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Archived - Fish and Wildlife Special Purpose Account annual report 2010–2011

The 2010-2011 annual report on the Ministry of Natural Resources' Special Purpose Account. This account houses all the licensing fees, royalties and fines collected under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

For fiscal year 2010/11

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Background

The *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (FWCA)* requires that revenues collected under that *Act* flow into the Fish and Wildlife Special Purpose Account (SPA). This includes all licence fees, royalties and fines paid under the *FWCA* and its regulations. Money held in this account may only be spent on:

- the conservation or management of wildlife or fish populations or the ecosystems of which those populations are a part;
- matters related to the activities of people as they interact with or affect wildlife or fish populations, including any matter related to safety; or
- a refund of all or part of a fee or royalty.

The combined funds received from the SPA and the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) provide for the delivery of an effective and diverse program, including resource management activities such as enforcement, resource monitoring, policy and program development, resource allocation, licensing, research, and fish stocking.

In 2010/11, the Ministry began a review of the SPA to:

- improve the governance and management of the fund;
- develop objectives, outcomes and more specific performance measures;
- improve financial and accounting processes;

- improve the revenue forecasting model; and
- develop a new workplan and allocation model.

This internal review is expected to be completed by March 2012 with implementation of approved changes in Fiscal Year 2012-13. It is expected that future annual reports will be informed by this review and the resulting planning and performance measure recommendations.

Fish and wildlife heritage commission recommendations

The Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission (FWHC), established under the provisions of the *Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act*, provides recommendations on matters referred to it by the Minister. The FWHC was active during 2010/11 and reviewed materials and/or provided input on youth hunting opportunities, a possible Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights for Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources' (MNR) celebration of the successful re-introduction of elk in Ontario; the formal recommendations of the FWHC on these topics, and MNR's response to the recommendations, are summarized in the following table.

FWHC Recommendation (January 16, 2011)	Ministry Response (response letters were sent April 19, 2011)
Youth Hunting Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FWHC and MNR facilitate two "Youth Event Management" information sessions to be held in east and west Ontario during 2011. • MNR support and make available youth hunter apprentice tags/licenses for youth apprentice hunters between the ages of 12 to 14. • MNR explore the feasibility and future timing of youth apprentice days or short seasons for youths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MNR will work with FWHC to identify possible options for a youth licence in the coming months. • MNR encourages continued dialogue with full range of interests and opportunities to engage youth in outdoor heritage.
Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MNR promote outdoor activities including fishing and hunting as healthy youth/family endeavours by introducing a Children's Outdoor Bill Of Rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MNR staff will look at this concept over the coming months.
Elk Celebration Event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MNR celebration of the successful re- introduction of elk in Ontario. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MNR participated in a June 3, 2011 event in Bancroft at which Ontario the partners who helped restore elk to the province were honoured. The event was used as an opportunity to promote the fall 2011 elk hunt and celebrate the successful reintroduction of elk to Ontario.

Fish and wildlife spa revenues

Revenues deposited into the SPA largely come from anglers, hunters and commercial users of fish and wildlife resources. Of the total SPA revenues, more than 90 percent comes from angling and hunting licences and permits. Of this, approximately two-thirds are associated with recreational fishing and one-third with hunting. About two-thirds of recreational licence revenues are derived from Ontario residents and about one-third from non-residents. Over the past three fiscal years, total annual licence sales have included an average of about 920,000 resident fishing licences; 33,000 Canadian resident fishing licences; 557,000 resident hunting licences; 536,000 non-resident fishing licences, and 31,000 non-resident hunting licences. Other revenue sources include fines collected under the *FWCA* and interest paid on the SPA account.

Revenues (\$000's) to the Fish and Wildlife SPA over the past 3 fiscal years

Source of Revenue	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Ontario Resident Angling and Hunting Licences and Permits	\$36,781.1	\$38,558.0	\$55,614.9
Non-Resident Angling and Hunting Licences and Permits	\$16,818.4	\$15,601.7	\$15,743.3
Commercial Fish Licences and Royalties	\$969.9	\$922.9	\$1,122.4
Bait Fish Licences	\$342.4	\$314.1	\$319.5
Fur Licences and Royalties	\$895.0	\$766.8	\$730.1
Fines and Penalties	\$459.0	\$696.1	\$875.6
Interest	\$658.9	\$56.8	\$261.1
Other Revenue	\$566.5	\$545.8	\$364.8
Total Revenue	\$57,491.2	\$57,461.6	\$75,031.7

Annual recoveries from the SPA are planned based on a 3-year rolling average of expected revenues, due to significant annual fluctuations resulting from the Outdoors Card 3-year purchasing cycle. Treasury Board approves the SPA recovery level as part of the Ministry's annual Results Based Plan submission.

Recovery/expenditure levels, revenues and the resulting SPA account balance are reviewed annually as part of the program business planning cycle, and planned recoveries are adjusted as required. The program plans to maintain a minimum year-end SPA balance of approximately 10% of annual planned expenditures, to allow for unexpected changes in revenue. The table below shows revenues and recoveries from the SPA and resulting year-end SPA balances for the past three fiscal years and the projected balance for the current fiscal year.

Summary of recoveries, revenues and year-end account balances (\$000)

Item	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12 (Projected)
Year Start SPA Balance	\$25,940.0	\$21,790.1	\$15,046.6	\$25,586.5
Revenues	\$57,491.2	\$57,461.6	\$75,031.7	\$59,467.7
Recoveries/ Expenditures	(\$61,641.2)	(\$64,205.0)	(\$64,491.4)	(\$68,289.0)
Year End SPA Balance	\$21,790.0	\$15,046.6	\$25,586.5	\$16,765.2

Operating expenditures for the Fish and Wildlife Program, including enforcement, amounted to \$108.5 million in fiscal year 2010/11. Approximately 60% percent of these expenditures (\$64.5 million) were supported by recoveries from the Fish and Wildlife SPA. The remaining \$44 million in program expenditures were supported by funding from the CRF.

Achievements

Throughout 2010/11, the Fish and Wildlife Program continued to focus on its goal of providing leadership and direction in sustaining healthy ecosystems, managing the province's fish and wildlife resources and maintaining

or enhancing social, economic and cultural benefits derived from these resources.

SPA and CRE funds were integrated for program delivery. The Fish and Wildlife program achievements from both funding sources for 2010/11 include the following.

- Fish stocking and restoration efforts:
 - Approximately 7.1 million fish were stocked into approximately 1000 water bodies, including four Great Lakes, to support the rehabilitation of native fish stocks (3.7 million) and put-grow-and-take fisheries (3.3 million).
 - Rehabilitation stocking included 2.9 million lake trout into the Great Lakes; and 0.724 million Atlantic salmon (includes spring fingerlings, fall fingerlings, spring yearlings and a small number of surplus adults) into Lake Ontario tributaries in support of the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program.
 - MNR also provided approximately 1.1 million eggs and/or fry to partner
 - Continued restoration of other native species including American eel and deepwater ci
- Support of lake sturgeon recovery as part of the Huron – Erie corridor initiative (Detroit River, St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair).
- Reached / supported commercial fishing arrangements with nine First Nations communities; ongoing discussions with several other communities regarding fisheries interests including negotiations of new commercial fishing agreement
- Commercial fishery licenses implemented for all the Great Lakes, and \$1.2 million in commercial fish royalties collected; continued Commercial Fish Business Relationship with Ontario Commercial Fisheries Association.
- Completed the draft 'Revised Lake Trout Rehabilitation Plan for Ontario Waters of Lake Huron' and supporting information in support of a comprehensive public and First Nation consultation process. Progress made on a 'Stocking Plan for Ontario Waters of Lake Huron'.
- Development and beta-testing of the Broad Scale Fisheries Monitoring database was completed, and the database is in operational use across Ontario Standardized queries to produce data summaries by lake and by Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ) are under development.
- An assessment of the status of walleye in two collapsed and recovering populations on Lake Nipigon (Ombabikwa Bay) and Lake of the Woods (Shoal Lake) was completed using the Fall Walleye Index netting protocol. Both populations have supported important recreational fisheries in northwestern Ontario and local First Nations communities and First Nations commercial fisher Preliminary findings show that the walleye populations on each water body remain depressed with poor year class recruitment despite closure of both fisheries several years ago. Full technical reports are in preparation that will eventually be pooled with documentation from other collapsed walleye fisheries to yield a retrospective analysis of the recovery of collapsed walleye fisheries under varying management regimes and across different environmental and ecological conditions.
- Winter creel surveys were conducted in selected lakes including two sectors on Lake of the Woods to provide updated long-term information for the Border Waters Atlas program.

Fisheries Monitoring:

- 378 lakes monitored over last two years (2008 and 2009) and additional 219 lakes in 2010 via Broad-scale Monitoring program; ongoing intensive monitoring of Great Lakes, Specially Designated Waters and Fisheries Assessment Unit lakes.
 - Samples were collected from 219 lakes to describe the fish community, estimate abundance and describe characteristics such as growth, age and relative abundance.
 - Information was collected on water temperatures, oxygen levels, and clarity from about 197 lakes, and additional water samples were sent to the Ministry of the Environment for water quality analysis.
 - Almost all of the 219 lakes were sampled for invasive species such as spiny waterflea and rock bass. Estimates of fishing pressure were carried out on 118 lakes.

- Data has been entered and a preliminary analysis has started. Standardized methods for recording data have been developed so that information can be compared among zones, waterbodies, and between sample years.

Fisheries Management Zone Councils and Planning:

- Supported the Fisheries Management Zone Advisory Councils in EMZ's 4, 5 and 9 as they progress through the fisheries management planning process.
- Completed a Fisheries Background Report for EMZ 4 and progressing through the development of fisheries management objectives and actions.
- Continued implementation of the EMZ 6 fisheries management plan.
- Fisheries Management Plans for Hamilton Harbour and Bay of Quinte were approved.
- Assessment and documentation of the successes and challenges of the three pilot advisory councils (EMZ 6, 10, and 17) resulting from a provincial workshop.
- Initiated policy work to support the development of future EMZ councils, and establishing a process for making changes to the *Ontario Fishery Regulations* under the federal *Fisheries Act*.
- Additional support provided to the lead districts for EMZ 8 – Kirkland Lake, EMZ 10 – Sudbury and EMZ 11 – North Bay, for the development of background information to support fisheries management planning with EMZ Councils.

Management of Specially Designated Waters

- Undertook creel surveys to assess fish harvests on Rainy Lake (North Arm) and Eagle Lake.
- Supported lake trout rehabilitation efforts on Red Lake.
- In partnership with Ontario Power Generation, Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Species at Risk Branch, contributed to lake sturgeon population assessment and rehabilitation efforts on the Winnipeg River.
- A creel survey was conducted on Charleston Lake, as part of ongoing fisheries management data collection and analysis efforts in support of the development of the EMZ 18 Fisheries Management Plan.
- Conducted creel surveys to promote and monitor the new ice fishing regulations in EMZ 17. The winter angler diary program received 369 responses reporting information from 17 lakes. This information will be used to evaluate the success of the new ice fishing season and better inform fisheries management in EMZ 17.
- Continued implementation of province-wide Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) planning training for commercial bait harvesters, to reduce the risk of the spread of invasive species. A web-based training module was developed and delivered to improve the accessibility of training opportunities for bait harvesters.
- Support for the development and delivery of the Ontario portion of the 2010 National Recreational Fishing Survey in partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Survey responses will be collected in 2011-12 and analysis of results will be initiated.
- Development of Fish OnLine, a Google-based tool that provides anglers access to information on what fish species are present in over 13,000 lakes in the province, fish stocking records, information on ServiceOntario locations, angling regulations, lake contour maps for select lakes and directions to and from particular water bodies.
- Conversion of fisheries information from hard copy sources into digital format. Information was inputted into ArcMap and the digital layer now includes 1050 fisheries data points. This will assist MNR in responding to information requests from clients and the general public.
- Provided support to five Districts to monitor and assess both threatened and special concern sturgeon populations in six large rivers, for the purpose of informing water power development and recovery efforts.
- Funded the collection of winter creel information from Lake Nipissing. This information was critical to MNR understanding dramatic changes in walleye status on the lake for management planning purposes.
- MNR received two new fisheries assessment vessels valued at \$4.5 million, the "Ontario Explorer" and "Huron Explorer I". The two 20 metre vessels replace an aging fleet and will enable enhanced assessment

and research to support the Great Lakes fisheries.

- Support to United States Fish and Wildlife Service in the prevention of Asian carp into the Great Lakes via the Chicago Shipping Channel.
- Enhanced public involvement in Lake Ontario Fisheries Management through the planning and delivery of the first Lake Ontario Trout and Salmon Symposium in Port Credit. Over 300 anglers attended the free one-day event to learn about Great Lakes fisheries from an international line-up of speakers and local conservation organizations.
- A pilot program in partnership with area hunters, landowners and Stewardship Councils was initiated by Peterborough District. The program utilizes innovative trail camera image collection in Prince Edward County and Hastings County. The camera surveys will allow the ministry to assess fawn recruitment, herd composition, body condition and population estimates for deer populations in Wildlife Management Units 70 and 68A.
- The winter carrying capacity was assessed for the 92 km² Healy Lake deer wintering area via a fall browse supply survey. In addition, aerial mapping of winter deer distribution was completed for the final portion of the Trout Lake deer yard, McDougall Township, the Sturgeon Bay area at Pointe au Baril, Township of the Archipelago, and the Stisted deer yard, Stisted Township. This allowed mapping from 1987 to be updated and Stratum 1 and 2 habitats to be designated.
- Analysis of moose pregnancy rates from faecal pellets collected in 2009 and 2010 was completed in collaboration with Trent University and the Toronto Zoo. Preliminary findings are that 76-89% of cows were found to be pregnant in each of the two winters, eliminating low pregnancy rates as a factor in observed population declines in northeastern Ontario. A full report is in preparation.
- Deer, moose, bear and wolf questionnaire and hunter surveys conducted and caribou survey conducted.
- Developed and implemented a comprehensive elk management program for the province, including Ontario's Elk Management Plan, Elk Population Objective Setting Guidelines, a population objective for the Bancroft-North Hastings area, Elk Harvest Management Guidelines, Policy for Protecting Agricultural Property from Elk, Ontario's first modern day elk hunt, and a harvest allocation system to support the hunt.
- Elk management survey generated a population estimate of 511 that increased confidence in the recommended harvest allocation for the inaugural elk hunt in September 2011. The survey determined that an effective population monitoring protocol will require collaring elk for the first 3-5 years that a population is hunted, to locate the main social groups and generate a population estimate.
- Developed a 3-year research plan to gather information with regard to coyote distribution, density, movements and their inter-relationships with local deer populations and humans in the rural-urban boundaries of Ottawa. Advanced telemetry equipment was purchased and installed, including wireless collars with transmitters. Staff will be monitoring and tracking coyote movements, with a final report and analysis to be completed in the final year.
- Enhanced hunting opportunities by adding four municipalities to the list of areas where Sunday gun hunting is permitted and clarifying permitted firearms in the Hunting regulation.
- Implemented new regulations to prevent the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease to Ontario by requiring health status certification prior to transportation of live captive deer, elk, moose and caribou into Ontario, restricting the use of deer urine and other bodily fluids while hunting, and expanding carcass importation restrictions to include high risk parts of moose and caribou.
- Partnering with the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre for surveillance and testing of bat hibernacula resulted in White Nose Syndrome being positively identified in bats in several additional areas in Ontario. Continuing to work with partner agencies and other jurisdictions in developing surveillance and response plans.
- 17,645 individuals trained through Ontario's hunter education program and 8,800 individuals trained through Ontario's wild turkey hunter education program; both programs are administered by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters in partnership with the province. A new home study DVD training program was developed for wild turkey hunter education training to increase accessibility to training for people from out of province or areas where a classroom course is not offered.
- An enhanced trapping manual was released for the Fur Harvest, Fur Management and Conservation Course, which is a prerequisite to become a licenced trapper in Ontario.

- Increased monitoring efforts by implementing moose aerial inventory of WMU 38, enhanced resident moose calf hunter surveys for 14 WMUs, purchased a new moose decoy for enforcement purposes, and created a moose identification display to assist hunters in correctly identifying calves. Funded aerial moose surveys in WMU 12a and WMU 4 allowing for a catchup on the backlog of surveys.
- Additional support was provided to monitor elk populations within the Lake Huron North Shore area, as well as within the Chapleau Crown Game Preserve.
- Provided funds to implement the deer check station on Manitoulin Island, as well as monitoring of key snow depth stations.
- Purchased bat ultrasonic acoustic devices for seven districts to document bat hibernacula, conducted bat white-nose syndrome surveillance monitoring and supported outreach efforts with letters, fact sheets and poster displays at sportsmen shows and mining events.
- Enforcement Branch made 332,091 public contacts, gave 11,065 warnings and laid 8,716 charges.

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