Highlights and Notes From March 2011 O.F.A.H. Annual Conference

By O.F.A.H. Zone "E" Secretary / Treasurer Alan W. Fennell

Thursday March 17th 2011

- Annual General Meeting (AGM) called to order at 4:00 PM
- we did the O.F.A.H. pledge and had a moment of reflection for the members that are no longer with us;
- the President’s Report by Rob Hare update and highlights of the past year;
- Executive Director’s Report by Mike Reader update, noted Strategic Plan (copies available), Ontario Out Of Doors magazine (OOD) Return On Investment (ROI) better than expected, and staff were items in his report;
- Terry Quinney on fish matters, Asian Carp, and OFAH rep across North America on defense of fish and wildlife;
- Greg Farrant on bill C391, Algonquin Land claim, Sunday Hunting, No-Discharge By-laws, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook;
- Treasurer Frank Wick did the financial reports, statements, and budget for 2011; Frank told us O.F.A.H. head office looking at solar installation for expense reduction at the Peterborough site; Frank told us need 82,000 membership numbers to break-even;
- Advisory Committee Reports were given by the respective chairs; we heard news on status of coyote / wolf snaring, March 22 is the dissection of the 60 WMUs on the moose tag allocations; electronic muzzleloaders maybe allowed by 2012; hunter orange on tents, ground-blinds and pop-up blinds no required as the MNR has backed off on this; hunter orange helmets while hunting and using ATVs and / or snowmobiles still up in the air as MNR still considering making this mandatory - - no definite decision yet so still NOT required; Spring waterfowl hunt in WMU 60 in 2011 which will be a first since 1916; Canvasbacks and Redheads limit changed to 6 for 2011; Dove hunt now on the radar and we are very close to having one in Ontario soon; wind turbines and the political football this is;
- auditors for 2011 will be Turner McColl same as last year
- a thank-you to the outgoing President Rob Hare and a Past President, John Ford; John is going to The Canadian Wildlife Board Of Directors;
- Jack O’Dette award to Tony Jackson
- meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM
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Minister Of Natural Resources, Honourable Linda Jeffrey presentation;
-she stated that she has spent a large amount of time in the last few weeks on Agent Orange; she said O.F.A.H. help a lot on lands and waters issues; a February 2011 story on ice-fishing for the first time; a political speech on Tim Hudak and what the Liberals have done; talked on the Elk reintroduction and the Bancroft herd is now self-sustaining; the hunt in September 2011 will help deal with the farm crops damage issue; the numbers of seals and details on the Elk hunt will be in the Hunter regs out April 2011; talked on the Moose management and the changes to the tag transfer rules; talked on the coyote / coyote-wolf hybrids / wolf attacks and no culls nor bounties; had bounties from 1919 to 1970 and statistics show no real effect so therefore there will be a multi-pronged approach; told us that MNR are adding on-line training for Wild Turkey license and then to face-to-face test with MNR certified person; MNR working on adding new Canadians to hunters and anglers; she told us MNR are adding a new section (called Fish Online) to their website which will supply easier access to information like boat-ramps, regs, etc.; she defended her government and their history on resource management; then a Q and A;

O.F.A.H. Executive Director Mike Reader – Year In Review
-relevance to angling and hunting in Ontario;
in April 2011 O.F.A.H. will have a new partner for the Atlantic Salmon project; had a training session in Cannington on stream restoration in 2010; Normandale Hatchery expansion will take over the Ringwood fish capacity therefore no net loss in fish stock numbers; discussed ice-fishing in the Kawarthas; the travelling road show on fishing is back Summer of 2011 put on by students, they will be doing demonstrations, selling licenses, tackle-share in Ontario Parks;
-the first school class trip to Heritage center was September 2010 and have done 35 so far this school year;
-G3 boats as part of Yamaha have signed on as long term supporter of the O.F.A.H. lottery
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-Tom Otto is the voice of the new radio O.F.A.H. show which fits as he is the voice/narrator of Angler & Hunter Television show;
-discussed the moose and moose tag review; whitetail deer management; no need for emergency deer feeding this year; the Manitoulin Island Wild Turkey EBR and EA delayed due to the Agent Orange situation and we have confirmed there are already self-transplanted birds on the island; there is no evidence of any negative impact by the Fall Turkey hunt;
-discussed that as part of the management of Elk hunting will help reduce farm crop damage; Deer / Elk farms continue to be problematic;
-head office will update us ASAP when they have further information on the Black Bear management issue; head office continues to urge a reversal on the ban to coyote / hybrid coyote-wolf / wolf hunt;
-O.F.A.H. major player in putting on the May 2012 Fish Conference in Ottawa Ontario;

Leader of The Ontario Conservative Party, The Honourable Tim Hudak presentation
-he is a dog owner as of December 2010 “Tavish” a Duck Trolling Retriever; the PC party is against offshore wind turbines; stand with us on the removal of the long gun registry; pro and fighting for ATV access to Crown land; wants to stop treating Volunteer Fish Hatcheries as industrial water dischargers; he promises to remove and stop electricity “Smart” meters;

Minister Of Fisheries & Oceans, The Honourable Gail Shea presentation
-she told us the government is giving $25,000 of support to the May 2012 National Fish & Wildlife Conservation Congress in Ottawa Ontario May 27 to 31 2012; discussed the issue of Asian Carp; she was part of a fund raiser Friday March 11, 2011 that raised $415,000 for research and prevention of invasive species;
MNR Regional Biologist Michael Gatt presentation
-stated that it is of critical importance that deer hunters return their deer postcard surveys; there is a new on-line survey available to use instead of the postcard; it is not if – the number of deer are down especially in Southwestern Ontario and the shield area South of the French River; we have had controlled deer hunts since 1985 (someone in the audience wanted MNR to ban them); since 1980 the deer hunter numbers have been on the rise; harvest low point was 1985 and the high point was 2007 with 2008 and 2009 numbers lower – the 2010 numbers are still not available but he expects them to be as low or drastically lower still; expect 2011 tag numbers to be lower than 2010 (maybe similar); severe winters equal higher predator kills and MTO show 2007 was the height of vehicle collisions (the 20,000 per year range);

MNR Research Biologist Dr. Brent Patterson presentation
- coyote / hybrid coyote-wolf / wolf research from Nunavut to Nova Scotia; gave us an update to the 2005 Strategy For Wolf Conservation In Ontario; he is doing research in Prince Edward County this year; 1919 in Hampton County was the first confirmed recorded coyote kill; bounty on coyote / hybrid coyote-wolf has never worked but wolf bounties has; wolf abundance is directly tied to food availability (this is proven by science); the science in Algonquin Park and the surrounding 13 Counties show hunting does not affect wolf numbers but hunting does damage the purity of DNA by allowing/encouraging more hybrid coyote-wolf pups to be born; coyotes can eat almost anything but wolves generally rely on ungulates; -science proves / confirms pack exclusively to a specific land mass / territory with some travel between by single animals; proven scientifically some packs eat mostly Moose (meaning greater than 60% of their diet), some packs deer only and some packs a mix; as Winter progresses Wolves take more Moose as a percent of their diet; we feel this is due to Moose becoming weaker and thinner as Winter takes its toll; he will be doing research on coyote near urban Ottawa this year;
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MNR Manager, Fisheries Policy Section, Dave Brown presentation
-MNR is adding to their web presence with “Fish Online”; which will be available in April 2011; this resource will allow you to obtain information on specific lakes in Ontario; some of the information will be, Hydro maps, boat-ramp locations, species present, Lake specific regulations, etc.; it is a work in progress & more will be added as it is available;

Saturday March 19th 2011
Algonquin Land Claim presentation by Phil Morlock, Greg Farrant, Craig Selby
Chair Canadian Sport Fishing Industry Association Phil Morlock
-we are getting screwed; the recreational fishing economy in Canada is tied to and affects the hunting and retail, economies too; the rest of Canada may not affect Ontario much but Ontario affects the rest of Canada in the above areas; the number of licensed and unlicensed anglers (youth, old and natives do not need a license) is over 3.6 million Canadians; Algonquin Park (The Park) is the last place in the World there are any original Brook Trout lakes; there is a ban on live bait in The Park; there has been a ban on ice-fishing in The Park; until recently you could only access them by walking or human powered watercraft; Bob Rae changed all that; Bob Rae gave First Nations the privilege to has motorized access and fish all year round in The Park; this human impact has drastic negative results on the fish numbers; the land claim does not even have a share and / or fair-share component; the First Nations are over-fishing the interior and if this is not stopped soon the Brook Trout will disappear; if we get this land claim wrong the template will mean we will lose all; MNR is not allowed to speak-out about protecting the resources in the land claim negotiation; the Federal Government has finally agreed this needs to be changed; we need science based species specific honest agreements; there are seven groups of First Nations (6 plus the Algonquians) that hunt and fish in the landmass of this land claim; we need to finalize species protection, fair sharing, and accountability before sign the agreement;
Manager O.F.A.H. Government Affairs & Policy Greg Farrant
-the only current comprehensive land claim in Ontario; started process in 1991; in the land claim live 1,400,000 non-natives and between 7,000 to 10,000 Algonquians; the phases are (phase one) Agreement In Principal (AIP) which is non-binding and is the framework to set the agreements / give and take in the treaty; (phase two) the final treaty which is binding and has all the legal wording; the big concern is the lack of transparency, lack of public information, lack of consultation, no allowed stakeholder input, no discussion on conservation of the resources, no definition of fair-sharing, no enforcement wordings, no monitoring, no mandatory reporting, no non-native access agreements, no agreements on the recreational camps that currently exist, no discussions on development limits, and nothing addressing other First Nations claims; in answer to a question re Crown Land Patents from the floor Greg said it appears Private land is not on the table;

MNR Area Biologist, Bancroft District, Erin MacDonald presentation
-only Bancroft Elk release herd of the 4 has grown their numbers to the sustainable numbers MNR projected as the floor to allow hunting; looking at a population of between 400 to 600 Elk; there will be an Elk hunt Fall 2011 from September 19 to September 25 2011; it will be South of The Park in WMUs 57, 58, 60, 61, 62, and 63A which will be subdivided into “Harvest Zones”; your seal will be “Harvest Zone” specific;
MNR Area Biologist, Bancroft District, Erin MacDonald presentation continued

-you will need a Outdoors Card, Elk Seal, and an Elk license to hunt; you can apply as an individual or a group of 2, 3, or 4 hunters; if you apply as a group seal all hunters must pay an application an Elk application fee; the fee is $16.95 per hunter; if you as a group obtain a seal all hunters must purchase an Elk license; the license cost is $50 which you only need to purchase if you get a seal; if you obtain an Elk seal in the random draw you will not get another seal for at least 5 years; you can hunt an Elk with any as per the regulations legal firearm (bow, rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader); you must wear hunter orange and no dogs; if you apply as an individual you must hunt as an individual; also hunt groups must hunt separately too - - hunt group cannot get together to make mega-groups;
-all details will be in the 2011 regulations due out April 2011; you must obtain (I think she said and carry with you) written landowner permission; there will be mandatory reporting; no check station and the hunter does get to keep the rack; MNR is asking for voluntary ban on killing any Elk with a collar; in answer to question / suggestion from the floor MNR are looking at also the additional information from the hunters on collared Elk seen, could have shot, and did not shoot;