

# **Moose populations under-managed ... moose hunters over-regulated ... devoted Ontario moose hunters conclude!**

**MNR should re-focus on current '1980 POLICY GUIDELINES'... Manage non-hunting mortality, control predation, restore, maintain, protect winter habitat ... Current draw system much too complicated ... Consider many benefits of return to simpler revised X number of AVT'S (tags) per moose system ...**

**Open Letter to Minister-MNR:**

**Ms. Donna Cansfield MPP**

**Minister of Natural Resources**

**Room 6630, Whitney Block**

**99 Wellesley Street West**

**Toronto ON M7A 1W3**

**Dear Ms. Minister,**

**Enough is enough is the message conveyed by an ever-increasing number of bona fide moose hunters canvassed from across Ontario. After 25 years of micro-managing hunter harvest (testing) the 'Selective Harvest System' est. 1983, the status-quo has indeed miserably failed to meet projected population & hunting opportunity objectives, Therefore a transparent in-depth strengths & weaknesses test (review) of the current '1980 Moose Management Policy No. WM.8.02.01' is surely needed; involving more of the stakeholder 'groups' (NOSA, OFMF, FoF etc.) representing the greater majority of moose hunters.**

**Adding insult to misery when informed by the disturbing news that during Phase 1 (2008) 'MNR Moose Management Review' process, a small privileged group of 500 hunters (merely .5%) were invited to meet behind closed doors to review, revise and approve changes to the current**

**1980 'Moose Management Policy'. Leaving the remaining 99.5 % of the 100,000 devoted moose hunters, who loyally contribute the crucial 'MILLIONS' toward 'MOOSE MANAGEMENT' via annual licence fees, without equal opportunity for meaningful input; now forced to deal with the negative impacts of this MNR misconceived revised vital policy. The 2009 EBR posting is now their only option for input toward this important matter of policy. Many moose hunters absolutely agree MNR has failed to demonstrate due diligence here!**

## **Phase 2, 2009.**

**Today we have the largest recorded population of moose (109,000), the lowest recorded harvest numbers (approx 7.5 %), combined with the lowest number of hunting opportunities (AVT's) current average is approx 14, 500. The Selective Harvest System has evolved from a few simple, easily understood paragraphs in a fold-out hunting regulations summary (1980); today a nightmare maze (20 pages very fine print) of extremely complex regulation. Therefore it's hard to disagree that Ontario moose hunters feel over-regulated and that changes to reverse this unjustified situation are long overdue!**

**Enlightened Ontario moose hunters , quickly recognise that since 1983 MNR moose management is simply 'HUNTER MANAGEMENT' nothing more and that this new 2009 proposal is simply more of same old. Avid moose hunters feel they are downright over-regulated taking up 20 pages of 'bewildering jumble' focused solely on 'hunting harvest' (currently yielding scarcely 7.5% of moose population mortality) leaving the precise herd growth limiting factors within the 92.5% (non-hunting mortality). Meanwhile crucial '1980 Policy Guidelines' geared to address critical growth limiting factors such as predator control (wolves & bears) and winter habitat identification/restoration/protection remain completely disregarded. Simply put HUNTERS are not to BLAME for the dismal failures of the MNR 1980 Moose Management Policy.**

**AVT's should not be removed unless proven that 'hunter Harvest' is responsible for declining moose population. Prior to 1983 the much simpler two tags per moose system in place 1980, 1981, 1982 was tried, tested and proven sustainable, measuring 'hunter harvest as a percentage**

of the population' (below the allowable 12%). Effectively 50% of us moose hunters had an AVT (tag) allowing a ratio of 2 to 1 odds to share the opportunity to annually harvest an adult moose. Although a much smaller ratio actually harvest a moose, (a three year average of 71, 122 hunters harvested an ave. of 9,015 moose) yet at least the opportunity existed.

Clearly moose hunters mistakenly opted for the 'selective harvest draw system' in 1983, which removes AVT's based on irrelevant AVT fill rate percentage's (hunter success), in hindsight more time should have been devoted toward fine tuning any perceived minor weaknesses of the initial X number of tags per moose system.

Therefore Ms Minister, please consider the following.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) MNR should demonstrate due diligence based on the above circumstances, declare the 2008 EBR posting Registry # 010-5396 as inconclusive input, pending further discussions involving more stakeholder groups, representing the greater majority of moose hunters (NOSA, OFMF, FoF etc.)!
- 2) Further, put on hold the 2009 EBR posting Registry # 010-5965 and immediately establish the process toward formal discussions between yourself and the above groups geared toward revisiting the 1980 Policy guidelines in particular (6.0) - (8.0) relevant to predator control and winter habitat management, concurrent with establishing a long overdue fresh approach; implementing a slightly revised 'X # of tags per moose system' initially tested and proven sustainable in 1980, 1981, 1982.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Eldon Hawton,

Moose Hunter,

North Bay

**Fellow Moose hunters ... your attention & action on this important '1980 Moose Management Policy' matter is needed now!**

- **"There is a misconception being fostered by some people within the MNR that would imply hunters are killing too many moose, and this is the farthest thing from the truth. Therefore, we as moose hunters should be asking MNR why they are continuing to spend copious time, money and resources with another moose review when what we should be doing is researching moose and finding ways to recognize and utilize the value of harvesting moose as a tool to improving moose population, quality and hunter satisfaction." John Kaplanis.**
- **"There never has been an issue of the moose population being in danger or being threatened in any WMU, nor a case of hunters harvesting a greater percentage of the population than was harvested during the late 1980s when the population was growing at a fast pace. MNR is still pretending hunters are a problem with population growth and that further cuts to tags may be required to achieve yet higher populations." Randy Ford.**
- **"With hunter harvest accounting for merely 10 per cent of moose mortality and non-hunting mortality factors the remaining 90 per cent it is hard to understand why MNR would spend its time, efforts and funds focused on hunter management and paying little more than lip service toward the 1980 Policy Guidelines pertaining to the relevant non-hunting mortality growth limiting factors. The main predators of moose are wolves and black bears. Wolves are protected in some areas and in Northern Ontario we have a severe black bear over-population crisis due to politics rather than science based wildlife management decisions. We can hardly expect the moose herd growth from the annual spring calving when 50 per cent of the 50,000 calves born each spring are gobbled-up by an ever-increasing number of hungry black bears within the first two weeks after they hit the ground. Yet hunters get the blame from MNR as tags are further slashed and more and more calf hunting restrictions are imposed." Eldon Hawton.**

**Less than 2% of us moose hunters have had any opportunity for discussion**

**or meaningful input therefore;**

**The MNR should immediately declare the EBR postings "inconclusive input" pending further discussion/input from a much larger number of qualified, knowledgeable moose hunters. Ontario's 100,000 moose hunters contribute considerable funds through licence fees toward moose management. Together we have a vested interest in these matters of policy, Meanwhile, consider the following course of action, send your protest letters to our Minister of Natural Resources with a copy duly posted on the appropriate EBR Registry # 010-5965. This 1980 Moose Management Policy is far too important to be cast aside without your needed input and approval.**

**Copies (pdf) of 1980 Moose Management Policy No. WM.8.02.01 c/w MNR Table 1, "A summary of moose harvest and moose numbers in Ontario ..." are available via email upon request.**

**This is your opportunity to help make a difference. For a better understanding of the situation, please take time to read the following media clips (Sudbury Star) and take appropriate action toward changes for the better ...**

## **Moose hunters chime in on management issues**

### **UPSET HUNTERS: Moose meeting**

**Posted 1 hour ago Saturday March 21st 2009**

The recent Sudbury moose round table discussions were held at the Navy League Hall last Tuesday evening.

Despite that night's winter storm and freezing rain warnings, many were in attendance. The fact people came out in such numbers in that weather is testament to the near and dear affinity -- and importance -- moose have with Northern residents. No doubt many more moose hunters were not able to go to the meeting.

Here we've compiled a number of moose specialists to give a broader spectrum of moose-related input the MNR and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters offered at the discussions. This may expand the round table talks as it widens perspectives.

My hope is to add some credulity to the mix being given by the MNR and OFAH, and

that concerned moose hunters will use this information and compose a written submission for the moose review of their own. Such submissions can be presented to the moose review. The MNR moose review will be accepting submissions until the end of April, so moose hunters can offer a significant presentation. I also urge anyone submitting comments to the moose review to keep a copy for future reference.

My first resource person is John Kaplanis, executive director of The Northwestern Sportsmens Alliance who is a well known Thunder Bay moose hunter who attended the moose meeting in Thunder Bay. Here's his take on the issues:

"While the situation in the Northwest Region is slightly better than the south eastern region as far as overall moose numbers go, it remains that the MNR seems to be addressing this subject by managing the hunter rather than managing the moose and its ecosystem.

By this I mean that moose hunters by and large have not contributed at all to a growing harvest of moose since the inception of the selective harvest system. In fact, harvest has gone down slightly if anything.

**There is a misconception being fostered by some people within the MNR that would imply hunters are killing too many moose, and this is the farthest thing from the truth. Therefore, we as moose hunters should be asking MNR why they are continuing to spend copious time, money and resources with another moose review when what we should be doing is researching moose and finding ways to recognize and utilize the value of harvesting moose as a tool to improving moose population, quality and hunter satisfaction.**

**Additionally, moose hunters need to be asking MNR to fill information gaps. For example, what impact do predators have on calf recruitment? We know this occurs in the wild, but to what extent, and at what point does it become a limiting factor on recruitment? What about habitat alteration, logging, spraying herbicides, etc. Does this contribute to more deer and less moose? We want the answers to these questions and we're not getting them. The MNR needs to get back to basics in moose management research and stop tinkering with hunter management systems as it distracts from real moose management issues."**

See Monday's edition of The Star for Part 2 of the moose feature, where moose specialist Randy Ford, former chair of the Wildlife Committee of the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board, adds his view, as does seasoned moose hunter and trapper Eldon Hawton of North Bay.

Read John Vance's Outdoor Trails every Saturday in The Sudbury Star. Vance can be reached at [outdoors@execulink.com](mailto:outdoors@execulink.com).

## **MNR's promises to hunters remain**

# unkept

## MOOSE MEETINGS: Of moose and men -- part two

Updated 7 hours ago Monday March 23rd 2009

Our next moose specialist is Randy Ford, former chair of the Wildlife Committee of the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board.

"As wildlife subcommittee chair for the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board from 1999 until it was dissolved four years later, I had an opportunity to look in depth at the work being done within MNR on a number of wildlife issues, including moose management. We were able to report our findings on issues directly to the Minister of Natural Resources sitting at the time.

As for moose, I was able to attend all of the moose population target review meetings held in Ontario, and quite frankly, was very disappointed with the process. I believe the basis for the meetings being held in the first place was because MNR was being held to account by the provincial auditor as to why the population of moose had not reached the 1980 moose policy objectives of 160,000 moose by the year 2000. **One should take into consideration there was no scientific basis back in 1980 whether those population levels were achievable or sustainable. What is important to understand was the rationale provided for achieving and maintaining higher populations was because there were credible benefits promised to hunters had they been achieved.**

**The program targets that were purported were to provide for a harvest of 10,000 moose after 1985, 18,000 by 1995 and 25,000 moose annually by 2000. Also, a quality standard of a minimum hunter success rate of 12 per cent was expected. At no time was there mention of a conservation issue or that moose were threatened in any way, nor any rationale to suggest there were other reasons to maximize the moose population other than to provide additional viewing and hunting/harvesting opportunities.**

**"There was even mention predators would be controlled if necessary so these benefits could be achieved. Someone at MNR decided to abdicate their mandate and refused to follow the spirit of the Moose Policy document. Suddenly, all that was important was increasing the moose population. They then refused to allow the resource to be harvested in responsible fashion as was intended in 1980 to benefit hunters.**

As far as I'm concerned, it was a con game then, and it still is. The lack of accountability for not delivering the goods to hunters is what astounds me yet today. Perhaps, the promises for those harvest yields were just carrots to get hunters to go along with a management system that you'd swear was, and still is, being run by a group of anti-hunting zealots. I say still because the same promises are heard today, but it's obvious

there was and is no intention to follow through for moose hunters.

**There never has been an issue of the moose population being in danger or being threatened in any WMU, nor a case of hunters harvesting a greater percentage of the population than was harvested during the late 1980s when the population was growing at a fast pace. MNR is still pretending hunters are a problem with population growth and that further cuts to tags may be required to achieve yet higher populations.**

There is no rationale for maintaining populations at or above current levels at all. In fact, crashes in populations are not only possible, it's expected in a normal ecosystem, even where hunting does not occur. Don't let anyone tell you there are benefits to trying to force populations higher. What benefits? We already watched as some WMU moose populations peaked and crashed back to normal levels. And what is MNR's response? The MNR wrings their hands and blames hunters for shooting too many moose and respond by cutting more tags.

I would suggest managers look to the last few years of good growth in the population and they'd find the optimum populations the WMUs should be managed at, which is probably when the provincial moose population was in the 90,000 range, like around 1992-94 .

**Harvests were at a much higher level as a percentage of the total population, and the herd was still growing. Now, we have at least one MNR expert claiming it's one of their fears that if they issued 100,000 tags it's possible that all 100,000 moose would be harvested in that year, and there'd be no moose left. The harvest numbers went up only because there were more moose available and more hunters, nothing more than that. The MNR's own numbers bear that out. The MNR portrays hunters as the enemy when it comes to achieving moose population objectives. Worst of all, it seems they have successfully pulled the wool over the eyes of the OFAH, and have lulled them into accepting this shell game for years. Where's the outrage? Moose hunters have been and still are getting the shaft.**

The next guest at our round table is a well-known, seasoned moose hunter and trapper in Ontario. Eldon Hawton, of North Bay, has more than 43 years of moose/deer/bear hunting experience, is also a licensed trapper, helped establish and maintain an ongoing public awareness campaign relevant to Northern Ontario's black bear overpopulation crisis. All this combined with six years experience with the Ontario Moose and Bear Allocation Advisory Committee. Hawton is well aware of the issues and concerns of Northern Ontario residents and the hunting population.

Here's his take.

"Coverage prior to the event touted the meeting as MNR province-wide public meetings on moose review, suggesting these discussions would include reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the current Moose Management Policy No. WM. 8.02.01. This policy

was used to get hunters to buy into the selective harvest system in 1983. This six-page policy was an easy sell as it contained some significant program targets, along with many needed policy guidelines to ensure the program targets could be met. Targets such as No. 1.0 'To increase the moose population from 80,000 to 100,000 animals by 1985, 140,000 by 1995 and 160,000 by year 2000'. Target No. 2.0, 'To provide from this herd, an annual harvest of 10,000 moose after 1985, 18,000 by 1985 and 25,000 by the year 2000'.

"Short term pain for long term gain was the slogan of the day. In 1983, the first year of selective harvest, 71,690 hunters shared 53,000 tags and harvested 9,049 moose from a herd of 80,000. The 109,000 figure peaked in the early to mid 1990s. For example, in 1993, 93,032 hunters shared 27,000 tags and harvested 10,908 moose from a herd of 109,000. Despite the further reduction of 12,000 tags, the moose herd has not increased and remains today at 109,000. This coming fall marks 26 years of short term pain and 100,000 hunters share 15,000 tags and expect to harvest between 8,000 to 9000 moose from a herd of 109,000.

**"Why did this plan turn into such a dismal failure? With hunter harvest accounting for merely 10 per cent of moose mortality and non-hunting mortality factors the remaining 90 per cent it is hard to understand why MNR would spend its time, efforts and funds focused on hunter management and paying little more than lip service toward the 1980 Policy Guidelines pertaining to the relevant non-hunting mortality growth limiting factors. The main predators of moose are wolves and black bears. Wolves are protected in some areas and in Northern Ontario we have a severe black bear over-population crisis due to politics rather than science based wildlife management decisions. We can hardly expect the moose herd growth from the annual spring calving when 50 per cent of the 50,000 calves born each spring are gobbled-up by an ever-increasing number of hungry black bears within the first two weeks after they hit the ground. Yet hunters get the blame from MNR as tags are further slashed and more and more calf hunting restrictions are imposed.**

Many of us looking for the answers attending the Sudbury Moose program review meeting were surprised, disappointed and frustrated to learn the meeting was not for discussing matters of policy. Rather than discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the current Moose Management Policy the meeting was held to decide how best to divvy up the meager 15,000 tags among the 100,000 some hunters who apply in the annual draw.

"Moose hunters are told that if we want to add our input we have till April 30 to submit our input to the EBR.

**"The MNR should immediately remove the EBR posting pending further discussion/input from a much larger number of qualified, knowledgeable moose hunters.** Meanwhile, consider the following course of action. Without the funding provided by the Outdoors Heritage Community, many important social, economic and wildlife management benefits would no longer exist. Ontario's 100,000 moose hunters contribute considerable funds through licence fees toward moose management.

*Together we have a vested interest in these matters of policy, and if you are outraged as I am, send your protest letters to our Minister of Natural Resources with a copy duly posted on the appropriate EBR. This 1980 Moose Management Policy is far too important to be cast aside without your needed input and approval."*

\* Read John Vance's Outdoor Trails every Saturday in The Sudbury Star. Vance can be reached at [outdoors@execulink.com](mailto:outdoors@execulink.com).

## **John Vance's Outdoor Trails (The Sudbury Star Saturday March 28, 2009)**

Posted 23 hours ago

Last Saturday's outdoor column and Monday's second part concerned the recent MNR-hosted moose talks.

My article included much new input from several recognized moose experts and as a consequence it was quite lengthy so it was split into a second part which was in Monday's edition of The Sudbury Star.

**I also suggest you send a copy to MNR minister Donna Canfield at Whiney Block, Rm 6630, Queen's Park, Toronto Ont., M7A 1W3.**

**I also recommend you keep a copy of your submission for your own future reference, and please get them in well before the April 30 deadline.**

**For us as moose hunters to not to let the MNR know our wishes will mean that we get whatever they dictate, and for some of us, this may not be an option at all.**

Read John Vance's Outdoor Trails every Saturday in The Sudbury Star. Vance can be reached at [outdoors@execulink.com](mailto:outdoors@execulink.com).

*Eldon*

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*Knowledge is not power until it is turned into action.*  
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Please Note: Email address has changed; new email [friends\\_of\\_fur@sympatico.ca](mailto:friends_of_fur@sympatico.ca) please update your contact info. Meanwhile messages sent to old address will be forwarded to new.