

# ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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*Ontario Conservation Centre*

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To Whom It May Concern:

Subject: ERO #019-3685 Proposal to allow the issuance of licences for new dog train and trial areas and the transfer of licences

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 ERO posting #019-3685 *Proposal to allow the issuance of licences for new dog train and trial areas and the transfer of licences* and offer the following comments for consideration.

The use of hunting dogs is a historic tradition and an important aspect of Ontario's hunting heritage. Training and trialing areas are vital for the creation of well-trained dogs for use in various popular hunting pursuits and sporting competitions. Having a well-trained dog that knows to go after the correct game species during the actual hunt is essential for both legal and safety reasons. Being able to train these dogs in safely enclosed and regulated areas gives peace of mind to both the dog owners, and to members of the public as it reduces chances of accidental property trespassing, conflicts with livestock and even road collisions, since dog handlers have complete control over their dogs in training and trialing areas.

## **The OFAH supports the proposal to allow the issuance of licences for new dog train and trial areas.**

The proposal will allow for an increased number of training and trialing areas to operate within Ontario, which will give the sporting dog community a better chance to make use of these areas. Without the ability to obtain a new licence, training and trialing establishments have been dwindling in the province to numbers that are less than half of what they were several decades ago, leading to a slow elimination of the valued tradition. A one-time 90-day application window will finally let new training and trialing area licences to be issued, which hunters with dogs and other members of the sporting dog community are eager to see happen. By allowing new licences to be issued for establishing new training and trialing areas, hunters with dogs they need to train, and even novice hunters who need more experience running dogs, will have better access to these areas if there are more of them in existence in the province.

Having more training and trialing areas will also contribute to the local economies in areas where they exist. Hunters and sporting dog handlers travel to training and trialing areas, which means spending money on travel expenses such as gas, food, and accommodations, and other direct and indirect contributions to local businesses. The opportunity to be issued a licence to establish a new training and trialing area also creates a new small business opportunity for people to generate income through regular usage/membership fees and income from organizing and hosting sporting dog trials and competitions. These events can attract over 100 people, many of whom travel as well and further contribute to local business economy. If there are more training and trialing areas holding competitions, participants are encouraged to stay within the province and spend their money here, rather than being forced to travel outside the province in order to find these types of competitions.

The use of training and trialing areas itself is a great method of being able to exercise dogs out of season and enhances their quality of life. Giving dogs a way to be active and work on their skills makes for a happier dog, and training time improves handler-dog bonds. Usage of training and trialing areas are also excellent ways for dog handlers to be active, get outdoors and even introduce youth into the hunting and recreation world, all of which is especially important in today's society where mental health is an increasing concern.

**The OFAH supports the proposal to allow for the transfer of licences.**

The ability to transfer training and trialing area licences is something the OFAH has specifically lobbied for in the past because it allows owners to pass on their business to new and interested parties and, more importantly, it prevents the loss of these areas through attrition. In recent years, with the current regulations in place prohibiting licence transfers, licence owners who pass away or can no longer operate could not pass on their licence and business in order to keep it running, which caused many training and trialing areas to close. This is an unnecessary loss, and the OFAH is pleased to see that this no longer has to be the case if licences become transferrable. Keeping training and trialing areas running maintains a sense of continuity and tradition, letting younger generations take up the torch and carry on the business and the practice.

Training and trialing areas are important to the sporting dog community and to Ontario's hunting heritage, and as such, the OFAH supports the ERO proposal to allow the issuance of licences for new dog train and trial areas and the transfer of licences. We are pleased to see the MNRF address this long-standing issue and we thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Yours in Conservation,



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KS/jb

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