

# Fish & Wildlife Conservation Management

Healthy fish and wildlife populations are the foundation of our outdoor heritage activities. In North America, anglers and hunters have always been at the forefront of fish and wildlife conservation management and the OFAH continues those traditions in Ontario. The management of our fish and wildlife resources has evolved into a highly technical and complex science-based system. The OFAH employs a team of highly trained professional staff to help ensure anglers and hunters have access to affordable and sustainable fishing and hunting opportunities. To represent the needs of anglers and hunters on behalf of OFAH members, staff have many important functions and duties.

## **A Champion for Conservation**

One of the ways we achieve our fish and wildlife conservation mandate is by reviewing, scrutinizing and providing comments on proposed projects, plans, policies, regulations and legislation that have the potential to impact the quality and quantity of fishing and hunting opportunities in Ontario. OFAH staff are involved with local and regional fisheries and wildlife management activities; however, we primarily focus our attention on provincial, national and binational scales. Working at these broader levels allows us to influence natural resource management policies and decisions in a way that will provide the greatest benefits for our members across the entire province. In addition, OFAH staff provide technical assistance on local fish and wildlife-related topics when requested by individual members, member clubs and OFAH Zones. Topics related to fisheries management, wildlife management, access to hunting and fishing opportunities, and the protection of our fish and wildlife resources from development and other threats (e.g. invasive species) are always on the OFAH radar.

## **The VOICE of Anglers and Hunters**

We often use public and stakeholder consultation opportunities to provide a voice for anglers and hunters, with the majority of our official comments on Ontario ministry-based postings occurring through the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry. We also provide comments using Environmental Assessment processes, federal government registries, and other public notices to represent the interests of our members. Whenever possible, the OFAH engages its members, member clubs and local representatives to further inform staff submissions, as well as encourage individual member input that will strengthen or complement OFAH initiatives. We accomplish this using many OFAH communications vehicles, such as Angler & Hunter Hotline in *Ontario OUT OF DOORS* magazine, *Angler & Hunter Radio*, *Angler & Hunter Television*, media releases, social media and the OFAH website. When required, OFAH staff participate in, or even host public meetings to inform and engage our members on issues impacting their communities. There are anti-hunters, anti-anglers and animal rights extremists in Ontario working to diminish fishing and hunting opportunities, so the OFAH plays an important role in ensuring the voices of the angling and hunting community continue to be heard loud and clear by decision-makers.

## **A Leader in Advocacy**

The OFAH has a proud legacy and reputation of being at the forefront of natural resource conservation management in Ontario. Our successful track record of working with a diverse group of partners, including all levels of government, continues to afford us great opportunities to be involved with, and influence discussions related to fish and wildlife conservation management. We fully utilize these opportunities to advocate on behalf of our membership and our strong and effective advocacy role at municipal, provincial and federal levels contributes immensely to the overall success of the OFAH.

Local OFAH members and OFAH staff represent the interests of anglers and hunters on a wide variety of committees, boards and advisory groups discussing issues related to our fish and wildlife conservation mandate. This occurs in every corner of the province, throughout the Great Lakes Basin on both sides of the border and across Canada. For a complete list of committee representation by OFAH staff, please see the end of this section.

## **Restoring Fish and Wildlife**

The OFAH not only advocates for the conservation of our natural resources and protection of our hunting and fishing heritage, but also works with many partners on the ground to restore our fish, wildlife and their habitats. The work of the OFAH Community Stream Steward Program and Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program are on-the-ground examples of OFAH staff leading critical habitat restoration projects that directly benefit our fish and wildlife resources. The OFAH has made significant contributions to many conservation success stories in our 85 year history, including the reintroduction of wild turkeys and eastern elk to Ontario. The restoration of these species has provided important new hunting opportunities for Ontario residents. The OFAH builds on a restoration legacy through our program to bring back Atlantic Salmon to Lake Ontario.

## **A History of Partnerships**

The OFAH takes great pride in building strong partnerships. Our long-standing partnerships with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) to deliver the Invading Species Awareness Program and Ontario Hunter Education Program show the success that can be achieved. In 2013, the OFAH and MNR partnered again to establish the Community Hatchery Program to provide targeted funding and technical support to community hatcheries. The OFAH is truly excited about this new partnership as it will help to ensure community hatcheries continue to play an important role in Ontario's fisheries management. All our partnerships are aimed at increasing the overall benefits for anglers and hunters in Ontario.

## **Investing in the Future**

The OFAH has always taken a science-based approach to natural resource management. This is not only evident in our fish and wildlife activities and advocacy efforts, but also our commitment

to assist in the education and training of Ontario's next generation of resource managers. For many years, the OFAH has awarded fish and wildlife research grants to graduate students who are carrying out research in fisheries, wildlife and conservation. In 2013, we were able to work with additional partners to secure funding for two more research grants. In 2014, the OFAH will award five research grants to deserving graduate students who are making valuable research contributions to Ontario's natural resources.

The year 2013 also marked the second year of a partnership with BrokerLink to offer an internship within OFAH's Fish & Wildlife Services department. This internship gives a recent post secondary graduate the opportunity to gain valuable experiences with many of OFAH's fish and wildlife programs.

In addition to investing in research and training that will improve the future management of our fish and wildlife resources, the

OFAH recognizes the importance of youth engagement in our outdoor heritage. The OFAH educates and engages youth through the OFAH/Mario Cortellucci Hunting and Fishing Heritage Centre, Get Outdoors youth conservation and leadership programs, and youth hunting events. Our investment in the future of fishing and hunting will take another step forward in 2014 with OFAH launching the National Archery in the Schools Program in Ontario.

The OFAH continues to be a leader in the field of fish and wildlife conservation, and we will continue these efforts on behalf of OFAH members to ensure that future generations enjoy our fishing and hunting heritage traditions.

The following sections of this annual report will provide greater details on the valuable contributions the OFAH has made to fish and wildlife conservation management in 2013.

## OFAH Staff Committee Responsibilities

OFAH staff are proud to serve on the following committees, councils, and boards (in addition to OFAH's own advisory committees- see pages 53 to 60) to promote the conservation of Ontario's fish and wildlife resources, and sustainable hunting and fishing opportunities.

*In alphabetical order:*

Algonquin Park Forest Certification Advisory Group;  
Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee, Technical and Policy Work Groups;  
Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network;  
Black Sturgeon River Dam Structured Decision-Making Process;  
Boreal Landscape Guide Development Team;  
Brock Lands Master Plan Public Advisory Committee;  
Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Canadian Advisor on Recreational Fishing;  
Canadian Aquatic Invasive Species Network II;  
Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee;  
Cobourg Creek Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) Technical Team;  
Credit River FMP Implementation Committee;  
Economic Development Advisory Committee of the Municipality of Huron Shores, Elk Subcommittee;  
Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ) 17 Advisory Council;  
FMZ 19 Advisory Council;  
FMZ 20 Advisory Council (west-basin);  
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement Advisory Panel;  
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Cities Initiative/Great Lakes Commission, Restoring the Natural Divide Advisory Committee;  
Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species, Information and Education Committee;  
Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) Aquatic Invasive Species Subcommittee;  
GLWQA Habitat and Species Subcommittee;

GLWQA Lakewide Management Subcommittee;  
Great Lakes Executive Committee to the GLWQA (observer status);  
Halton FMP Technical Committee;  
Humber Station Road Municipal Environmental Assessment Technical Advisory Committee;  
Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel;  
Invasive Species Centre, Board of Directors;  
Kawartha's Naturally Connected Scenario Planning Team;  
Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group;  
Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program, Steering Committee Subcommittees;  
Lake Simcoe Fisheries Stakeholders Committee;  
Lake Simcoe Lake Herring Working Group;  
McLaughlin Bay Restoration Strategy Steering Committee;  
MNR Bait Review Advisory Group;  
MNR Big Game Management Advisory Committee;  
MNR Hats for Hides Steering Committee;  
MNR Human-Wildlife Conflict Advisory Group;  
Ontario Biodiversity Council;  
Ontario Invasive Plant Council, Board of Directors;  
Ontario Trails Strategy Coordinating Committee;  
Ontario Waterfowl Advisory Committee;  
Ontario Wild Turkey Working Group;  
Pickering Airport Lands Restoration Opportunities Planning Team;  
Provincial Falconry Advisory Committee;  
Stakeholder Groups of the Kawartha Highlands;  
Sustainable Forestry Initiative External Review Panel; and  
Toronto Urban Recreational Fishing Plan Technical Team.



# Fisheries Management

*Healthy fish populations provide benefits for all Ontarians. In particular, Ontario's fisheries offer sustenance, recreation, tourism and enriching experiences through the heritage activity of fishing. Ontario's fisheries resources, especially in northern communities, are often linked with local economies, tourism and jobs. Working in partnership with all levels of government, nongovernment organizations and OFAH member clubs and individuals, the OFAH strives to sustain and enhance Ontario's fisheries to support high quality fishing opportunities.*

## **Binational**

### **Great Lakes Executive Committee**

The OFAH has "observer" status on the Great Lakes Executive Committee (GLEC) to the Canada-US Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA). The role of the GLEC is to help coordinate, implement, review and report on programs, practices and measures undertaken to achieve the purpose of the GLWQA. The GLEC meets biannually.

### **GLWQA Annex Subcommittees**

OFAH staff have representation on three of the Annex Extended Subcommittees: 1) Lakewide Management (Annex 2); 2) Aquatic Invasive Species (Annex 6); and 3) Habitat and Species (Annex 7). The Lakewide Management (Annex 2) Extended Subcommittee has discussed a proposed workplan which includes three key deliverables: 1) Establish Lake Ecosystem Objectives for the Great Lakes; 2) Develop an integrated Nearshore Framework; and 3) Develop/update and implement Lakewide Management Plans for all the Great Lakes.

Annex co-leads (Environment Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) are required to provide an update on annex-specific implementation efforts to date as well as next steps related to time-bound commitments, at the Great Lakes Executive Committee (GLEC) meetings that take place in June and December.

### **Asian Carp**

The OFAH participates on numerous binational committees and project teams working to prevent Asian Carp from entering the Great Lakes. The OFAH has membership on the Great Lake Commission (GLC) Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance

Species; the Policy and Technical Committee of the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee; and, the GLC and Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Cities Initiative co-sponsored Advisory Committee for Restoring the Natural Divide to prevent Asian Carp.

### **IJC - Lake Ontario-St Lawrence Plan 2014**

The OFAH has been participating for many years in the International Joint Commission's (IJC) process to change the water level management regime for the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River system and to incorporate fish and wildlife values as key criteria.

We provided support for Plan Bv7 last year, which was a more comprehensive approach than the current Plan 1958D, and strived to improve environmental conditions without causing any significant impacts to other interests (e.g. recreational boating, coastal property, and industry). We supported the implementation of Plan Bv7 which was based both on science and public input and designed to better address water level challenges, while providing new benefits (e.g. ecological, social, and economic). We also supported the IJC's proposal at that time to institute an adaptive management approach and believed appropriate effectiveness monitoring should be a critical component of Plan Bv7.

The IJC has since released Regulation Plan 2014, which is based on Plan Bv7 plus a provision for deviations to be made when Lake Ontario water levels are outside the range. The new plan is being proposed in response to concerns about the previously proposed Plan Bv7 from coastal and riparian homeowners both on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.

There is general support for Plan 2014 as it will still perform about as well as Plan B+ (which we previously supported adopting during the IJC's 2007 review) for the environment, and it performs better than B+ and much better than Bv7 alone for south shore erosion protection structures.

### **An Adaptive Management Plan for Addressing Extreme Water Levels across the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River System**

OFAH staff submitted a response to the IJC's Adaptive Management Plan for Addressing Extreme Water Levels across the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River System.

We see the adaptive management plan as an important tool for moving forward with more progressive management approaches

for the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River system (e.g. Plan Bv7) and trust the IJC will promptly implement these approaches, including the proposed adaptive management plan for addressing extreme water levels.

## **National**

### **Fisheries Act**

The OFAH continues to be involved with discussions related to the 2012 changes to the federal Fisheries Act. OFAH staff participated in workshops and meetings with other organizations, including the Canadian Wildlife Federation and OFAH's affiliates from across Canada. Since the changes to the Fisheries Act were announced, the OFAH has been advocating for an approach to policy development that will adequately protect and enhance recreational fisheries. The OFAH is particularly interested in determining how the new Fisheries Act will be implemented and enforced. The OFAH, along with other stakeholders, has experienced success in influencing the operational approach, as well as the development of regulations and policies under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Fisheries Protection Program. The OFAH will continue to work with our national and provincial partners, as well as DFO to ensure that our fisheries are well served by the changes to the Fisheries Act and DFO's Fisheries Protection Program.

### **The Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program**

The DFO announced the launch of the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program (RFCPP) in 2013 to provide funding support for community-based restoration, rehabilitation and enhancement projects that benefit fish habitat, and recreational fisheries conservation. The OFAH Community Stream Steward Program received funding during the first year of the program. Following the initial call for applications, the OFAH expressed some concerns with restrictive criteria related to funding eligibility. Specifically, the requirement to have 50% matching funds from a "nongovernment source" prevented several projects from meeting the criteria. The OFAH offered a number of recommendations for modifying RFCPP criteria to address our concerns. The application period for the second year (2014-2015) of the RFCPP occurred in late 2013. Unfortunately, our recommendations to modify the funding eligibility criteria were not included. We will continue to stress the benefits of adjusting the current criteria to enable more worthwhile projects to be eligible in future years. Although the OFAH believes this funding program to be of great importance to recreational fisheries conservation, we will continue to work with the federal government to ensure DFO's Fisheries Protection Program as a whole provides the best possible protection of recreational fisheries. This includes the development of regulations, policies and guiding documents associated with recent changes to the Fisheries Act.

### **Experimental Lakes Area (OFAH Zone A)**

The Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) was a world-renowned DFO-run fisheries research facility in northwestern Ontario. Decades of aquatic research studies carried out at the ELA have provided significant and direct contributions to our understanding, management and enhancement of Ontario's freshwater fisheries. In 2012, the federal government announced the closure of the ELA. Since that time, the OFAH has advocated the importance

of the ELA to all levels of government. In 2013, we urged DFO to seek partnerships to maintain research capacity at the facility. We are extremely pleased that the Ontario Government announced their intention to step in with financial support to ensure the ELA will remain open.

### **Canada-Ontario Agreement for the Great Lakes**

The Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem (COA) is an important five year agreement between the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada. The COA outlines how the two governments will cooperate and coordinate their efforts to support the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem. COA also provides project funding to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to carry out work that will help meet Canada's obligations under the Canada-US Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Many OFAH programs receive COA funding that is used for restoration, education and outreach activities related to the Great Lakes. The OFAH has been advocating for both provincial and federal governments to increase their contributions to COA.

## **Provincial**

### **Black Sturgeon River (OFAH Zone B)**

For many years, the OFAH has been involved locally and provincially with the discussions surrounding the removal of the Camp 43 barrier dam on the Black Sturgeon River. In February 2013, the OFAH submitted a response to the EBR posting for the Initial Public Notice for the Decommissioning of the Camp 43 Dam on the Black Sturgeon River and Construction of a multi-purpose Sea Lamprey Barrier at Eskwanonwatin Lake. The OFAH recommended that additional analyses of potential trade-offs were necessary before proceeding further with the Environmental Assessment process. Further, we recommended that a structured decision-making process be used to evaluate which option provides a net benefit to the Black Sturgeon River, Black Bay of Lake Superior and the Great Lakes as a whole. The MNR listened to the concerns of the OFAH and other stakeholders by establishing a facilitated Black Sturgeon Structured Decision-Making Process. The OFAH was represented both locally (OFAH Zone B) and provincially (OFAH staff) during four, two-day meetings in Thunder Bay. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission, MNR, DFO, neighbouring US jurisdictions, First Nations, FMZ 9 and local stakeholders were also represented. The group developed a suite of potential management options and each participating stakeholder had an opportunity to provide comments, and select a preferred option. Given the current understanding of the potential costs and benefits of each management option, the OFAH's preferred solution was to include a trap and sort fishway at the Camp 43 dam site. In the absence of clear evidence to show that dam removal will accomplish fishery goals and objectives, the OFAH cannot support the removal of the Camp 43 dam at this time. The inclusion of a trap and sort fishway at Camp 43 would allow for passage of desired fish species upstream, and restrict invasive species (e.g. Sea Lamprey) passage upstream of the dam. In other words, this option would maintain Sea Lamprey control costs within the Great Lakes system and help with selective passage of fish without taking more drastic and permanent actions. A trap and sort fishway will also provide an opportunity to collect more information to fill data gaps to help

with long-term management of the Black Sturgeon River and Black Bay system. The outcomes of this process will be summarized by the facilitator and presented to the MNR, who will determine the next steps.

### **Lake Nipissing Walleye (OFAH Zone D)**

The MNR further restricted the Lake Nipissing Walleye recreational fishery in 2013. Angler limits were cut in half (from four to two for a sport licence and from two to one for a conservation licence). Unfortunately, the MNR did not impose any restrictions on Lake Nipissing's commercial gill net Walleye fishery. These restrictions had immediate and significant impacts on local tourism, as many clients cancelled their reservations upon hearing the news. No changes to the Lake Nipissing Walleye recreational fishing regulations are expected for 2014; however, there has been much speculation about what management action will be taken next, including potential options for size restriction changes. As long as there is an unregulated commercial gill net harvest of Walleye in Lake Nipissing, there are no size restrictions or other changes to the recreational fishing regulations that can help the population recover. The Nipissing First Nation reported a commercial gill net harvest of 26,000 kg of Walleye in 2012, which is lower than the previous five year average (40,075 kg), but remains well above the most risky harvest level (predicted by an MNR risk assessment) that is needed for a 10 or even 20 year recovery of the fishery to a "healthy" state. The average commercial gill net harvest in Lake Nipissing is more than double the level needed for recovery, whereas the recreational fishery continues to harvest at a level that is between ½ and ¾ below what is considered to be sustainable (i.e. well below any risk level). In addition to potential size-based regulations for the recreational fishery, the OFAH continues to seek answers from the MNR related to recent reports regarding to the commercialization of the Dokis First Nation Walleye harvest. If the reports are true, this commercialization could help to explain the continuing decline of the fishery despite recreational harvest reductions. The presence of two commercial Walleye fisheries on Lake Nipissing puts additional pressure on the resource and is compounded by the fact that there is limited harvest information available. How can we manage, let alone recover, a Walleye fishery in Lake Nipissing with such a high level of unreported commercial harvest? The OFAH will remain vigilant on these issues to make sure any new recreational fishing restrictions are scientifically justified and do not needlessly impact on anglers. We will continue to lobby the government to fully regulate the commercial gill net fishery for Walleye in Lake Nipissing.

### **Lake Simcoe (OFAH Zones G, H)**

The OFAH is represented by staff and local representatives on the Lake Simcoe Fisheries Stakeholder Committee (LSFSC). In recent years, the OFAH has been advocating for a return of a Lake Herring recreational fishery in Lake Simcoe. Lake Simcoe anglers have been telling us for many years that Lake Simcoe could support an open Lake Herring fishery. Despite repeated recommendations by the OFAH and the LSFSC to open a limited recreational Lake Herring fishery, the MNR remained unsatisfied that the current knowledge of the fishery was sufficient to reopen a season. In 2012, the MNR established the Lake Simcoe Lake Herring Working Group to discuss this issue further. The working group was comprised of LSFSC representatives, including an OFAH biologist, as well as MNR technical staff. Through the LSFSC

and working group, the MNR made a commitment to develop a transparent process outlining the information requirements needed to open a Lake Herring season in Lake Simcoe. In 2013, significant efforts were made by MNR staff to develop evidence-based criteria and collect the appropriate information needed to make informed decisions using this tool. The OFAH is confident that MNR now has the necessary tools to make an evidence-based decision. We will continue to advocate for the return of a recreational Lake Herring fishery to Lake Simcoe as early as 2015.

### **Lake Erie (OFAH Zone J)**

The OFAH is an active participant in stakeholder consultation for Walleye and Yellow Perch management through the Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group (LEPMAG). Following a thorough review and discussions regarding potential changes to the Walleye assessment model and harvest policy (used to determine the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Walleye in Lake Erie), the OFAH and other LEPMAG members were given an opportunity to submit comments to the Lake Erie Committee (fishery managers from each jurisdiction). The LEC has made a decision to make changes to the Walleye assessment model and harvest policy that will begin to influence the Walleye TAC in Lake Erie in 2014. The new LEPMAG model is expected to evolve over time as we improve our understanding of the fishery. The OFAH will continue our involvement with the process to ensure our concerns are addressed and recreational anglers in Ontario are adequately represented. In 2014, the LEPMAG focus will turn to Yellow Perch; however, it is not expected that discussions will have an impact on the Yellow Perch TAC until 2015 at the earliest.

### **Greater GTA Urban Recreational Fishing Plan (OFAH Zones E, G & J)**

OFAH staff sat on the technical team for the Greater GTA Urban Recreational Fishing Plan, which met through the winter and spring. The plan extends as far west as the western border of Burlington. Previously it had only gone as far as the western border of Mississauga. Beginning in mid-October, five public meetings were held across the Greater GTA – Oshawa, Ajax, Pickering, Toronto, and Mississauga. At the public meetings, OFAH staff had display materials for: Atlantic Salmon restoration, Invading Species Awareness Program, Community Stream Steward Program (3/5 meetings), OFAH TackleShare, Ontario Family Fishing Events, Ontario Record Fish Registry, Ontario Angler Awards, and the OFAH/Mario Cortellucci Hunting and Fishing Heritage Centre.

### **Bait Review Advisory Group**

The OFAH has been asking for a provincial bait policy review in response to attempts by the MNR to establish regional policies on the use of bait. In 2013, the MNR Fisheries Policy Section initiated a bait policy review to examine the use and harvest of bait and its management framework in Ontario. The ultimate goal of the review is to develop a new system which better addresses ecological challenges associated with live bait use, while taking into consideration social and economic factors. The Bait Review Advisory Group (BRAG) will assist with the review and development of policy options during this bait policy review. BRAG consists of provincial stakeholders, such as the OFAH, with an interest in bait management. The OFAH participated in multiple meetings to discuss topics including angler use and movement of bait, as well as commercial and angler use and

movement of bait in protected areas. Through these meetings, the OFAH provided preliminary comments on potential management approaches, the criteria that MNR will use to evaluate management approaches, and the management options proposed to go forward for public consultation. Public consultation is expected to occur in early 2014 for those topics already discussed, while the BRAG discusses additional topics related to the commercial harvest of bait. The OFAH will continue to remain fully engaged throughout the review to ensure that our traditional use of bait for angling is not compromised during the development of policies.

## **Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ) Advisory Councils**

The OFAH has been supportive of the development of Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ) Advisory Councils to engage stakeholders in fisheries management decisions, and we value the continued opportunity for OFAH representatives to provide input into this process.

While councils have been established in FMZs 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, and 20, there are still several councils expected to form, including FMZ 7, 8, 15 and 16.

### **FMZ 4**

OFAH staff submitted comments on the Fisheries Management Plan for FMZ 4 (EBR# 011-7316). While we generally supported the recommendations proposed by the MNR (vetted through the FMZ 4 Advisory Council), we identified specific concerns with respect to proposed Northern Pike and Lake Trout regulation changes.

Following our submission to the draft Fisheries Management Plan for FMZ 4 we heard from a number of our members concerning the MNR's decision to further delay the removal of the exceptions to the fishing regulations on the Watcomb Chain of Lakes (Watcomb, Whiterock, Young and Elva Lakes). While we were pleased to see the removal of these unnecessary restrictions reflected in the draft FMP for FMZ 4, we did not agree with the proposed timeframe (delay) for implementation. Further, we strongly recommended that the exceptions on the Watcomb Chain of Lakes be removed by 2014.

### **FMZ 9**

The OFAH Zone B Executive and the Thunder Bay Salmon Association (TBSA) continue to have concerns over the future of Chinook Salmon stocking in FMZ 9, and consequently the operation of the TBSA Hatchery.

OFAH staff continue to work with the zone and club, and have encouraged the MNR to work with the TBSA to provide the club with greater certainty regarding their ongoing contributions to the maintenance and enhancement of a Chinook Salmon recreational fishery. The TBSA is committed to working with the MNR to establish clear stocking objectives and targets for Chinook Salmon.

### **FMZ 17**

OFAH head office staff continue to represent the OFAH on the FMZ 17 Advisory Council.

As part of the pilot put-grow-take (PGT) Walleye stocking program, OFAH staff joined the MNR, as well as members of the Crowe Lake Waterway Association and some other members of the FMZ 17 Advisory Council to stock 22,700 fall fingerlings into Crowe Lake. The program is aimed at diverting angling pressure

from lakes with self-sustaining Walleye populations, while enhancing angler opportunities in FMZ 17.

The MNR released a brochure inviting public comment (30 days) on proposed changes to coldwater fishing regulations for trout in FMZ 17. The proposed changes included catch and possession limits for Brook Trout and Brown Trout. The OFAH supported, in principle, a limit reduction for Brook Trout due to well-documented declines elsewhere within the Lake Ontario watershed; however, we recommended that any reductions must be accompanied by the management of stream habitat (as identified in the FMZ 17 Coldwater Stream Fisheries Management Strategy) and implementation of priority actions for protecting, maintaining, and enhancing Brook Trout habitat. The OFAH did not support a reduction in Brown Trout limit/possession in the absence of science and policy to justify changes to the current regulations.

### **FMZ 19 (OFAH Zone J)**

The OFAH is represented on FMZ 19 by staff and local representatives. A primary task of this committee continues to focus on reviewing the status of fish populations and discussing the allocation of fishery resources to the commercial and recreational fisheries. The OFAH is also represented on the Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group (LEPMAG), a stakeholder group responsible for providing input and recommendations to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Lake Erie Committee.

### **FMZ 20 (OFAH Zones E, G and J)**

OFAH head office staff continue to represent the OFAH on the FMZ 20 (West) Advisory Council, which met several times in 2013. This was the first year of new bass and Muskellunge regulations in the zone. In the early summer, the new Fish Community Objectives (FCOs) received final approval and became official policy. In the fall of 2013 the council began its next major initiative, building on the new FCOs, which is to assist MNR with the development of a draft stocking plan for the Lake Ontario watershed. The beneficial non-native (naturalized) species stocked for put-grow-take fisheries (Chinook and Coho Salmon, Rainbow and Brown Trout) are also required to undergo an Environmental Assessment screening, which will be covered under the stocking plan. The stocking plan is also an opportunity to review and optimize current stocking practices for those non-native species to increase and improve fishing opportunities. Public consultations will follow when the draft is ready for public review, likely in the spring of 2014.

## **Bring Back The Salmon**

### **Partnerships**



Ontario Power Generation (OPG) continued as the lead sponsor of the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program (LOASRP), for the third year of their current five-year commitment. The LCBO also remains a core sponsor of the program; their eighth year of involvement. The OFAH received \$65,000 from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation to support Atlantic Salmon habitat restoration projects; their third year as program partners. Additional private sector funding was received from TransCanada

Pipelines (\$9,500), and Greenside Up Environmental Services (\$1,000). The program was the successful recipient of \$25,000 from the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund to complete a second phase of the Brock Lands Reforestation Planting Plan in 2014.

A major event for the program in 2013 was the official re-opening of MNR's Normandale Fish Culture Station (FCS) after a three-year, \$18.5 million rebuild. The facility currently raises all of MNR's Atlantic Salmon (barring the broodstock still at Harwood FCS) as well as Chinook Salmon and Rainbow Trout for Lake Ontario. Program partners OPG, LCBO, Trout Unlimited Canada, DFO, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) also attended the event with OFAH staff.

Two events for partners were held in the fall on Duffins Creek. In September, MNR and TRCA held an event at the Duffins Creek weir, which was attended by their staff, as well as the MNR deputy minister, OFAH staff, GLFC, and OPG staff.

In October, the OFAH hosted an event at TRCA's Rodar Property on Duffins Creek, with speeches, fish stocking, shrub planting, and a demonstration of electrofishing by MNR staff. At the event and speaking were TRCA, MNR, OPG, OFAH, and a local high school student. The Ajax mayor, a Pickering councillor, TRCA and MNR staff, OPG, LCBO, TD Canada Trust, Greenside Up Environmental, OFAH Zone G members, Fleming College staff, and more local students also participated.

### **Fish Production and Stocking**

In the fall of 2012, approximately three million green eggs were collected for 2013's production stocking. In early March, yearling stocking began from both the Normandale and Fleming facilities, and over eight weeks 87,000 Atlantic Salmon yearlings were stocked into four target tributaries. An additional 500,000 eggs were stocked directly into streams in January and roughly 65,000 non-feeding fry were stocked by the Belfountain and Islington club hatcheries in April.

During 15 days of April and May, approximately 423,000 feeding fry were stocked from Normandale FCS and Fleming College. The 57 classroom hatcheries the OFAH works with stocked their fry in the spring, in addition to another 45 classroom hatcheries mentored by Let's Talk Science, the Toronto Zoo, Ontario Streams, and MNR.

In October, 188,000 fall fingerlings were stocked from the Normandale FCS (MNR), Ringwood Hatchery (Metro East Anglers) and the Fleming College Hatchery. Normandale stocked 163,000 fish, Ringwood 17,000 fish, and Fleming College 8,000 fish. Roughly 48% of the fish were released into the Credit River and the remainder were split evenly between Duffins Creek and Cobourg Brook. Approximately 87-92,000 yearlings are expected to be stocked in March and April, 2014.

Production planning for 2013-15 occurred in September. In addition to eggs going to fish production at the various partner facilities, surplus eggs will be available to stock directly into streams in January, albeit in smaller numbers than previous years. In total, all facilities combined have a production target of 550,000 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.

The three-year-old broodstock (all strains) had their identification microchips (Passive Induced Transmitter tags) implanted

in September at the Harwood Fish Culture Station. Some broodstock are also now housed at Normandale, as the transfer from Harwood is now underway, but will take several years as most new broodstock are being raised at Normandale rather than being transferred at an older age.



### **Habitat Restoration and Water Quality Enhancement**

The past year was a busy one for habitat projects, with 17 completed and several large ones planned for 2014. As mentioned previously, we had secured \$25,000 from the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund in late 2012 for a pond decommissioning project on the Brock Lands (Duffins Creek), but permitting delays required the project to be postponed until 2014. To prepare for our work on the Brock Lands, in the winter Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program staff mentored a group of four Ecosystem Management students from Fleming College on a Credit-For-Product project to design a Reforestation Planting Plan for the Brock Lands project area. Four key planting areas were identified and price quotes for materials were sourced out.

Habitat projects began with a pre-Earth Week clean-up event at Brock Ridge Community Park, Pickering, on April 16th – the second such event for our program on Duffins Creek. Once again, OPG Pickering Nuclear Plant supported the event with student busing, a BBQ, and volunteers. A group of 38 Holy Redeemer Catholic Elementary School students cleaned up garbage along the stream shoreline in the park. Over 1.3 km of stream and parts of the park's trail system were cleaned by the students with the assistance of team leaders from OPG, TRCA, Fleming College students, and OFAH staff.

Later that week the program held its seventh annual Earth Week event in Cobourg, where 16 students and two teachers from Cobourg East High School cleaned the Cobourg Conservation Area of litter. By participating in a community-based improvement project, students learn the importance of a clean stream for both their health and the inhabitants of the stream. Also as part of the event, nine students from Cobourg West High School planted 50 potted shrubs along the stream edge to provide root structure to the bank and absorb salt and potential contaminants from the nearby road. Fleming College students and Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority staff also assisted with the event. Both Earth Week events concluded with the students stocking yearling Atlantic Salmon from Fleming College into the rivers – 304 into Duffins Creek, and 600 into Cobourg Brook.

In late May, we hosted a small tree planting (not included in our project count) in the Belfountain Conservation Area (Credit River) with material donated by Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) to the Dufferin-Northern Peel Anglers and Hunters Association. The planting was done by students from St. Leonard and St. Benedict Catholic Elementary Schools after they released the Atlantic Salmon fry they had raised in the classroom.

OFAH staff worked closely with our lead habitat sponsor, TD Bank, to organize and host five TD Tree Day events in the fall across the five LOASRP target tributaries; our second year partnering with TD on their annual initiative.

***The TD Tree Day events we coordinated with them were:***

- September 14 – Terra Cotta Conservation Area - Jacquith Property/Credit River (175 trees, 16 volunteers, 48 hours)
- September 15 – Lowville Park/Bronte Creek (55 trees & 117 shrubs, 28 volunteers, 56 hours)
- September 28 – Albion Hills Conservation Area/Humber River (560 trees, 50 volunteers, 200 hours)
- September 29 – Cobourg Conservation Area/Cobourg Brook (12 trees & 134 shrubs, 35 volunteers, 70 hours)
- October 5 – Greenwood Conservation Lands - Brock Lands North/Duffins Creek (650 trees, 70 volunteers, 105 hours)

***Other habitat projects this fall were:***

- October 11 – Brock Lands North (Duffins Creek) wetland planting with 72 Fleming College students planting 75 trees and 1,225 shrubs
- October 18 – Rodar Property (Duffins Creek) riparian planting of 50 shrubs as part of our event with program partners
- October 23 – Albion Hills Conservation Area (Humber River) buffer expansion planting of 90 trees
- October 29 – Upper Credit Conservation Area planting of 75 trees and 85 shrubs with 8 staff and students from Archbishop Romero Catholic Secondary School
- November 26 – Albion Hills Conservation Area Buffer Expansion Planting Part 2 (300 trees, 63 volunteers and 189 hours) with Palgrave Public School and Ontario Streams
- November 28 – Greenwood Conservation Lands Rodar Property Field Planting (370 trees, 78 volunteer and 234 hours) with Vimy Ridge Public School and the Community Stream Steward Program (CSSP)
- December 3 – Duffy’s Lane Live Willow Shrub Staking (750 shrubs, 1 volunteer and 3 hours) with Ontario Streams and CSSP
- December 3 – Albion Hills Conservation Area Wetland Live Willow Shrub Staking (250 shrubs, 1 volunteer and 1 hour) with Ontario Streams and CSSP

Transport Canada announced that the Pickering Airport would proceed with an estimated opening in 2027, and partitioned the existing Pickering Airport Lands. One portion has been added to the Rouge River National Park, another portion retained for the airport, and the third portion identified as being open for development. The latter two portions consist of significant portions of the upper reaches of Duffins Creek, and the “developable lands” are much of the river’s headwaters.

The OFAH and program partners have always recognized the potential likelihood of the airport proceeding, but were aware the footprint would likely be smaller than what was envisioned at the



time the lands were purchased in the 1970s. We are concerned about the additional development proposed outside of the airport, and provided comments to Transport Canada. We recommended that ideally these lands would be set aside for agricultural development and naturalization (including fishing opportunities) but if industrial/commercial development should occur, the OFAH requested the highest standards of protection for the watershed. We received a response in early December that the OFAH would continue to be consulted during the long-term planning process that will occur over the next decade.

Notwithstanding those long-term concerns, we continue to work well with Transport Canada staff on the Airport Lands. We applied to the federal Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program (RFCPP) for a pond decommissioning project on the property, in partnership with Transport Canada and TRCA. We anticipate more partners will join in on this major effort, which is one of the largest projects the program has undertaken in its history.

**Research and Assessment**

The OFAH did not conduct any assessment in 2013, but still participates on the Science Team. MNR (Lake Ontario Management Unit, Aurora District), CVC, TRCA, and the NSERC Strategic Grant researchers are currently undertaking the majority of research and assessment.

With Canada-Ontario Agreement funding, MNR and CVC were again able to assess smolts on the Credit River from April to June using the rotary screw trap (numbers not yet available). The TRCA and MNR were able to get the resistance board weir installed in Duffins Creek in early May, and it began operations in June. Over the first 18 days, with some challenges as the new equipment was operated for the first time, six adult Atlantic Salmon were captured, processed, and released upstream. The weir was shut down during the warm weather in July and faced new challenges when it re-opened as the density of Chinook Salmon filled the trap and sections of stream below the weir. Eventually, the decision was made to only partially block fish passage with the weir, allowing excess fish past while trapping some, leading to an early estimate of a 10% fishing efficiency. During that time, at least three unmarked adult Atlantic Salmon were reported by anglers upstream. A full report on the 2013 assessment programs will be in the Lake Ontario Management Unit annual report.

MNR’s Credit River crew has continued operation of the Streetsville and Norval fishways to monitor for returns; nine adults were captured at Streetsville (which is operated for a shorter period now that the Norval fishway is in place). At Norval, 12 adult Atlantic

Salmon were captured; one being a recapture from Streetsville, and the other 11 having passed Streetsville while the fishway was open. There is also some likelihood that returning adults, having passed Streetsville, find spawning habitat below Norval and do not move further upstream (e.g. the eight fish from Streetsville not captured at Norval).

In October, an MNR crew working with CVC, electrofished the Credit River's spring stocking sites to assess in-stream survival and growth rates. They also marked the parr to assess survival to spring 2014, when the fish will be observed passing through the rotary screw trap located downstream in the river. Both assessment projects were funded through Canada-Ontario Agreement monies acquired by the Lake Ontario Management Unit.

The Science Team met, working towards a series of workshops in the winter and spring of 2014, the first one including participation from American researchers. OFAH staff are helping to organize the workshops, which are led by MNR and funded through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

### **Education and Outreach**

Fifty-three classes and four education centres reared Atlantic Salmon in classroom hatcheries under OFAH head office guidance; up from 49 units in 2012. The geographic range was from Hamilton to Kingston. An additional 18 units were administered by the Toronto Zoo, and McMaster University's Let's Talk Science node oversaw another 12. The MNR (Aurora District) and Ontario Streams had 15 units in place, for an overall total of 102 units. Eggs were delivered from January to early February, and 34 presentations to classes/schools were made from February through April.

Again this year, to support the hatchery at the OPG Pickering Nuclear Plant, approximately 50 grade 6 students from a local school were invited to hear a presentation on the program, learn about other stewardship opportunities, and watch the eggs being loaded into the hatchery. Local media were out to cover the event and the program received additional media attention during the classroom hatchery stocking period, including Durham CHEX, CITY-TV, CBC TV (Toronto), and local newspapers.

Staff have made additional presentations to the Town of Ajax's Environmental Advisory Committee, the Ontario Society for Environmental Education, Ontario's Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission, an Ocean Wise fundraising dinner, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, TRCA Board, second year Ecosystem Management students, "Wild Toronto" course students at the University of Toronto, and the Centre for Social Innovation's Annex location as part of their environmental awareness program. Additional educational presentations were made to Brookside Youth Correctional Institute staff (twice), Equinox Holistic School grade 4 students, and students in the East Elgin Environmental Leadership Program. The program had displays at the OFAH conference, the Toronto Zoo's "Mad About Fishes" event on the Civic holiday long weekend, Trout Unlimited Canada Ted Knott Chapter's Family Fun Day in Lowville Park, Burlington, and five public meetings for the Greater GTA Urban Recreational Fishing Plan. A newsletter was also completed in the summer.

The program continues to be much more active in social media (Facebook, Twitter): [www.facebook.com/ontariosalmon](http://www.facebook.com/ontariosalmon) and <http://twitter.com/ontariosalmon>. The Facebook account recently passed 500 "Likes" (567 currently) and the Twitter account has 167 followers. The program will continue posting updates and

announcements of activities on both sites.

In the fall, independently of each other, two documentary filmmakers got in touch with us to film various aspects of the program, one on Duffins Creek, the other on the Credit River. To date they have filmed fish stocking, assessment, habitat restoration, and interviews with staff.

Other media coverage in 2013 included the re-opening of Normandale being profiled in the Toronto Star and local papers, and our two fall events received coverage in local Ajax/Pickering press and the local (Durham CHEX) television station. A number of other articles mentioning the program were published in the Toronto Star over the summer.

## **Community Hatchery Program**



In March 2013, the OFAH, in partnership with the MNR, launched the Community Hatchery Program (CHP). This new program will grant funding to eligible community hatcheries and provide strategic and targeted support for

Ontario's community fish culture and stocking efforts. The MNR will provide the OFAH \$250,000 annually over the next three years to administer this new program. The OFAH is truly excited to now offer a dedicated program that will sustain and enhance community-based fish culture operations in Ontario.

The OFAH hired a CHP coordinator to lead the delivery of this new program in May 2013. The CHP coordinator, in collaboration with the MNR, developed administrative and funding allocation processes for the initial year of the CHP operation. These processes involved the development of an application-based method to allocate funds to volunteer-based community hatcheries. Application packages were directly mailed to the 56 known community hatcheries across the province in June. A CHP Question and Answer document was included in the package to provide clarity to community hatcheries on how the CHP will transition from the former Community Fish and Wildlife Involvement Program (CFWIP), and what roles and responsibilities the OFAH and MNR will each play in this new program.

In the program's initial year of operation, the OFAH received CHP funding applications from 42 community hatcheries rearing nine fish species (Walleye, Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout, Chinook Salmon, Brook Trout, Atlantic Salmon, Coho Salmon, Lake Trout, and Muskie) and projected to stock millions of fish (various life stages). Community hatcheries collectively applied for a total of \$204,637, with individual funding requests ranging from \$64 to \$23,000. The CHP awarded \$143,946 in total funding to community hatcheries in 2013 with individual hatcheries receiving an average \$3,428. Nine of the community hatcheries that received CHP funding in 2013 were not recipients of CFWIP funding in 2012.

The OFAH produced a CHP questionnaire to facilitate program feedback from community hatcheries regarding administration processes, financial details, technical support, fish production, community of practice, annual workshop, and licensing/permitting. The feedback gathered from the CHP questionnaire will provide valuable information and will be used in the development

of the program moving forward. In addition to obtaining feedback through the questionnaire, the CHP coordinator has visited a few hatcheries and participated in a production planning meeting and wild egg collections. Visiting and working with community hatcheries has further demonstrated the important role of community hatcheries in local communities and their contributions to local fisheries.

The OFAH is beginning to profile the CHP to highlight the importance of these community-based hatcheries in the conservation and management of local fisheries. The OFAH has developed a CHP webpage ([www.ofah.org/CHP](http://www.ofah.org/CHP)), designed a CHP graphic, and promoted the program through various media avenues.

## Community Stream Steward Program

### Program Evolution



Throughout 2013 the Community Stream Steward Program (CSSP) experienced a number of changes in operation and structure due to issues with funding availability and staffing. The program entered a temporary non-operational state in January with the loss of key funding sources, and a lack of available replacements. Key projects

were wrapped up, and the program continued to provide only existing resources and materials to partners as requested.

In April and May, the program became operational again with the approval of funding applications submitted in late 2012, and the development of a targeted outreach campaign in partnership with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. A program coordinator was employed in May and an intern was hired from September to December to assist with project implementation.

A few key projects have been completed this year, but a key focus has been finding suitable funding and attempting to ensure the long-term longevity of the program. There was minimal monitoring or outreach education completed this year, with the exception of a successful Landowners' Guide to Ponds workshop held in November at the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) offices in Port Hope. This workshop, hosted in partnership with Ducks Unlimited and GRCA, drew 30 landowners and led to potential site visits and restoration projects in the area.

### DFO Funding

In August, the Community Stream Steward Program was chosen as one of the recipients of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Recreational Fisheries Community Partnership Program (RFCPP) funding. This contribution allowed us to complete a variety of fish habitat improvement projects in Northumberland, Peterborough, and Hastings counties, and provided the funding for an intern throughout the fall. Projects completed under this grant included two bank stabilizations, multiple planting projects, one fencing project, and two bed-level stream crossings.

### Harper Park Project

In September a large coldwater stream restoration project that had been in the planning stages for over a year, was realized in Peterborough. A section of Harper Creek located in a small municipal park was restored in partnership with the Harper Park Stewards and Otonabee Conservation. Work took place over three

project days and consisted of stabilizing the collapsing stream banks, planting native trees and shrubs, and removing garbage and debris from the area. A large number of volunteers came out to take part in the event, and efforts were featured in a segment on CHEX news. This project was funded through the MNR Land Stewardship and Habitat Restoration Program.

### TRCA Duffins Creek Equine Project

In May, the CSSP began an outreach program in partnership with TRCA to target small horse farm owners within the Duffins Creek watershed. This project was funded by the Ministry of the Environment in an effort to decrease the levels of organic pollution in the creek thought to come from this type of farm, due to the minimal regulations and incentives aimed at this demographic.

Outreach efforts began in August with a door-to-door campaign. All identified farms with less than six horses were approached, and landowners were provided with educational stewardship materials, an offer for a free site visit, and information on available incentives. Interested landowners participated in a tour of their farm with CSSP staff to identify potential project sites or changes in operation practices that could lessen their impact on adjacent waterways, while meeting the landowners' objectives. There has been discussion around continuing this project at a less intensive level in future years to build trust and participation in the watershed.

### Funding

CSSP activities were funded this year through a variety of sources in addition to the DFO and TRCA grants. Wildlife Habitat Canada continues to be a strong financial supporter of the program and provided funding for projects, staff support, workshops, and operations. The MNR Land Stewardship Habitat Restoration Program also provided funding to allow the program to complete coldwater stream enhancement projects throughout our operational area. While some of the local stewardship councils that supported the program in past years are no longer in operation, Northumberland Stewardship has provided significant financial support in 2013.

Approval was received in October for the CSSP application to the Lake Simcoe/Georgian Bay Clean-up Fund, which will support the completion of stream stewardship projects on agricultural properties in the south and west sections of the Lake Simcoe watershed. In addition, workshops and training opportunities will be provided to landowners and community members in this area, hosted in partnership with other stewardship groups in the area. This grant will continue until March 2016, and provides support for salary and operations.

The program continues to seek more sustainable funding options including private sources, and multi-year grants in an effort to ensure the long-term sustainability of operations.



# Wildlife Management

Photo: James Markou

*Healthy wildlife populations provide benefits for all Ontarians. In particular, Ontario's wildlife offer sustenance, recreation and enriching experiences through traditional activities such as hunting and trapping. Ontario's wildlife resources, especially in northern communities are often closely linked with local economies, tourism and jobs. Working in partnership with all levels of government, nongovernment organizations and OFAH member clubs and individuals, the OFAH strives to sustain and enhance Ontario's wildlife populations to support high quality hunting opportunities.*

## **Moose Management**

### **Moose Resource Reports**

MNR released a set of 67 Moose Resource Reports. The reports provide WMU-specific information about moose biology/ecology, hunter interest and harvest, and habitat. OFAH staff reviewed each report and provided feedback to the MNR.

### **Moose Management Presentation**

We made a presentation on moose management in Ontario at the OFAH Zone E and H annual general meetings. The presentation provided a detailed summary of the moose tag calculation process, an examination of the pros and cons of the current draw system, and a discussion of potential future changes to the moose hunting regime in Ontario.

### **MNR's Provincial Big Game Management Advisory Committee**

The OFAH is a member of MNR's Provincial Big Game Management Advisory Committee (BGMAC). BGMAC met only once in 2013 as opposed to the usual two meetings. The committee met in March to discuss the draft moose tag allocations. The OFAH reviewed the proposed allocations and provided our input. While we were successful in convincing MNR to increase tag allocations in certain areas, many of our suggestions were not accepted.

The committee was also given an update on the Moose Project. MNR has developed and distributed a questionnaire to quantify the socio-economic impact of moose hunting in Ontario.

Respondents were asked to estimate their expenditures related to moose hunting, preferred equipment and hunting methods, the importance of various types of hunting opportunities, and their opinion on the health of the moose herd in the WMUs where they hunt. The questionnaire also proposes various hypothetical regulatory changes intended to increase moose populations over the next 10-15 years. We are pleased that MNR is finally beginning to quantify the socio-economic importance of moose hunting and opinions of moose hunters. Unfortunately neither the OFAH nor BGMAC were afforded an opportunity to provide input to the structure or content of the questionnaire.

MNR's Northeast Region (NER) has developed and distributed a region-specific moose management questionnaire to hunters who hunted moose in a Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) within the NER during 2012. The Northeast Region is by far the most popular region for moose hunters, and experiences the highest application volume. It also experiences a consistently high and increasing level of calf harvest. The content of this questionnaire is specific to the problems that moose populations experience in NER. It does not attempt to quantify the socio-economic importance of moose hunting, but rather surveys hunter support for various regulatory changes to moose hunting in those WMUs. Examples included a calf tag allocation, shorter calf and/or adult seasons, shorter overall seasons, and various combinations of these. Again, we are disappointed that neither BGMAC nor OFAH were given the opportunity to provide input to the content of this questionnaire. To date, we have not seen the results of either questionnaire.

## **Elk Management**

The OFAH was invited to participate as a member of the Elk Subcommittee of the Economic Development Committee of the Municipality of Huron Shores. The subcommittee met in April 2013 to discuss ongoing elk-landowner conflicts in the Lake Huron North Shore (LHNS) restoration area. The MNR's Blind River area supervisor provided the committee with details about the elk trap and transfer program that occurred in February. The goal was to remove 20 elk from areas of intense conflict to an area north of Elliot Lake, where 18 elk were transferred in 2004. One day prior to beginning the capture program, a wet snow storm blanketed the area and created a hard crust on top of the existing snow. Over the course of three days, 10 elk were net-gunned and handled by the contractors. Two of these elk were asphyxiated by the net and

one elk died during its first day in the temporary holding pen. The cause of death was determined to be 'major muscle injuries' due to the stress and difficulty of running through deep snow that is covered in a hard crust. All surviving elk were released in April. The OFAH supported the distribution of harassment permits but not kill permits. Furthermore, we did not support the suggestion to transfer elk to another elk restoration area or into a completely new area. The OFAH recommended that the MNR prioritize the development of a population objective for the LHNS elk herd as the first step in calculating the sustainable harvest level that would be needed to establish a licensed hunt.

In June, we received word that farmers in LHNS had invited members of the local First Nation community to harvest elk on their properties. MNR confirmed that at least one elk had been harvested by an Aboriginal hunter. The elk was initially seized by a conservation officer, but was subsequently returned with no charges laid. We are awaiting further details.

At the invitation of the Sudbury Elk Restoration Committee (SERC), we attended a meeting between SERC and CN Rail executives to discuss potential methods to mitigate elk-train collisions in the Nipissing/French River (NFR) elk restoration area. We were successful in convincing CN Rail to establish a reporting protocol for all big game species struck by trains on CN-owned railway lines. The NFR area was chosen as the location for the pilot program due to the significant number of wildlife-train collisions.

In October, we contacted Bancroft District MNR to request an expansion of elk hunting opportunities in that area. Specifically, we requested an increased tag allocation for the current gun hunt as well as a one week bows-only season immediately prior to the gun hunt. MNR agreed to discuss the 2014 elk tag allocation with OFAH sometime in early 2014.

## **Bancroft-North Hastings Elk Hunt**

### **Draw**

Number of applicants: 2,286

Number of tags allocated: 70 (16 bull and 54 cow)

Number of tags purchased: 64 of 70 (6 cow tags not purchased)

Number of licenses purchased: 185 of an eligible 214

Distribution of Groups: 21% individuals, 10% pairs, 10% groups of 3, 59% groups of 4

### **Harvest**

A total of 23 elk were harvested in 2013; 9 bulls and 14 cows

All elk harvested were from Area 2 (WMU 57), and Areas 5 and 6 (WMU 61).

## **White-Tailed Deer Management**

### **Controlled Deer Hunt**

The OFAH requested that MNR complete a review of the controlled deer hunts in southern Ontario. We have collected comments and concerns from zones and will begin discussions with MNR early in 2014. The discussions will attempt to identify inconsistencies between WMUs and determine if controlled hunts are still required in many WMUs.

## **Woodland Caribou**

The OFAH submitted comments on the draft Range Management Policy in Support of Woodland Caribou Conservation in Ontario.

We reiterated our longstanding concerns with preliminary range boundaries and the prioritization of woodland caribou habitat management over other species (e.g. moose) in areas that will likely never support caribou again.

## **Black Bear Management**

We requested that the MNR analyze the potential for expanding black bear hunting opportunities into WMUs that do not currently have a fall bear season.

The provincial government announced the partial re-instatement of the spring bear hunt as a two-year pilot project in select northern communities. The OFAH believes that the proposed partial re-instatement of a spring bear hunt in some northern communities is a step in the right direction; however, we maintain our position that a full return of the spring bear hunt across bear country in Ontario is needed. The best management for Ontario's black bear resource requires a spring and fall hunt. The OFAH will work hard to ensure our members take full advantage of the partial spring bear hunt in 2014 and continue to advocate for the full return of the spring bear hunt across Ontario's bear country.

## **MNR's Modernization of Approvals**

As part of its three-year transformation plan, the MNR proposed a policy framework aimed at improving service delivery and reducing administrative burdens faced by individuals, businesses and government. The framework would also allow the MNR to refocus on its core mandate. To aid in this transformation, regulatory amendments were made to update requirements for approvals for various fish and wildlife-related activities under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. All of the proposed changes were accepted and will come into effect on January 1, 2014. Many of the regulatory amendments had been requested by the OFAH and will result in many favourable outcomes for OFAH members and clubs.

Resident hunters no longer require a Licence to Hunt Raccoon at Night or a Licence to Chase Raccoon at Night or Fox, Coyote or Wolf During the Day. Resident hunters can now export a black bear, white-tailed deer or moose that was legally harvested in Ontario without obtaining a permit.

Municipalities no longer require MNR approval to employ hunters to harvest problem furbearers. Fish and game clubs that serve wild harvested fish and game at charity events are no longer required to obtain a permit from MNR, but must continue to follow requirements identified by the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

Hunters and trappers no longer need a permit to send pelts to a tanner or to sell live furbearers to facilities that are legally permitted to purchase them. A permit is no longer required for businesses to buy or sell the hides of certain game mammals and cast antlers.

Individuals are now allowed to release up to 10 pheasants or chukar partridges on their own property for immediate put and take hunting activities during the open season without obtaining MNR authorization and can release birds to support dog training and field trial activities during the closed season.

Finally, individuals who acquire the carcass of certain game and furbearing mammals and wish to keep it for personal use must now register the possession through a registry system instead of obtaining a permit from MNR.

## Protection of Property Agent Authorizations

In 2012 the OFAH requested that the MNR develop a proposal to amend Ontario Regulation 665/98 (Hunting), 132 (1) to include licensed small game hunters to the classes of agents prescribed in the regulation. Under the Modernization of Approvals, amendments were made to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act under the Protection of Property 'Agent Authorizations' to allow licenced hunters to act as agents (at the request of a landowner) to harass or dispatch certain species of wildlife in protection of property.

### Use of Leashed Dogs for Big Game Retrieval

The OFAH initiated discussions with the MNR regarding the potential for changes to the regulations governing the use of dogs for big game retrieval. Subsequent to those discussions, the MNR posted a proposal in 2012 to allow for the use of leashed dogs to track and recover big game in WMUs where hunting with dogs is not currently permitted. The OFAH supported the proposal and was pleased when MNR made the amendment to Ontario Regulation 665/98 (Hunting) under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act in 2013.

### Sporting Dog Brochure

OFAH staff revised the Sporting Dog brochure. The brochure promotes the responsible uses of sporting dogs in the field and is available online ([www.ofah.org/hunting](http://www.ofah.org/hunting)).

### Hats for Hides

The Hats for Hides program underwent significant changes in 2013, as it was administered entirely by BRT Provisioners. Unfortunately, the program is no longer accepting bear hides. Despite being a member of the Hats for Hides Steering Committee, the OFAH was not made aware of these changes prior to their implementation. We wrote to MNR to express our disappointment at being excluded from the process.

### MNR's Human-Wildlife Conflict Advisory Group

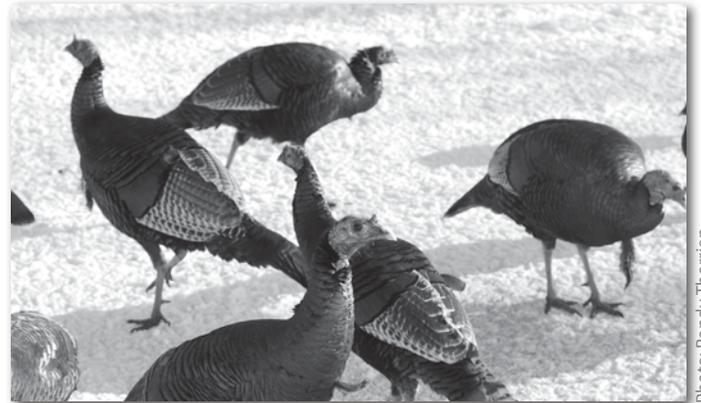
The OFAH participates as a member of the MNR Human-Wildlife Conflict Advisory Group (HWCAG) which met three times in 2013. Topics of discussion included the impacts of wind power development on wildlife, game farming, and invasive species in Ontario. The OFAH went on record with the following positions: the cervid farming industry should be phased out with fair compensation for farmers; MNR must be more accountable when cervids escape or are released from farms; provincial and federal governments must make an effort to gather accurate statistics about the game farming industry, particularly the number of farms in existence; and, the MNR has been negligent in its duty to track, compile and distribute statistics about the number of cervid escapes that occur annually in Ontario.

### Chronic Wasting Disease

In late 2012, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) released a draft document entitled "Proposed Zoning Approach for the Control of Chronic Wasting Disease in Canada." The OFAH sent a letter to the minister of agriculture and agri-food outlining our concerns with the proposed approach and with the membership of CFIA's CWD Task Force (for which representation was heavily weighted in favour of the cervid farming community). We recommended that CFIA prohibit the interprovincial movement of live cervids except for the purposes

of science, research, and conservation. In mid-October, the CWD Task Force released the results of its discussions, "A Discussion of Options for Canada's Next Captive Cervid Chronic Wasting Disease Control Program." Not surprisingly, elimination of the cervid farming industry was not considered by the Task Force. We supported the Canadian Wildlife Federation's letter of response to CFIA stating that the considered options are wholly inadequate to stop the spread of CWD in Canada.

## Wild Turkey



### Wild Turkey Management

The OFAH participates as a member of the Ontario Wild Turkey Working Group (WTWG), an advisory group to the MNR. The OFAH has made recommendations to the MNR for expanding both spring and fall turkey hunting opportunities.

### Youth Wild Turkey Heritage Day

Recognizing the need to promote hunting activities for the next generation, the OFAH recommended that the MNR designate the Saturday before the regular opening of the spring wild turkey season as a Youth Wild Turkey Heritage Day. In August, OFAH staff submitted a letter to the MNR requesting a Youth Wild Turkey Heritage Day. Youth Wild Turkey Heritage Day(s) are presently in effect in a number of US states and the province of Manitoba. The OFAH believes there are substantial benefits (similar to those being achieved through the Waterfowl Heritage Days) to initiating a Youth Wild Turkey Heritage Day in the province of Ontario.

## Changes to the Migratory Birds Hunting Regulations for Ontario - 2013

### Mourning Dove Hunting Season

The OFAH has long supported the creation of a mourning dove hunting season in Ontario because we were convinced it would provide new sustainable hunting opportunities. In September, Ontario welcomed a mourning dove hunting season to the Southern and Central hunting districts, with a daily bag limit of 15 and a possession limit of 45 (i.e. three times the daily bag limit).

### American Black Duck

The OFAH supported a proposal to implement the International Harvest Strategy for American Black Duck in Canada through prescribed regulatory packages. The strategy allowed for additional harvest opportunities for black ducks in 2013, as the harvest in Ontario was currently below the 'Moderate' regulatory package; liberalizing the hunting regulations for black ducks to 107 days with a daily bag limit of 2 black ducks in southern

hunting districts (increase from 1 to 2); and a daily bag limit of 4 black ducks in the Hudson-James Bay, northern and central hunting districts (increase from 2 to 4). The OFAH also supported the proposal to make the opening and closing dates for black ducks the same as for other duck species in Ontario.

### **Removal of possession limits for geese (i.e. Canada, Cackling, Snow Geese)**

The OFAH has been supportive of the Canadian Wildlife Service's efforts to manage overabundant species. Therefore, the OFAH supported the removal of possession limits for Canada Geese, Cackling Geese and Snow Geese in 2013.

### **Donation of Migratory Game Birds for Wild Game Fundraising Dinners**

The OFAH and affiliated partner clubs regularly hold wild game dinners to raise funds for conservation projects across the province for which a wide variety of wild game is donated and sampled. Money raised from these charity events has contributed significantly to conservation efforts across the province. Unfortunately, participants, including hunters and non-hunters alike, have been unable to sample and enjoy any wild migratory birds because of restrictive regulations.

In October, the OFAH requested that Environment Canada amend the Migratory Birds Hunting Regulations to allow migratory birds taken under a hunting permit and in accordance with all appropriate daily bag and possession limits, to be donated and used at fundraising events. At the very least, we believe overabundant species such as snow geese and Canada geese should be permitted to be donated and used at fundraising events.

### **Mute Swans**

The OFAH has been aware of the harm that invasive non-native mute swans have been causing Ontario's waterfowl resources for a number of years. The United States are now coordinating control efforts for mute swans. The OFAH requested that the Canadian Wildlife Service take an active role in participating with the appropriate US agencies (and the Province of Ontario) to ensure that mute swans are successfully managed, so that they are no longer damaging our valuable waterfowl resources.

### **Proposed Modernization of MBHR**

Environment Canada (EC) is proposing amendments to the Migratory Birds Hunting Regulations (MBHR) to improve the management of hunting. The proposed changes are in response to a collection of issues raised by hunters, outfitters, biologists, and enforcement officers over the past several years.

EC provided the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel (HAAP), of which the OFAH is a member, with an opportunity to review and comment on the proposals prior to broader public consultation.

## **Other Wildlife Management Activities**

### **MNR Wildlife Research and Development Section**

We hosted two meetings with the MNR Wildlife Research and Development Section at OFAH head office to discuss current and future wildlife research activities that are relevant to our mandate. The following research topics were discussed: provincial elk monitoring; the Bancroft/North Hastings elk calving research study; DNA-based estimates of black bear populations; wild turkey research on the Bruce Peninsula; wolf-caribou interactions; coyote research in Prince Edward County and the current taxonomic

classification of coyotes and wolves in Ontario; the Hudson Bay Lowland Waterbird and Wetland Research and Monitoring Project; and, the Chronic Wasting Disease Risk Surveillance Model, which is used to allocate annual sampling effort.

### **MNR Website Review**

As part of the provincial government's transformation plans, all websites are being reviewed for content. By the end of 2013, all provincial government webpages will be changed from the current link-based design to a search-based design. Upon request from the MNR, we reviewed the Wildlife Management portion of the MNR website and provided a list of recommendations to MNR. We concluded that, since MNR is the only provider/repository of this type of information, all of the website's content was necessary and should be preserved in the new design. We also recommended that MNR expand the hunter activity and harvest reporting section to include more data and results.

### **Atlantic Flyway Technical Section**

The Atlantic Flyway Technical Section (AFTS) is made up of representatives from all jurisdictions in the Atlantic Flyway (Ontario eastward to the Atlantic Ocean, and U.S. states on the eastern seaboard). The group is responsible for flyway-specific harvest management and regulatory changes under the Migratory Birds Convention Act. The group's annual meeting was hosted in Peterborough, and we were invited to give a welcome speech and participate in the four-day session.

## **Supporting Students**

### **Fish & Wildlife Internship Award**



The OFAH/BrokerLink Fish and Wildlife Internship for 2013 was awarded to Katie Cook. For 18 weeks, (April 29 – August 30) Katie worked

directly with OFAH Fish and Wildlife staff on various program initiatives such as Atlantic Salmon stocking and habitat restoration, and Invading Species Awareness Program efforts. The practical work experience Katie gained through this internship will reap rewards both in her continuing studies and the workplace. BrokerLink has already confirmed their commitment to the internship for a third year, in 2014.

### **Two New OFAH Student Research Grants**

The St. Catharine's Game and Fish Association, an OFAH member club, will provide a student research grant of \$2,000 for five consecutive years, beginning in 2013/2014. The OFAH/St. Catharine's Game and Fish Association, Fish and Wildlife Research Grant will alternate annually between wildlife and fisheries research to reflect the club's mandate and support of both interests.

To commemorate the significant contributions made by OFAH past president, the late Dr. Dave Ankney an annual award of \$2,000 will be available to eligible graduate students for scientific research in the field of Avian Ecology. The award is named the OFAH/Dr. Dave Ankney/Sandi Johnson Award for Avian Ecology and will be presented for the first time at the 86th Annual OFAH AGM and Fish & Wildlife Conference.



# Land Use Management & Access

*Ontario's lands and waters support a diversity of fish and wildlife that offer high quality fishing and hunting opportunities. Access to these opportunities is one of the most important issues for OFAH members. Working in partnership with OFAH member clubs and individuals, we strive to ensure land use development does not compromise our fish and wildlife resources, or our access to them.*

## Parks & Protected Areas

### Ontario's Protected Areas Planning Guidelines

The OFAH reviewed Ontario's Protected Areas Planning Guidelines (EBR#011-7467) and provided comment. We outlined concerns related to the current draft wording and how it leaves little certainty for recreational uses such as hunting and fishing to be adequately considered during the planning process. Overall, the OFAH would like to see a more balanced approach to protected areas planning that includes greater recognition and utilization of sustainable resource management activities such as hunting, fishing and trapping. We also provided additional comments related to hunting being underutilized as a means to increase public participation, generate revenue and sustainably manage natural resources, without compromising ecological integrity and other park values. We emphasized the importance of public and stakeholder consultation in successful management of a public protected area, and we strongly encouraged meaningful consultation throughout the management planning process.

### Proactive Wildlife Management in Provincial Parks

In response to requests and concerns from our members, the OFAH prepared a letter to Ontario Parks explaining our concerns regarding the current passive wildlife management used in provincial parks and the resulting overabundant wildlife populations. We list the limitations of passive and reactive wildlife management and explain the difference between culling and hunting. The topic of Aboriginal hunting was addressed and the idea of fair sharing of our natural resources was promoted. We explained that hunting is a safe and compatible activity and highlighted that the use of licensed hunters provides ecological and socioeconomic benefits to the park and surrounding communities. We explain how proactive wildlife management using licensed hunters can help ensure healthy and sustainable populations and ecosystems, as well as promote and

conserve the rich culture, heritage, and tradition of hunting in Ontario. This letter serves as the initiation of a campaign to advocate for proactive wildlife management in Ontario's publicly accessible areas (e.g. provincial parks, conservation lands, municipal forests) to increase hunting opportunities for our members across Ontario.

### Addition to Coral Rapids Conservation Reserve (OFAH Zone C)

The OFAH submitted comments on the Addition to Coral Rapids Conservation Reserve (EBR# 011-8196). We supported the proposal for additional lands (1091.52 hectares) to allow for recreational activities such as hunting, fishing and other existing traditional uses (e.g. trails) to continue; however, we had several concerns regarding the consultation and how land users were, or were not, notified of the proposal. General users do not typically review EBR postings, nor do all users reside within the distribution area for local newspapers in which these notices are typically advertised. As such, we had concerns regarding what "appeal" mechanisms are in place if it is determined that an "existing use" has not been accurately captured within the policy report. We also expressed concerns that the policy will be built with the information gathered from desk-top exercises only, and that on-the-ground existing uses may not be adequately identified. MNR's response to our submission indicated that all resource users "in or near the addition" were in fact notified; that the addition is not accessible by road; that existing "trails" are thought to be mining transects; and that if a resource user finds an activity has not been adequately captured under current policy, then they can contact the Cochrane District MNR office to begin the process for an amendment for the activity to be included.

### The Shoals Provincial Park (OFAH Zone C)

The OFAH received some inquiries from members who were concerned that the closure of The Shoals Provincial Park would result in the gating of an access road to a boat launch. This would not only effectively cut off access to Prairie Bee Lake, but would also severely restrict access for moose hunters who use the launch to access hunting areas. The OFAH engaged in discussion with the Northeast Zone Management staff to discuss options available for this access point to remain open. The OFAH has been informed that staff are actively pursuing options for the access to remain open. We have offered our support with this issue and look forward to working with Ontario Parks staff to find a workable solution to this issue.

## **Balsam Lake Provincial Park Preliminary Management Plan (OFAH Zone E)**

The OFAH submitted comments on the Balsam Lake Provincial Park Preliminary Management Plan (EBR #011-8258). The current management plan would allow fishing to continue; however, hunting is not currently permitted, or proposed, within the park. The OFAH strongly encouraged the MNR to consider some level of licensed hunting to be permitted within the park. We believe licensed hunting would provide for sustainable wildlife management, the expansion of recreational opportunities, and revenue generation for the park at a time when visitor usage is typically low. We look forward to a response and additional opportunities to discuss this with park management staff.

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

A decision notice for the Algonquin Provincial Park Management Plan Amendments (EBR #010-8824) was posted. The OFAH had previously expressed concerns regarding 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 on forest habitat availability, and the cumulative impacts of placing restrictions on forestry operations within the park. The proposal was generally approved as proposed, with some minor changes based on the comments received. The OFAH was pleased to see that some of the changes were as a result of efforts made by the planning team working with the Algonquin Forestry Authority staff; however, we still have concerns about what impacts these changes will ultimately have within the park and the surrounding landscape.

## **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). The OFAH supported the policy's proposal to allow for leases to be extended for another 21-year term; however, 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 also expressed concerns on how the Algonquin Land Claim may impact current or subsequent lease renewals. The EBR posting received over 11,000 comments (the second highest ever received for an EBR posting), with many being in favour of extending the leases. An Environmental Assessment for extending the term for private cottage tenure in Algonquin Park will be carried out in 2014.

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

The OFAH continues to be 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 Restoration Strategy

report was distributed for review and the OFAH was encouraged to see our input incorporated into the report. The OFAH commends the efforts of the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, as well as the other stakeholders and partners who have contributed to the success of this project to date. This project certainly has the potential to enhance the biological and recreational components of the bay, and we believe that these two objectives are not exclusive of each other. As part of the restoration activities, an amendment to the Darlington Provincial Park Management Plan was posted on the Environmental Registry to provide the flexibility needed to allow for future restoration options to be completed within McLaughlin Bay. OFAH comments were largely in support of the amendments, although an emphasis was placed on ensuring that recreational aspects are thoroughly considered. In addition, the OFAH also again expressed interest in remaining engaged as the project moves forward.

## **Darlington Provincial Park - Waterfowl Heritage Day (OFAH Zone E)**

The OFAH has been working with Darlington Provincial Park to establish a Waterfowl Heritage Day hunt in association with the annual controlled waterfowl hunt (administered by OFAH Zone E). Unfortunately, the request has been denied due to the fact that this weekend typically receives high visitor usage. As such, Darlington Provincial Park did not entertain this hunt in 2013. The OFAH will continue to advocate for the initiation of a Waterfowl Heritage Day at Darlington Provincial Park in the years to come.

## **Inverhuron Provincial Park – New Boat Launch Facility (OFAH Zone H)**

The OFAH was contacted by Inverhuron Provincial Park requesting a letter of support for a funding opportunity available through Ontario Power Generation. The purpose of the funding application was for the construction of a new boat launch facility at the park. A letter of support was provided by OFAH because the boat launch is an important access point for boaters and recreational anglers in Lake Huron. The lack of suitable launch locations in the local area emphasizes the need for this site to remain accessible, especially considering the often unpredictable weather that boaters can face on Lake Huron.

## **Quetico Provincial Park Management Plan Review**

The OFAH provided comments on the preliminary Quetico Provincial Park Management Plan (EBR# PB06E2023). The OFAH supported the proposal to increase access in the northern portion of the park; however, the OFAH was disappointed that proactive wildlife management was still not included as a management option. The OFAH acknowledged that hunting is not generally permitted in wilderness class parks; however, we also believe that adaptive management in wilderness class parks can incorporate strategies such as hunting, especially where it can be used to “protect significant features, yet allow opportunities for recreation and heritage appreciation.” Hunting is a safe and compatible activity that helps ensure proactive wildlife management, and provides ecological and socioeconomic benefits to the park and surrounding communities. The OFAH recommended that active wildlife management, using licensed Ontario hunters, be presented as a management option in the Quetico Provincial Park Management Plan.

## **Access Issues**

### **Botha Creek Bridge Removal (OFAH Zone C)**

The OFAH became aware of a situation near New Liskeard in which a bridge, owned by Ontario Power Generation (OPG), was planned for removal in 2014. An OFAH affiliated club, the Temiskaming Anglers and Hunters Association (TAHA), had been in contact with OPG and expressed some concerns regarding the removal of this access point and the impacts it may have on property owners and access to hunting and fishing areas. OFAH wrote a letter of support for TAHA, encouraging discussions to continue between OPG and local stakeholders, and offering technical support in the decision-making process. An on-site meeting was held between OPG and local stakeholders (including TAHA). Discussions are ongoing and it appears promising that a mutually beneficial solution can be reached prior to the planned removal of the bridge.

### **Madawaska Highlands Land Use Plan – Letters of Support (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 MNR to review options that will allow some form of access for these long-term Land Use Plan (LUP) holders. Two camps in particular have written several letters to the MNR requesting 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 proper consideration for and consultation of these LUP holders. The OFAH has provided letters of support for both of these camps and will continue to assist them in finding a solution to this issue.

### **Navigable Waters Protection Act**

The OFAH remains concerned with the amendments to the Navigable Waters Protection Act (NWPA) because of potential public access restrictions to our lakes, rivers and streams. Although it appears the changes to the NWPA were not specifically intended to restrict public access, the fact remains that we will potentially lose access to thousands of lakes, rivers and streams across the province. We can now expect an even greater impact on anglers and hunters than was originally anticipated. With all of the public lands and lakes that will be lost through the Algonquin Land Claim, and the public hunting and fishing opportunities that will go with them, the major changes in federal navigation laws will leave non-Algonquin anglers and hunters with even fewer opportunities once the dust settles. The draft Agreement-in-Principle for the Algonquin Land Claim has 117,500 acres scheduled for transfer to the Algonquins of Ontario when a final treaty is signed. Previous protection of navigation by Transport Canada meant that all accessible waters would remain publicly available regardless of whether the adjacent lands are privatized. Last year's changes to the NWPA by the federal government will shut the door on future public navigation of hundreds, if not thousands, of waters in the land claim area beyond the lands and waters being directly transferred. The OFAH remains on the front lines of a battle to maintain public hunting and fishing opportunities in the Algonquin Land Claim area.

### **Shale Beach (OFAH Zone H)**

An OFAH member and long-time angler at Shale Beach informed us that the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) had closed the

vehicle entrance to Shale Beach from Highway 26 and installed “no parking” signs near the entrance. This effectively removed access for traditional users of the beach for low impact heritage activities such as angling. The OFAH strongly advocates for the maintenance and enhancement of public access opportunities for recreational heritage activities and wrote a letter of support for continued use of the beach by anglers, including recommendations to the MTO outlining potential solutions.

## **Resource Extraction & Development**

### **Osisko Hammond Reef Gold Project (OFAH Zone A)**

The OFAH provided comments on the Osisko Hammond Reef Gold project, which is a large-scale gold mine proposed near Atikokan. The OFAH is deeply concerned that a development of this scale will result in significant impacts to fish and fish habitat. We expressed concerns about impacts to changes in groundwater and surface waters, as well as the discharge of effluent and contaminants and the subsequent accumulation of contaminants in fish. We did not believe that sufficient pre-construction information had been collected or that the proposed compensation and mitigation measures would be adequate for the protection of fish, fish habitat and other important recreational fishery values within the area. Osisko Mining Corporation initiated further dialogue with OFAH to discuss our concerns.

### **Rainy River Gold (OFAH Zone A)**

The OFAH provided comments on the Rainy River gold project, which is a large-scale gold mine proposed near Fort Frances. The OFAH is concerned that a development of this scale will result in significant impacts to fish and fish habitat. We expressed concerns about impacts to changes in groundwater and surface waters, as well as the discharge of effluent and contaminants and the subsequent accumulation of contaminants in fish. In a response addressing our comments and concerns, Rainy River Resources Ltd. stated that priority was given to avoiding impacts. They stated that the company has worked diligently with MNR and DFO to avoid or minimize environmental impacts, and acknowledged the importance of recreational fishing. As part of the development they will be required to conduct an intensive Environmental Effects Monitoring program, as well as other types of provincially and federally required monitoring programs. The OFAH has requested to remain involved as the process moves forward.

### **MNR-71 & MNR-74 Declaration Orders Consolidation and EAA Coverage for FMPs**

The OFAH provided comments on the proposed revisions to the current Forest Management Planning (FMP) process and the consolidation of two (71 and 74) declaration orders (EBR # 011-9374). The OFAH supported the revision of the current FMP process to provide greater clarity; however, we were concerned with the proposed reduction of formal public comment opportunities. The OFAH provided comments to ensure anglers, hunters and other key stakeholders did not lose, or have a diminished role in the forest management planning process.

## **Other Land Use Issues**

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

A Crown Land Use Policy Atlas (CLUPA) Amendment #2011-011 was posted to complete minor administrative corrections, add clarity to the wording of the CLUPA reports, and to re-designate

29 management areas from General Use to Enhanced Management Areas associated with the Temagami Land Use Plan (TLUP). The OFAH submitted a response with concerns about having public consultation occurring through the CLUPA instead of the TLUP. The OFAH received a response from MNR indicating that no further changes will be made to the TLUP document itself. In addition, we had requested an additional opportunity for the public to participate in the 10-year review of the plan. Despite being assured that the amendment proposal was “minor” and “administrative in nature only,” the OFAH was informed that the amendment posting met the requirements of public consultation for the 10-year “scoped” review of the plan and no further consultation will be completed.

### **Proposed Amendment to the Greenbelt Plan (OFAH Zone J)**

The OFAH provided comment on the Proposed Amendments to the Greenbelt Plan – Glenorchy Lands and Urban River Valleys (EBR#011-6331). We were supportive of the proposal to add an additional Urban River Valley designation to the Greenbelt Plan to provide more protection to these important river systems. The proximity to large urban areas poses many challenges in protecting the ecological integrity of these systems, but could also allow for these areas to provide substantial social and economic benefits. We are concerned that the addition of 255 hectares (630 acres) of provincially-owned lands (currently part of the Glenorchy Conservation Area) to the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan will result in an overall weakening of protection for natural resources. The changes in land use designation could provide opportunities for development (which were previously prohibited) that may negatively impact natural heritage features and functions and/or result in access restrictions for anglers.

### **Strengthening Ontario’s Trail Strategy**

The OFAH provided comments on Strengthening Ontario’s Trail Strategy (EBR #011-9565). The OFAH agreed that there should be a new term for a trail type in Ontario, “designated recreational trail.” We cautioned that the term “trail” has a different meaning for each user group, and can also be different depending on the socioeconomic priorities of a given region and specific local land uses. We recommended the definition be flexible enough to encompass everything from urban walking trails to remote or semi-remote forest access roads. The OFAH recommended that long-term public access to trails/roads be preserved and requested an increase in the frequency of reviews of land use/management plans currently employed for provincial public lands and protected areas. We also recommended that private land liability protection, easements and incentives should be addressed. The OFAH noted that there was little support/consideration for recreational vehicle use in the trail use strategy. Currently there is a negative stigma associated with trail use by motorized vehicles and for traditional heritage purposes (hunting, fishing, and trapping). We requested more focus on education and outreach about hunting and fishing as compatible activities with other trail uses, and noted that some users require recreational vehicles to access natural resources due to age and mobility issues, as well as to transport gear, and retrieve big game animals.

### **Perth County Rail Trail (OFAH Zone J)**

The OFAH received concerns from members regarding the proposed leasing of former CP Rail lands in Perth County as part of the Goderich to Guelph (G2G) recreational trail system.

Concerns were related to potential changes in permitted activities should the lands be leased, including the prohibition of hunting and ATV use. Public meetings were attended by several representatives of OFAH Zone J. OFAH will remain engaged in this matter to ensure that hunting opportunities are not lost in this process.

### **MNR’s Modernization of Approvals – Proposed Changes to the Endangered Species Act**

The OFAH reviewed and commented on changes to the Endangered Species Act proposed through MNR’s Modernization of Approvals. In a later decision notice posted to the Environmental Registry, we were pleased to see that Safe Harbour measures were in fact incorporated into the regulation; however, we were disappointed that our recommendations for extending Safe Harbour provisions beyond property boundaries was not incorporated. We remain concerned that there is the potential for neighbouring property owners to be impacted because they may not be encompassed by the Safe Harbour provision. In addition, we acknowledge that many best practices were incorporated into the regulation, which may still result in an overly onerous process and limit the number of proponents who would uptake this restrictive provision (i.e. timing restrictions and relocation of species costs may result in proponents simply opting for outright removal of species/habitats through Overall Benefit Permits instead of utilizing the Safe Harbour provisions). Given the broad nature of the proposal it was difficult to fully assess what the implications of the changes may be, therefore we could not yet fully support the proposed approaches until specific changes to the Act can be reviewed.

### **MNR’s Modernization of Approvals – Proposed Regulatory Amendments to Work Permits**

The OFAH provided comments on EBR#011-7669 that were generally positive. The OFAH supports a more efficient and cost-effective approach for the approvals process, as long as it does not come at the expense of Crown land resources. The proposal to replace Work Permits with Rules in Regulation or Registration with Rules in Regulation, is a proposal that the OFAH is willing to support in principle. These proposed changes should help lessen the regulatory burden for individuals or groups wishing to undertake minor maintenance activities (e.g. minor maintenance to trails or roads). We also expressed our opposition to the decommissioning of roads. We recommend that opportunities should be made available for member clubs or groups to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to maintain portions of the road whenever decommissioning is proposed.

### **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. The CLUPA can be challenging to use effectively, so we created a free electronic CLUPA guide to assist members in searching for Crown land hunting and fishing opportunities. In 2013, the MNR updated the appearance of the CLUPA, and we changed the guide to match the look of the new site. Despite having distributed well over 700 guides, there remains a steady demand.



# Invading Species

*Harmful invasive species can have devastating impacts on our aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. This in turn can impact our fish and wildlife populations and the quality of our fishing and hunting opportunities. Working in partnership with others, the OFAH strives to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful invasive species in Ontario to ensure our lands and waters can continue to support healthy fish and wildlife populations.*

## Invading Species Awareness Program



ONTARIO'S  
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 2013, in collaboration with hundreds of community groups, nongovernment organizations, and all levels of government, the ISAP reached millions of Ontarians and engaged the public's participation in preventing the spread of invasive species.

## Partnerships

In 2013, the OFAH and MNR continued the successful joint delivery of the ISAP, with OFAH staff working collaboratively with staff from the MNR's Biodiversity Branch, as well as numerous district offices and provincial parks across the province. Funding was also received from Environment Canada's Great Lakes Management and Reporting Section, the Canada/Ontario Invasive Species Centre, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Canada Summer Jobs Program.

Numerous organizations made valuable in-kind and financial contributions to the ISAP in 2013. These organizations included: MNR, Ontario Invasive Plant Council, Environment Canada, Canada/Ontario Invasive Species Centre, Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network, Algonquin Provincial Park, Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, Credit Valley Conservation Authority, Kids for Turtles Environmental Education, Killbear Provincial Park, Kirkland Lake District MNR, Lower Trent Conservation Authority, Manitoulin Streams, Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council, Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority, Nipigon District MNR, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation

Authority, Pinery Provincial Park, Plenty Canada, Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, Rondeau Provincial Park, Sibbald Point Provincial Park, South Nation Conservation Authority, University of Windsor, Voyageur Provincial Park, Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, Wheatley Provincial Park, OFAH Zones, Federation of Ontario Cottager's Association, Lake of the Woods District Property Owner's Association, Thunder Bay District Stewardship Council, University of Georgia, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Conservation Ontario, Toronto Region Conservation Authority, City of Mississauga, County of Renfrew, York Region, University of Toronto, Sault College, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Kawartha Conservation, Sir Sandford Fleming College, Big Al's Pet Store, Ontario Streams, Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council and the Minnesota Sea Grant.

## Capacity Building

Program staff participated as members of several committees formed to address the threats posed by invasive species. Committee membership for 2013 included: the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species Technical Committee, Canadian Aquatic Invasive Species Network II, Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Annex Six Aquatic Invasive Species Extended Subcommittee, Lake of the Woods International Multi-Agency Working Group on Aquatic Invasive Species, Ontario Invasive Plant Council Communications Committee, Ontario Invasive Plant Council Horticulture Outreach Collaborative, Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network, Emerald Ash Borer Task Force Communications Committee (Thunder Bay) and the Ontario Phragmites Working Group.





## Communications

Program staff were successful in attracting media interest regarding invasive species. Their efforts resulted in over 40 media/promotional contacts with the program being profiled in newsprint, radio, and television, reaching millions of people. Highlights include stories on *CBC Radio* (Sudbury), *Peterborough Examiner*, *Orangeville Citizen*, *Chatham Daily News*, *CBC News (Thunder Bay)*, *Angler and Hunter Radio*, *CHEX TV*, a local Rogers cable television show (Orillia), and numerous profiles in *Ontario OUT OF DOORS* and *Angler and Hunter Hotline*.

## Program Outreach Overview

The ISAP conducted outreach to a broad audience in 2013, including anglers, hunters, recreational boaters, gardeners, ATV users, aquarium hobbyists, educational institutions, landowners, and the general public. Staff attended more than 210 events, including the Lake Simcoe Science Forum, A.D. Latonnell Conference and Symposium, Toronto Sportsmen's Show and the International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species. Numerous workshops and presentations were delivered, and strategic initiatives were developed and coordinated by staff. As a result, hundreds of thousands of pieces educational material were distributed province-wide, and program staff fielded direct calls/requests from over 795 people to the Invading Species Hotline.

## Educational Materials

### Interactive Display at Algonquin Park

With funding support from the Canada/Ontario Invasive Species Centre, program staff developed and coordinated the installation of an interactive invasive species display at the Algonquin Park Visitor's Centre. The display includes invasive species profiles, information on how to help prevent the spread of invasive species, issues specific to Algonquin Park, and a game that illustrates the impacts of invasive species.

### Lake Superior Aquatic Invasive Species Guide

Program staff are working with staff from Environment Canada, MNR, and the Minnesota Sea Grant to produce a binational Lake Superior Aquatic Invasive Species Guide.

### Aquatic Invasive Species Billboards

Two new billboards were installed along Highway 11 in Rainy River, Ontario. The billboards are intended to educate non-resident anglers on the Ontario regulations pertaining to the movement of live baitfish into Ontario.

### Invasive Species Website & Social Media

Program staff continue to utilize Facebook and Twitter to reach a broader audience with invasive species messaging. The program

has 558 followers on Facebook and 547 followers on Twitter. Program staff maintain the ISAP website ([www.invadingspecies.com](http://www.invadingspecies.com)) and distribute an e-newsletter to over 120 subscribers. The ISAP website was visited over 165,000 times in 2013.

## Targeted Education & Outreach

### 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 Whitney, Oshawa, Mississauga, Orillia, Nobel, Kirkland Lake, Trenton, Manitowaning, Lanark (2), Nipigon, Utopia, Peterborough, Grand Bend, Manotick, Morpeth, Sutton West, Finch, Windsor, Chute a Blondeau, Wasaga Beach and Wheatley. The summer was extremely successful for the Invading Species Hit Squad. Following a two day training workshop held at the OFAH/Mario Cortellucci Hunting & Fishing Heritage Centre, our team of 22 summer staff, working in partnership with ISAP program staff, MNR district offices, stewardship councils, conservation authorities, provincial parks and nongovernment organizations, hit the ground running, attending more than 150 community events across Ontario. Events included boat launch/watercraft inspections, presentations, attending meetings, setting up booths at community events and delivering interpretive programs in provincial parks.

### Invasive Species Intern

With funding assistance from the Canada/Ontario Invasive Species Centre, the ISAP hired an Invasive Species Intern in 2013 to assist with the delivery of numerous projects. Projects included assisting program staff with the development of a promotional/marketing plan to promote the availability of the EDDMapS system in Ontario; assisting program staff with the coordination, scheduling and promotion of training workshops and volunteer monitoring events to engage Ontarians in using EDDMapS (on-line and mobile); working with program staff, MNR, and DFO to engage the public and generate awareness of Asian Carps (e.g., development of a radio public service announcement); working with OFAH and MNR staff to develop a fact sheet and web content; and utilizing social media to educate the public on the existence of the new aquatic invasive species regulations being developed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

### Live Release Project

Staff worked with the MNR, the University of Toronto, and French Planning Services Inc. on a project focused on better understanding the cultural motivations behind the live release of organisms into natural environments. The project involved a literature review, telephone interviews with experts and practitioners, and a stakeholder workshop. Twenty-eight interested and knowledgeable representatives from provincial, municipal and federal levels of government, conservation authorities, ENGOs, industry and academia participated in the workshop and provided excellent feedback on the issue. The results demonstrated that cultural live release occurs in Canada and may contribute to invasive species introductions. However, better data is needed on the extent and nature of this practice, the types and numbers of animals released, and the viability of alternatives.

## Lake Simcoe Outreach

A series of on-ice outreach events promoting awareness of invasive species during the ice fishing season on Lake Simcoe continued this winter in partnership with staff from the Aurora District MNR office. This program, "Operation Bait Bucket," was successful in distributing over 945 educational lures. In total, staff travelled over 300 km by snowmobile to reach anglers on Lake Simcoe. Program staff also launched "Operation Boat Clean" at the Barrie Marina, in partnership with Aurora District MNR. Staff assisted with the installation of a boat wash station at the marina to raise awareness about the importance of cleaning your boat after it is taken out of the water to prevent the introduction/spread of invasive species. Staff also delivered "Operation Boat Clean" resources (educational signs and post cards) for installation and distribution to 28 marinas in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

## Invasive Species Workshops

Program staff delivered Aquatic Invasive Species Training Workshops to the staff and students at Sault College. Over 70 individuals were trained in invasive species identification, sampling and reporting. Program staff also delivered an Invasive Plant Management Workshop for Landowners in partnership with York Region, the Ontario Invasive Plant Council and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. The workshop included both presentations and hands-on activities for removing Common Buckthorn, Garlic Mustard and Dog-strangling Vine. A total of 60 participants were present for the workshop.

## Pet Store Outreach

With funding support from the Canada/Ontario Invasive Species Centre, program staff worked with key partners including Big Al's Pet Store, Ontario Streams and the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), to coordinate a pilot project with pet stores to encourage pet owners to not release unwanted pets into the wild. It was identified that PIJAC's Habitattitude campaign aligned with the goals and objectives and there was an opportunity to combine resources and work together to deliver a joint message to the public. As a result, staff worked with PIJAC Canada to amalgamate the Habitattitude campaign with ISAP's "Keep. Care. Be Aware." messaging in order to create a unified campaign targeting the release of unwanted pets. Campaign resources were promoted and/or distributed to Big Al's Pet Store, as well as numerous pet stores in the Peterborough and Kawartha Lakes area, including Pet Valu, Pawz 'N' Clawz, Paulmac's Pet Foods, PetSmart and PJ's Pets.

## Invasive Species Information Management

### Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System

There's an app for that! (or there will be). With funding provided by the Canada/Ontario Invasive Species Centre, ISAP staff worked with the University of Georgia's Centre for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health and the MNR to create a smartphone application that will allow anyone with a smartphone to take a picture of a suspect invasive species and upload it to the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System for Ontario (EDDMapS Ontario). In 2013, OFAH staff worked to develop EDDMapS Ontario. EDDMapS is an innovative, web-based mapping tool which is used to document the distribution of invasive species and help identify the leading edge of new invasions.

## Invading Species Hotline

In 2013, program staff received over 795 calls to the Invading Species Hotline to report a sighting, request materials, or to seek more information on invasive species. This resulted in the distribution of hundreds of thousands of pieces of educational material. Hundreds of sighting reports for a variety of invasive species were received as a result of the contacts made directly through the Invading Species Hotline and EDDMapS Ontario.

## Invasive Species Monitoring & Control

### Invading Species Watch

Interest in the Invading Species Watch Program continued to be strong in 2013. Over 31 volunteers participated in the program with over 120 lakes monitored across the province for the presence of zebra mussel veligers and spiny waterfleas.

### Garlic Mustard

Program staff, in partnership with the Ontario Invasive Plant Council, Kawartha Conservation, and members of the public, teamed up to rid Ken Reid Conservation Area in Lindsay, Ontario of invasive Garlic Mustard. Efforts resulted in the removal of 30 yard waste bags of the plant, totaling 728 lbs. Funding for this event was provided by the Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network in celebration of International Biodiversity Day.

### European Water Chestnut

Efforts to control European Water Chestnut in the Ottawa River continued in 2013. A member of the Invading Species Hit Squad was based out of Voyageur Provincial Park and assisted with this control project. A team of 10 people worked together to remove populations from the Ottawa River via manual removal and the use of specially designed boats that cut and collect the plants. In addition to removal, monitoring was conducted to ensure that the populations were not spreading to new locations.

### Water Soldier

Program staff, in partnership with Trent University and Sir Sandford Fleming College, monitored the Trent Severn Waterway above and below Healey Falls for the presence of Water Soldier. No new populations were found outside of known infested waters.

## Canada Summer Jobs Program

In 2013, the OFAH provided university, college and high school students with summer employment. In total over 9,300 hours of student labour were made possible through over \$95,000 in funding from the Canadian government.

In partnership with several organizations, the OFAH employed students in the communities of Chute a Blondeau, Finch, Grand Bend, Kirkland Lake, Lanark, Manitowaning, Manotick, Mississauga, Morpeth, Nipigon, Nobel, Orillia, Oshawa, Peterborough, Sutton, Trenton, Utopia, Wasaga Beach, Wheatley, Whitney and Windsor.

The Invading Species Awareness Program, Get Outdoors summer camp, OFAH/Mario Cortellucci Hunting & Fishing Heritage Centre, OFAH TackleShare program, and OFAH Communications welcomed students, whose efforts attracted excellent media attention for the program initiatives.

# Ontario Invasive Plant Council



The Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC) is an incorporated non-profit organization. It is hosted within the OFAH building and the OFAH provides office space and

administrative support for OIPC staff, as well as contributing to the OIPC Board of Directors. OIPC's mandate is to provide leadership, expertise and a forum to engage and empower Ontarians to take action on invasive plant issues. The OIPC works closely with the OFAH and the ISAP on provincial initiatives related to invasive plant species. In 2013, the OIPC was involved in numerous activities, media and workshops across the province.

## OIPC Committees

The OIPC has always worked to meet its objectives through its five committees. These include Policy, Communications, Research/Control, Fundraising, and Horticultural Outreach Collaborative. In 2013, the OIPC partnered with the already established Ontario Phragmites Working Group (OPWG) to provide infrastructure and administrative support to help the OPWG continue their work and meet their goals.

## Grow Me Instead Nursery Recognition Program Expansion

The Grow Me Instead Program consists of two guidebooks (one for northern Ontario and one for southern Ontario), a canned presentation, and a nursery recognition program. The program focuses on providing information on potentially invasive garden plants, while giving some ideas for non-invasive plant alternatives. Since it began, this program has expanded in stages across Ontario, including this summer, through our local coordinator partners. There are now 33 nurseries in southern Ontario signed on to the program. A full list can be found on the OIPC website.

## Look Before You Leave

The Look Before You Leave Campaign began in 2009 as a tool to educate cottagers, campers, and outdoor enthusiasts about how they can avoid inadvertently bringing invasive species from home to their summer activity destinations. This year, OIPC relaunched the 24 for 24 cartoon campaign on the OIPC Facebook and Twitter pages, and ads were put in the Hunting Regulations Summary and Ontario Parks tabloids. The Look Before You Leave campaign also expanded its reach by providing messaging in the Ontario Parks "Learn to Camp" program curriculum.

## Workshops: Clean Equipment Protocol, Landowner Control, and Giant Hogweed

The Clean Equipment Protocol was developed to establish a standard for cleaning vehicles and equipment, and to provide a guide for its application where current codes of practice, industry standards or other environmental management plans are not already in place. Clean Equipment workshops were held in various locations across Ontario, and a Clean Equipment demonstration was held at the Ontario Vegetative Management Association fall meeting. Workshops targeted Ontario Parks' staff, industry workers, and municipalities.

The OIPC also helped organize a Giant Hogweed training workshop for municipality workers, health unit employees, and others in the Sudbury area.

The OIPC partnered with York Region, Lake Simcoe Region

Conservation Authority, Aurora District MNR, and the ISAP to offer a landowner workshop on managing invasive plants.

## Invasive Species Monitoring and Management Projects

This year, OIPC partnered with Voyageur Provincial Park to assist the park in its efforts to eradicate invasive Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*). Park staff did additional monitoring and removal of plants outside the park boundaries along the Ottawa River, and worked to clear five bays of Water Chestnut using a cutting boat and a mechanical harvesting boat. They also initiated volunteer days, where members of the public could join in to assist in monitoring and manual removal, as well as seed collection along the beaches. The project will continue next summer.

The OIPC continues to participate on the Early Detection Distribution (EDD)MaPS steering committee, and work with Credit Valley Conservation to assist them in their efforts to start a local early detection and rapid response network for their region.

## Best Management Practices (BMP) Documents

The OIPC, along with partners, has had success with the Best Management Practices series which provide information on the biology, identification features, distribution, habitat, control measures, prevention and restoration efforts (once invasive plant has been removed) of various species. In 2013, OIPC completed BMPs for Japanese Knotweed, Garlic Mustard and Reed Canary Grass which can be found on the control information page of the OIPC website, along with five other BMPs.

## OIPC 7th Annual General Meeting and Invasive Plant Symposium

The OIPC hosted its 7th AGM and Invasive Plant Symposium at Geneva Park, near Orillia. The event boasted 22 speakers focusing on invasive plant species, brainstorming sessions for OIPC committees, networking opportunities and field tours. Over 100 people were in attendance and it was very well received.

## Social Media/ Newsletter

The OIPC distributes monthly updates to a large network of individuals, who receive information about invasive plant research, control projects, educational material, job postings, conferences, etc., that are being conducted across the province.

The OIPC website [www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca](http://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca), provides users with up-to-date information including: downloadable educational materials, strategic documents, an events calendar, links to other invasive plant sites, board activity notes, and more. The OIPC also provides daily updates to followers through its Facebook and Twitter presence at [www.twitter.com/OIPC1](http://www.twitter.com/OIPC1) and [www.facebook.com/ontarioinvasiveplantcouncil](http://www.facebook.com/ontarioinvasiveplantcouncil).

## Partnerships

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

For information about the OIPC, including our annual report, visit [www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca](http://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca) or join our mailing list by emailing [info@oninvasives.ca](mailto:info@oninvasives.ca).