



# 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 (FMZ) Advisory Councils**

The OFAH continues to support the implementation of the FMZ Advisory Councils. While Advisory Councils are currently established and operating in FMZs 4, 5, 6, 9 (west), 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20 (east and west subcommittees), there are still several FMZ Advisory Councils expected to form (i.e. FMZ 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 [east], 15, and 16).

### **FMZ 5 – Draft Fisheries Management Plan**

Fisheries Management Zone 5's Draft Fisheries Management Plan was posted to the Environmental Registry for a 46-day public review and comment period. The draft plan was developed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources with input from the FMZ 5 Advisory Council to tackle fisheries management priorities and issues specific to the zone. In addition, several public open houses were held across the zone to provide further opportunity for public input. In general, we were supportive of the MNR recommendations that were supported by the FMZ 5 Advisory Council. We were confident that the MNR and the FMZ 5 Advisory Council had scoped out many beneficial non-regulatory strategies (e.g. education/outreach).

### **FMZ 10**

Proposed changes to the Ontario Fishery Regulations for bass and Lake Trout in Fisheries Management Zone 10 were posted to the EBR for comment. Bass are present in many of the inland lakes in FMZ 10, and were intentionally introduced to provide fishing opportunities. Therefore the OFAH strongly supports having year-round open seasons with no size limits and a six fish catch and possession limit for sportfish licence holders, to promote angling opportunities and reduce impacts on native species. The OFAH is concerned that the proposed Lake Trout regulations will compromise zone-wide angling opportunities for Lake Trout and other species. Specifically, the OFAH did not support the redesignation of acid-damaged lakes from "Lake Trout closed all

year" to "Fish Sanctuary – closed all year" because it will reduce angling opportunities for other species. In addition, the OFAH could not support the redesignation of Put-Grow-and-Take lakes from "Open all year" to "Open January 1 – Labour Day" and the redesignation of fish sanctuary dates from the "day after Labour Day – December 31" to "October 1 – December 31" because more information is needed to conclude whether the proposed changes are necessary.

### **FMZ 17**

The FMZ 17 Advisory Council continues to review and discuss coldwater stream fisheries regulations.

### **FMZ 18**

The FMZ 18 Advisory Council has invested significant time in reviewing and discussing proposed Walleye regulation changes. As a result, a new zone-wide slot limit regulation for Walleye will be implemented in 2013. Walleye must be between 40-50 cm (15.7 to 19.7 in.).

### **FMZ 19**

The FMZ 19 Advisory Council discusses and provides advice to the MNR on Lake Erie fisheries management issues. The majority of discussions focus on the status and allocations of harvested species, particularly commercially harvested species such as Walleye and Yellow Perch. The OFAH remains actively engaged in these discussions to ensure the productivity of Lake Erie's recreational fisheries are maximized. A recommendation has been made by the FMZ 19 Council to create a two day possession limit of 100 Yellow Perch (currently a 50 fish catch and possession limit). The proposal is currently in an approval process that requires both provincial and federal sign-off before a regulation could take effect (January 1, 2014 at the earliest).

### **FMZ 20**

OFAH FMZ 20 Advisory Council representatives attended a workshop in Picton, Ontario. The purpose of the workshop was to provide the FMZ 20 Advisory Council (east and west sub-committees) as well as representatives from the other Great Lakes Zones (FMZs 9, 13, and 14) a forum to discuss Great Lakes fishery management issues (e.g. multi-line regulations). It is anticipated that the outcomes of this workshop will help guide future Great Lakes management decisions. FMZ 20 will see several changes within the 2013 fishing regulations summary including new limits for Rainbow Trout

(sportfishing licence holders will have a limit of two Rainbow Trout; conservation licence holders will have a limit of one Rainbow Trout) and a new minimum size limit for Muskellunge (increased to 137 cm (54 inches)).

## **Bass Season Changes in Southern Ontario**

The MNR sought public consultation on a proposal to open bass seasons earlier (3rd Saturday in June) and harmonize season closure dates to December 15 in FMZs 17, 18 and 20. MNR research shows water temperatures are increasing in many southern Ontario lakes, meaning that the critical parental care period for bass is occurring earlier, well ahead of the current season opener (4th Saturday in June). The OFAH provided comments on the proposal, which included our full support for longer bass seasons in FMZs 17, 18 and the Bay of Quinte in FMZ 20. The OFAH does have reservations about the application of the proposed changes in parts of Lake Ontario where water temperature data suggests that bass may still be providing parental care during the proposed season; therefore, the OFAH recommended that a bass season extension for Lake Ontario should be accompanied by monitoring and assessment to ensure no adverse impacts to the resource occur. The proposed regulation changes are moving forward in 2013 and will result in an extra week of bass fishing in June for all three FMZs and 15 extra days in December for FMZs 18 and 20. Other FMZs in southern Ontario may look at similar changes in the future. The OFAH is encouraged that the MNR has recognized the changing environmental conditions and has responded by adapting bass management. The extended seasons will provide more angling opportunities, and scientific evidence illustrates that the increase in opportunities will not come at the expense of bass populations or the immense social, economic, and cultural benefits that this resource supplies to the residents of Ontario.

## **Black Crappie Stocking Proposal – Parry Sound District**

OFAH staff reviewed the MNR proposal to stock Black Crappie in Prospect, Morrison, and Muldrew lakes in Gravenhurst. While we appreciated MNR's interest in diversifying angling opportunities in FMZ 15, we were concerned with the rationale for introducing Black Crappie into new lakes outside their historical range. Black Crappie invasions can alter the inshore fish community and impact prey/food availability for some native species (e.g. Walleye). As indicated in the project description, once Black Crappie are introduced and become established, changes to the fish community cannot be mitigated. Although the lakes identified in the proposal do not currently support resident/native Walleye, proposing to stock Black Crappie on top of other desirable species (e.g. Muskellunge in Morrison Lake) could be in direct conflict with other FMZ 15 management objectives. The OFAH did not support the MNR facilitating the movement of Black Crappie on the landscape. The creation of new fisheries requires careful planning and thorough consultation, which were not carried out. OFAH comments were submitted to the Parry Sound MNR District Office.

## **Lake Simcoe**

The OFAH is represented on the Lake Simcoe Fisheries Stakeholder Committee (LSFSC). In recent years, the LSFSC has

discussed the potential for an open Lake Herring fishery in Lake Simcoe; however, the MNR has remained reluctant to reopen a fishery because they feel the current knowledge of Lake Herring fisheries is not sufficient. The OFAH participated in a Lake Simcoe Lake Herring Working Group comprised of representatives from the LSFSC as well as MNR technical staff to review the current knowledge of Lake Simcoe's Lake Herring populations. Based on the results of the Working Group discussions, the LSFSC made a recommendation to the MNR to reopen a Lake Herring season with a low catch limit because they believe it would offer a sustainable fishery with significant socio-economic benefits. Unfortunately, the MNR is still not satisfied and, therefore, the recommendation to open a fishery in 2013 was rejected. The MNR has committed to initiating a process to model the Lake Herring population and provide the information needed to determine when a sustainable recreational fishery could be returned to Lake Simcoe. The OFAH is disappointed with MNR's continued reluctance to open a Lake Herring fishery; however, we believe that a process to fill in the current information gaps is a major step in the right direction. The OFAH will continue to be a strong advocate for the return of a Lake Herring recreational fishery to Lake Simcoe.

Following the detection of an infectious fish disease known as Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) in Lake Simcoe, a VHS Management Zone was created to encompass the Lake Simcoe watershed and restrict the movement of bait in and out of the zone. Lake Simcoe is a major source of bait in Ontario and, therefore, steps have been taken by the MNR and the bait industry to develop a VHS testing program that will allow disease-free Lake Simcoe bait to be used during the winter of 2013. The OFAH will actively participate in a larger provincial strategy for bait management in 2013.

The OFAH participated in a socio-economic study to determine the value of the Lake Simcoe fishery and aquatic community. The first two workshops included a focus group of interested stakeholders who met to discuss and share information on the social, cultural and economic benefits of the Lake Simcoe fishery and aquatic community. The study concluded with a third workshop to develop the scenarios to be used for modeling the data. The resulting model will be used to determine the fishery-related socio-economic implications of proposed policies and regulatory options in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

## **Brook Trout Workshop**

In October, OFAH staff attended a Brook Trout Workshop hosted by Credit Valley Conservation (CVC). The MNR and CVC initiated the workshop because Brook Trout declines have been observed in the CVC's Watershed Monitoring Program data. The CVC is planning to develop a recovery strategy for Brook Trout in the Credit River Watershed. CVC presented a suite of issues impacting Brook Trout, and possible strategies or tactics to address them. Participants were asked to provide input as well as prioritize which issues, strategies or tactics should be highest priority, and which are short and which are long-term goals.

## **Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group**

The OFAH participates on the Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group (LEPMAG) which met four times in 2012 to discuss Walleye and Yellow Perch modeling in Lake Erie. The LEPMAG workshops provided an opportunity to review the current modeling techniques and data sources, to address uncertainties, and to discuss management perspectives from government and nongovernment stakeholders of all five jurisdictions surrounding Lake Erie (Ontario, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan). The ultimate goal of this process is to produce scientifically sound and up-to-date Walleye and Yellow Perch stock assessment models that will accurately estimate population numbers and trends in order to guide decisions about the Recommended Allowable Harvest (RAH) and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) in Lake Erie. The Walleye model is near completion and is expected to impact the 2013 RAH and TAC for Lake Erie. Work has begun on a similar exercise for Yellow Perch.

## **Lake Huron Lake Trout Rehabilitation**

The OFAH identified some serious concerns with the MNR's Revised Lake Trout Rehabilitation Plan for Ontario Waters of Lake Huron. The plan puts an emphasis on Lake Trout rehabilitation at the expense of other important fish species, including naturalized species such as Chinook Salmon, Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout. The OFAH has recommended that a comprehensive stocking plan for all species (including naturalized species) should be developed through widespread consultation with Fisheries Management Zone 13 and 14 Advisory Councils, other interested stakeholders and the general public. We also recommended that the plan reflect the preferences expressed by Lake Huron users in the 2009 Lake Huron Fish Community Questionnaire, which includes a mix of native and naturalized species. The plan should also seriously consider the needs and desires of the community-supported hatcheries that have helped to enhance Lake Huron's fisheries for generations through successful fish rearing and stocking programs. The OFAH has recommended that Lake Trout rehabilitation should focus on protection of the wild Lake Trout stocks. This can be accomplished through regulation of the commercial fishery to minimize Lake Trout mortality, and establishment of a "no-wild-fish-harvest" in those areas of the lake where it may help to simplify the complexity of Lake Huron's Lake Trout regulations (e.g. reduce the number of sanctuaries). The OFAH fully supported the proposed actions for addressing the impacts of Sea Lamprey predation on Lake Trout.

## **Lake Nipissing Walleye**

OFAH staff reviewed the 1998-2011 Lake Nipissing Walleye Data Review Report commissioned by the MNR. Using MNR's own data, the OFAH produced the 2012 Report on the Lake Nipissing Walleye Fishery. Our findings clearly show that the abundance, age structure, and growth of the Walleye population in Lake Nipissing have changed dramatically, especially in recent years, to a point where very few spawning fish remain. Overexploitation by the commercial gill net fishery has been identified as a major contributing factor in the decline of the Walleye population. The OFAH recommended that the Ontario government immediately suspend all commercial gill netting, and the commercial gill net Walleye Fishery in Lake Nipissing must be regulated with

biologically defensible quotas, size limitations, and seasons, and include mandatory reporting for all Lake Nipissing Walleye fisheries (commercial, recreational, subsistence/ceremonial), prior to any other management actions being taken. Further restrictions to recreational anglers are unnecessary and inappropriate because they will have no positive impact on the Walleye fishery. Unfortunately, the MNR has ignored the data and reduced the recreational catch and possession limits for 2013 (from four to two for a sportfishing licence and two to one for a conservation licence) without taking any steps to fully regulate the commercial gill net fishery. If the successive strong year classes present in Lake Nipissing are allowed to survive, only to be overharvested in the commercial gear in the same way that has been done in the past, they will not contribute to the reproductive potential of the population. Even if all gill netting was suspended now, the recovery of the Lake Nipissing Walleye fishery will likely take more than a decade. The OFAH will continue to advocate for all commercial fishing operations in Ontario to be fully regulated.

## **Lake of the Woods Commercial Fishing**

In response to OFAH member concerns about commercial gill netting in Lake of the Woods, the OFAH requested information from the MNR. Although our initial questions focused on commercial Lake Whitefish harvest, the MNR has indicated there are many other commercially targeted species, including Walleye and Northern Pike. Historical commercial fisheries were retired on Lake of the Woods by the MNR and have been replaced over the past decade by First Nation commercial operations. There are currently four First Nations fisheries operating under an Ontario Commercial Fishing Licence and six under harvest agreements with the MNR. Preliminary OFAH concerns include the absence of fully regulated commercial fisheries and the associated lack of formal harvest reporting, as well as use of gill nets and arbitrary quota determination. OFAH staff will continue to review this issue to determine whether any sustainability concerns exist.

## **Waterpower Class EA Amendment**

The Ontario Waterpower Association, a not-for-profit organization representing the Ontario waterpower industry, proposed an amendment to the Waterpower Class Environmental Assessment. The proposed amendment would reduce the requirements to complete an environmental assessment for projects with an electricity generation capacity of 2 MW or less that use existing infrastructure (e.g. obsolete dams). The OFAH did not support the proposed amendment because it reduces the requirements to complete an environmental assessment and, consequently, weakens the existing level of environmental protection. The OFAH would go further and recommend that there is a need to strengthen the existing requirements of the Waterpower Class Environmental Assessment to ensure that we minimize any potential adverse impacts to Ontario's aquatic ecosystems. Regardless of their size or whether infrastructure is already present, all waterpower projects have the potential to seriously compromise aquatic ecosystems, including the fish and fisheries they support. Our comments were submitted to the Ministry of the Environment through the environmental registry.

## **Provincial Waterpower Development Strategy**

The OFAH sent a letter to the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources requesting that the Province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Natural Resources, develop a provincial strategy to determine where, when, and how waterpower projects will be established. Our request was based on a long-standing concern regarding the adverse environmental impacts associated with waterpower development. In particular, the OFAH is concerned with deficiencies of the environmental screening process with respect to requirements for proponents to address cumulative ecological impacts of other nearby development. The MNR did not support our request for a provincial waterpower strategy review. The OFAH will continue to advocate a more strategic approach that is based on environmental considerations.

## **Agreements under Section 11 of O. Reg. 242/08 under the ESA, 2007 in respect of Lake Sturgeon for Waterpower**

Lake Sturgeon (Great Lakes - Upper St. Lawrence River population) are listed as "Threatened" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). While Clause 10(1) (a) under the ESA states that "no person shall cause adverse effects to the habitat of a species that is listed as endangered or threatened," it does not apply to hydro-electric generating stations, as long as they enter into an agreement under section 11 of Ontario Regulation 242/08 with the Minister. An agreement under section 11 of O. Reg. 242/08 must specify how the facility will take measures to "not jeopardize the survival and recovery of the species in Ontario" and must include an implementation plan and provide effectiveness monitoring. The MNR has been considering entering into these agreements with several generating stations throughout the province. In general, the OFAH supports the intent of these agreements and agrees the Waterpower Agreement process outlined in Regulation 242/08 of the ESA is one means to provide effective mitigation; however, the supporting information needed to critically evaluate the effectiveness of these agreements has been insufficient to date. These agreements must be consistent with, and reinforce important guiding government legislation and policy (e.g. Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act, Fisheries Act), as well as Ontario's Recovery Strategy for Lake Sturgeon.

The OFAH provided comments recommending mitigation and monitoring plans for these agreements must outline measures to:

- provide adequate upstream and downstream fish passage;
- describe how adaptive management approaches will be implemented;
- integrate sound targets for reductions in turbine mortality specific to hydro facilities;
- incorporate effectiveness monitoring programs associated with all mitigation; and
- address cumulative effects.

## **Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA)**

In September the new GLWQA was signed. The OFAH spent a significant amount of time over the years providing input, particularly through our participation on the Canadian Great

Lakes Stakeholder Advisory Panel. There is general support for the improvements to the GLWQA, in particular the new Aquatic Invasive Species Annex. We are hopeful that the new agreement, while highly focused on water quality, will also benefit both fish and wildlife.

## **Negotiations for a New Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA)**

Canada and Ontario are currently negotiating a new COA, which will help Canada (and Ontario domestically) meet its obligations under the new GLWQA. In December, the OFAH provided initial feedback on considerations and priorities for a new COA for 2013.

## **IJC – Public Participation in the Lake Erie Ecosystem Priority (LEEP)**

The International Joint Commission's (IJC) Lake Erie Ecosystem Priority (LEEP) Management Team sought public participation in the development of recommendations to the U.S. and Canadian governments on restoring the health of Lake Erie. The LEEP examined issues related to excess algal growth and sources of nutrient loading (e.g. phosphorus) to the lake. The IJC hosted a series of public meetings around the lake throughout August and September. OFAH representatives attended the meetings and will continue to participate throughout the process. Draft research papers were expected to be completed by the end of 2012 and will be considered by an expert stakeholder panel in February 2013. In the summer of 2013 a draft report is expected to be released for public comment. The final report will be presented to the governments in October 2013.

## **New Approach to Managing Water Level and Flows in the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River**

The International Joint Commission (IJC) released information about the new approach to manage water levels and flows in Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River system (LOSLR). The OFAH provided input through the stakeholder sessions. The new approach should allow for a more natural water regime and is expected to be more beneficial for coastal wetlands and wetland species. In June, the OFAH provided a letter of support for IJC's proposed new approach (Plan Bv7). The OFAH has been participating for many years in the IJC's process to change the water level management regime for LOSLR to incorporate fish and wildlife values as key criteria. Given the current approach (Plan 1958D) for managing water levels and flows through the Moses-Saunders Dam has not adequately protected aquatic ecosystems and has negatively impacted wetlands in the LOSLR system, we were pleased to see a new approach that incorporates fish and wildlife values and we look forward to the IJC implementing Plan Bv7.

## **Great Lakes Protection Act**

In the November 2011 Speech from the Throne, the province announced that it would be developing and introducing a Great Lakes Protection Act. Accordingly, the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) hosted several listening sessions to engage stakeholder input, which the OFAH attended. The purpose of the proposed Act is to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin, with an emphasis on creating opportunities for individuals and communities

to become involved in restoration and protection efforts. In our response we acknowledged the need to coordinate and integrate existing Great Lakes agreements, legislation, policies, etc.; however, the Province of Ontario, in partnership with other jurisdictions, agencies, and nongovernment organizations, currently has many of the tools needed for the effective management of the Great Lakes. The OFAH is not convinced that new prescriptive legislation is the answer. We had several concerns, specifically with the Act's intent to enable the Minister of the Environment's overriding authority to set Great Lakes targets and take targeted action on priority areas through geographically-focused initiatives. Furthermore, linkages between the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act and the renegotiated Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement were not well defined. There must be stronger coordination and integration of Great Lakes enhancement activities to better facilitate achieving healthy Great Lakes ecosystems.

## **Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy**

In conjunction with the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act, the province developed Ontario's Draft Great Lakes Strategy and posted it for comment to the EBR. Many of the objectives outlined in the strategy already exist under other legislation, policies, acts, and agreements. In some cases these objectives are often binationally agreed-upon targets or municipal targets. It is not clear in the strategy how these objectives will be prioritized. Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy was finalized and released in December. The strategy will provide a blueprint for Ontario's new Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) to achieve domestic commitments under the new GLWQA. While there is general support for the intent of the Great Lakes Strategy, it is not clear what added value the strategy will provide beyond existing efforts.

## **Proposed Management Plan for Grass Pickerel in Canada**

In 2006, the Grass Pickerel was designated as "Special Concern" under the Species at Risk Act (SARA). This listing required the formation of a management plan. The OFAH reviewed the proposed management plan and made a submission outlining our concerns. First and foremost, the OFAH does not believe that SARA status for Grass Pickerel is appropriate in Ontario, because they have not been properly inventoried, they are relatively abundant (considering that they are at the northern extent of their range), and their populations in Ontario are likely to increase due to the warmer water temperatures caused by climate change.

## **COSEWIC Designation of Silver Lamprey**

The OFAH did not support the recommendation by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) to list Silver Lamprey as "Special Concern" under the Species at Risk Act (SARA). Upon review of the COSEWIC Status and Assessment Report for Silver Lamprey, the OFAH determined that it would be inappropriate to designate any species under SARA based on the amount of empirical evidence that is currently available for Silver Lamprey, especially when the limited evidence suggests stable or increasing population trends over the past three generations.

The OFAH outlined how it would be completely irresponsible to develop subsequent goals or objectives (in future management plans – a requirement for a species listed as "Special Concern") that will reduce Sea Lamprey control measures, given the

extremely limited biological basis to do so, and the incredibly high potential for adverse impacts to the Great Lakes. In response to our submission, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) assured us that a listing of "Special Concern" under SARA would have no impact on current Sea Lamprey control measures.

## **Federal Fisheries Act**

The OFAH and the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) hosted two successful workshops in Ottawa for fish and wildlife conservation organizations on changes to the Federal Fisheries Act. Groups attending were the Atlantic Salmon Federation, British Columbia Wildlife Federation, Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Quebec Federation of Hunters and Anglers (La Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs), Manitoba Wildlife Federation, New Brunswick Wildlife Federation, Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation, Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Outdoor Network, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation and Trout Unlimited.

The CWF paid for the first workshop and, at our request, the Department of Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO) paid for the second workshop on October 11, 2012. Additional funding support was provided by Shimano Canada Ltd.

The Harper government has committed to us that the Fisheries Act changes will result in better protection of fisheries values from development projects such as hydro-electric facilities and dams, aquatic invasive species (e.g. Asian Carp), and increased partnerships with organizations such as the OFAH and our member community-based clubs. We continue to emphasize that the supply of healthy fish habitat is critical to our fisheries, that free passage of fish (where appropriate) is also critical to our fisheries, and that recreational fisheries, in particular, supply significant socio-economic benefits to Canadian society. According to government statistics, more than 3.3 million Canadians participate in recreational angling, resulting in economic benefits exceeding \$8 billion annually.

Senior DFO staff participated in the October 11 workshop and, as a result, the workshop group sent a letter to DFO Minister Ashfield. OFAH and CWF staff, on behalf of the workshop groups, had a follow-up meeting with Ministerial staff from several departments including Natural Resources Canada, Environment Canada, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Prime Minister's office on November 14 in Ottawa. The Harper government is also proceeding with the development of a National Conservation Plan. We are hopeful this will, in fact, be a National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Plan. We have made submissions on this and, most recently, invited our provincial and territorial counterparts (i.e. CWF affiliates) to submit their ideas on this to OFAH fish and wildlife staff, so that we can move the yardsticks forward on this important issue. OFAH staff participated in a stakeholder roundtable meeting and appeared before the federal Standing Committee on the Environment in response to the government's proposed creation of a National Conservation Plan.

## **Navigation Protection Act**

The amendments to the Navigable Waters Protection Act (NWPA) proposed in Bill C-45 (Budget Bill) by the federal government created the new Navigation Protection Act (NPA). Maintaining

safe and navigable waters is critically important for providing access to angling and hunting opportunities. In response to our initial concerns and preliminary questions, Transport Canada has ensured us that the impacts to angling and hunting will be negligible. The OFAH remains concerned that the reduced scope of the new Act could negatively impact the accessibility of angling and hunting opportunities in some areas. The NWPA applied much more broadly to all bodies of water capable of being navigated by any type of floating vessel for transportation, recreation or commerce, whereas the new NPA only applies to 162 of Canada's waters (oceans, lakes and rivers) that are listed under Schedule 2 of the Act. For all unlisted waters, the Canadian public right of navigation in waters not listed under the Act will now only be protected under Common Law, meaning that infringements on navigation rights will have to be addressed through the courts. As a result, the OFAH identified concerns related to accessibility and public safety for "unlisted" waters under the new act, and sought greater clarity on how the proposed changes will impact anglers and hunters.

## Experimental Lakes Area (ELA)

The OFAH wrote a letter to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to describe the importance of fundamental and applied scientific research related to fish, fisheries, and aquatic ecosystems, for providing significant and direct contributions to the understanding, management and enhancement of our freshwater fisheries. We asked the federal government to make every possible effort to retain the ELA program by exploring all possible alternatives to the elimination of this world-renowned and unique program. In response to our letter, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has assured the OFAH that they are "working diligently to find another operator for the facility so that this important work can continue by another party better suited for this type of research."

## Asian Carp

The OFAH attended and presented at the Asian Carp Public Forum, co-hosted by the Great Lakes Cities Initiative and the Canada/Ontario Invasive Species Centre. We can take pride in the fact that the OFAH has successfully contributed to the public awareness of the threat posed by Asian Carp to the Great Lakes Basin. Over the last three years alone, the federal government of the United States has invested more than \$150 million on activities associated with ending this threat. The Canadian government is spending \$17.5 million over the next three years. We also continue to participate as members of the International Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, the Asian Carp Control Regional Technical Working Group, and we are the only Canadian organization on the Natural Divide Advisory Committee to the Great Lakes Commission/Great Lakes Cities Initiative.

## Invading Species Awareness Program



The Invading Species Awareness Program (ISAP) has been a partnership initiative of the OFAH and MNR since 1992, focusing on preventing invasive species introductions to Ontario's forests and waters.

In 2012, 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. The ISAP proudly launched a new website and online newsletter, increased program engagement through social media outlets, and continued making valuable contributions to early detection and rapid response initiatives for invasive species that are threatening Ontario's biodiversity, such as Asian Carp and Water Chestnut. The ISAP made significant contributions to provincial, national, and international initiatives, including the Canada/Ontario Invasive Species Centre, OIPC, Canadian Aquatic Invasive Species Network, and the Great Lakes Panel for Aquatic Invasive Species.

## Partnerships

In 2012, the OFAH and MNR entered into a new five-year agreement and continued the successful joint delivery of the ISAP, with OFAH staff working collaboratively with staff from MNR's biodiversity branch, as well district offices across the province. The program also received funding from the Canada/Ontario Invasive Species Centre to produce a Compendium of Education and Outreach Resources in Ontario, and 50 new invasive species fact sheets. Federally, funding commitments were made by Environment Canada's Great Lakes Management and Reporting Section, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Summer Jobs Program. Numerous additional organizations made valuable in-kind and financial contributions to the ISAP in 2012. These organizations included: OFAH Zones; Ontario Invasive Plant Council; Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Community Fish and Wildlife Involvement Program; Ontario Woodlot Association; Boating Ontario, Federation of Ontario Cottager's Association; Centre for Community Mapping; Ontario Professional Foresters' Association; Ontario Nature; Couchiching Conservancy; Thunder Bay District Stewardship Council; Wisconsin Sea Grant; Minnesota Sea Grant; Conservation Authorities (Ganaraska, Toronto Region, Central Lake Ontario, South Nation, Credit Valley, Rideau Valley, Mississippi Valley, Lower Trent, Nottawasaga Valley); provincial parks (Voyageur, Wasaga Beach, Killbear, Algonquin); Eastern Georgina Bay Stewardship Council; Manitoulin and Area Stewardship Council; Lake of the Woods District Property Owner's Association; Kids for Turtles Environmental Education; Plenty Canada; Ontario Streams; Bruce Trail Conservancy; University of Windsor; and Kirkland Lake, Aurora and Sault Ste. Marie District MNR Offices.

## Capacity Building

### Terrestrial Invasive Plant Species Conference

ISAP staff attended and participated as part of the Organizing Committee for the inaugural Terrestrial Invasive Plant Species Conference held in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario in August 2012. The conference focused on terrestrial invasive plant species and their introduction, impacts, and control and management, and was sponsored by the Invasive Species Centre, in partnership with MNR, OIPC, Invasive Species Research Institute, and the OFAH.

### Canadian Aquatic Invasive Species Network II

We continue to participate as a member of the Board of Directors for the Canadian Aquatic Invasive Species Network (CAISN). This network seeks to provide a comprehensive profile of AIS in waters across Canada, and to develop and to determine the effectiveness of possible tools for early detection and rapid response.

## **Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species**

The ISAP continues to participate as a Member-at-Large of the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species. This panel works to prevent and control the occurrence of aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes.

## **National Invasive Species Forum**

We were invited to attend the Invasive Species National Forum in Ottawa, Ontario. The objective of this forum was to facilitate networking opportunities and encourage collaboration between agencies working on invasive species across Canada. We delivered two presentations at the forum profiling the implementation of two specific projects: the Early Detection Network and the Lake Simcoe Community-Based Social Marketing Project. We also participated in a day of workshops dealing with invasive species data management and reporting/tracking tools; staff delivered a presentation on the Invasives Tracking System and the Invading Species Hotline.

## **Communications**

We were successful in attracting media interest around invasive species in 2012. Our efforts resulted in over 46 media/promotional events with the program being profiled in newsprint/web (37), radio (6) and television (3), reaching millions of people. Highlights of media included stories profiling the outreach efforts of the members of the Invading Species Hit Squad, as well as our outreach efforts for Lake Superior and the North Shore. Regular articles were submitted for publications by members of the Invading Species Hit Squad, and were published in the Orillia Packet and Times, Lifestyles, and The Beacon in Parry Sound,

## **Program Outreach Overview**

The ISAP conducted outreach to a broad audience in 2012, including anglers, hunters, recreational boaters, gardeners, ATV users, aquarium hobbyists, education institutions, bait harvesters, woodlot owners, and the general public. We attended more than 220 events, including the Toronto International Boat Show, Central Canada Outdoors Show, Ottawa Boat and Sportsmen's Show, Outdoor Adventure Show, Canada Blooms, Spring Cottage Life Show, and the Toronto Sportsmen's Show, reaching over 500,000 people. Numerous workshops and presentations were delivered by staff, focusing on a variety of topics for bait harvesters, lake associations, garden clubs, school groups, and landowners. 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, hundreds of thousands of educational materials were distributed province-wide, and staff fielded direct calls/requests from over 950 people who phoned the Invading Species Hotline.

## **Targeted Education & Outreach**

### **Public Service Announcements**

We coordinated the inclusion of invasive species public service announcements in early spring and summer issues of Ontario Home and Gardener Living, as well as the Renfrew County Visitor's Guide. We also coordinated the circulation of the Adventures of the Green Family radio public service announcements. The radio public service announcements were aired approximately 1,575 times on over 35 radio stations across the province.

## **Invasive Species Workshops**

With funding assistance from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, four Aquatic Invasive Species Workshops were delivered in 2012. Workshop participants included staff and students from Sir Sandford Fleming College's School of Environmental and Natural Resource Sciences, staff and students from Sault College, as well as natural resource professionals in northeastern Ontario. In May, a workshop was delivered to the Bruce Peninsula Environment Group to which the public was invited to attend. This workshop focused on training participants in invasive species detection, monitoring and reporting, in order to increase capacity for early detection. These workshops were funded by Environment Canada's Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program. Unfortunately, due to the cancellation of the Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program, the delivery of additional early detection workshops was postponed.

## **Invading Species Hit Squad**

The ISAP received funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Canada Summer Jobs Program for 22 students. The students worked with host partners in Finch, Kirkland Lake, Lanark (2), Sault Ste. Marie, Trenton, Peterborough, Oshawa, Espanola, Manotick, Aurora, Mississauga, Chute a Blondeau, Utopia, Kenora, Orillia, Windsor, Wasaga Beach, Nobel, Whitney, Parry Sound, and Hamilton. The summer was extremely successful for the Invading Species Hit Squad. Following a two-day training workshop at the OFAH/Mario Cortellucci Hunting and Fishing Heritage Centre in Peterborough, they attended nearly 130 community events. Events included boat launch inspections, presentations, meetings, and interpretive programs in provincial parks. Bait retailers, tourism centres, marinas, and garden centres were visited by the Hit Squad to share educational resources and to spread the word about invasive species in their communities. Invasive species boat launch signs were also posted at numerous boat launches across the province, and staff coordinated numerous invasive species monitoring and control events.

## **Aquarium, Landscape and Water Garden Outreach**

We continue to contribute to the Horticulture Outreach Collaborative, a committee of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC). Key projects of this collaborative included the finalization and promotion of the Northern Grow-Me-Instead Guide. We coordinated an event in northern Ontario to launch the guide; this event was hosted by the OFAH, on behalf of the OIPC, at the Central Gardens Nursery in Thunder Bay.

Over the summer, a total of 113 nurseries and garden centres were visited and surveyed by OFAH staff in the counties/regions of Durham, Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth, Kawartha Lakes, King, Lanark, Northumberland, Ottawa, Peterborough, Peel, Simcoe, Toronto and York. Over 2,600 educational materials were distributed as a result of this outreach.

## **Educational Materials**

### **ISAP E-Newsletter**

The ISAP launched a program e-newsletter. ISAP staff issued the first e-newsletter on October 1, 2012; the e-newsletter was issued to over 45 individuals, and was followed by a second newsletter in December. Interested parties are able to sign up to receive the e-newsletter through the ISAP website.

## ISAP Website & Social Media

Program staff have been utilizing Facebook and Twitter to reach a broader audience with invasive species messaging, and have seen a significant increase in the number of people being reached. To date, the program has 226 followers on Twitter and 346 followers on Facebook.

## Lake Simcoe Outreach



Invasive species signage was installed at three Lake Simcoe access points to encourage anglers to use local bait. Program staff visited Sibbald Point Provincial Park and McRae Point Provincial Park, set up the mobile boat wash units, and offered visitors the opportunity to clean their boats before they entered Lake Simcoe. Program staff also took this opportunity to speak to visitors about invasive species, and they disseminated educational resources throughout the parks.

## Lake Superior Outreach

The Lake Superior Invasive Species Outreach Coordinator was busy conducting outreach to local aquarium and water garden stores, delivering presentations, and attending community events, such as the Sault Ste. Marie Spring Expo, Central Canada Outdoors Show, Lake Superior Day, Summer in the Parks, and the Pigeon River Tourism Week Open House. Program staff coordinated the official launch of the Northern Grow Me Instead Guide in partnership with the Ontario Invasive Plant Council, and coordinated the dissemination of education materials to fishing tournaments, such as the Geraldton Walleye Classic, Shebandowan Smallmouth Showdown, and Perch Lake Bass Challenge. Numerous presentations were delivered to visitors to provincial parks, including Sleeping Giant, Blue Lake, Rushing River, and Kakabeka Falls.

## Invasive Species Information Management

In 2012, program staff received over 950 calls to the Invading Species Hotline to report a sighting, request resource materials, or to seek more information on invasive species. Program staff responded to these requests, resulting in the distribution of over 150,000 educational materials. Staff received over 190 sighting reports for a variety of invasive species as a result of the contacts made directly through the Invading Species Hotline.

## Invasive Species Monitoring & Control



### Invading Species Watch

Interest in the Invading Species Watch program continued to be strong across the province. With the assistance of volunteers from the community, lake/cottage associations, as well as our Invading Species Hit Squad, over 100 lakes were monitored across the province for the presence of zebra mussel veligers and spiny waterflea.

### Garlic Mustard

In May, program staff coordinated a group of 15 eager volunteers to help pull Garlic Mustard at Ken Reid Conservation Area. Volunteers included representatives from the Ontario Invasive Plant Council, Fleming College, Kawartha Conservation and local residents. Staff and volunteers were able to pull the entire population of Garlic Mustard at this location, resulting in 119 yard waste bags of the plant with a total weight of 1310 kilograms. The bags were loaded into a trailer and two trucks and were then sent to the landfill.

### Water Soldier Control

Program staff monitored for Water Soldier populations in the Trent Severn Waterway below Healey Falls. This monitoring effort was the result of a report of plants in the Healey Falls locks, which resulted in concern that the plant may have spread past its presently known locations. Staff were happy to report that no new populations of Water Soldier were detected below the Healey Falls locks.

### Water Chestnut Control

Efforts to control Water Chestnut in the Ottawa River continued in 2012. A member of the Invading Species Hit Squad was based out of Voyageur Provincial Park and assisted with this control project. Mechanical and manual methods of control were used primarily in Iroquois Bay, as this is the area with the highest level of infestation. The installation of a floating oil spill boom was installed to separate the Iroquois Bay infestation from the Ottawa River by preventing cut floating heads to spread and re-establish in other areas.

## Bring Back The Salmon



### Partnership Development

In addition to ongoing support from Ontario Power Generation (lead sponsor) and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, in 2012 the program received general funding from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (\$30,000), and the Canadian National Sportsmen's Shows (\$10,000). Toronto Tourism/City of Mississauga (\$10,000) funded fish production and habitat restoration on the Credit River in 2012/13.

Funding specific to the habitat component was received from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation (\$50,000), Ontario Wildlife Foundation (\$10,000), TransCanada Pipelines (\$5,000), Uxbridge Nurseries (\$1,200), and Greenside Up Environmental Services (\$1,000). Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) sponsored three new classroom hatcheries in 2012. In February, the program was awarded the Spring Fishing & Boat Show's Conservation Project of the Year award for 2011, as voted on by members of the Canadian Angler Hall of Fame. This was the fourth award won by the program or participating staff.

### Fish Production and Stocking

Over three million green eggs were collected for 2012's fish production and were distributed to the participating hatcheries in late 2011 and early 2012. In late February, yearling stocking began from both the Normandale and Fleming College facilities. Over six weeks, 92,000 Atlantic salmon yearlings were stocked into three target tributaries. Students from Cobourg and Pickering stocked 150 yearlings from Fleming College as part of our annual Earth Week clean-ups on each of Cobourg Brook and Duffins Creek. Also stocking yearlings in Duffins Creek were Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Keith Ashfield, local MP Chris Alexander, Pickering Mayor Dave Ryan, and local councillors. On Cobourg Brook, MP Rick Norlock and MPP Rob Milligan helped with the clean-up and stocking.

An additional 975,000 surplus eggs were stocked directly into streams in January, and 60,000 surplus non-feeding fry were stocked in March from Fleming College. Through April to June approximately 440,000 feeding fry were stocked from Normandale, Harwood FCS and Fleming College, and a further 60,000 swim-up fry were stocked by Fleming College, Belfountain Hatchery and the Islington Sportsmen's Club. The Credit River received approximately 50% of the fish, with the Humber River, Duffins Creek and Cobourg Brook splitting the remainder. Of the Humber River's allocation, roughly 60,000 were swim-up fry and 20,000 were feeding fry.

The 49 classroom hatcheries the OFAH work with directly also stocked their fry over this period, in addition to one class with Fleming College, nine with Ontario Streams, and seven classes with each of the Toronto Zoo and Let's Talk Science (McMaster University).

In September and October, 192,000 fall fingerlings were stocked from the Normandale and Harwood Fish Culture Stations and Fleming College. Roughly 50% of the fish were released into the Credit River with the remaining fish split between Duffins Creek and Cobourg Brook. Approximately 87-92,000 yearlings from 2012 are still in the hatchery and are expected to be stocked in

March and April 2013.

Production planning for 2012-14 occurred in September, and egg collection occurred during November and December. In addition to eggs going to fish production at the various partner facilities, approximately 500,000 surplus eggs will be available to stock directly into streams in January. Some eggs will also be reared again as part of NSERC-funded PhD programs in partnership with MNR (Codrington Research Hatchery). In total, all facilities combined have a production target of 589,000 fry, 175,000 fall fingerlings, and 90,000 yearlings. Allocations for schools and smaller partner facilities (e.g. Belfountain Community Hatchery, Credit River Anglers Association and Islington Sportsmen's Club) are included in those totals. Normandale Fish Culture Station's rebuild should be functionally complete and a re-opening ceremony is being planned for this.

### Water Quality and Habitat Protection and Enhancement

The program held two Earth Week events with students, including a 1.3km stream cleanup on Duffins Creek, supported by OPG Pickering and TRCA. The second event was our sixth annual Cobourg cleanup.

This was the first year we partnered with the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation on their national TD Tree Days program in September, hosting three events with them. The first was in Etobicoke with 34 volunteers planting 150 trees and shrubs. The second was in north Pickering with 57 volunteers planting 250 shrubs, and the third was two sites in Lowville Park (Burlington), which had over 600 trees and shrubs planted by 50 volunteers.

A subset of the Atlantic Salmon Habitat Working Group met three times to discuss projects on the Humber River and Duffins Creek. Through this, staff from the team assessed the Albion Hills Conservation Area (Humber River) for restoration opportunities in the summer. The OFAH then implemented five fall projects on the CA lands. We removed old gabion baskets, rebuilt an eroded bank with anchored wood, planted 1,025 potted shrubs and inserted 4,000 live willow and dogwood shrub stakes at two sites. On Duffins Creek we created a wetland on the Transport Canada Airport Lands, and planted 1,792 shrubs and 617 trees with 90 students from Fleming College and a local high school. Program staff have been working with TRCA on the newly acquired Brock Lands (now the Greenwood Conservation Lands) properties since 2011. In the fall we submitted a successful funding proposal to the new Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund for \$25,000, which will be used in 2013 for restoration work around a decommissioned pond. At the decommissioned Spring Pond on the Credit River, we planted 280 trees/shrubs along with 2,374 live willow shrub stakes. Smaller planting projects included one on the Credit with material donated by the Dufferin-Northern Peel Anglers and Hunters Association, and another by Trout Unlimited Canada on Bronte Creek.

We completed a total of 17 projects with the help of 561 volunteers who contributed 1,098.5 person-hours planting 819 trees and 10,321 shrubs over 39,769m<sup>2</sup>.

## Research and Assessment

The Science Team met twice in 2012 and hosted a symposium in May at the annual International Association for Great Lakes Research conference. Colleagues working on Lake Champlain Atlantic Salmon participated in one meeting and the symposium. Some interesting results were the diet of Atlantic Salmon (primarily round goby and rainbow darter) and the discovery of likely wild fry in new parts of the Credit River.

The OFAH did not conduct any assessment in 2012. The MNR (Lake Ontario Management Unit, Aurora District), Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), TRCA, and the NSERC Strategic Grant researchers undertook the majority of research and assessment. Temperature trends and water levels were extreme in 2012, making it a difficult year to assess numbers for the program. Generally, fewer fish were seen, but with an early spring and extreme summer conditions, fish were likely missed when they were entering or leaving the rivers.

With Canada-Ontario Agreement funding, the MNR and CVC were again able to assess smolts on the Credit River using the rotary screw trap. As with last year, large numbers of Atlantic Salmon smolts (338) 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.

Reports of angler catches of Atlantic Salmon from Lake Ontario continue and are being quantified by New York's creel program and MNR's Chinook Salmon headhunting program. Both collected data and tissue samples (for genetic analysis), as did a subset of anglers in Ontario. Some reports of catches from the tributaries of Lake Ontario also came in this summer, including some off the Port Credit pier in May and early June. Three adult Atlantic Salmon were caught during the Bowmanville Creek fish lift in the fall.

With the rebuilt Norval fishway in place, we were able to leave the Streetsville fishway open during the summer (and after Chinook and Coho Salmon runs in the fall). We primarily counted Atlantic Salmon at Norval, where temperatures were lower in the summer and the fish did not need to be moved overland to spawning habitat. To operate the fishways, the MNR hired a three-person crew in early June, and had a challenging year. As mentioned, the early run of Atlantic Salmon appeared to occur much earlier than in previous years due to stream conditions, and by November, the crew had handled 20 adults at the fishways. The Credit River crew also surveyed stream anglers below the Streetsville dam through a formal creel, the first on the Credit River in many years.

In the fall, a COA-funded MNR crew again electrofished the upper Credit River to assess in-stream survival and growth rates, and marked Atlantic Salmon to assess over winter survival. They caught 2,727 Atlantic Salmon. We received an update on research being conducted under the NSERC Strategic Grant to the Universities of Windsor, Western Ontario, and the University of Quebec at Montreal. Currently, the grant is supporting in whole or in part, one Post-Doctoral Fellow, four PhD students, one M.Sc. student, two research assistants and two undergraduate student assistants. Another four students (two M.Sc., one PhD, and one undergraduate) are also associated with the research funded through the grant.

## Education and Outreach

Forty-four classes and five education centres reared Atlantic Salmon in classroom hatcheries under OFAH head office guidance. This is up from 44 units in 2011. The geographic range was again from Fort Erie to Kingston. The Toronto Zoo administered an additional seven units, and McMaster University's Let's Talk Science node oversaw another seven. The MNR (Aurora District), Ontario Streams, and Fleming College combined for ten units in operation, for a total of 73 units across the program.

The classroom hatchery program was without funding for a dedicated staff person. Stocking days were staffed by the program coordinator, habitat technician, and intern (29 staff days). Three hatchery units were removed from schools where there was a lack of engagement on the part of teachers and/or students, or there were mentoring problems. These units were moved to schools on the waiting list (approximately 30 schools) for 2013.

In January, a new classroom hatchery was launched with an event at the OPG Pickering Nuclear Plant. In April, the long-awaited *Fishes of Toronto* booklet was printed, which features Atlantic Salmon as the "(un)Official Fish" of the city. An official launch event was held in Toronto as part of the Toronto Harbour Remedial Action Plan's Lake Ontario Evenings lecture series.

## Communications

Along with approximately 30 presentations to classes/schools in the winter, presentations were made to the Willow Beach Field Naturalists Club in Cobourg, the International Association of Great Lakes Research Conference, Pickering Nuclear's Community Advisory Council, environmental staff of the CANDU Owners Group, and three prospective schools interested in the classroom hatchery program. The program had a booth at the third annual Sunny Days for Conservation fundraising dinner in Pickering/Ajax in April, and the program also manned a station at a Family Fun Day in Lowville Park, Burlington in June. The program attracted TV, print, online and radio media coverage in 2012, including DurhamRegion.com, CHEX TV (Peterborough and Durham), CHCH-TV, *Ontario OUT OF DOORS*, *InsideToronto.com*, *Toronto Sun*, *Toronto Star*, *Northumberland Today*, *Watertown Daily Times*, and several other local and regional media sources. The OFAH's own *Angler and Hunter Radio* and *Hotline* also featured BBTS initiatives.

In May, a Chicago film crew producing a documentary for PBS on the Great Lakes ([www.makingwavesdocumentary.com](http://www.makingwavesdocumentary.com)) filmed and interviewed students loading and releasing their fish. They stayed a second day to get more footage of Credit River production stocking. The documentary will focus on native versus invasive species in the Great Lakes. The crew has now been in Ontario three times over the last year to film Atlantic Salmon program activities.

The program's Facebook page and Twitter account were active throughout the year. The program has over 400 likes on Facebook and more than 120 followers on Twitter.

## Community Stream Steward Program

### Outreach & Training



In 2012, the CSSP hosted three watershed bus tours which included Cold Creek, Lake Scugog, and Bowmanville and Soper Creek watersheds. The purpose of these tours was to increase awareness of local issues, bring together partners, stakeholders, and volunteers, and provide insights into conservation and stewardship across the landscape. These tours were supported by local partners and by Environment Canada's EcoAction program.

Two Stream Steward Trainings were held this year with the highest participation rates ever attained. At the end of March, the CSSP hosted a Lake Simcoe focused workshop in partnership with Ontario Streams' Adopt-a-Stream program. In October, the second training was held at the Scouts Canada property, Camp Samac, along Oshawa Creek. Both trainings were full, with 20 and 17 participants, respectively. The trainees took time to learn about stream ecology, monitoring activities, restoration projects, and support organizations for local stewardship activities. The workshops were supported by Wildlife Habitat Canada and Environment Canada's Lake Simcoe Clean-up Fund.

A group of students from Trent University approached CSSP in the winter with findings from a school report they completed on Harper Park and Harper Creek, in the City of Peterborough. This group has since formed the Harper Park Stewardship Initiative and is being guided and supported by CSSP.

The CSSP continues to seek out and support local efforts for stream conservation. We attended several shows and events to provide informational materials, advice, and youth education. The Lindsay Woodlot Conference and the East Central Farm Show targets rural/agricultural landowners from within the program's focus area. In April, a presentation was done for the Kingston Fly Fishing Club on stream stewardship and fish habitat restoration techniques. The CSSP participated in a number of youth education events through the spring and summer, including the Brook Never Sleeps in Uxbridge, the annual Cobourg Earth Day Event, the Peterborough Children's Water Festival, and the Conservation Day on Bronte Creek hosted by Pioneer Petroleum.

### Stream Monitoring

Two watersheds were targeted for intensive monitoring: Bowmanville/Soper Creeks (Durham Region, Lake Ontario Tributaries); and Blackstock Creek (Durham Region, Lake Scugog Tributary). On July 16 CSSP held the Bowmanville/Soper Community Monitoring Day. The entire headwaters were covered with 119 stream crossings being assessed. On July 23 CSSP held the Blackstock Creek Community Monitoring Day. to gather water quality information. Despite very low water levels, 35 stream crossings were assessed and 12 water samples were collected and analyzed. This information will be used by CSSP and partner organizations to target restoration efforts and future monitoring. Temperature loggers were used to assess habitat suitability for Brook Trout in cold-water streams. The Cold Creek watershed had a full profile created using 11 temperature loggers placed at the convergence of major tributaries. Twelve additional loggers were used at past restoration sites to evaluate project success.

## Habitat Restoration Projects

The CSSP worked to implement and support projects which enhanced and rehabilitated stream and wetland habitats for the benefit of water quality and fish habitat. In 2012, CSSP completed 40 projects including bank stabilizations, livestock exclusion fencing, and streamside plantings. Habitat restoration projects were focused on the Bowmanville/Soper Creeks watershed and Lake Scugog tributaries this past year due to funding support from Environment Canada's EcoAction Program. A riparian planting was done in the headwaters of Bowmanville Creek, a bridge removal and debris clean-up was done on the main branch of Soper Creek, and an urban stream clean-up was done in downtown Bowmanville. Urban stream stewardship projects were completed in Port Perry along Williams Creek; they involved two property owners and included fish habitat features and riparian plantings. A native shrub planting was also completed at a municipal park in Blackstock to serve as a demonstration project to local landowners. Other projects completed in the summer included projects supported through the Kawartha Farm Stewardship Collaborative (KFSC) and the Ontario Wildlife Foundation (OWF). A wetland creation project that was completed in partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada created a pair pond, connected an existing pond to the wetland complex, and naturalized the area with native trees and shrubs. Along Baxter Creek (Peterborough County), a section of cold water stream was naturalized by removing a concrete bank and stabilized using bioengineering techniques. In Brighton along Butler Creek, log jams were removed to improve water flow, and interpretive signs were developed to increase community awareness of healthy streams. A Scouts Canada property along Oshawa Creek had a bank stabilization project completed using cedar trees. A farm stewardship project was done to create a by-pass channel to separate a cold water tributary of White's Creek from a pond and pasture area. A fencing project was done to exclude livestock from a branch of Cobourg Brook which has been influenced by cattle for the last 50 years (Northumberland County).

### Funding

In 2012, operating and project support for the CSSP was provided by Environment Canada's EcoAction Program, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Canada's Summer Experience Program, and the Ontario Wildlife Foundation. Additional project funding was provided by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program; however, the funding was not approved until mid-September and only five out of 17 projects were completed. The CSSP continues to face serious funding restrictions and is not likely to be operating in 2013.





# Wildlife Management



## Moose Management

Due to less than ideal weather conditions in the early months of 2012, only half of the planned Moose Aerial Inventories (MAI) were flown. This has increased the backlog of MAI's to be flown. With the recent cuts to the MNR's operating budget, the OFAH is greatly concerned about the potential negative effect on the government's ability to effectively monitor and manage the moose resource. The OFAH continues to pressure the MNR to find cost-saving measures elsewhere, and to maintain and increase the budget for MAI's to ensure it has the best possible assessment data when making management decisions.

The MNR continues to make progress on WMU-specific Moose Resource Reports. The reports are expected to be released in 2013, but no firm deadline has been given by the MNR. OFAH continues to pressure the MNR to show progress on the Moose Project, including finalizing and consulting on WMU-specific moose population objectives. There has been discussion between the OFAH Big Game Advisory Committee and the MNR about reviewing the effectiveness of the Northern Resident Tag Allocation to ensure it is operating as designed.



Photo: Jim Markou

## Elk Management

### Amendment to Regulation Under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to Extend Open Season for Hunting Elk (EBR #011-5624)

Due to lower-than-expected harvest results in the inaugural 2011 elk hunt, the MNR proposed to extend the open season for elk by one week. The OFAH generally supported the proposal as a reasonable step to achieve local harvest planning objectives, but continues to seek consultation with the MNR to optimize this new hunting opportunity. This includes a redistribution of unpurchased tags and the possibility of splitting the two-week season into two separate one-week seasons. The MNR also redistributed tags between harvest areas to increase pressure on cow elk in the core conflict area.

## Bancroft-Hastings Elk Hunt

### Draw

- Applications for the 2012 elk hunt dropped significantly from 2011, from 4,422 to 2,727 applications.
- 70 tags were available.
- 65 of 70 successful groups claimed their elk seal.
- 196 of 209 eligible licences were purchased.
- Application fees and purchased seals resulted in over \$49,000 in revenue to the Special Purpose Account. Successful applications went to groups of 4 (59% of seals), groups of 3 (19%), pairs (9%) and individuals (14%).



Photo: Mark Majchrowski

## Harvest

- A total of 23 elk were harvested in 2012; 10 bulls and 13 cows.

## Next Steps

- Analysis of detailed harvest reporting, including the impact of the open season extension is complete and OFAH is reviewing the data.
- Continue herd/population monitoring, assessment and research.
- There are no new regulations anticipated for 2013.

## White-Tailed Deer Management



Photo: Mark Majchrowski

### Management of Deer in Ontario Parks

Ontario Parks mailed a Public Notice for a Category B Evaluation—White-Tailed Deer Population Management, requesting an extension of their deer population management practices in the Pinery and Rondeau Provincial Parks in order to protect ecologically significant habitats. Culling of white-tailed deer in these parks is typically performed by MNR staff and local First Nations. The OFAH recognized the need to reduce deer densities in the park to protect important habitats, but advocated the involvement of licensed hunters in the deer herd reductions. The OFAH continues to assert that a licensed hunt outside the park is the most practical and effective means of managing deer densities.

### Amendment of Ontario Regulation 670/98 (Open Seasons - Hunting) made under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to Change the Open Season for White-tailed Deer in Wildlife Management Unit 83C (EBR #011-6992)

The MNR proposed to extend the white-tailed deer open season in WMU 83C (Hay Island) from 2.5 weeks to 11 weeks to synchronize it with neighbouring Griffith Island. WMU 83C is entirely privately-owned, and access is by invitation only. After verbally discussing the proposal with MNR staff, the OFAH did not submit a response to this EBR posting due to lack of public access.

## Black Bear Management

The OFAH met with the MNR to discuss black bear issues, including the methodology used to generate population estimates, and to obtain an update on public consultation efforts with respect to Black Bear Ecological Zones and zone-specific black bear population objectives and densities. Every MNR District where bear hunting exists has completed some type of public outreach, and efforts are ongoing to consult on WMU-specific black bear population objectives. Population estimates have been generated

for most Black Bear Ecological Zones using DNA-based capture-recapture analysis.

## Recovery Strategy for Woodland Caribou, Boreal Population in Canada

The OFAH has grave concerns with the proposed federal Boreal Caribou Recovery Strategy. In a submission to Environment Canada, the OFAH outlined our primary concerns with the risk assessments of sustainability, and particularly the scientific modeling on which they are based. The Recovery Strategy recognizes that boreal caribou should be managed on a herd-specific basis, yet its risk assessments and recommendations for management actions are largely based on a meta-analysis (all herds in Canada) approach. This is problematic because individual boreal caribou herds are faced with a diversity of conditions (e.g. geography, climate, soil and anthropogenic use of the landscape) that will heavily influence their productivity and persistence. There is no sound biological rationale to justify using a metapopulation approach for managing Canada's boreal caribou. We believe that our concerns with the Recovery Strategy and Scientific Assessment ultimately result from the inappropriate and unnecessary designation of Ontario's boreal caribou herds as "Threatened" under the Species At Risk Act (SARA). We do not disagree that some of Canada's individual boreal caribou herds may require additional management attention to achieve self-sustainability; however, it is unnecessary and ecologically inappropriate to designate (under SARA) and manage all boreal caribou herds as a "threatened" species. The concerns outlined in our submission emphasized this point. The final Recovery Strategy for Woodland Caribou, Boreal Population, in Canada was released in late fall 2012. The OFAH reviewed the recovery strategy to determine if the authors considered any of our comments that were submitted. There is no evidence that our comments and suggestions were incorporated into the Recovery Strategy; furthermore, a comparison of the draft and final strategies reveals that no public comments were incorporated into the final strategy. The OFAH continues to have grave concerns about the management of all woodland caribou herds in Canada when data is sufficient for only a fraction of Canada's herds.

## Leashed Dogs

The MNR posted to the EBR an amendment to Ontario Regulation 665/98 (Hunting) made under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to allow the use of leashed dogs to track and retrieve big game animals in areas where hunting with dogs is not permitted.

The use of tracking dogs to recover big game has a long conservation history in Europe, where it was first formalized in law in the 19th century. In North America, the use of tracking dogs is legally recognized in two provinces (British Columbia and Quebec), and in some U.S. states (Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio). In Ontario, the beneficial use of tracking dogs for locating big game is currently allowed only in those WMUs where dogs are allowed for hunting big game. Permitting the use of leashed dogs to track and retrieve big game throughout Ontario would be beneficial for wildlife conservation.

The ability to retrieve big game in a reasonable time is invaluable. The OFAH strongly agreed that the use of a leashed dog for tracking would increase the likelihood of retrieving big game, and

we supported the amendment. If approved, the new regulation for the use of leashed dogs to retrieve big game could be in place for 2013.

## Hats for Hides

The MNR and BRT Group partnered to secure the necessary services and funding for 2012 to sustain the Hats for Hides program in the same format as last year.

Approximately three quarters (\$75,000) of the total budget came out of the SPA to cover off the minimum 32,000 hats.

Unfortunately, no commitment has been made beyond 2012 at this time. The OFAH plans to follow up with MNR and the Hats For Hides committee to discuss next steps/program options in 2013.



## Cervid Farming

### Escaped Red Deer in North Bay District

We continue to request a meeting with MNR North Bay District to discuss the escaped/released red deer in that district. The idea was initially met with positivity, but no progress has been made since February 2012. An unknown number of farmed red deer appeared on the landscape four to five years ago and are now confirmed to be breeding. Male red deer are capable of breeding with female elk, raising concerns of genetic dilution of Ontario's reintroduced elk populations. In addition, there are serious concerns about the potential spread of disease from farmed animals to the wildlife population. The OFAH continues to oppose cervid farming in all its forms.

### Cervid Farming in Ontario

As a direct result of the ongoing situation in North Bay District, OFAH staff and the OFAH Big Game Advisory Committee reviewed the cervid farming industry in Ontario, and made recommendations to strengthen the legislation and improve accountability of the industry. The cervid farming industry is governed federally by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and provincially by the MNR and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). In many respects, the various elements of federal and provincial legislation are adequate and effective at protecting Ontario's wild, native cervid species from the negative impacts of the cervid farming industry. The OFAH continues to have grave concerns about the lack of accountability and responsibility when animals escape, the disease risks to native cervid population posed by escaped farmed animals, and the lack of financial sustainability in the industry.

## Human-Wildlife Conflict Advisory Group

The Human-Wildlife Conflict Advisory Group is a diverse group of highly-invested stakeholders who meet to discuss contentious, often irresolvable issues, and provide suggestions to the MNR using the 2007 "integrated solutions (policy) framework." The suggestions are relayed to a multi-ministry steering committee for consideration and response. This multi-stakeholder group met twice in 2012 to discuss vehicle-wildlife collisions and how the municipal and provincial land use planning processes impact human-wildlife conflicts.

## Modelling the Risk of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Ontario

The OFAH met with the MNR to discuss the model used to evaluate CWD risk in Ontario. The model contains input for game farm density, deer density, winter severity, time since the last CWD sampling, elk density, linear distance to the nearest CWD case (in the USA), and soil type. The OFAH continues to stress to the MNR the importance of maintaining adequate funding for disease surveillance, given the spread of CWD in North America.

## Wild Turkey



Photo: Dave Allen

### Manitoulin Wild Turkey and Ring-necked Pheasants

In October, the MNR confirmed their decision to "indefinitely postpone" the introduction of wild turkeys and ring-necked pheasants to Manitoulin Island. The MNR is concerned the introduction of these species may negatively affect a number of species at risk in the area. They have cited significant costs (over \$1 million) associated with the proposal which is not economically feasible, and it is outside the MNR's core business mandate. Therefore, they will not be proceeding with an individual environmental assessment, which is a requirement for the introduction. The MNR also informed us that the research completed (to date) on the Bruce Peninsula will be analyzed to provide more insight into the behaviour and feeding habits of wild turkeys in northern habitats, should the proposal be revisited in the future.

### Ontario Wild Turkey Harvest Totals - 2012

The reported spring harvest for 2012 was 8,079 turkeys (481 birds less than last spring). This is the fourth consecutive year of decline in reported harvest. License sales this year (50,434) were also noticeably lower than previous years.

## Proposed Mourning Dove Season

The OFAH has advocated on behalf of our members for the creating of an Ontario Mourning Dove hunt for many years. A new Mourning Dove season is being proposed in the central and southern hunting districts for early 2013. If approved, the season would open the same day as the early Canada goose season and length would be 70 days with a daily bag limit of 15, and a possession limit three times the daily bag limit.

We are convinced it will provide welcome and sustainable new recreational hunting opportunities.

## Snapping Turtle – Mandatory Reporting

Photo: Michelle McCann Rowan



It was brought to our attention that a petition on snapping turtles had been submitted to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The snapping turtle is listed as “special concern” under the provincial Endangered Species Act, 2007 (ESA), and the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA). The petition (initiated by the Friends of Ontario Snapping Turtles [FROST]) calls for the province to remove the snapping turtle from the list of “Game Reptiles” (Schedule 4) under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 (FWCA). The regulation currently allows (under a valid fishing license) the daily harvest of two snapping turtles with a possession limit of five. In response to the petition, a letter was sent by OFAH staff to all Members of Provincial Parliament, requesting they review our previous submissions to both the MNR and Environment Canada regarding the lack of empirical data. This data is required to rationalize any proposed change to existing regulations. In addition, we asked that they help us to continue to ensure that sound fish and wildlife management is based upon concrete, scientific evidence. The OFAH provided comments to EBR Registry Number 011-6043: Amendment of Ontario Regulation 665/98 (Hunting) made under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to require annual mandatory reporting of snapping turtle harvest activities. Snapping Turtle Mandatory Harvest Reporting came into effect on July 1, 2012.

### Ontario Regulation 665/98 - Protection of Property “Classes of Agents”

In response to a recommendation brought forward by the OFAH Sporting Dogs/Small Game Advisory Committee at the September OFAH Board of Directors’ meeting, in November OFAH staff submitted a letter to the MNR to request that they develop a proposal to amend Ontario Regulation 665/98 (Hunting), 132 (1) to include licensed small game hunters for the purpose of coyote and wolf control. Those belonging to a class of agents (e.g. licensed trappers) are preauthorized by the MNR to act on behalf of a landowner; however, O. Reg. 665/98, 132 (1) which prescribes the classes of agents, does not include licensed small game hunters. Ultimately, adding licensed small game hunters to the classes of agents will provide an accessible, efficient and effective tool to manage coyotes in Ontario.

### Modernization of Approvals

The MNR is consulting on a proposal to update requirements for approvals for specific fish and wildlife-related activities under the

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. The intent of the proposal is to streamline the permitting process and improve approval efficiency. For example, if approved, clubs that host fish and game dinners would no longer be required to obtain individual authorization from the MNR, as long as they were in compliance with the guidelines set out by the Ministry of Health.

### It’s in Our Nature, Ontario Government Plan to Conserve Biodiversity

It’s in Our Nature, Ontario Government Plan to Conserve Biodiversity, was posted to the EBR in June to inform and invite comments on actions and activities the government is proposing under Ontario’s Biodiversity Strategy, 2011.

While we supported the general intent of the proposed government response, we expressed concern with the plan’s lack of setting priorities for action, given fiscal realities, and its lack of timelines for delivering on the proposed actions. Ontario’s final Government Plan to Conserve Biodiversity was released in December.

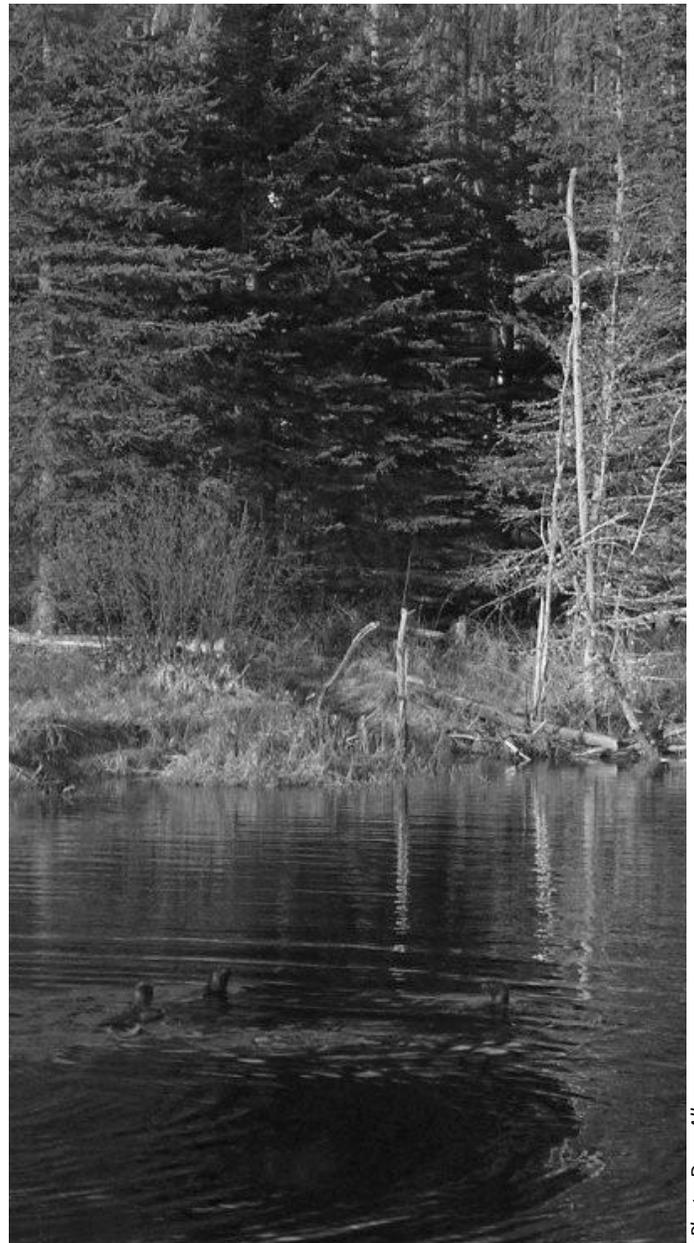


Photo: Dave Allen



# Land Use Management & Access

Photo: Ian DesLauriers

## Forest Management Planning

### Aber Lake Forestry Road Decommissioning (Lac Seul Forest, OFAH Zone A)

The OFAH provided comments regarding the decommissioning of a forestry road associated with the Lac Seul Forest Management Plan. We indicated our opposition to works that physically decommission the road, and encouraged the MNR to allow the road to return to its natural state without being made physically impassable. However, the MNR has decided to proceed with the decommissioning, citing the need to address public safety concerns from known hazards on the road.

### White River Mining Road Minor Amendment (White River Forest, OFAH Zone C)

The OFAH commented on a Public Notice for an amendment to the White River Forest Management Plan. The amendment was in regards to an additional road to be built to connect forestry road 200 to Highway 631. The OFAH had numerous comments and concerns regarding this amendment, including the lack of transparency in the Public Notice (i.e. no mention of the proposed access restrictions), the designation of the trail as “Multi-Use” (although limited to forestry and mining operations), roads funding, and our opposition for the proposed physical access restrictions including gated access.

The OFAH participated in an Issue Resolution for the amendment, where we again provided comments on the use of physical barriers, motorized access restrictions, remote tourism Land Use Permits (LUP) and timing restrictions. The MNR’s final decision stated that they have decided to proceed with their original proposal to build the road with a gate, based on the input received from the stakeholders who initiated the original Issue Resolution on this particular road in 2008.

### Kenora Forest, draft 2012-2022 Forest Management Plan (OFAH Zone A)

The OFAH reviewed and submitted comments on the draft 2012–2022 Forest Management Plan for the Kenora Forest, and was primarily concerned with the lack of attention to wildlife habitat in the plan. In particular, the OFAH was concerned with the absence of specific targets and objectives for important wildlife species such as moose, white-tailed deer and black bear. Our submission also highlighted questions and concerns regarding natural disturbance emulation (e.g. clearcut sizes and residual

forest patches), as well as forest access and road use management strategies used in the Kenora Forest. As part of the submission, we provided the MNR with a socio-economic analysis of big game hunting in the Kenora Forest. OFAH staff followed up on our submission and met with the MNR Area Forester and Management Biologist for the Kenora District.

## Parks and Protected Areas

### Darlington Provincial Park (OFAH Zone E)

The OFAH has been involved as a key stakeholder in the McLaughlin Bay Restoration Project at Darlington Provincial Park. McLaughlin Bay is home to an annual Controlled Waterfowl Hunt (administered by OFAH Zone E), and provides for fishing opportunities and community-based events. The OFAH has provided input to ensure the restoration project remains focused on maintaining, or improving, the important recreational aspects of McLaughlin Bay. The final McLaughlin Bay Existing Conditions and Restoration Opportunities Report has recently been distributed for review, with an additional final strategy report to be available for review in 2013.

### Algonquin Provincial Park Management Plan Amendments (OFAH Zone E)

The OFAH submitted comments on the Algonquin Provincial Park Management Plan Amendments (EBR #010-8824), and was supportive of the proposed amendment to permit trapping and hunting to continue in Bruton, Clyde and Eyre Townships within new Natural Environment Zones. However, we were largely opposed to the zoning changes and how they may influence resource accessibility. We submitted extensive comments on access control measures, the criterion for determining protected areas, the impact to forest habitat availability, and the cumulative impacts that operational restrictions have placed on forestry operations within the park.

### Cottage Lease Policy in Algonquin Provincial Park (OFAH Zone E)

The OFAH submitted comments on the Cottage Lease Policy in Algonquin Park (EBR #011-7289) and was very supportive of the policy’s proposal to allow for leases to be extended for another 21-year term. However, there was no specific wording provided for the terms and conditions of the leases, and so we provided our input and expressed concerns on several aspects that may

negatively impact lease holders. Specifically, the OFAH would not support any restrictions on lease transfers that could ultimately result in the forfeiting of the lease, or restrictions on construction/maintenance that may negatively impact a lease owner's ability to do beneficial activities (i.e. installation of roof-top solar to reduce/eliminate generator usage). In addition, we expressed concerns on how the Algonquin Land Claim may impact current or subsequent lease renewals.

### **Algonquin Roads Review (OFAH Zone E)**

The OFAH participated in an Independent Roads Review for Algonquin Park which was initiated by the Algonquin Forest Authority and Ontario Parks, and undertaken by FPInnovations. The review involved soliciting stakeholder feedback on aspects such as roads standards, density, construction, and management practices. OFAH feedback included support for forestry work and road construction within Algonquin Park, and concerns regarding access. Access restrictions were beyond the scope of the review; however, the OFAH strongly disagreed with this condition and stressed that a discussion regarding access restrictions should be included as part of the review. Access controls should not be used as a fish and wildlife management regime. Fish and wildlife management should be sought through full compliance with Ontario's fishing and hunting regulations, which already incorporate sound fish and wildlife management practices. A final report is anticipated to be completed in late 2012. Although it was not clear if the document would be publicly available, the OFAH will be requesting a copy.

### **Sibbald Point Provincial Park Management Plan (OFAH Zone H)**

The OFAH submitted comments on the Sibbald Point Provincial Park Management Plan (EBR #011-3487) and commented on the current wording within the plan which leaves little certainty for continued winter access to Lake Simcoe within the park. We are deeply concerned that if winter access is removed from the park, it may impact the quantity and quality of winter angling opportunities, as well as important community events such as the "Perchin" For MS Ice Fishing Tournament" which is an all-abilities event. Subsequent to our submission, we have been informed that access to Lake Simcoe will remain open for the 2012-2013 winter season. We will continue to monitor this issue in upcoming years.

### **Luther Marsh Management Plan (OFAH Zone J)**

The OFAH strongly supports the continued enhancement of hunting and fishing opportunities within the marsh, as outlined in the plan; however, we had several concerns with specific wording in the plan related to hunter distribution, dog trial and training areas, and opening wild turkey hunting opportunities within the marsh. No response has yet been received.

## **Natural Heritage Protection**

### **Provincial Policy Statement Review**

The OFAH submitted comments for the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) Five-Year Review (EBR #011-7070). The OFAH was deeply concerned that there was very little change in the draft policies to increase protection for sensitive natural heritage features. Rather, the policy changes were largely in favour of development within these features and prime agricultural lands. Given the pressures to sustain wildlife habitat, and the continued removal of natural and prime agricultural lands for large-scale

aggregate and renewable energy projects, the OFAH will not support such changes. The OFAH supports a more efficient and cost-effective approach for the approvals process, so long as it does not come at the expense of environmental protection. We provided a number of questions and concerns, and have encouraged the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to incorporate our comments and recommendations into a revised PPS.

### **Significant Wildlife Habitat Technical Guide**

The Significant Wildlife Habitat Technical Guide is a detailed technical manual that provides information on the identification, description and prioritization of significant wildlife habitat (e.g. moose aquatic feeding areas, deer yards). It is an advisory guide intended to be used by ecologists, biologists, environmental planners and others involved in the development of strategies to identify and protect significant wildlife habitat in the municipal planning and renewable energy planning processes. The OFAH reviewed the criteria schedules, and has provided comments and recommendations regarding the identification and protection of winter deer congregation areas, animal movement corridors, and early successional habitat. We are still awaiting a response.

### **"Kawarthas Naturally Connected" Natural Heritage Planning System (OFAH Zone E)**

The OFAH has been involved in the development of the Natural Heritage Planning System in the Kawarthas. The project has been in development since the fall of 2011, during which time stakeholders have been involved in identifying and setting ecological "targets" to help identify the key areas on the landscape with the most significant natural heritage systems. The goal of the group is to identify and map a connected system of key natural areas that can be used during land use planning exercises. This will help to ensure that sustainable resource management decisions are made. The final "Kawarthas Naturally Connected" Natural Heritage Planning System meeting took place in late 2012. The project will be moving into the implementation phase in 2013, and the OFAH has made a request to remain involved.

### **Renewable Energy on Crown Land Policy**

The OFAH submitted comments on the Renewable Energy on Crown Land Policy (EBR #011-6005). This policy was a high-level policy to be used as an early screening process for projects proposed on Crown land in areas where approval would not be granted (i.e. Provincial Parks, Lake Trout lakes). The OFAH submitted comments regarding the important benefits of Crown lands and posed questions on whether cost-benefit analyses would be done, if cumulative impacts would be considered, how other sensitive wildlife habitat (i.e. wintering areas, flyways, feeding areas) would be considered, and what provisions would be made to ensure that any project granted would be fully decommissioned at the end of its term.

### **Additional Amendments to Renewable Energy Approvals**

The OFAH submitted comments for the proposed additional amendments to Renewable Energy Approvals (EBR #011-6509), which included concerns regarding the proposed reduction in setback distances from Natural Heritage Features (such as wetlands). Although a formal response to our submission and answers to our questions have not yet been received, the Decision Notice has been posted on the EBR. Despite admission that comments varied widely from being very supportive to strongly

opposed, the MNR has largely approved the policy changes as initially proposed. The OFAH is deeply concerned that the comments from those who were strongly opposed to such changes appear to have been completely disregarded.

## Other Land Use Issues

Photo: Ian Deslauriers



### CLUAH Update (OFAH Zone C)

The Crown Land Use Atlas Harmonization Project (CLUAH) was put on hold during last year's provincial election. Following the election, the MNR was not sure how a new government and a new Minister of Natural Resources would approach CLUAH. Therefore, the project was stalled again. The new Minister of Natural Resources was briefed on CLUAH and was interested in seeing the project move forward. The public consultation for Stage 3 that occurred in the summer of 2011 must now be followed by First Nation consultations before Stage 4 can occur. First Nations consultations were anticipated to occur in the late summer/early fall of 2012, with Stage 4 public consultations anticipated to be posted in the summer of 2013. We still await the results of the First Nations consultation.

### Temagami Land Use Plan Amendments (OFAH Zone C)

The purpose of the Crown Land Use Policy Atlas (CLUPA) Amendment #2011-011 was to complete minor administrative corrections, add clarity to the wording of the CLUPA reports, and to redesignate 29 management areas from "General Use" to "Enhanced Management Areas" to capture the original intent of the Temagami Land Use Plan (TLUP). The OFAH submitted a response with concerns regarding the administrative changes and how public consultation opportunities will now be undertaken with regard to changes to the TLUP, CLUPA, and a number of other land use planning documents applicable to the Temagami area. The OFAH is still awaiting a response.

### Madawaska Highlands Land Use Plan (OFAH Zones E & F)

The Madawaska Highlands Land Use Plan is long overdue for a review. As such, a few camps impacted by access restrictions have been unable to make any progress in engaging the MNR to review options that will allow some form of access for these long-term LUP holders. Two camps in particular have written several letters to the MNR with very minimal requests to allow for access

to their camps. After reviewing the information submitted by both camps, the OFAH agrees that the requests are reasonable and that the restrictions have been imposed without the proper consideration of and consultation with these LUP holders. We will continue to help LUP holders work with the MNR to resolve any issues. The OFAH will also continue to advocate for amendments to the MHLUP that will offer more access for anglers and hunters within the plan area.

### Hunting on NCC Lands (OFAH Zone F)

The OFAH and Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) entered into an agreement in 2012 that would allow OFAH member clubs to administer hunting on some specific NCC properties. The OFAH is working with NCC to establish hunting opportunities on NCC properties in eastern Ontario for 2013. We are hopeful that the successful implementation of the current agreement will result in future opportunities on NCC properties throughout the province.

### OFAH Website Updates

The OFAH website has undergone recent changes to help inform members about the OFAH Fish & Wildlife Services department's involvement and action on issues related to fishing- and hunting-related fish and wildlife management. The website now directs members to the EBR and other postings available for public comment ([www.ofah.org/postings](http://www.ofah.org/postings)) and offers an opportunity for members to learn what the OFAH position is on recent postings ([www.ofah.org/ofahcomments](http://www.ofah.org/ofahcomments)). We will continue to improve the fish and wildlife sections of the website and update content as it becomes available.

### Crown Land Use Policy Atlas Guide

The Crown Land Use Policy Atlas (CLUPA), hosted by the MNR, is an interactive web browser that allows users to search for Crown land in Ontario. Policies (permitted and prohibited activities) are available for each Crown land parcel, which allows anglers and hunters to determine if angling and hunting is permitted, and if there are any additional restrictions; however, the CLUPA can be challenging to navigate and use effectively. As a service to OFAH members, we have created a CLUPA guide to assist members in searching for Crown land hunting and fishing opportunities. Members can contact the OFAH to receive an electronic copy of the guide, free of charge. Interest has been steadily increasing since January 2012, and we have now distributed over 150 guides to OFAH members.



Photo: Dave Allen

## Ontario Invasive Plant Council



The Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC), a nonprofit organization, was incorporated in 2012 and is housed within the OFAH Conservation Centre. The

OFAH provides office space and administrative support for OIPC staff, as well as contributing to the OIPC Board of Directors. The OIPC mandate is to provide leadership, expertise, and a forum to engage and empower Ontarians to take action on invasive plant issues. This mandate provides the opportunity for the OIPC to work closely with the OFAH and the OFAH/MNR Invading Species Awareness Program, and to collaborate and partner on provincial initiatives related to invasive plant species.

### Partnerships

#### Clean Equipment Protocol

This protocol was developed in 2012 and establishes a standard for cleaning vehicles and equipment, and provides a guide to prescribing its application where current codes of practice, industry standards or other environmental management plans are not already in place.

It is much more costly to control invasive species after their establishment and spread than it is to prevent their spread. The unintentional introduction of invasive species can be minimized significantly by the diligent cleaning of vehicles and equipment when leaving an existing site and moving to another site. This is important even if movement is within the same property. The draft protocol has been implemented by forest managers, provincial parks and municipalities.

#### Look Before You Leave (Mayday Campaign)

The Look Before you Leave Campaign began in 2009 as a method of educating cottagers, campers and other outdoor enthusiasts about invasive species and how they can avoid inadvertently bringing them from home to their summer activity destinations. Currently, the campaign is launched every year on the Victoria Day Weekend, and it reminds people of the potential pathways of spread. Since 2009, a poster and public service announcement has been available and several events are held every year, along with media interviews. This past year, a 24-for-24 cartoon campaign was released on the OIPC Facebook and Twitter pages, and ads were placed in the Hunting Regulations summary and Ontario Parks tabloids.

#### Grow Me Instead

The Grow Me Instead Program consists of two guidebooks (one for northern Ontario and one for southern Ontario), a canned presentation, and a pilot nursery recognition program. The program focuses on providing information on potentially invasive garden plants, and it offers alternatives to plant instead. In 2012, 13 nurseries signed on to a pilot program to provide the guidebooks in their nurseries, and to promote the sale of the native or noninvasive garden plants that are featured in the guide. For further information about OIPC activities (and to see our annual report), please visit our website at [www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca](http://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca)



### OFAH/Brokerlink Fish and Wildlife Internship

The BrokerLink logo features a stylized square icon above the text "BrokerLink" and "Auto/Home/Business Insurance" below it.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Intern, who was sponsored by BrokerLink, completed a four-month internship (April 30, 2012 to August 31, 2012). For the duration of her employment, the intern gained practical work experience in stream rehabilitation and aquatic ecosystem assessment projects related to the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program and the Community Stream Steward Program. Knowledge and skills relating to monitoring local waters and natural areas for invasive species, experience networking with resource professionals and other agencies, engaging volunteers and the public were possible by working directly with the Invading Species Awareness Program. A final report was completed outlining the intern's work experience and activities.

A black and white photograph of a young woman wearing a safety vest, smiling as she works in a stream, likely participating in a stream rehabilitation project.