

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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Ontario Conservation Centre

OFAH FILE: 440
July 12, 2021

Point Pelee National Park
407 Monarch Lane, RR1
Leamington, ON
N8H 3V4

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Draft Management Plan for Point Pelee National Park

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) is Ontario's largest, non-profit, fish and wildlife conservation-based organization, representing 100,000 members, subscribers, and supporters, and 725 member clubs. We have reviewed the draft Management Plan for Point Pelee National Park and offer the following comments for consideration.

The OFAH would have liked to see the draft Management Plan (the Plan) for Point Pelee National Park (PPNP) include more opportunities to increase hunting and angling opportunities. One of the key strategies for the plan is "Enhancing Visitor Experience" and within that strategy increased opportunities, especially in shoulder seasons, are mentioned. However, the Plan actually looks to decrease angling opportunities within PPNP and recreational hunting is not considered. There are several objectives under the Plan that we offer specific comments on.

Objective 1.2

"A shared approach to the stewardship of natural and cultural resources provides partners and stakeholders with meaningful opportunities to contribute to and influence park management priorities."

The OFAH can offer a wealth of knowledge and experience to PPNP through partnerships on invasive species, habitat restoration, and outreach and education activities. The OFAH, through partnership with the MNRF, coordinate the Invading Species Awareness Program which has delivered invasive species identification training and outreach, reporting, and management to the public and professionals. The OFAH also delivers the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program (LOASRP) and ALUS Peterborough, both of which aid in the restoration of habitat for sensitive species. All of our programs and policy work have an outreach and education component to them that we could use to assist PPNP in the delivery of their own outreach and education programming.

Objective 2.1

"Forest and coastal ecosystem health are maintained as part of the national park's diverse, resilient habitat mosaic."

There are multiple targets within this objective that the OFAH would like to offer suggestions on, namely management of invasive species and hyperabundant species. The ISAP would be a willing partner in assisting the PPNP with the development of invasive species management plans, as well as assisting with training for employees and visitors. Additionally, the Plan outlines the need for PPNP to manage their hyperabundant white-tailed deer population and active management of double-crested cormorants. The OFAH would like to suggest that the PPNP consider implementing a hunting season for white-tailed deer and waterfowl species (including cormorants). Creating a hunting season for white-tailed deer would be beneficial ecologically, socially, and economically for PPNP. There are existing examples of deer hunts held in high traffic areas, such as the City of Thunder Bay’s hunt for overabundant white-tailed deer. They have established a hunt within city limits to help manage their deer populations and have done so by putting in rules around tree stand heights and requiring participants to use bows. A hunt in PPNP would not necessarily need to be a bow-only hunt, but it is an option to consider. Many hunters in Southwestern Ontario are looking for deer hunting locations and opportunities, so there is little doubt that there is interest in the area. Additionally, the Plan states that they are looking to increase their visitation in shoulder and off seasons, which could easily be done by permitting deer hunters to hunt in November and December. Additionally, the OFAH is supportive of PPNP actively managing cormorant populations to protect sensitive species. We suggest allowing hunting of cormorants during the existing hunting season at PPNP to aid in the ongoing management actions.

Objective 2.2

“Point Pelee’s marsh shows an improving trend as a result of collaborative active management.”

One of the Targets under this Objective is to phase out sport fishing in Point Pelee’s marsh by 2022, because it is a “non-conforming” use. The OFAH disagrees with the idea that sport fishing is a contrary activity in the special preservation zone of PPNP. The Plan does not fully explain why fishing is suddenly seen as “non-conforming” and we would like clarification on why this change is being made now. PPNP advertises and promotes canoeing and kayaking throughout the marsh in the special preservation zone, so it can be assumed that access to the marsh is not a concern with anglers. There is already a long list of restrictions that anglers must follow when fishing in PPNP, including catch and release only, no barbed hooks, no use of live or dead bait, no use of lead sinkers or jigs, and no use of chemical attractants. How exactly does angling with these limitations pose a risk to the ecosystem or species within PPNP? These restrictions mean that fishing in PPNP is not a consumptive activity and, as such, we would like to see angling opportunities be maintained in the marsh. We also believe that this target is counter to the general Plan strategy of enhancing visitor experiences by increasing activities and opportunities. The OFAH would like the opportunity to discuss fishing in PPNP further, especially in regard to creating designated fishing locations to better allow PPNP to manage angler access and distribution in the special preservation zone.

Objective 4.1

“A sustainable overall increase in visitation is achieved through targeted shoulder and winter season offers.”

PPNP is aiming to increase their off-season (November to April) visitation rates and as mentioned above, the OFAH believes that this could easily be done by allowing a fall hunting season for white-tailed deer. We also suggest looking into offering a small game hunt and a waterfowl hunt, depending on species present in PPNP during the fall/winter seasons. We also recommend not further restricting fishing in PPNP and allowing for ice fishing opportunities in the winter months. Allowing these activities would increase revenue and tourism in what is currently an off-season and could easily be implemented. Angling and hunting are recognized sustainable use activities that are regulated in Ontario and could bring in visitors who have never experienced PPNP before. There are existing examples of parks offering controlled hunting opportunities that could be copied for PPNP, such as Darlington or Rondeau Provincial Parks’ controlled waterfowl hunts, which the OFAH and our member-clubs help to administer.

Conclusion

The OFAH would appreciate the ability to work with PPNP to discuss how enhanced angling and hunting opportunities could fit in the park. We believe that these activities would benefit PPNP and surrounding areas, while also fitting into the strategies and objectives of the draft management plan. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Yours in Conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lauren Tonelli". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lauren" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Tonelli".

Lauren Tonelli
Resource Management Specialist

LT/jb

cc: OFAH Board of Directors
Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director
Matt DeMille, OFAH Manager, Fish & Wildlife Services
Mark Ryckman, OFAH Manager, Policy
OFAH Fish & Wildlife Staff