

ONTARIO
PROVINCIAL REPORT
May 2023

Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
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Peterborough, ON K9J 8M5

Regulatory Changes

- **Baitfish management:** Ontario has made changes to its bait management framework in an effort to mitigate the potential spread of invasive species and disease. As of January 1, 2022, Ontario has established four Bait Management Zones (BMZ). All commercial bait operators and anglers are required to keep baitfish and leeches within the zone it originated from (with a few limited exceptions). Anglers using baitfish or leeches outside of the BMZ of their primary residence (including non-residents) are required to purchase their bait and keep the receipt to prove the bait was acquired within the BMZ. The bait must be used within two weeks of the date of purchase. Anglers using baitfish and leeches within the BMZ of their primary residence can either purchase or self-harvest their bait and are not required to keep a receipt.
- **Black bear management:** Ontario is exploring improvements to the current harvest management approach for black bear in the province. Over the last several years, a population monitoring initiative has been underway to update the province's black bear population estimate and improve our knowledge of local black bear populations. This broadscale population survey, which is now part of our annual monitoring efforts is the largest of its kind in North America.
- **Chronic Wasting Disease:** Ontario continues to work at keeping CWD out of the province. Efforts include regulations to prohibit or restrict products derived from cervids and movement of cervids. In 2022 Ontario tested 646 samples and all tested negative for CWD.

Policy Updates

- **SARS-CoV-2 and Wildlife in Captivity:** Ontario implemented requirements on education facilities (e.g. zoos), wildlife rehabilitators and researchers that keep mammals in captivity to prevent the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. Requirements are based on ECCC's "Wildlife and SARS-CoV-2: Handling Guidelines" available at <http://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/publications.php>. These requirements will be reviewed in Fall 2023, prior to 2024 renewals.
- **Trapping/trapline allocation:** Ontario continues to evaluate feedback received from key stakeholders, Indigenous communities and organizations, on a proposal to renew the policy for the allocation of registered traplines areas.
- **Catch and Release Recreational Fishing:** Ontario is evaluating feedback received from the public, key stakeholders and Indigenous communities about proposed changes related to catch and release fishing. The changes would allow anglers to delay the release of a fish caught during the open season for that species, only long enough to photograph, measure and weigh, if the fish is of a restricted size or over

daily catch and possession limits. The changes would require the immediate release of fish that are out of season, are species at risk or are otherwise prohibited under the existing recreational fishing rules. The target date for implementation of any changes related to this proposal would be January 1, 2025.

Emerging Issues / Trends

- **Avian Influenza Emergency Management:** Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) continues to be detected in domestic poultry and wild birds in numerous regions of Ontario. Positive domestic premises have been placed under quarantine. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is the lead agency for responding to HPAI outbreaks in commercial poultry operations with support from Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. MNR provides support with wild bird disease surveillance and communications with stakeholders and members of the public who are licensed or authorized to hunt, hold, or rehabilitate birds