

February 18, 2020

Public Input Coordinator
Species Conservation Policy Branch
Wildlife Section
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
300 Water Street
5th Floor, North Tower
Peterborough, Ontario
K9J 3C7

To Whom it may concern;

RE: Environmental Registry of Ontario posting 019-1112 Proposed changes to black bear hunting

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is Canada's largest voluntary general farm organization, representing more than 38,000 farm family businesses across Ontario. These farm businesses form the backbone of a robust food system and rural communities with the potential to drive the Ontario economy forward.

OFA regularly hears from members who have experienced crop, livestock or poultry damage by black bears. In some instances, farmers suffer from more than one of these. While compensation for livestock or poultry damage is available, farmers have no effective compensation program to offset the losses from crop damage. Implementing a permanent spring black bear hunting season is a positive action that may help to lessen the crop, livestock or poultry losses farmers face. OFA supports the implementation of a regular spring black bear season where there is a regular fall hunt.

We note that this posting also proposes to set a 1-week spring hunting and trapping season and close the fall seasons in parts of Wildlife Management Units 82A, 83 and 84. We understand that black bear numbers on the Bruce Peninsula have been declining, and that this black bear population is both geographically and genetically isolated from bear populations throughout the balance of Ontario. Given these realities, OFA supports the reduction in hunting and trapping seasons in those portions Wildlife Management Units 82A, 83 and 84 where black bear hunting and trapping are permitted.

In other parts of Ontario, black bear populations seem to be on the rise. Of concern for us are increased reports of bear damage to crops in Wildlife Management Units 78A and 78B. The extent of crop damage by bears suggests that black bear populations in Wildlife Management Units 78A and 78B are large enough to justify regular spring and fall black bear seasons. Neighbouring Wildlife Management Units have black bear hunting and trapping seasons. OFA recommends

that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry implement spring and fall black bear hunting and trapping seasons in Wildlife Management Units 78A and 78B as soon as possible.

On behalf of OFA's 38,000 farm family businesses across Ontario, we thank the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry for proposing a regular spring black bear season across those Wildlife Management Units with a fall season, and look forward to the Ministry opening Wildlife Management Units 78A and 78B to hunting and trapping black bears.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie
President

KC/pj

cc: The Honourable John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
The Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OFA Board of Directors