



OFAH TOOLKIT FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS

FISHING & HUNTING, THE OFAH, AND MUNICIPALITIES



FISHING AND HUNTING ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR CANADIAN HERITAGE. THESE ACTIVITIES REMAIN ENTRENCHED IN OUR CULTURE AND HELP TO SHAPE THE IDENTITY OF MILLIONS OF ONTARIANS TODAY — NOT JUST IN SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL ONTARIO, BUT IN EVERY MUNICIPALITY THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE.

Whether your municipality is in the north or south, is rural or urban, is big or small, fishing and hunting has social relevance to your residents and significant economic potential for your local economy. As land managers and decision-makers, municipalities have an important role to play in conservation and access to outdoor opportunities like fishing and hunting.

The **Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH)** is Ontario's largest non-profit, conservation-based organization representing **100,000** members, subscribers and supporters, and **740** member-clubs. On behalf of our members, the OFAH engages on policy issues related to fish, wildlife, fishing, hunting, firearms, land use, access, species at risk, and many other related topics. The OFAH has a long history of working with municipalities on a variety of these important issues.

Our organization is also home to the **Invading Species Awareness Program, Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program, Community Hatchery Program, Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) Peterborough, National Archery in the Schools Program, Tackleshare, Ontario Family Fishing Events**, and many other conservation and education programming that benefits Ontarians.

The **OFAH TOOLKIT FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS** includes a few of the most prominent topics where an important intersection between the interests of municipalities and the outdoors community exists. Municipalities can use this guide to better understand the interests, issues, and opportunities associated with fishing, hunting and conservation enthusiasts, and ultimately incorporate them into municipal planning and decision making.

The OFAH is available to offer support to municipalities for initiatives related to fishing, hunting, and conservation. If your municipality is engaging on the topics in this toolkit or anything else relevant to our organization, please don't hesitate to connect with us.

IN THIS TOOLKIT, YOU WILL FIND INFORMATION ON...

- FISHING ACCESS • BOWHUNTING IN CITY LIMITS
- DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS BY-LAWS
- HUNTING ON MUNICIPAL LANDS • SUNDAY GUN HUNTING

FISHING ACCESS

BACKGROUND

- Angling is a **\$2.2-billion** industry in Ontario, engaging over **1.4 million** citizens and drawing in visitors from outside the province to enjoy our fisheries. Fishing brings money to municipalities through spending on fuel, food, accommodations, tackle/gear, etc.
- Fishing in urban areas is an opportunity for residents, particularly youth, to enjoy the outdoors, and has been recognized in the Ontario Children's Outdoor Charter.
- Many waterbodies in Ontario are considered Crown resources, and access to public streams, rivers, and lakes should be maintained without unnecessary and restrictive by-laws, licensing, or additional fees.
- Limiting access complicates provincial fisheries management. The revenue from fishing licence fees goes into the MNRF's Fish and Wildlife Special Purpose Account, which supports regulation, science, enforcement, conservation, licensing, and education.
- When issues related to fishing arise, responsible anglers are often lumped in with vandals, poachers, and other illegal activities that result in broad, simplistic restrictions on fishing to curtail bad behaviour of a few individuals.
- Municipalities are supported by the angling community when they maintain and increase barrier-free access, and promote fishing.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Fishing opportunities in Ontario should be promoted in and by municipalities to capitalize on benefits.
- Proactive and constructive ways to handle concerns are ultimately simpler and more beneficial for all.
- An ideal public fishing area should be safe and accessible, and may be enhanced by clear paths and signage, transit access, washrooms, and garbage receptacles with frequent removal.
- Strategically designed fishing areas (including piers, nodes, and platforms) can help direct angling activity to specific locations and away from inappropriate places such as private property, fish sanctuaries, and areas lacking adequate garbage receptacles or washroom facilities.
- Other proven measures taken by municipalities in Ontario: coordinated MNRF enforcement blitzes and police service training; improved education and outreach for anglers; promotion of the community as a fishing destination; improved collaboration with all stakeholders to develop strategies to manage concerns.
- If concerns arise, then education and outreach promoting responsible fishing is a key first step with additional mitigation strategies (as described above) implemented where appropriate.
- *Engage the OFAH* -- the OFAH is willing to work with municipalities to address fishing-related concerns and to promote fishing in their community (See video links below).

WHO BENEFITS?

- Promotion and facilitation of responsible angling has significant positive economic impacts in a municipality.
- Recreational fishing promotes healthy lifestyles while creating meaningful community connections. Access to fishing locations can act as a conduit to these experiences for all age groups and demographics. In urban areas in particular we must ensure these experiences are available to youth, those with limited access to transportation, and new Canadians.

RESOURCES

- [Respectful Fishing -- What Not to Do](#)
- [Be a responsible angler](#)
- [Fishing in Your Backyard](#)
- [Ontario's Provincial Fish Strategy: Fish for the Future](#)
- [Children's Outdoor Charter](#)



INVADING SPECIES AWARENESS PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

- Invasive species are the second leading cause of species extinctions worldwide after habitat loss (IUCN, 2014).
- Invasive species pose a number of threats to municipal forests, natural areas, the local economy, and residents (e.g., degradation of natural areas, danger to human health and safety, recreation).
- Municipalities are responsible for managing street trees, municipally designated forests and woodlands, natural areas, and public parks.
- Municipal costs are estimated at **\$55 million** annually to combat invasive species (ISC, 2017).

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Municipalities can play a key role in responding to invasive species through local management and educating the public to change perceptions and behaviours around their use and spread, by:
 1. Incorporating Invasive Species Management into Land Use Planning to mitigate impacts (e.g. risk to human health, natural area degradation) on a local scale.
 2. Promoting the use of EDDMapS Ontario as a fast and easy way to map invasive species without requiring any GIS or technical computer experience to help engage the public in learning more about invasive species.
 3. Coordinating Staff Training and Education to assist with tracking and mapping invasive species, as well as communicating with the public.
 4. Incorporate invasive species messaging into communications plans for municipal programs to educate residents and the public through websites, social media, mail-outs, workshops, signage, etc.

WHO BENEFITS?

- Effective management and control of invasive species presents challenges, but many harmful impacts can be reduced by working collaboratively on a local scale. The most cost-effective strategy is to invest in proactive education and outreach.

RESOURCES

Invading Species Awareness Program – www.invadingspecies.com

- Invasive species monitoring and reporting
- Free educational resources

Ontario Invasive Plant Council – www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca

- Can assist municipalities with developing an Invasive Plant Management Strategy

EDDMapS Ontario – www.eddmaps.org/ontario

- Free, web-based invasive species reporting tool (with affiliated mobile app.)
- View species profiles, distribution, set up local alerts, or report invasive species using this tool



BOW HUNTING IN CITY LIMITS

BACKGROUND

- The combination of no hunting, low predator numbers, and ample food resources that exist within many Ontario municipalities allow deer populations to grow and persist at high densities. With this comes increased human-deer conflict, including the destruction of public and private property, increased instances of deer-vehicle collisions, and the potential spread of disease (i.e. Lyme) both among deer as well as to humans, pets, and livestock.
- Fencing, repellants, deterrents, and the planting of deer resistant plants can provide localized, short-term relief from some of these issues but will not address the root cause.
- Wildlife professionals can employ methods such as fertility control, trap and relocate or trap and shoot programs, and sharpshooting. However, these methods incur significant costs to the municipality in terms of both staff time and resources, with costs ranging from approximately \$100 to \$3,000 per deer. Furthermore, fertility control has limited effectiveness in free-ranging populations and relocated deer can spread disease and parasites.
- Ontario municipalities such as Thunder Bay, Shuniah, and Kenora have established successful municipal hunting programs to address concerns.
- Regulated hunting is a safe, provincially- and federally-recognized heritage activity that results in a net economic benefit for municipalities. Urban bowhunting results in an economic gain as hunters purchase equipment, food, gas, and lodging from local merchants. Big game hunters contributed **\$169,000,000** to the Ontario economy in 2012.
- Hunters are required to complete hunter safety training (and firearms safety course if they hunt with a firearm) with the result being lower injury rates than bicycling, boating, swimming, horse-back riding, and most recreational field sports. Established city bowhunting programs, such as those currently taking place in Thunder Bay and Shuniah, place additional requirements on hunters to further ensure public safety.



HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

- *Engage the OFAH staff contact.* E-mail: [Keith Munro](#)
- Municipalities can develop bowhunting opportunities based on the framework currently in place for Thunder Bay, Shuniah, and Kenora, Ontario. These by-laws were enacted in 2012, 2015, and 2016, respectively, and include various restrictions relevant in the individual municipality. For example, by-laws can include areas that can be hunted, equipment that must be used (i.e. archery-only), requirement for hunters to obtain landowner permission, and the minimum distance to neighbours, dwellings, and highways.
- To exert greater control and monitoring of deer harvest, municipalities can lobby the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) to subdivide wildlife management units (WMU) to create and track specific harvest allocations within municipal limits.

WHO BENEFITS?

- Urban bowhunting provides municipalities with a safe and economically positive method of controlling deer populations.
- Addressing human-deer conflict through effective population control can lead the public to view wildlife as a valuable resource rather than nuisance.

RESOURCES

- [Thunder Bay hunting by-law](#)
- [Shuniah hunting by-law](#)
- [Kenora hunting by-law](#)
- [OFAH Landowner Permission Form](#)
- [Urban Deer Technical Guide, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife](#)
- [2012 Canadian Nature Survey](#)

DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS BY-LAWS



BACKGROUND

- The Municipal Act (Section 119) allows a municipality to create a by-law to restrict the discharge of firearms in the interest of public safety; however, a municipality must clearly demonstrate that any restriction is justifiable, and not based on public opinion or perception of hunting, trapping, or recreational shooting.
- Municipal by-laws do not supersede provincial or federal rules and regulations.
- Hunting rules and regulations are provincially governed, while firearms rules and regulations are federally governed.
- Hunting is both provincially and federally recognized as a Heritage Activity (2002 & 2014, respectively).
- Since 2013, the OFAH has been involved in over 50 discharge of firearm by-laws across the province.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Engage the OFAH staff contact** early in the process (as a resource for information). E-mail: [Brian McRae](mailto:Brian.McRae@ofah.on.ca)
- Create a working group/committee.
- Validate concerns/complaints before contemplating changes, as well as understand provincial and federal rules and regulations (and jurisdiction for a given issue) by initiating and maintaining dialogue with appropriate government agencies.
- Seek public input on possible options.

WHO BENEFITS?

- OFAH's willingness to offer our experience and expertise in the crafting of these by-laws to ensure that *IF* by-laws (or amendments to existing by-laws) are needed, they have a focus on public safety and don't unnecessarily restrict hunting, trapping, and recreational shooting opportunities.
- Ensures government transparency and accountability.

RESOURCES

- Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF): www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry
- MNRF TIPS LINE (to report illegal activity): 1-877-847-7667
- RCMP – Canadian Firearms Program: www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/index-eng.htm

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The OFAH can assist with consideration of other municipal by-law for topics including:

- Noise
- Fishing and Hunting Accessibility
- Kennels
- ATVs

HUNTING ON MUNICIPAL LANDS

BACKGROUND

- In southern Ontario, there is very little Crown land that offers public fishing and hunting opportunities.
- Municipally owned forests are essential for many people in southern Ontario to participate in outdoor activities.
- Non-hunting user groups often oppose hunting on multi-use properties, citing safety as their main concern.
- According to Statistics Canada, hunting today is measurably safer than bicycling, boating, swimming, horseback riding, and most recreational field sports. Canada Safety Council and the National Safety Council have stated that hunting in Canada is responsible for only 0.001 percent of accidents.
- Hunting is one of the few recreational activities that require proof of competence BEFORE engaging in the activity through both hunter safety and firearms safety courses. Since the advent of the hunter safety courses administered by the OFAH on behalf of the MNRF, the injury rate for hunting accidents have become negligible.
- There are many private forests that allow public hunting via permit and/or with **OFAH liability insurance** (e.g. Simcoe County Forest, Nature Conservancy of Canada properties, Conservation Authorities, etc.).

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Engage the OFAH staff contact. E-mail: [Lauren Tonelli](mailto:Lauren.Tonelli@ofah.com)
- Where municipalities have suitably sized tracts of lands there are opportunities to allow hunting. There are many proven models that can be used to establish a system that will work.
- By requiring that hunters are OFAH members, municipalities can ensure that the hunters have liability insurance (\$5 million excess member's personal public liability insurance) to help mitigate liability concerns.
- Where a municipally owned property is next to a waterbody, fishing access and parking should be permitted and advertised.

WHO BENEFITS?

- Because of the lack of Crown land in much of southern Ontario, municipal forests are the few areas where wildlife management can take place. This can help to reduce human/wildlife conflicts such as deer vehicle collisions, bear encounters, and property damage. Hunting is the most cost-effective method of controlling wildlife populations.
- By allowing hunting within the municipality, hunters will be feeding money into the local economy (purchasing gear, gas, food, and potentially accommodations locally).
- Municipalities have the potential to charge a small fee for hunting permits to gain revenue for management of lands.
- Would allow more opportunity for residents to get out into nature and connect with the environment locally.

RESOURCES

- [OFAH member insurance](#)
- [Simcoe County Forest](#)
- [Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority](#)
- [Grand River Conservation Authority](#)
- [Otonabee Region Conservation Authority](#)



SUNDAY GUN HUNTING

BACKGROUND

- Sunday gun hunting (SGH) in southern Ontario continues to be a tremendous success story.
- In 2005, a policy developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) and Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), resulted in 67 municipalities passing resolutions in support of SGH.
- The number of municipalities that permit SGH has risen to 180 as of Aug. 31, 2018
- Each year, OFAH staff attend numerous municipal committee and council meetings to provide informative presentations about it.
- Hunting is both provincially and federally recognized as a Heritage Activity (2002 & 2014, respectively).
- There are over **470,000** trained, licensed, and responsible hunters in Ontario who contribute hundreds of millions of dollars each year to fish and wildlife conservation programs.
- In the case of private property, landowners ultimately have the right to determine whether or not to allow SGH on their land, just as they do for the rest of the week.
- According to Statistics Canada, hunting today is measurably safer than bicycling, boating, swimming, horseback riding, and most recreational field sports, including baseball and golf. In fact, both the Canada Safety Council and the National Safety Council have stated that hunting in Canada is responsible for only 0.001 percent of accidents, which pales in comparison to injuries from the sports mentioned above.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

- *Engage the OFAH staff contact.* E-mail: [Brian McRae](mailto:brian.mcrae@ofah.org)
- Invite OFAH to make a formal presentation on the numerous benefits associated with SGH – early engagement.
- A resolution is required to approve SGH (not a bylaw) followed by an approval process by to MNRF. Twice annually (March 31 and August 31), a regulation amendment is made to the provincial Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, which adds the names of municipalities to the areas where SGH is permitted. It becomes official when the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry approves the inclusion.

WHO BENEFITS?

- Four primary reasons why SGH is important to your municipality:
 - Mitigating crop and livestock damage/predation
 - Wildlife management
 - Public safety (e.g. helping to minimize wildlife-vehicle collisions)
 - Economic contributions from hunting

RESOURCES

- <https://www.ofah.org/programs/sunday-gun-hunting/>
- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/sunday-gun-hunting>



Contact the OFAH

Phone: 705-748-6324 • Email: ofah@ofah.org
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