

2021

FISHERIES

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



FISHERIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR -- PETER SWORD (NEW LISKEARD)

MEMBERS

Justin McGinnis (Kenora)

Dan Polsky (Sturgeon Falls)

Brian Sutcliffe (Griffith)

Merrill Elliott (Carleton Place)

Jim Kelly (Schomberg)

Chris Geberdt (Dashwood)

Jim Bertulli (Copper Cliff)

Neil Wiens (Shuniah)

Mark Robbins (Lindsay)

Dr. Bruce Tuffs (Elginburg)

Daniel Skinner – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Ennismore)

Erin Stewart – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Peterborough)

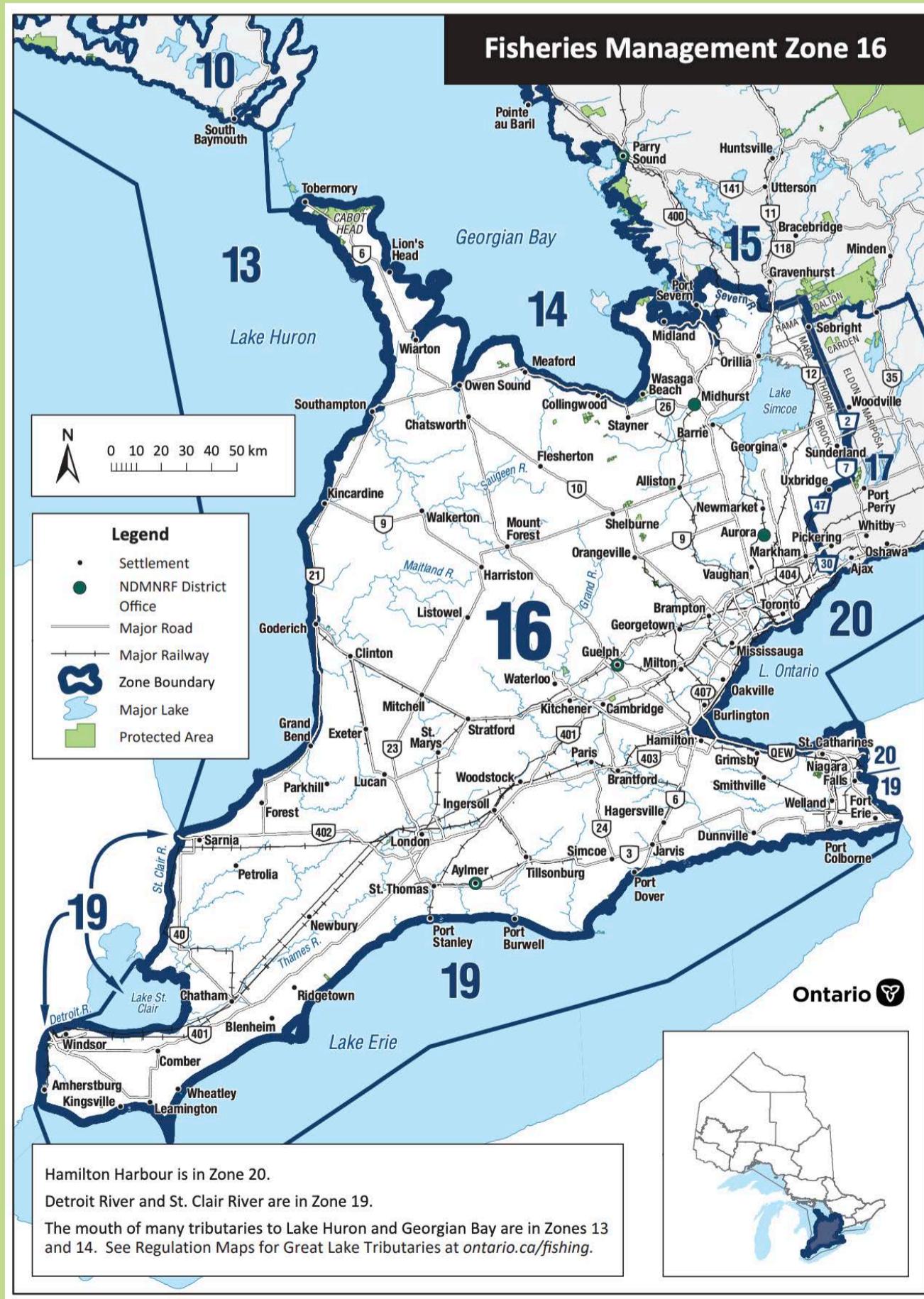
Trisha Tugade – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Brampton)

Adam Weir – Staff Liaison

PLANNING FOR FMZ 16

FMZ advisory councils were first launched over a decade ago and others have been phased in gradually over time. While these FMZs and their respective councils were progressing – many of which now have fisheries management plans – FMZ 16 has been at a standstill. There was some activity in 2017 when the NDMNRF hosted several listening sessions; that said, it took more than three years to summarize stakeholder feedback.

In 2021, the Ministry posted a discussion paper on the ERO that included identifying key themes or priority areas, the appropriate scale for fisheries management in the zone, and how the advisory councils should be formed. We highlighted the importance of collaborating with neighboring FMZs and councils, developing a broad-scale monitoring program for flowing waters, and the importance of migratory fishes to FMZ 16.



INCREASING SET FINE AMOUNTS AND ENHANCING ENFORCEMENT

The OFAH provided feedback to the NDMNRF's proposals to increase set fines for certain recreational and commercial fishery offences and establish new ticketable offences. The OFAH supports modernizing and increasing set fines in this way as it will deter illegal activities and help conserve our fisheries resources. Many prohibitions in the Ontario Fishery Regulations (OFR) are not ticketable, meaning infractions must be processed through the federal court system to lead to a charge. This proposal will also take prohibitions in the OFR and amend them to "contraventions" under the Contraventions Regulations, so they become ticketable. This frees up federal court proceedings, decreases the likelihood cases are thrown out, and reduces unnecessary barriers and red tape for enforcement.



PAYING MORE FOR BOATING IN CANADA

The government is proposing to introduce a \$15 service fee to obtain, renew, transfer, or duplicate an application, as well as reduce the validity period to five years for all pleasure craft licences (PCLs).

Transport Canada is also proposing additional fees for course providers, including a \$5,000 accreditation application fee that course providers would be required to pay every five years and an additional \$8.50 access fee for maintenance and test materials for each Pleasure Craft Operator Card issued. These costs will almost certainly be passed on to applicants, so anyone wanting to get into boating will pay more than the current course costs (average between \$50 and \$70).

Though the OFAH and the broader boating community, including anglers and hunters, may be displeased, the OFAH requested that Transport Canada reinvest any funds gathered via fees to directly enhance boating programs and services for Canadians if they decide to proceed with the proposals.



ENHANCING THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF FISH AND FISH HABITAT

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) consulted stakeholders on various aspects to the Fisheries Act under the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program (FFHPP) including cumulative effects, habitat banking, codes of practice, prescribed works and waters regulations, and the public registry. Our official submission reinforced our concerns over the continued loss of fish habitat across the country because, in many cases, proponents are not being required to recover habitat losses and smaller scale projects do not have adequate oversight and are contributing to cumulative effects. These losses can aggregate or work together to create a larger ecological impact. The OFAH raised attention to these threats in our feedback to DFO and highlighted the need for better monitoring, enforcement, and tracking of projects. The OFAH will continue to be active with the FFHPP and Wave 2 of the engagement process in 2022.



2021

BIG GAME

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



BIG GAME ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR -- NEIL WIENS (SHUNIAH)

VICE CHAIR -- DAVID DIXON (PORT PERRY)

MEMBERS

Rick Moore (Keewatin)

Gerry Giesler (Powassan)

Rob Hare (Keswick)

Chris Bonner-Vickers (Fort Frances)

Jeff Bevilacqua (Thunder Bay)

Richard Mongeon (New Liskeard)

Eric Smith (Arnprior)

Wally Motz (Kincardine)

Dr. Chris Davies (Lakefield)

Tony Jackson (Fullarton)

Satbir Bassi – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Brampton)

Jenna Knight – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Peterborough)

Leah Robinson – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Peterborough)

Dr. Keith Munro – Staff Liaison

BLACK BEAR

With the return of the spring hunt for black bear, the committee had significant discussions on the long-term direction of bear management in the province. The provincial barbed wire hair trap study was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, the data from the second round has not yet been completely analyzed by NDMNRF staff. Ontario's management guidelines for population and harvest guidelines have been in place since 2011 and will be reviewed in the near future. Trends in black bear hunting have shown a significant change in participation patterns. Resident hunter numbers have seen a steady increase. Non-resident activity had been reduced when the spring hunt was cancelled back in 1999 and was extremely curtailed in 2020 and 2021 with COVID-19 restrictions on travel. With an anticipated further increase in hunter demand going forward the committee expects that there will be much more discussion on population sustainability and harvest management.



MOOSE

Much of the committee's time this past year was dedicated to discussions on moose. We expressed our disappointment to NDMNRF staff on the failure to complete all scheduled moose aerial inventories in 2021. Data from these assessments is critical when developing harvest management plans annually. We had lengthy discussions on how the new draw process unfolded. Feedback from OFAH members and the hunting public were mixed but mostly positive. The committee members helped in driving the significant communication efforts that were ultimately delivered to assist moose hunters in navigating the new draw system. Concerns expressed by members about potential lost hunting opportunities as a result of unclaimed tags was not lost on NDMNRF staff.



WHITE-TAILED DEER

We have finally seen some success in getting the province to make appropriate positive moves concerning chronic wasting disease with the NDMNRF implementing new regulations to reduce the risk of CWD spreading into Ontario, especially by the deer farming industry. This has been an issue of considerable angst with the big game committee for years. The committee also received updates from the NDMNRF on the planned 2021 CWD surveillance.

The committee had several presentations on the proposed deer season changes as NDMNRF staff looked at fine tuning their intended public consultation. It was evident during our discussions that there were clearly differences of opinion on the proposed changes. Our recommendation was that changes that provided real new sustainable opportunities were appropriate, but those changes being explored that pit user groups against one another would require more in-depth and focused consultation with user groups, including farmers and landowners where much of the deer hunting activity in many parts of the province takes place. With changes to deer seasons on the horizon, the committee has again pushed to have notification of successful controlled deer hunt applications moved up. The committee had a brief presentation on the deer hunter socio-economic survey that was carried out by the NDMNRF. Ministry staff provided the committee with a presentation on Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease after a number of deer in Eastern Ontario were confirmed to have succumbed from an outbreak. The committee had discussions around member concerns about the size of the deer population in various parts of the province.



ELK

Little is happening on the elk file in Ontario. The NDMNRF provided an update on the Bancroft-North Hastings elk herd and plans for a 2022 survey of the herd in the Nipissing-French River area. Further surveys are being considered for the Kenora and North Shore herds in the future. Of concern to the committee is where the long-term management of our elk is headed. There are no plans to bring more elk into the province from other jurisdictions and our current pockets of animals do not have any extra elk that can be relocated to supplement other herds.



OTHER

While not specific to any individual big game species, the committee had in-depth discussions on mandatory reporting, especially the proposed penalties for failure to submit a mandatory report; attempting to locate a wounded animal after dark and any contraventions to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act regulations that this might result in; wolves and coyotes; escaped farmed cervids; and wild pigs. All of these items can impact our big game populations and are of concern to committee members.

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 FISH and WILDLIFE

Hunter Reporting

Reminder: You should not complete a hunter report until you are done hunting for that species and season. In most cases hunters have 14 days from the end of the season to complete their report. For example, spring turkey hunters should not complete their spring report until they are completely done hunting turkeys in the spring. Additional information is available in the Hunting Regulations Summary.

 = Hunter Report Complete

 = Hunter Report Due

 = Failure to Report

2021

SPORTING DOGS

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



SPORTING DOGS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR -- DR. JOE WILSON (MONO)

MEMBERS

Jim Baker (Guelph)

Chris Bayles (Ancaster)

Greg Steeves (Cameron)

Lauren Tonelli -- Staff Liaison

BIG GAME BLOOD TRACKERS

The OFAH Sporting Dogs Advisory Committee is waiting on a committee member to determine what wording could be used to change the regulations to permit the searching for game after legal shooting time with a blood tracking dog. This can also be extended to hunters without tracking dogs, to search for dead game. A change in this regulation would allow all hunters, with or without a tracking dog, to be more certain that they are acting within the law.



TRAIN & TRIAL AREAS

Discussions regarding train and trial areas have been delayed due to changes to the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry. This continues to be an advocacy point for the committee.



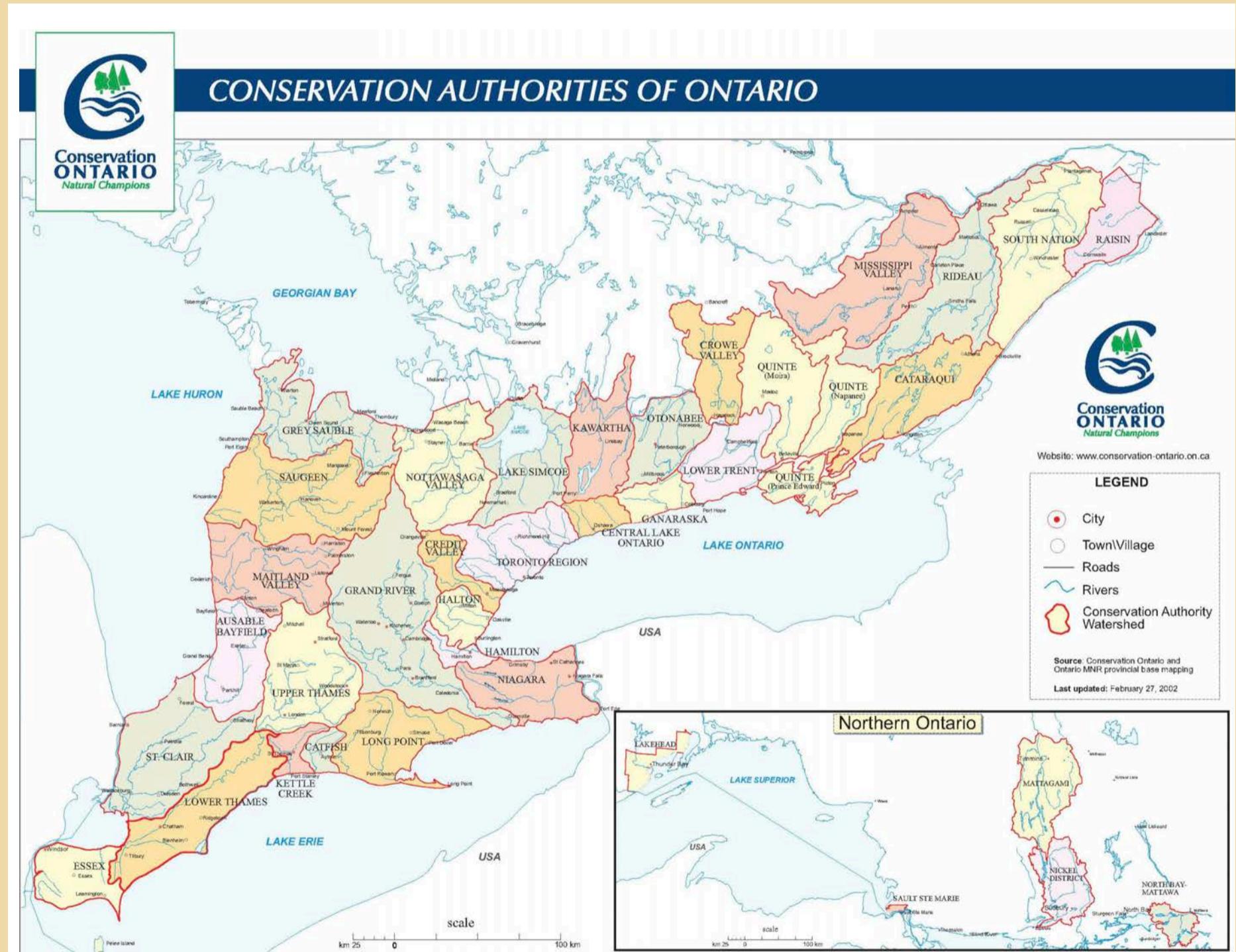
WALKERTON CASE

The appeal in the case where a hunter was charged with trespass, due to his hound entering private property, has not yet been scheduled by the Court of Appeals in Walkerton.



CONSERVATION AUTHORITY PROPERTIES

The effort to gain permission to train and trial sporting dogs on Conservation Authority properties has been ongoing and the OFAH is advocating for expanded use of dogs in Conservation Authorities whenever the opportunity arises.



2021

AGRICULTURAL LIAISON ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



AGRICULTURE LIAISON ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR -- KERRY COLEMAN (OXFORD MILLS)

MEMBERS

Dr. Joe Wilson (Mono)

Tony Jackson (Fullarton)

Mike Bohm (Douro-Dummer)

Larry Campbell (Burlington)

Dave Ferguson (Alvinston)

Larry Miehls (Woodslee)

Paul Mussell (Manotick)

John Williamson (Inverary)

Lauren Tonelli – Staff Liaison

Dr. Keith Munro – Staff Liaison

WILD PIGS

This was a good news story thanks to the hard work of OFAH staff, most notably Lauren Tonelli and Dr. Keith Munro. Their persistence in raising awareness to this issue and advocating for governments to take action has paid off. In partnership with the Invading Species Awareness Program (ISAP), they have spearheaded wild pig surveillance using game cameras with OFAH zones and the public (e.g., OFAH Zone F participated). I also want to acknowledge the significant contribution of committee members John Williamson and Paul Mussell.

They drafted the following resolution:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) lobby the Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs and the Ontario Government to implement programs to eradicate wild pigs and get Ontario to be a wild pig free province; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the OFA encourage its members to report any sightings to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Their resolution was passed at their local county federations and then passed at the provincial AGM of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Having the weight of the agriculture sector pressing government to take action on wild pigs certainly helped to achieve results. This could be a model for future cooperative initiatives.

Much of the good news on wild pigs focused on the governments of Canada and Ontario investing nearly \$3 million in three new initiatives as part of a coordinated effort to enhance biosecurity and support the provincial pork sector's African Swine Fever (ASF) prevention and emergency preparedness efforts.

LINKS:

- <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001004/governments-protecting-ontarios-pork-sector>
 - [Partners Endorse Enhanced Biosecurity Supports for African Swine Fever Prevention and Preparedness](#)
- | [Ontario Newsroom](#)
- [Wild Pigs in Ontario | Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters \(ofah.org\)](#)

The Ontario government committed to protecting the agricultural sector and the natural environment by taking action to prevent wild pigs from establishing in Ontario. This includes detection and removal efforts, as well as regulating wild pigs under the Invasive Species Act, 2015 as they pose a greater risk of transmitting ASF if they escape in the wild. To assist Eurasian Wild Boar (EWB) farmers and encourage faster transition, producers who agreed to stop raising them within six months would be eligible for funding to shift to other forms of production such as heritage breeds of swine, other livestock, or crop production.

The government is also phasing out wild boar production:

- No new wild boar farms will be permitted as of January 1, 2022
- Existing boar farms have until January 1, 2024 to transition out of boar production

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Several committee members are well informed about agriculture news all across Canada and frequently share CWD and wild pig related articles with the committee. Over the past year some progress has been made to prevent the spread of CWD into Ontario.

NDMNRF posted a Decision Notice regarding CWD on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) in December 2020:

- NDMNRF can now regulate the movement of all cervids in Ontario, not just native species.
- To move a cervid in Ontario it is necessary to have a cervid movement permit.
- Any cervid moved into Ontario must be from a CWD-free jurisdiction and from a herd that is certified as CWD free.
- The possession and all uses of attractants from deer urine is prohibited.
- There are further restrictions on animal parts of cervids coming across the border.

One weak link is still the issue that federal border services officers have no delegated authority to enforce provincial legislation, but discussions between NDMNRF and the Canada Border Services Agency have been occurring.

Currently there is research in several jurisdictions, including the University of Calgary, on an oral vaccine for CWD. So far, the vaccine doesn't prevent the disease but delays its onset, which is a significant factor in reducing the rapid spread of CWD. Work is also being undertaken in the US. Obviously, there are many logistical issues in getting vaccines to wild cervids, but it must be seen as progress.



OTHER

Carolyn Callaghan, a senior biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, provided the committee with an update. She is working on a number of agriculture land-related projects including research on the composition and configuration of natural habitat that maximizes the abundance and diversity of pollinators. She plans to create an app that farmers and other landowners can use as a guide to create and protect pollinator habitat. These natural areas can also provide benefits to several game wildlife.

Paul Mussell also talked to the committee about a Pheasants Forever partnership program in the US using precision farming to set aside unproductive acres of farmland for wildlife. This program is starting to garner some interest here in Canada. It has potential to create wildlife habitat on landscapes dominated by agriculture.

A presentation was given to the committee by ALUS Peterborough and ALUS National. This was given jointly to the OFAH Agriculture Liaison and OFAH Land Use/Access/Trails Advisory Committees.

The committee was also updated frequently on the ongoing work by OFAH staff to obtain a sandhill crane hunting season in Ontario.

We also get regular updates from Tony Jackson and Larry Campbell on human-wildlife conflict, including raccoon rabies. Since the peak of the outbreak in 2016, cases of raccoon rabies have been declining by about 50% each year and contained to within 65 km of the initial case in Hamilton.



2021

LAND USE/ACCESS/TRAILS

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



LAND USE/ACCESS/TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR -- MICHAEL EVERS (INNISFIL)

VICE CHAIR -- BRIAN MOORE (WATFORD)

MEMBERS

Stephen Huntley (Beeton)

Roy DeCorte (Atikokan)

Josef Brecka (Thunder Bay)

David Chenier (Haileybury)

Roy Polsky (Val Caron)

Bob Emery (Perth)

Britney Belanger – NXT-GEN Ambassador (London)

Branden Fennell – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Aurora)

Steven Zingaro – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Barrie)

Lauren Tonelli – Staff Liaison

NXT-GEN AMBASSADORS

At our August 13, 2021 committee meeting, we welcomed three new advisory committee members: Britney Belanger, Branden Fennell and Steven Zingaro, our NXT-GEN Ambassadors.

We welcome the participation of these young people and appreciate their important contributions to our discussions. Each one of these candidates had a very impressive resume and varied outdoor backgrounds. The intent of the OFAH NXT-GEN is to attract and engage a younger demographic (members between the ages of 18-30 years of age) who will be the next generation of OFAH members. Our committee is very pleased with this initiative and appreciates their involvement.



Britney Belanger

My name is Britney Belanger, I was born and raised in London, ON. I graduated from Western University with my BA in Women's Studies and Feminist Research. I am currently working as a developmental service worker.

I am a first generational hunter and a lifelong angler. I have been fishing for 25 years and hunting for 3. I have yet to harvest my first animal but it is not for the lack of trying. I have my third bear hunt this September, my first waterfowl hunt this October and my third season hunting deer.

I want to bring my knowledge and lived experiences as a new hunter, avid angler and a woman to the OFAH, by shining a light on the barriers that many individuals face within the community. I want others to feel comfortable learning and exploring the outdoors, and not be afraid to get out of their comfort zones.



Branden Fennell

As a member of the Algonquin First Nation, I have always had a deep connection with the woodlands and lakes of Ontario. This passion for the outdoors pushed me towards obtaining my BA in Environmental Studies from Wilfrid Laurier University, where I could apply the things I had learned about conservation growing up into my education. I am fortunate to come from a rich hunting and angling history on both sides of my family, whose camps have long been active conservationists and involved in various programs supporting conservation. Those closest to me know that I am happiest with a gun in my hand, looking out over my favorite duck pond with my Flat-coated Retriever, or waiting in anticipation as the deer hounds get closer. Having grown up hunting and fishing in South Central Ontario on a healthy mix of private and public land, I feel I can bring a unique perspective to the NXT-GEN program.



Steven Zingaro

Steven is an outdoor enthusiast, with passions for foraging, gardening, hunting, and fishing. In his professional career, Steven went to the University of Guelph and obtained a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering, and is currently working in the field of energy management and sustainability. Now he has been pursuing ways to give back to the outdoors community. He is currently a director at Friends of Hullett, which manages the Hullett Provincial Wildlife Area.

Having lived in many cities in Southern Ontario, Steven has had to repeatedly find new access to water and lands. He brings to the OFAH NXT-GEN his experiences in land access, interpreting regulations and the challenges of hunting and fishing in southern Ontario. He is passionate about mentorship, and also looks to advise on how to engage new anglers and hunters.

ALTERNATIVE LAND USE SERVICES (ALUS) DISCUSSION

This is an innovative community-based and farmer-delivered program that produces, enhances and maintains ecosystem services on agricultural lands. The ALUS Peterborough Coordinator Kate Powell, advised our committee on how annual payments and program costs are established for creating and maintaining ecological services on farms. Every ALUS community has a Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) which is made up of farmers and conservation-based organizations. The PAC's role is to review and approve the projects that are implemented and funded. ALUS Peterborough currently has 22 participants with 29 projects covering a total of 265 acres (68.5 acres of re-forestation, 191.5 acres of grassland, and 5 water-body acres).

ALUS National has 32,134 acres across 31 Canadian communities, with over \$12 million invested in projects. As part of the Government of Canada's 2 Billion Trees program, ALUS has received funding for the planting of trees through the communities, of which ALUS Peterborough is planning to use their portion of funding to plant 2,000+ trees.



LAND'ESCAPES

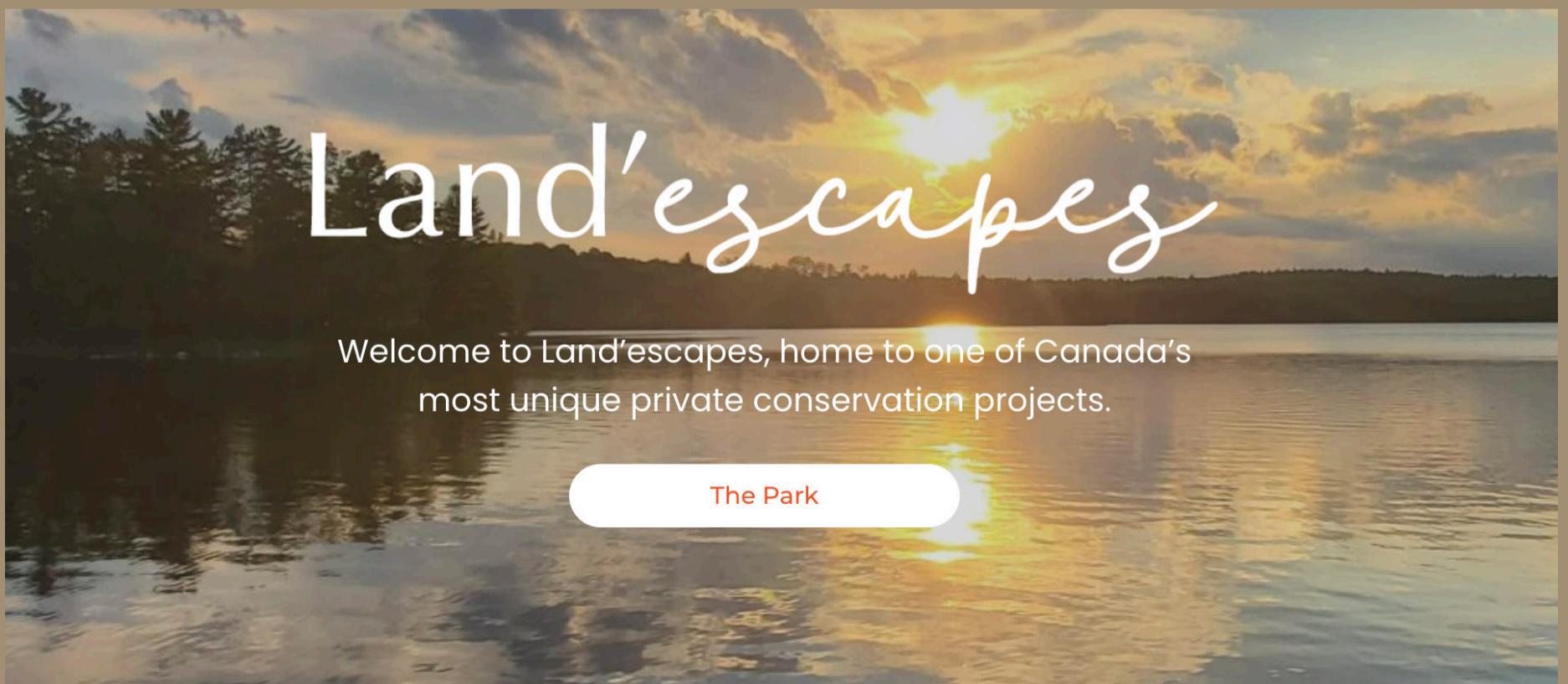
A presentation was delivered by Brian McRae, senior advisor, community & partner relations, regarding Land'escapes – a 66,000+ acre private land sale in Hastings County. This property used to belong to various forestry companies that had land leases set up for over 70 hunt camps. The property has most recently been purchased by an individual who has intentions of making the property into a multi-use area with a portion remaining in leases. Normally the OFAH wouldn't get involved with private land hunting opportunities, but due to the size of the property and the fact that the large number of hunt camps are OFAH member clubs, we are working to advocate for continued hunting opportunities there.

The new owner reached out to the OFAH to ask about hunting and hunt camps. The new owner decided, after legal advice, to terminate the existing leases in order to restructure how the property would be used. These camps had been in families for decades and there is a lot of history and traditions with the area. The OFAH is trying to work with the new owner to educate him on how hunting works in Ontario and how hunt camps generally operate. By trying to facilitate the continuation of hunting on this property the hope is that no current hunters are displaced. It needs to be recognized that this is private land and the OFAH role is just to advocate with the new landowner to keep hunting on the property.

Brian McRae delivered an update at our October 26, 2021 meeting indicating that the owner donated several parcels of land totalling 12,000 acres to the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). NCC has contacted the camps impacted by this donation to inform them hunting will continue on these 12,000 acres; however, not in the way it was before. The OFAH continues to facilitate hunting on other NCC properties, although traditionally NCC properties only permitted hunting of turkey and deer. Since these parcels of land are traditionally moose, elk, and bear hunting areas, the OFAH has had preliminary conversations with NCC to facilitate wording changes to permit for moose, elk, and bear hunting.

Not only is it ecologically and socially important to have hunting continuing in this area, but hunters bring a large economic benefit to the surrounding towns and cities. There is an estimated \$1.2 million brought into the area by the influx of hunters who come to hunt on that property.

Information on Land'escapes can be found at <https://landescapes.org/>.



CONTROLLED WATERFOWL HUNT ACCESS ISSUES

Long Point -- An issue arose with the Long Point Waterfowl Unit controlled waterfowl hunt, where signage (indicating that hunting was ongoing) and fencing was removed. The signage indicated that other recreational users should avoid the area beyond the fencing erected by the waterfowlers association. This resulted in an influx of people walking into areas where waterfowl hunting was taking place. It was agreed that new signage would go up with approved wording outlining that a controlled waterfowl hunt occurs during set dates and that interfering with a lawful hunt is illegal.

Rondeau Bay -- There has been an ongoing access issue at Rondeau Bay Provincial Park with regards to a specific area called Long Pond. The park management is concerned about the presence of multiple at-risk aquatic plant species and have deemed Long Pond to be a no motorized access area to prevent boat motors from destroying the species at risk. Unfortunately, this waterway gives easier access to a number of waterfowl blinds. There is land access and the option to use a non-motorized boat to get there, but a number of older hunters have cited these options as barriers to access the blinds. OFAH staff is working with the waterfowlers association and the park staff in an attempt to arrive at a compromise.

A compounding issue is that anglers have been accessing Long Pond with apparently no consequences, though park staff have attempted to place signs – but they keep getting removed. It was suggested by the committee that better education and signage on the Rondeau Bay Provincial Park website and at the boat launches would help to reduce the number of anglers in Long Pond.



ONTARIO TRAILS COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S ROUNDTABLE

The Ontario Trails Council (OTC) called a meeting of the presidents of various organizations who represent trail users in Ontario. This virtual Zoom meeting was held on October 5, 2021 and Mike Evers represented OFAH President Dan Elliott. The purpose of the meeting was to share information, exchange ideas, and cultivate opportunities to build collaborations on provincial level issues affecting the regulations, development, preservation, use and appreciation of recreational trails in Ontario. The meeting frequency is four meetings per year (or as needed to address emerging issues) and last for 1.5 hours in a virtual format.

Current OTC members invited to participate (alphabetical, as of September 2021):

1. Boating Ontario
2. Bruce Trail Conservancy
3. Canadian Recreational Horse and Rider Association
4. Conservation Ontario
5. Great Lakes Waterfront Trail
6. Hike Ontario
7. Motorcycle and Moped Industry Council
8. Ontario Climbers Alliance
9. Ontario Competitive Trail Riders Association
10. Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicle Clubs
11. Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
12. Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs
13. Ontario Federation of Trail Riders
14. Ontario Mountain Bike Association
15. Ontario Parks
16. Ontario Parks Association
17. Ontario Recreational Canoe and Kayak Association
18. Ontario Recreational Facilities Association
19. Parks Canada
20. Snowshoe Canada
21. Trans Canada Trail Ontario



HUNTING INNISFIL TRANSIT HUB - MZO

In March 2021, the Ontario government proposed a change to Ministerial Zoning Orders (MZO) which would exempt the development project from abiding by the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). Another concern with MZOs is that they offer no chance for appeal once they are approved. The OFAH submitted comments opposing this proposal, but the changes were made regardless. The committee has discussed a recently granted MZO in Innisfil; their concern is that because it was done via an MZO that there is sensitive habitat that will be damaged. The committee recognizes the need for development projects, especially those that increase housing density like the project in Innisfil; however, we feel that it should not come at the loss of valuable habitat or farmland. The committee received an update on this topic when the Williams Treaties First Nations (WTFN) filed court proceedings to challenge the proposal. The case argues that the MZO granted for the transit hub was issued "in a manner inconsistent with the honour of the Crown," by failing to consult and accommodate First Nations as required under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.



SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES ACT AND RELATED ACT CHANGES

OFAH staff provided the committee with an update on the Supporting People and Businesses Act in regards to the changes it proposes to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act (CFSA), Public Lands Act (PLA), and the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act (PPCRA). This bill had passed its first reading at the time of the meeting. The focus of the committee was the additions to the CFSA, which created the ability to make a new regulation to govern personal forest harvest on Crown land. It also grants the minister authority to issue a permit for personal harvest on Crown land. The proposed regulation would be able to outline the circumstances where someone would be permitted to harvest for personal reasons and outline what must occur if the minister grants authority. No details are present in the Act change as to what rules would govern personal harvesting, any details would be in the regulation which has not yet been developed.



2021

SMALL GAME/MIGRATORY BIRDS/WETLANDS

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



SMALL GAME/MIGRATORY BIRDS/WETLANDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR -- MAYA BASDEO (ANCASTER)

MEMBERS

Stephen Huntley (Beeton)

Kerry Coleman (Oxford Mills)

Vince Falcigno (Thunder Bay)

Roy Polsky (Val Caron)

Dr. Chris Davies (Lakefield)

Kathy Richardson (St. Catharines)

Scott Corner – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Ottawa)

Mike Lee – NXT-GEN Ambassador (Toronto)

Lauren Tonelli – Staff Liaison

Dr. Keith Munro – Staff Liaison

NXT-GEN AMBASSADORS

A highlight of 2021 was the launch of the OFAH NXT-GEN Ambassador program. This committee was one of four lucky ones to welcome participation from these ambassadors, with Scott Corner and Mike Lee as part of the inaugural cohort. This new program helped the committee achieve one of our long-standing goals of recruiting younger folks as volunteers and reached members who didn't otherwise have a means of engaging in provincial committees. The reciprocal knowledge transfer between newer, younger committee members and more seasoned and senior committee members has enriched the work of the Small Game/Migratory Birds/Wetlands Advisory Committee and is a tangible step towards succession planning of important volunteer efforts at the OFAH. We look forward to Scott's and Mike's continued participation in some capacity, and hopefully also welcoming the next cohort of NXT-GEN Ambassadors this summer.



Scott Corner

I'm a first generation outdoorsman raised on a small hobby farm outside of Cayuga Ontario. I spend my time exploring the vast amount of crown land and lakes outside the National Capitol Region. I was raised with a strong passion for the outdoors and I'm on a lifelong journey to act as a steward for the outdoors while becoming a better advocate for the hunting and angling communities. I hope to bring to the OFAH a strong sense of responsibility for the wildlife which we see too often taken for granted in Ontario. I'm excited to advocate for and assist new anglers and hunters as they begin their journey with the timeless traditions of hunting and angling.



Michael Joseph Lee

I was born and raised in Kitchener-Waterloo as a fifth generation Chinese Canadian, currently living in downtown Toronto on land covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit. I received a Bachelor of Science in Biology from McMaster focused on ecology and evolution, and Master of Planning in Urban Development from Ryerson focused on sustainable energy systems. Previously I worked as a community energy planning researcher, and currently work in healthcare.

I am a recently self-taught, first generation hunter. I am drawn to hunting as an intersection between food, sustainability, and personal connection to the natural world. I feel that hunting is an avenue for us to ethically engage with nature as an active participant within the ecosystems we live in.

SMALL GAME

Returning to a season end date for Varying (Snowshoe) Hare to a point beyond the end of March each year remains an unresolved issue and has unfortunately not received attention from NDMNRF, despite ongoing requests for review from OFAH staff. We wholeheartedly support evidence-based management for long-term sustainability and viability of wildlife populations. Having the season for Varying Hare end at the end of March, particularly in Northern Ontario, is unnecessarily restrictive and has considerable negative impacts for small game hunters, again in the north, who have limited opportunities during the middle of winter. Falconry in Northern Ontario is practiced by a small minority of people and is disproportionately impacted by such an early closure of the season. We look forward to meaningful discussion about this issue in the upcoming year.



MIGRATORY BIRDS

The OFAH continues to engage on topics of migratory birds federally with the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) through the Ontario Waterfowl Advisory Committee (OWAC), and provincially with the NDMNRF.

Areas of focus in the last year included the implementation of the modernized Migratory Bird Regulations, which are scheduled to take place in 2022; ongoing interest in a limited hunt for Sandhill Cranes; and new concerns about access during the 2021 controlled waterfowl hunts at Long Point and Rondeau Bay Provincial Parks.

Historically, access to the marsh in Long Point was limited to non-waterfowl hunters during the waterfowl hunting season. An increase in park traffic in 2021, likely due to COVID-19, resulted in non-hunters from outside of Norfolk County accessing waterfowl hunting areas during the hunting season. The Ministry removed signs that appeared to some as though access for non-hunters was restricted, given the area is technically open to anyone. The OFAH, Ministry and Long Point Waterfowlers met and were able to start discussions focused on resolutions.

In Rondeau Bay, some duck blinds are most accessible through Long Pond, a wetland area. The park is concerned about impacts to species at risk that are present in the pond and, as a result, have restricted motorized boat access. Waterfowlers would like boat access to the blinds, citing that other recreationists access the same area outside of hunting seasons, and that a number of blinds are only accessible by watercraft. OFAH staff will continue to reach out to park staff in an effort to reach a fair and viable solution for all users of the area.



GUEST PRESENTER: JACK HUGHES, CWS ONTARIO

We were fortunate to welcome Jack Hughes, a manager in the Wildlife Habitat & Assessment Section of CWS Ontario. Mr. Hughes provided a high-level overview of the work being undertaken by this relatively small Ontario department, including:

- species status assessment & monitoring: the focus of much of their work, which supports gamebird harvest management
- species conflict management: primarily geese, ring-billed gulls & sandhill cranes
- wildlife emergency response via the National Environmental Emergency Centre (e.g., small-scale spills quite often in the Great Lakes)
- breeding waterfowl surveys
 - eastern waterfowl survey in Eastern Canada
 - Southern Ontario waterfowl & wetlands plot survey
 - northern Canada Goose surveys
- staging waterfowl surveys in the lower Great Lakes (primarily for Tundra Swans & Atlantic Brant)
- pre-season banding activities as a source of information for migratory game birds

Mr. Hughes also provided some detailed insight into a number of other programs overseen by his department, including the Mourning Dove Survey and National Harvest Survey. He also outlined initiatives that were focused on filling current knowledge gaps, including studies on the urban Canada Goose, American Woodcock, Sandhill Cranes and Trumpeter Swans. Mr. Hughes reminded us that the 3rd (2021 – 2025) Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) is underway. CWS is encouraging participation in BBA especially in farther north areas as more people are needed to contribute. For more information, please visit birdsontario.org.

The presentation by CWS was well received, and we look forward to incorporating such overviews and updates from CWS more regularly moving forward. It was the first presentation by CWS in many years, if not ever, to the SGAC. Thanks to OFAH staff Lauren Tonelli and Dr. Keith Munro for their diligence and hard work in making this possibility realized.



WILD PIGS

The Ontario government has moved forward with listing wild pigs as an invasive species under the Invasive Species Act (ISA) and will be phasing out farming of Eurasian wild boar over the next two years. Hunting wild pigs became prohibited as of January 1, 2022 (when the listing under the ISA came into force) in an attempt to prevent the negative ramifications associated with hunting wild pigs.

A heartfelt thanks to all committee members who give selflessly of their time, expertise, and energy to issues around hunting and conservation, and to OFAH staff who continue to be the most dedicated and exceptional I've encountered.



2021

FIREARMS/RECREATIONAL SHOOTING/HUNTER EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



FIREARMS/ RECREATIONAL SHOOTING/ HUNTER EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR -- BILL BLACKWELL (PORT ELGIN)

VICE CHAIR -- DAN ELLIOTT (AYLMER)

MEMBERS

Chris Bonner-Vickers (Fort Frances)

Carmen Woodcock (Thunder Bay)

Ed Giffin (Kingston)

Steve Laird (Uxbridge)

Spyros Chrysochou (Hastings)

Brian McRae – Staff Liaison

Tammy Gunter – Staff Liaison

FIREARMS

Bill C-21

Throughout 2021, this bill was a bone of contention that gun owners had with the Federal Government. Matt DeMille and Brian McRae addressed the different sections of this bill which is broken down into several distinct areas. As was the case with the Order in Council announced in May 2020, the OFAH had regular communication with Public Safety Canada and the Department of Justice in seeking clarity on many outstanding issues and questions. As a result, and similar to what has been done in the past, staff created a Bill C-21 FAQ to help address and answer many of these common questions being asked on a daily basis. This FAQ can be found at www.ofah.org/firearms.

OIC Prohibitions – Court Challenges

Matt DeMille and Brian McRae have been staying on top of the many challenges before the courts with this bill and have informed us that the motion for a temporary injunction against the May 2020 OIC-banned firearms was denied, but the larger court challenges continue. Matt's affidavit focused on the impact of the prohibitions on hunting and has been submitted in multiple proceedings. It was also reported that a considerable amount of money has been spent so far and that much more will be needed to continue fighting. OFAH staff put considerable effort in the research and preparation of a 65-page expert report entitled, "**What Firearms are Reasonable and Proportionate for Hunting in Canada: An examination of Previously Non-restricted Firearms Prohibited under SOR/2020-96**" that will be used to support the aforementioned affidavit.

Bill C-22

Matt and Brian informed us that this bill seems to contradict C-21, as C-22 proposes to remove mandatory minimum penalties on 14 different firearms-related crimes. Further information on this particular section can be found in the Bill C-21 FAQ document found at www.ofah.org/firearms.

OFAH Involvement in Firearms Discussions

Lastly, I would just like to comment that the OFAH was severely criticized by some in the firearms community for what they perceived as our indifference and not speaking out and joining in court challenges related to the OIC prohibitions, Bill C-21, and other firearms discussions. This has been a long-standing area of discussion with our committee and requires ongoing dialogue with OFAH members and the firearms community to ensure our role and value in firearms policy is fully understood. People do not understand that as a charitable organization we cannot be partisan or take positions related to firearms that other organizations do because it does not fit our conservation and hunting mandate and could jeopardize our charitable status that is critical for our conservation efforts. Instead, we try to be respectful, evidence-based, and to the point on issues in a way that allows us to advocate effectively while maintaining a connection to the responsible ministers' offices, MPs and MPPs through frank, but constructive dialogue. The OFAH continues to be involved in firearms policy discussions and spend time, effort and money on reports such as the one Matt DeMille prepared and that is being used by many in their court challenges on the OIC prohibitions. Just because you don't see us waving signs and banners and screaming at our elected officials does not mean we don't care, or we are not working on the issues. We are just doing it differently than others and are effective in many ways filling important gaps in the firearms policy discussion. Trust the OFAH to do the right thing for you and if you think we don't care, call us and find out exactly what we are doing; you will be pleasantly surprised.

HUNTER EDUCATION

Effective July 26, 2021, the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (NDMNRF) officially launched the new Ontario Hunter Education Program (OHEP) online course. This new made in Ontario online option for students replaces the temporary Saskatchewan course Ontario had been offering during the pandemic while the NDMNRF worked on finalizing Ontario's course. This new OHEP course costs \$60, which will cover the cost of the course and exam; both aspects are completed fully online. The new course was launched with little time for instructors to clear the backlog of students they had due to the many closures of training during heightened COVID-19 times. Several section modules from the old manual were removed and modified to match the new online manual, PowerPoint program and examination. The Ecology module has been replaced with a Wildlife Management module and the firearms section, Module 10B, has been removed. Some instructors who have been teaching this program for many years expressed concerns in the quality of the course, the PowerPoint program, and the student manual that now replaces the previous materials. There have been reports from some instructors that they have also been getting some students who have taken the online course coming to an in-person class citing disappointment in the content changes in the program.

Given the significant number of changes occurring with the program, the committee expressed a need for the NDMNRF to closely monitor and assess whether there are lost learning opportunities for students that can't be replicated online, apprehension issues due to learning barriers with online content and testing, abuse of the system (cheating on the test), a need to update or enhance the program with things like real photos (online and instructor PowerPoint) to assist with species identification, and need for stronger communication between NDMNRF and Firearms Safety Education Service of Ontario to ensure there are no gaps in program delivery (e.g., firearms content).

There are now 13 modules with content from across North America that pertains to Ontario. Online students have 90 days to complete the course and exam. To date, 3,557 Saskatchewan online, 8,926 in-person and 8,301 Ontario online students (totalling 20,784) completed the course in 2021, respectively.

One of the benefits associated with the online course is the ease of attaining and reviewing the data associated with the course and its participants. For example, it was noted that while reviewing the data for the month of October, there was a significant uptake of the online course by the 20- to 40-year-old age groups, making up 54.3% of all students enrolled in the online course that month. The data can also provide information into what chapters (and questions) students are having issues with.

A new framework has been established for data input by instructors that will provide for improved tracking and statistical analysis. It is anticipated that there will be a few glitches as with any new program; however, with input from the instructors in the early stages, implementation will be directed towards improvement.

BOWHUNTING

Early in 2021, there was some discussion as to whether the new limbless Lancehead crossbow is or will be legal for hunting purposes; and further discussions took place about the new crossbows that are shooting bolts (arrows) at velocities greater than 500fps, and whether users will be required to be in possession of a firearms licence (PAL) when using one. Clarification from both NDMNRF and the CFO was that the Lancehead is not considered a crossbow in Ontario and the CFO says any bow with arrow velocities of 500fps or greater will still be considered a bow and will not require a PAL to obtain or use.



MUZZLELOADING

We are currently waiting to hear back from NDMNRF to consider the use of straight walled cartridges, such as .357, 44/40, 44 Rem Mag, etc., during muzzleloading seasons. The straight walled or handgun cartridge rifles, in most cases, do not shoot as far as some muzzleloaders and have less range so they would be ideal in areas where bullet trajectory distance is an issue. The real issue will arise with hunters in the areas where muzzleloaders are the only firearm allowed.

