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Deer Populations “Out-of-Control” Yet Ontario Government Funds Deer Habitat Improvement Programs

Deer populations in Ontario are out-of-control according to Jerry Ouellette, Minister of Natural Resources, and he is prepared to expand the deer hunting season in Kemptville District in the Ottawa Valley, and allow a year round hunt of bucks by farmers province-wide. But at the same time, Ouellette funds programs aimed at “enhancing” deer populations through habitat improvement and feeding programs.

The proposal to expand the deer hunt in Ontario came only weeks after farmers in Lanark County in Kemptville District staged an illegal deer hunt to protest crop damage caused by the over abundance of deer. But in the last fiscal year of 2001/2002, the Ontario government funded three Kemptville specific projects aimed at increasing deer populations. In adjoining districts, a total of ten projects were funded to improve deer habitat and numerous more across the province. For example:

Kemptville District - 2001/2002

- Deer Habitat Manipulation, ** North Lanark (Oak Ridge) Habitat Rehabilitation $700
- Deer Habitat Manipulation, ** 4th Year (Gimmees) Habitat Rehabilitation $700
- Deer Habitat Improvement, Lanark (Crosbie) Habitat Rehabilitation $600

Pembroke District - 2001/2002

- Barry’s Bay Fish and Gun Club DeerYard Habitat Enhancement WMU 55B Habitat Rehabilitation $400
- Arnprior Fish and Game Club Deer Habitat Enhancement WMU 63 Habitat Rehabilitation $500
- Crosbie Hunt Club Forest Meadow Enhancement for Deer and Small Game Habitat Rehabilitation $500

Peterborough District - 2001/2002

- Browse Plot Maintenance - Bexley Deer Yard, Habitat Rehabilitation $500

“What a scam. There is no crisis here,” says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition. “Wildlife does not naturally overpopulate. Left to their own devices, wildlife populations are controlled through natural forces such as food availability and severity of winters. Rather the government is creating a crisis so it can create as many hunting opportunities as possible.”
If the government is serious about alleviating crop damage and deer/car collisions, then they need to explore all avenues including how sport hunting itself stimulates population growth and forces deer out of the woods and onto roads. The feeding and ultimate habituating of deer by individuals and hunt clubs to ensure accessible targets must also be re-evaluated. Restoring natural population limitations is essential. “This government has a responsibility to manage wildlife ethically and ecologically, and not just to generate dollars for their hunting programs,” says Gus Zylstra.

For more information contact
AnnaMaria Valastro at 416.537.3212.

For a rural perspective contact
Gus Zylstra at 613.332.3651

Notes to the Editor:
The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources funds community wildlife projects through their Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program (CFWIP). This program dispenses funds from the Special Purpose Account (SPA). The funds for the SPA are raised through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. Projects funded through the CFWIP primarily support fishing and hunting projects.

**Deer Habitat Manipulation - we could not confirm a clear definition of this project from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

This information was obtained through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Government Contacts
Ron Running,
Regional Manager South Central Region,
705.755.3235

Owen Williams,
CFWIP Coordinator,
519.675.7786

see Ontario Government Allows for Year round deer hunt for farmers

Illegal Deer Hunt rewarded by Ontario Government