

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS



Ontario Conservation Centre

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April 7, 2015

Ms. Corinne Nelson, RPF
Regional Director, Northeast Region
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
5520 Highway 101 East
South Porcupine, Ontario
P0N 1H0

Dear Ms. Nelson:

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Magpie Forest 2009-2019 Forest Management Plan Phase II Planned Operations. In our original comments we expressed concern with the proposed erection of a number of signs stating "Unauthorized motorized vehicular travel prohibited beyond this point." In the plan, the intent behind these new signs was unclear. Therefore, we assumed they were to be used as access restrictions to protect remote tourism values and noted that the proposed wording was inconsistent with the existing access restriction signs in the forest.

We were then invited to, and participated in, an issue resolution process on February 19, where we were informed that the intent of the signs was not to protect remote tourism values, but rather to "accelerate road decommissioning efforts." This was the reason that the wording on the signs differed from existing signs in the forest that state access restrictions to specific tourism lake(s), allowing for continued use of the road for safe passage and other low impact natural heritage recreational activities. Again, the intent and rationale for the wording on these new signs was not explained in the plan (for public consumption and comment) nor was it well understood by the attendees of the issue resolution meeting.

The OFAH has a long history of reviewing forest management plans and a keen interest in road decommissioning and access restrictions. Our understanding of natural decommissioning of forest access roads was to stop maintaining the road and allow for natural process to reclaim the area. During this time, the public could continue to use the "road" at their own risk. The natural decommissioning of roads is a common forestry practice and is generally more palatable to the public than the use of access restrictions including signs, berms, gates, etc. In the issue resolution meeting it was stated that the new signs are being used to accelerate this natural regeneration of specific roads. To our knowledge, the use of access restriction signs to "accelerate" natural decommissioning is not a common practice. According to the issue resolution letter sent to a local outfitter, it appears that some of the roads that are scheduled to receive access restriction are located close to a remote tourism lake(s). There is a belief among many stakeholders that the introduction of access restrictions signs on these roads is an attempt to appease the public access concerns of a local tourist operator, more so than to "accelerate" natural road decommissioning. The OFAH also has concerns with the proposal for a site visit by the district manager and stakeholders to determine if a road requires a sign; we do not feel that this would solve any issues. We strongly suggest that these roads should be left to naturally regenerate with no access restrictions. The staff time and government money required for site visits and to make, erect, and enforce these signs would be better used to maintain and enhance existing public access roads to the benefit of all natural resource users.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS AND HUNTERS

Ms. Corrinne Nelson
April 7, 2015
Page Two

Given the opposition and confusion by stakeholders, it is clear that the public and stakeholders were not provided with sufficient information to make informed comments on the phase two road planning for the Magpie Forest. The OFAH is not satisfied with the decision by the district manager and suggests a review by the regional director of the Northeast Region.

Yours in Conservation,



Chris Godwin
Land Use Specialist

CG/gh

cc: OFAH Zone C Executive
OFAH Land Use/Access/Trails Advisory Committee
Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director
Matt DeMille, OFAH Manager, Fish & Wildlife Services