
ONTARIO FISH AND WILDLIFE HERITAGE COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024

It's a pleasure to present Ontario's Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission Annual Report for the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

This document represents a vast array of deliberations, topics, and discussions that happened over the course of a year to better provide the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and staff with our very best advice on a variety of fish and wildlife related topics.

Commission members work very hard to fulfill their roles with exceptional service and due diligence. For their dedication and commitment, I want to thank Yvonne Brown, Greg Farrant, Jim Greenwood, Shannon Gutoskie, Robin Horwath, and Brent McNamee, who served as Commission members throughout the past year.

In particular, the Commission's review and advice with respect to the Fish and Wildlife Special Purpose Account is of paramount importance to all.

Let me also thank MNRF staff. Deputy Minister Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark, Deputy Minister Drew Vanderduim, Jamie Stewart, Dave Brown, Christie Curley and Lindsay Brown for all their support, preparation, and advice during this past fiscal year. I would also like to thank the Minister and his staff for their support and confidence placed in the Commission and its role.

Mike Reader

Chair
Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission

Submitted to the
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL
Date: AUGUST 29, 2024

Background and Mandate

The Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission (the Commission) was established in 2002 under subsection 2(1) of the Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act, 2002 (HHFA). The Commission is required to consider and make recommendations to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry ("the Minister") on the following matters set out in 2(3) of the HHFA:

1. The promotion of practices that will contribute to recreational hunting and fishing being valued by future generations.
2. The promotion of public participation in fish and wildlife conservation programs.
3. The promotion of youth participation in hunting, fishing and other fish and wildlife activities.
4. The promotion of tourism related to hunting, fishing and other fish and wildlife activities.
5. The promotion of new opportunities for hunting, fishing and other fish and wildlife activities.
6. Any other matter referred to the Commission by the Minister.
7. The design and establishment of a mechanism to finance matters referred to in paragraphs 1 to 6.
8. The operation of the separate account referred to in section 85 of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997.

The Commission has also been established as an advisory committee under section 85(4) of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 (FWCA). The Commission provides advice to the Minister on the operation of the Special Purpose Account (SPA) under the FWCA in relation to the above noted matters. As such, all recommendations provided by the Commission to the Minister are considered 'confidential advice to the Minister'.

Appointments and Remuneration

Commission members, including the Chair of the Commission, are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (LGIC). There is no legislated number of members that must be appointed to the Commission; however, the Commission Terms of Reference provides that the Commission shall consist of up to 10 members and a Chair with no quorum specified. Commission members are appointed for terms not exceeding three years, with further re-appointments allowable, each not to exceed three years.

Commission members are recommended by the Minister to the LGIC to be representative of fish and wildlife resource users from across Ontario. Members are selected for their demonstrated experience, knowledge, and insight related to fishing, hunting, and trapping activities in Ontario as well as their experience in a wide variety of government and non-government related activities.

In an effort to provide an opportunity for new and different perspectives on the Commission, two new members were added June 1, 2023, following a process that began in December of 2022. At the end of the fiscal year, the Commission was comprised of 6 members and the Chair.

Remuneration rates for Commission members are \$150 per day, with the Chair of the Commission receiving \$175 per day; total remuneration for all Commission members combined, including the Chair, for the 2023/24 fiscal year was \$3625.00.

NOTE: The Director of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch (FWPB) and one additional staff are assigned as ex-officio, non-voting members of the Commission. These ex-officio members provide administrative support and liaison services to the Commission.

During the 2023/24 fiscal year, members of the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission included:

Name	Location	Role	Appointment Date	Appointment Expiry
------	----------	------	------------------	--------------------

Mike Reader	Peterborough	Chair	Oct. 21, 2021	Oct. 20, 2024
Yvonne Brown	Inverary	Member	Jun. 18, 2023	Jun. 18, 2026
Greg Farrant	Warkworth	Member	Apr. 24, 2023	April 23, 2025
Jim Greenwood	Simcoe	Member	Oct. 22, 2023	Oct. 21, 2026
Shannon Gutoskie	Carleton Place	Member	Jun. 1, 2023	May 31, 2026
Robin Horwath	Blind River	Member	Jun. 1, 2023	May 31, 2026
Brent McNamee	Manotick	Member	Jun. 18, 2023	Jun. 17, 2025

Key Activities

Meetings and Advice

Since its establishment in 2004, the Commission has provided advice and recommendations to the Minister on the matters outlined in section 2(3) of the HHFA (see above). This has included critical recommendations on several fish and wildlife management policies and programs, including support for a fish and wildlife values survey, Ontario's renewal of the Invasive Species Strategic Plan, hunter reporting penalties, immediate release of fish, and management of the Fish and Wildlife Special Purpose Account.

The Commission typically meets quarterly throughout the fiscal year to discuss new and ongoing fish and wildlife programs and policies and operation of the FW SPA. The Commission is approved to hold two in-person meetings per fiscal year, with the remainder of the meetings to be held virtually to accommodate scheduling and budget considerations. In the 2023/24 fiscal year, the Commission met a total of 3 times. The Commission was able to meet in-person in Peterborough, ON for two days in June 2023. Meetings occurred on:

- June 6-7, 2023
- December 6, 2024
- March 21, 2024

Commission members were pleased to meet with newly appointed Deputy Minister Drew Vanderduim at the meeting in December. The Commission meetings were also regularly attended by Minister's Office staff throughout the 2023/24 fiscal year. The Commission discussed and provided advice to the ministry on the following topics during these meetings and check-ins:

- Wildlife specific topics:
 - o Mandatory hunter reporting;
 - o Trapline allocation;
 - o Black Bear management;
 - o Moose hunter survey;
 - o Wildlife connectivity;
 - o Train and trial; and
 - o Modernization of hunter education
- Fisheries specific topics:
 - o Fisheries Management Zone planning process;
 - o Regulations related to the immediate release of fish;
 - o Implementation of Ontario's Sustainable Bait Management Strategy;
 - o Reviews of Fisheries Management Zone plans;
 - o National Marine Conservations Areas; and
 - o Ontario's Fish Culture Program
- Invasive Species topics:
 - o Invasive Species Strategic Plan;

- o New species of concern;
- o Invasive Species listings under the Invasive Species Act; and
- o Proposed policy regarding movement of species
- Operations and Licensing topics:
 - o Operation of the Fish & Wildlife Special Purpose Account (FW SPA);
 - o Updates to the Fish & Wildlife Licensing Service (FAWLS);
 - o Continuous improvement of the Fish & Wildlife Program;
 - o Marketing and promotion strategies for fishing and hunting, including social media; and
 - o Fish and Wildlife revenue generation and consumer survey initiatives

Advice received from Commission members during meetings on the topics noted above helped ministry staff frame program and policy advice to the Minister.

Additionally, there were two formal written recommendations developed by the Commission and provided to the Minister during the 2023/24 fiscal year. The written recommendations were provided to the Minister following the Commission's meetings and provided specific advice about National Marine Conservations Areas, as well as mandatory hunter reporting. Additionally, ongoing discussion with staff and with the Minister's Office allowed the Commission to provide verbal advice regularly throughout the 2023/24 fiscal year.

Fish and Wildlife Special Purpose Account (FW SPA)

As part of its mandate, the Commission is updated regularly on the financial position and sustainability of the FW SPA, including fish and wildlife management activities conducted using FW SPA funding, annual work plans and funding requirements, and annual reports.

The information and data provided to the Commission by ministry staff indicates that FW SPA funding was properly allocated on fish and wildlife initiatives during the 2023/24 fiscal year.

The Commission notes that the delivery of fish and wildlife services continues to evolve, with new programs added and existing programs modified periodically, as appropriate. However, new or updated fish and wildlife programs have the potential to significantly impact available FW SPA funds. The Commission recognizes the need for change but cautions that any change must be considered in relation to the long-term use and sustainability of the FW SPA.

The Commission recognizes the many challenges facing the sustainability of the FW SPA, particularly as they relate to revenue decreases resulting from Covid-19 and other fiscal challenges (e.g., inflation). The Commission will continue to monitor the FW SPA's recovery from Covid-19 and provide specific recommendations around revenue generation to the Minister as requested and appropriate.

Performance

To assess the Commission's progress towards achieving its goals and objectives (i.e., intended outcomes) as well as to demonstrate the Commission's effectiveness and efficiency in delivering on its mandate (as described under section 2(3) of the HHFA and section 85(4) of the FWCA), five intended outcomes have been identified for the Commission¹. Corresponding performance measures to track the Commission's progress toward each intended outcome have also been identified and are described below:

¹ Measuring performance makes progress visible (Treasury Board Secretariat, 2016, Putting Outcomes First: A Roadmap for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in the OPS, Toronto, ON).

- Outcome 1:** Opportunities to promote the value of recreational hunting and fishing to future generations are identified.
- Outcome 2:** Opportunities to promote public participation in fish and wildlife conservation programs are identified.
- Outcome 3:** Opportunities to promote tourism, public, and youth participation in hunting, fishing and other fish and wildlife activities are identified.
- Outcome 4:** New opportunities for hunting, fishing and other fish and wildlife activities are identified.
- Outcome 5:** Effective, efficient, and sustainable operation of the SPA to finance matters referred to in section 2(3) of the HHFA.

Performance Measures:

- Number of meetings where the outcome was discussed;
- Percentage of Commission meetings where the outcome was discussed;
- Number of recommendations provided to the ministry regarding the outcome;
- Average number of recommendations (per meeting) regarding the outcome.

Table 1.0 outlines the Commission's achievements in delivering on its mandate as assessed through the above identified performance measures. Additional performance measures regarding the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission have also been included regarding:

- The average number of recommendations provided to the Minister or ministry staff per Commission meeting; and
- The average cost of Commission meetings.

Table 1.0: Performance Measures for the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission

Intended Outcome	Performance Measures			
	Number of formal meetings where discussed	Percentage of formal meetings where discussed ²	Number of recommendations provided	Avg. number of recommendations per formal meeting ³
1. Opportunities to promote the value of recreational hunting and fishing to future generations are identified.	3	100%	3	1.0
2. Opportunities to promote public participation in fish and wildlife conservation programs are identified.	3	100%	3	1.0
3. Opportunities to promote tourism, public, and youth participation in hunting, fishing and other fish and wildlife activities are identified.	3	100%	3	1.0
4. New opportunities for hunting, fishing and other fish and wildlife activities are identified.	2	67%	2	0.67
5. Effective, efficient, and sustainable operation of the SPA to finance matters referred to in section 2(3) of the HHFA.	3	100%	3	1.0

On average, the Commission provided approximately 3.3 recommendations/Commission meeting held in 2023/24 (down slightly from 4.0 per meeting in 2022-23, and consistent with 3.3 in 2021-2022).⁴ Average meeting costs were approximately \$2181.72 per meeting in 2023/24.⁵

² Assessed by dividing the number of meetings where the topic was discussed by the total number of meetings held by the Commission (which in 2023/24 was 3).

³ Assessed by dividing the number of recommendations provided on that topic by the by the total number of meetings held by the Commission (which in 2023/24 was 3).

⁴ Assessed by dividing the total number of recommendations made by the Commission by the total number of formal meetings held by the Commission (which in 2023/24 was 3).

⁵ Assessed by dividing the total amount of Commission expenditures by the number of formal meetings held by the Commission (which in 2023/24 was 3).

Financial Statements

Commission Expenses

Commission expenses are processed by FWPB. Costs include travel and accommodation expenses, per diems for Commission members and administrative support costs, which can include rental fees for meeting space as well as registration costs for training, conferences or courses attended by Commission members on behalf of the Commission.

NOTE: Travel and accommodation expenses include mileage, car rental, gas, taxi services, hotel accommodations, airport parking, hotel parking and meals in accordance with the Management Board of Cabinet Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive (January 2020).

The Commission continues to fulfill its role as effectively and efficiently as possible. For example, the Commission decided it was not a good use of resources to meet in October 2023, given a lighter potential agenda. Furthermore, the Commission continues to meet virtually twice a year to minimize costs; however periodic in-person meetings continue to be valuable on an as needed basis.

Total expenditures to support the Commission between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, were as follows:

<u>Expense</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Commissioner Per Diems	\$3,625.00
Travel & Accommodations	\$2,920.16
Administrative Expenses	\$0
TOTAL	\$6,545.16

The 2023/24 total expenditures were lower than the 2022/23 fiscal year (\$12,017.21).