

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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Ontario Conservation Centre

OFAH FILE: 440/794
January 18, 2022

Mr. Curt Morris
Darlington Provincial Park
1600 Darlington Park Road
Bowmanville, Ontario
L1C 3K3

Dear Mr. Morris:

Subject: ERO #019-4093 Amending the Darlington Provincial Park Management Plan to allow for the management of native species

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 proposal to amend the Darlington Provincial Park Management Plan to allow for the management of native species and support it.

There are often instances where natural areas have an overabundance of native species that requires some form of population control. There are multiple ways in which population control is undertaken depending on the area, the species, and the situation. Thousand Islands National Park uses a partnership with a local Indigenous group to manage hyperabundant deer populations. Point Pelee National Park has lethally managed cormorant populations on Middle Island to prevent damage to species at risk and other nesting birds. Toronto Region Conservation Authority has worked to move cormorant nests from trees to the ground to prevent canopy damage. Additionally, the provincial and federal governments use hunters and trappers in various capacities to manage wildlife populations such as snow geese, Canada geese, white-tailed deer, cormorants, coyotes, and beavers. Provincial parks need the ability to easily and effectively manage wildlife and plant populations to ensure sustainable population levels and protect biodiversity, regardless of which approach they take. The general wording proposed in the amended management plan will allow park managers to best determine what approach to population management is implemented, which is important in order to ensure this policy is applicable to the numerous species that could be targeted for control.

One of the most cost-effective methods of wildlife management is to allow the hunting of that species within the park boundary. Not only does this address the overabundance concern, but also brings social and economic value to the park and surrounding area. In Darlington Provincial Park, hunters can be used in the fall season to reduce the number of adult cormorants that have successfully nested in the park. There is already an established controlled waterfowl hunt in the park and a hunting season for cormorants, so coordination between hunters and park managers could direct hunting efforts to desired areas. Hunters can also be used to reinforce any non-lethal deterrents that the park may wish to use to prevent cormorants from landing in sensitive areas. When considering control options for cormorants, Darlington Provincial Park should consider implementing multiple methods in conjunction. Control measures for cormorants should not only focus on nesting deterrents, as it will just push the colony to adjacent areas, potentially leading to larger colonies nearby. Lethal measures should be used in combination with nesting deterrents to ensure effectiveness, as birds can become habituated to continued non-lethal deterrents over time. Egg-oiling works to reduce colony numbers, but does not immediately preclude them from nesting and, by extension, damaging vegetation. The chosen control options should depend on the management direction of the park. The OFAH suggests that prior to implementing control measures on cormorants, or any native wildlife species within the park, that the park develop a management plan for that species to ensure that there are population objectives and monitoring programs in place to measure effect.

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The OFAH believes that Darlington Provincial Park should be able to manage native wildlife and vegetation to ensure suitable habitat is maintained, not only for species at risk, but also when needed to improve habitat of any native park species. The creation of management plans whenever this type of work is being considered will ensure that the measures taken will be done in an ecologically responsible way and that there is scientific justification for the prioritization of certain species. In conclusion, we fully support the proposed changes to the Darlington Provincial Park Management Plan and would be happy to discuss further ways that the OFAH could assist with species management in the park.

Yours in Conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lauren Tonelli', written in a cursive style.

Lauren Tonelli
Resource Management Specialist

LT/jb

cc: OFAH Board of Directors
Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director
Matt DeMille, OFAH Director, Policy & Programs
Mark Ryckman, OFAH Manager, Policy
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