value to fish and wildlife conservation, considering they do not provide protection against some of the greatest threats facing the Great Lakes (e.g. invasive species).

National Marine Conservation Area - Lake Superior

The OFAH submitted another request to Parks Canada seeking representation on the Interim Management Advisory Board for the National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) - Lake Superior. Our request for membership has once again been declined as no new seats are being offered on the Interim Management Advisory Board. In a response statement to the OFAH, Parks Canada stated that “nothing in the interim management plan will be impacting the continuing jurisdiction of the Province of Ontario, Ministry of Natural Resources and/or Fisheries and Oceans Canada with regard to the regulation of fisheries or hunting activities in the Lake Superior NMCA.”

Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park (OFAH Zone E)

In 2011, strategies to achieve management objectives have been implemented in the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park (KHSSP). In particular, the introduction of permitting fees for boat caches and motorized vehicle use has raised concerns with OFAH members who fish and hunt in the park. The OFAH strongly advocated for a reduction of the excessive and inappropriate fees that were introduced for boat caches, and has received a tentative agreement from the Ministry of Natural Resources (Ontario Parks) to reduce the fee from \$107.50/boat/year to \$20/boat/year. In addition to the unreasonable permit fees, the OFAH is concerned with who is being targeted – namely anglers and hunters who are not associated with private or tenured property within the park. We will continue to monitor the implementation of permitting fees for other activities (e.g. ATV use) to ensure that traditional hunting and fishing opportunities in the park are not compromised by excessive costs.

Strawberry Island (OFAH Zone D)

Strawberry Island (Manitoulin Island) was purchased by the Nature Conservancy of Canada in 2002 and was recently proposed to be designated as a nature reserve class provincial park. This raised concerns because the previous owners had permitted local residents to hunt on the island for almost 80 years. The OFAH submitted comments and recommendations regarding the EBR posting for Strawberry Island’s designation with particular focus on the loss of socio-economic and cultural benefits associated with hunting. In addition, we emphasized the potential for ecological impacts that are likely to occur in the absence of deer hunting, especially the sensitive vegetative communities for which the nature reserve designation is intended to protect. The OFAH also submitted a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, *The Recorder*, to raise the profile of this issue.

Aggregates

Melancthon Quarry (OFAH Zone H)

The OFAH has made two submissions in response to the application for an Aggregate Licence by the Highland Companies Melancthon Quarry. In April 2011, a submission was made to The Highland Companies (proponent) during the official objection period under the *Aggregate Resources Act* to outline our concerns associated with the potential impacts on valuable coldwater ecosystems and fisheries in the area. The Highland Companies now have two years to address the concerns that were received through the more than 2,000 submitted objections. In July 2011, the OFAH made another submission in response to the EBR posting for the same Aggregate Licence Application. This submission was part of a completely separate process that is intended to influence the decision-making process (by the Ministry of Natural Resources) regarding the approval of the Aggregate Licence Application. The two OFAH submissions shared very similar content. Our EBR submission was one of the more than 3,700 comments received by the MNR. In September 2011, the MNR and Ministry of Environment jointly brought forward a regulation that will make the Highland Companies subject to the full requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act.

Trails

Ontario Trans Canada Trails

The OFAH and Ontario Trans Canada Trails (OTCT) are exploring the potential for OFAH zones, member clubs and affiliated programs to assist in the development and implementation of enhancement projects on sections of OTCT throughout the province. Enhancements are intended to showcase the local activities of the clubs or programs through signage and/or demonstration sites on the trails, as well as through messaging on websites, brochures and other materials. Specific enhancement may actually include habitat restoration adjacent to the trail, awareness of hunting activities for nonhunting trail users and raising public awareness of invasive species. OFAH participation in the enhancement of these trails could provide considerable exposure for the OFAH and OFAH-affiliated activities.

Trail User Safety During Hunting Season Campaign (OFAH Zone H)

Huronian Trails and Greenways (HTG) received a Healthy Communities Fund Grant from the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport to develop a campaign that promotes hunting safety awareness for trail users in Simcoe County, specifically targeting nonhunters. We supported this initiative because of the importance of hunting in Simcoe County Forests and our commitment to the promotion of safe hunting as a valuable recreational activity. On behalf of the hunting community, the OFAH is ensuring that the messaging is accurate and promotes a positive public image of hunting. The goals of the campaign are to help make hunting information accessible to nonhunters (e.g. open seasons), dispel myths about the dangers of hunting for other trail users and describe the ecological and socio-economic benefits.

During the traditional deer hunt in 2011, the project distributed a local media release “Be Safe, Be Seen-safety tips for trail users during hunting season.” Future initiatives of this project include distribution of hunter orange bandanas to trail users, as well as the development and distribution of a promotional brochure.