

March 2010
Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association
OFAH annual meeting report – Paterson



1. There were several references at the OFAH annual meeting to the recent netting in Colpoys Bay by commercial anglers during the rainbow pre-spawn.

The co-chair of the federations Native Affairs Committee thanked our club for keeping OFAH Directors and staff informed on the situation. John Ford told the conference a number of clubs are insisting that charges in this case be laid by the MNR. OFAH staff were told by the MNR that the net laying was a misunderstanding and that no charges will be laid.

Our federation's Government Affairs Director Greg Ferrant will insist that action be taken against these anglers just as action would be taken against sports anglers if they committed an infraction.

Greg promises to use the weight of our 100-thousand member federation in his approach to the minister Linda Jeffrey and her staff.

2. I circulated a copy to all concerned of a new BPSA research document. It uses MNR statistics to show how commercial anglers around the Bruce Peninsula, habitually go well over quota with their catch but suffer no penalties.

Ontario Out of Doors is working on a story on our commercial fishing issues for the May edition. They have a copy of this report.

I also handed Natural Resources Minister Linda Jeffrey a copy of this report. She had not read it when I spoke with her before her speech.

3. Minister Jeffrey admitted she is on a steep learning curve. She told the conference she recognizes and respects our traditions of hunting and fishing. She declined the opportunity to do a question and answer session but said she'd take a rain check on that. The minister did promise to make sure fishing and hunting license money from the new HST will be directed to MNR fish and wildlife programs.

She said she loves field trips and we did invite her to visit our hatchery so we will see what happens.

4. The keynote speaker was Candice Hoepfner the MP who is spearheading the push to kill the long gun registry.

She admitted passage of her private members bill, Bill C – 391, is not a slam dunk. So she is urging everyone to contact and lobby 20 opposition MP's to convince them to vote for her bill again when the time comes. These are MP's who have supported registry abolition in the past.

4. There will be two new MNR research vessels on Lakes Huron and Ontario. The Huron Explorer and the Ontario Explorer will be in on the water soon.

5. Eric Boysen MNR Director of Biodiversity discussed the new ministry re-alignment. Re. Fish and wildlife programs ...he said the MNR commitment to these is as strong as ever.

He is responsible for Great Lakes fisheries, water quality and quantity, relations with the International Joint Commission, aquaculture....he says he is working hard to make sure asian carp don't reach us...and he reports the MNR has budgeted 90 million dollars this year for fish and wildlife. And that all money from licenses and fees go towards fish and wildlife.

On Lake Huron water levels Eric reports the ministry is studying ways to hold back water to keep Huron and Michigan levels up. Less snow and less melting snow could create even more problems with levels this year.

On the question of Ministry of the Environment fees levied against volunteer hatcheries..he says "we will raise it again with the Minister."
Eric also agreed that the Ministry can do a much better job communicating with the public and its partners.

2. Federation Executive Director Mike Reader urges all of us to voice our opinions whenever something or someone threatens conservation, hunting or fishing. Write a letter to the editor. Write a column. Call a talk show. Mike Says "speak out now you may regret it later."

5. We heard from Kevin Loftus MNR fish culture manager.

He asked "what has stocking done to native fish species." He says the ministry is continually assessing existing stocking programs and is asking "is stocking working"? He predicts demand for stocked fish will grow and suggests the MNR may need more resources and hatchery capacity.

Loftus estimated the value of MNR and community hatcheries in Ontario at 4-5 million dollars a year. The estimated economic return from the fish our hatcheries produce...50 to 60 million dollars.

Loftus was asked about the crash of salmon in Lake Huron. He replied a study is under way now on the Lake Huron situation.

5. Your federation is looking at launching an OFAH radio talk show. A one hour pilot program is in the works. This will be an excellent vehicle to get our message out to partner with Ontario Out of Doors which showed a modest profit in its first year under OFAH ownership.

6. The OFAH will meet soon with Minister Jeffrey to discuss the increasingly serious coyote situation.

Paterson – March 25, 2010