

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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Ontario Conservation Centre

OFAH FILE: 430/794
March 9, 2021

Ms. Karen Hartley
Ontario Parks - Protected Areas Section
300 Water Street
6th Floor, North tower
Peterborough, Ontario
K9J 3C7

Dear Ms. Hartley:

Subject: ERO #019-0414 Fire Management Policy for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves and
ERO #019-0417 Fire Management Planning Guidelines for Provincial Parks and Conservation
Reserves

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 fire management policy and planning guidelines for provincial parks and conservation reserves and offer the following comments.

The OFAH supports the proposed policy and guidelines as it would better allow for the managers of individual provincial parks and conservation reserves to create area-specific fire plans. By housing the primary fire planning process in the general management plan, it enhances transparency of the planning process and ensures that all provincial parks and conservation reserves consider how they could best incorporate a fire regime. The proposed policy and guidelines also outline how managers can create detailed fire management plans if they feel that there are more specific requirements needed in their areas. The use of management plans and fire management plans would allow for managers to better incorporate their local area knowledge and specific management priorities when determining what fire regimes could be beneficial.

Wildland fires and prescribed burns can provide important ecological services that provincial parks and conservation reserves could be better utilizing. The proposed policy offers the ability to identify opportunities to allow for a fire regime to provide ecological benefits. Many provincial parks and conservation reserves that are located within the Boreal Forest have forests that would be naturally renewed by fire, such as jack pine dominated areas. Additionally, fires open the forest canopy which can allow for new vegetation growth, providing opportunities for early successional forest regrowth and understory vegetation. This can provide valuable foraging sources for wildlife species. Fires can also be beneficial in removing dying or diseased trees, forest pests, and invasive species; this can be done through wildfires but also, strategically, through prescribed burns. The proposed policy should allow for managers to identify where fire can be used and then create a plan for either a natural fire or a prescribed burn. These plans can then evolve over time if the need arises, such as using a prescribed burn if an invasive species begins to establish.

The OFAH believes that the proposed policy and guidelines will improve ecological outcomes while also ensuring that there are adequate protections in place for assets, resources, and societal interests. We hope to see more provincial parks and conservation reserves managers implementing fire regimes where they would be advantageous and safe.

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