

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS AND HUNTERS

2019



BIG GAME

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



Who are we?

CHAIR

Neil Wiens (Zone B)

MEMBERS

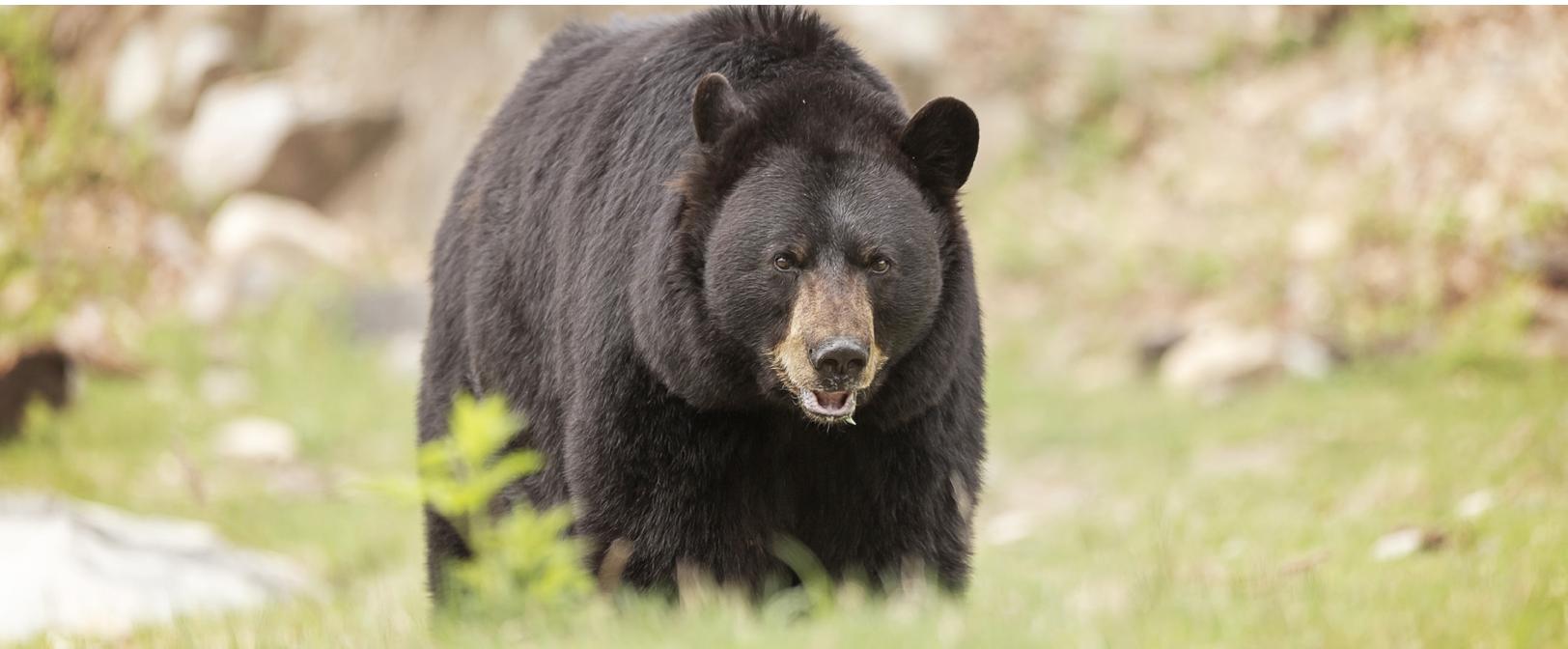
Robert Allen (Zone C)
Wendall Crosbie (Zone F)
Chris Davies (Zone E)
David Dixon (Zone G)
Gerry Giesler (Zone D)
Tony Jackson (Zone J)
Glenn Meads (Zone H)
Rick Moore (Zone A)
Wally Motz (Zone H)
Keith Munro (Staff Liaison)

Introduction

I would like to thank the committee members and our in-house contact for all of their hard work this past year. And thanks to all of our members who commented on and contacted head office with their valued perspectives of everything that was happening in the management of our valued big game species. There was certainly a lot on the go at the same time with so many proposed changes coming down from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. -- **Neil Weins, Chair, Big Game Advisory Committee.**

Black Bear

The committee had numerous discussions around the subject of black bears. We were able to review some of the data that had been collected to date from the second round of the barbed wire hair trap program. Originally done province-wide prior to 2011, we had been pushing for a refresher to help us better understand where populations stood after these last few years of spring pilot projects. The data collection for this most recent round will be completed in 2020 with the interim returns indicating that the provincial bear population remains strong with an upper estimate of about 105,000 bears. The committee raised some concerns about potential weak spots in this round of assessment. We had in-depth discussions about both Environmental Registry posting on bait placement and the return of the spring hunt. The committee helped to formulate the OFAH responses to these postings and continuously recommended to the OFAH Board of Directors that we not let up on our efforts to bring back the spring bear hunt on a permanent basis.



Elk

Elk did not receive as much attention from the committee as in past years. New inventory data was gathered in the 2019/2020 winter and with it will come the opportunity in 2020 to be more fully engaged in the management of this species with MNRF.



Moose

This past year saw a flurry of activity at the committee level with the government's Moose Management Review. We had the opportunity to comment on what was being presented at the open houses across the province, get feedback from members on the direction the program appeared to be going and deliberate on a response that best reflected our members' position. And our members certainly weighed in on this topic through phone calls, emails and Facebook to head office, which helped give the committee a flavour of sentiments being expressed. The committee members were sensitive to member comments as we reviewed both the initial options put forth by the MNRF and the Provincial Big Game Management Advisory Committee and the final proposal that was posted to the Environmental Registry, to which OFAH submitted an official response. The complexity of the program review and discussions on the proposed changes delivered by MNRF took up a lot of time for us.



White-Tailed Deer

Following on the heels of our very informative 2019 Conference which focussed on Chronic Wasting Disease, the committee worked hard to develop a strong action plan that could be taken to MNRF to persuade them to implement a strong course of action to get ahead of any potential impact of this devastating disease, ultimately resulting in the adoption of a new and updated Ontario Chronic Wasting Disease Prevention and Response Plan. The committee also had the opportunity to review and comment on Ontario's development of the White-tailed Deer Population Objective Setting and Harvest Management Guidelines.



Related items

The committee also had the opportunity to review and deliberate on a number of related, though not specifically big game, issues. We reviewed and commented on the proposed changes to the wolf and coyote hunting regulations, as well as advocated for common sense firearms regulations for wolf and coyote hunters. We provided input to the new mandatory reporting regulations. We were pleased to have the opportunity to comment and provide recommendations to help improve some of the challenges that occurred with the roll out of the Fish and Wildlife Licensing System. And we made time to talk about wild pigs and the impact they are expected to have should they continue to expand in numbers across the landscape.

