



Big Game Policy

Background

Big game hunts are a key economic driver to the Province of Ontario, especially in the North. Hunting occurs during the shoulder season when very few other resource-based tourism activities are available which extends the tourism season by 4 to 8 weeks. Many resident and non-resident hunters take part in big game hunts. These hunts bring significant economic and social benefits to Ontario such as:

- Employment
- Economic return
- Diversified recreational opportunities
- Reduction of human-animal hazards/interactions near populated regions

In recent years, Government policies and the tourism allocation systems have hindered the growth of the outfitting business and even forced some to close their doors. The current policies and allocation systems create significant barriers to optimizing the value of the operator's investments. Many big game hunt operators are now forced to refuse regular guests due to unpredictability and dwindling tag allocations. Some issues include:

- Lack of "up-to-date" population data and data on non-hunt related mortalities.
- Inconsistent treatment of tourism allocation by various district offices.
- Inconsistent science governing big game tag allocations.
- Lack of business-to-business transferability in the industry.
- Less than 1-year notice of what allocations are.
- No consideration of where allocations would have the most economic value.

This unpredictability causes unnecessary stress and uncertainty to operators who work tirelessly to keep their guests happy which brings money to the local economy and the province.

Policy

The MNRF needs to develop policies in a way that:

- Recognizes the economic and employment value of big game hunts to Ontario
- Allocates big game tags consistently across Ontario
- Allows optimization of economic value
- Allows for a minimum 1-year notice of what allocations will be
- Uses up-to-date scientific and population data to ensure tag allocations are fair, consistent and sustainable.

Adopted by the NOTO Board of Directors September 25, 2019

To be reviewed September 2021