

Evolving Roles:

From Department of Lands and Forests to Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

For over forty years, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF)¹ has been responsible for overseeing the management of the province's abundant natural wealth. While the public administration of Ontario's lands and forests dates back centuries, the formation of the OMNRF in 1972 marked the beginning of a new era for the provincial government. The Department of Crown Lands and the Department of Lands and Forests (DLF), the OMNRF's predecessors, had for many years been concerned primarily with facilitating development in the forest industry and with generating timber revenues for the public treasury. However, in response to rising public concerns over the state of the environment, which began to emerge during the 1960s, governments across North America began to fundamentally alter their approaches to natural resource management. The Ontario government was affected by and contributed to this trend, and consequently the OMNRF has played a central role in balancing the often conflicting objectives of environmental preservation and economic growth within the province. While it has certainly faced challenges along the way, over the years the OMNRF has regularly succeeded in meeting its mandate to protect "Ontario's biodiversity while promoting economic opportunities in the resource sector and supporting outdoor recreation opportunities."²

Long before the OMNRF was officially formed, Crown ownership of Canada's natural resources had existed as a defining characteristic of the country's political and economic system. This principle was inherited from both the French and British imperial traditions, which held that "natural resources remained the property of the crown and their use was regulated by statute in accordance with prevailing notions of the interests of the state."³ Following its military conquest

¹ Originally known as the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the title "Forestry" was officially added in 2014.

² "Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry," *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry> (accessed 27 July 2016).

³ H.V. Nelles, *The Politics of Development: Forests, Mines, and Hydro-Electric Power in Ontario, 1849-1941* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 2.

of New France in the 1760s, Britain proceeded to gain control over more and more of Canada's lands, waters, minerals, forests, and fish and wildlife through various treaties with the Indigenous population. It also adopted legislation which outlined its authority over these valuable resources. For example, the British Parliament's Constitutional Act of 1791 reserved all the precious metals and timber found in Upper Canada (modern-day Ontario) for the use of the Crown. However, the government initially focused most of its energies on encouraging agricultural settlement in the region through the allocation of freehold land grants rather than fostering development in the forestry or mining sectors.⁴

The forest industry began to emerge in Upper Canada during the early 1800s, and its rise subsequently effected significant changes in the government's administration of its natural resources over the course of the next century. The demand for Upper Canada's lumber first came from Great Britain during the Napoleonic Wars, but it later shifted to the rapidly expanding United States, which for nearly a century had a seemingly insatiable demand for this product.⁵ Although Sir David William Smith began working as the first Surveyor General of Upper Canada in 1794, it was not until 1827 that the early structure of the DLF began to take shape. That year Peter Robinson was appointed as both Commissioner of Crown Lands and Surveyor General of Woods and Forests, and was tasked with, among other duties, organizing timber licences and maximizing revenue derived from them.⁶ By 1856, the Department of Crown Lands (as the DLF was then known) employed just over thirty Crown Lands agents in Upper Canada who were responsible for carrying out its policies in the area, namely in the form of selling land to prospective settlers. The department also gradually gained authority over mining claims,

⁴ Richard S. Lambert and Paul Pross, *Renewing Nature's Wealth: A Centennial History of the Public Management of Lands, Forests, and Wildlife in Ontario, 1763-1967* (Toronto: Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, 1967), 17.

⁵ A.R.M. Lower, *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1938), viii-xxi.

⁶ Lambert and Pross, 49-53.

fisheries, and Indigenous affairs in Upper Canada during the first half of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, although the coming of Confederation and the birth of Canada imbued the newly formed Ontario government with regulatory power over the province's natural resources, for the most part "The administrative structure of the Crown Lands Department remained relatively unchanged from 1867 to the turn of the century."⁷

The early twentieth century proved to be a rather complex period for the Ontario government as it strove to manage prudently its vast supply of land, forests, waters, and wildlife. Indeed, a variety of factors, including the rise of Ontario's pulp and paper industry, the creation of multiple provincial parks, increased mining production throughout the province, forest fires, destructive insect pests, and the opening up of northern Ontario, had placed a plethora of new pressures upon the Department of Crown Lands. Consequently, "this called for a widening of its scope, to take in natural resources in general, rather than land and timber alone." Thus, in 1905 Premier J.P. Whitney's Conservative government reorganized the Department of Crown Lands into the Department of Lands and Mines (to which the title "Forests" was later added). However, it was not until 1920, when an independent Department of Mines was established, that the DLF officially came into being.⁸ Matters were soon complicated by the Great Depression of the 1930s, which devastated much of Ontario's natural resource sector; for example, by 1932 practically every pulp and paper company in the province was in receivership.⁹ By the end of the Second World War, however, Ontario's economy was once again on the upswing, and the DLF,

⁷ Ibid., 91-102.

⁸ Ibid., 313-314.

⁹ Peter A. Baskerville, *Sites of Power: A Concise History of Ontario* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 193; Mark Kuhlberg, *In the Power of the Government: The Rise and Fall of Newsprint in Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 3.

after having undergone another notable reorganization in the early 1940s, was primed to help guide the province's natural resource sector through an age of growth and prosperity.¹⁰

From the mid-1940s until the early 1970s, Canada in general and Ontario in particular experienced an extraordinary economic boom, and as a result the DLF underwent changes which reflected the wider political and social trends that were occurring at the time. In 1946, for instance, the Department of Game and Fisheries was amalgamated with the DLF, mainly in order to bring all of Ontario's natural resources under one administrative body. More importantly, the subsequent "infusion of biological expertise" within the DLF led to a shift in emphasis "from protection and conservation to scientific management."¹¹ For example, beginning in the late 1940s the DLF conducted the first provincial forest inventory, a move which had a significant impact on the estimation and allocation of timber resources in Ontario.¹² The postwar era also witnessed the rise of a "larger, more affluent, highly mobile urban population with newly acquired leisure time", and it flocked to Ontario's provincial parks in unprecedented numbers. In 1954, the DLF gained its own Division of Parks to deal with this situation, and by 1967 there were 94 provincial parks in Ontario.¹³ Yet it was the environmental movement of the 1960s which likely had the greatest long-term impact on the DLF. Public concern over environmental issues such as water and air pollution steadily rose in Ontario during this decade, reaching a peak in the early 1970s.¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, the government of Ontario was soon forced to re-evaluate many of its environmental laws and policies. In August 1971, for instance, Premier William "Bill" G. Davis remarked that "the provincial Government must respond to the public's growing

¹⁰ Baskerville, 212-216; Lambert and Pross, 354-89.

¹¹ Lambert and Pross, 453-454.

¹² R.M. Dixon, *The Forest Resources of Ontario* (Department of Lands and Forests, 1963).

¹³ Gerald Killan, *Protected Places: A History of Ontario's Provincial Parks System* (Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1993), 74.

¹⁴ Mark S. Winfield, *Blue-Green Province: The Environment and Political Economy of Ontario* (UBC Press, 2012), 21.

concern about the environment.”¹⁵ This mentality would inevitably alter the DLF’s role in Ontario’s natural resource sector forever.

The creation of the Ministry of Natural Resources (the title “Forestry” was not originally included) was actually part of a more general reorganization of the structure and operation of the Ontario government carried out by Davis and the Progressive Conservative Party during the early 1970s.¹⁶ While *The Ministry of Natural Resources Act, 1972* was not the subject of any serious debate in the Legislature, during the second reading of the bill one Conservative backbencher admitted that “it is with regret that I see the name ‘Lands and Forests’ being done away with ... throughout northern Ontario and throughout central Ontario ... it has stood for something that has been very meaningful in people’s lives.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, in April 1972 the Act received royal assent and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) was officially formed through an amalgamation of the DLF and the Department of Mines and Northern Affairs.¹⁸ The Ministry was initially made up of numerous divisions, including Lands, Forests, Fish and Wildlife, Parks, and Mines.¹⁹

The 1970s was a difficult decade for the MNR to begin its work. Although environmental issues were still receiving an unprecedented amount of international attention, from 1972 onward “public concern for the environment as a top-of-the-mind public policy issue began to decline” in Ontario. Furthermore, by the mid-1970s it had become apparent that the province’s postwar economic boom had also come to an end.²⁰ More specific to the MNR were a variety of

¹⁵ “Public concern growing on environment: Davis,” *The Globe and Mail*, 24 August 1971, page 5.

¹⁶ *Committee on Government Productivity: Report Number Ten – A Summary* (Toronto: Committee on Government Productivity, 1973), 65-66.

¹⁷ Ontario Legislature, *Debates*, 28 March 1972, 684.

¹⁸ *The Ministry of Natural Resources Act, 1972*, Statutes of Ontario 1972, Chapter 4, 67-71.

¹⁹ Killan, 243.

²⁰ Winfield, 30.

challenges and problems within different facets of Ontario's natural resource sector. Fortunately, the Ministry rose to the occasion and emerged from its first decade of existence with a bright future and clearer sense of its own identity. Indeed, by 1976 it had formulated its own official objective: "To provide from Crown lands and waters, and to encourage on private lands and waters, a continuing combination of resource development, outdoor recreation and quality environment most consistent with the social and economic well-being of the people of Ontario."²¹

Forestry and forest management remained a central concern for the MNR from the moment it inherited responsibility for these matters from the DLF. The main tasks of the Forest Resources Group (which replaced the Division of Forests in 1978) included providing scientific and technical knowledge for the management of Ontario's forests; growing and delivering tree seedlings throughout the province; combatting destructive forest insects; allocating Crown timber for private development and aiding with the growth of industry; and preparing forest management plans.²² In 1972, the Division of Forests produced a major document entitled "Forest Production Policy Options for Ontario," which ultimately shaped the provincial government's forest management policies for the next few years.²³ By the late-1970s the Ministry was making an even greater effort to improve its approach to forest stewardship. For example, in 1977 it was announced that it would be implementing the recommendations of a report released by Kenneth Armson, Professor of Forestry at the University of Toronto, which had criticized the Ontario government's approach to forest management.²⁴ The following year,

²¹ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1976): 3.

²² *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1978): 5-8.

²³ "Forest Production Policy Options for Ontario," *Ministry of Natural Resources*, (1972).

²⁴ K.A. Armson, "Forest Management in Ontario," (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resource, 1976).

Armson was appointed by the MNR as a special adviser on forest regeneration.²⁵ Most significantly, in 1979 the government of Ontario amended the *Crown Timber Act* in authorize the province to enter into Forest Management Agreements (FMAs) with private forestry companies. The first FMA was signed in 1980 and the subsequent ones resulted in a major increase in regeneration activities and silvicultural operations across Ontario. Moreover, FMAs initiated public involvement in forest management and planning, and also introduced the use of regular forest audits.²⁶

The mining industry was also a major area of focus for the MNR throughout the 1970s. Unfortunately, it was a rather bleak time for Ontario's mining sector.²⁷ In fact, research conducted by the MNR and the federal Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources in 1977 had determined "that the performance of the mineral sector during the past 20 years, as well as its outlook for the future, are poorer than is generally supposed."²⁸ Regardless, the MNR did its best to aid mining development in the province through various means including, but not limited to, carrying out in-depth research on mineral policy options and leading geological surveys to encourage industry exploration. A specific initiative enacted by the Ontario government was the Mineral Exploration Assistance Program (MEAP), introduced in 1971 to incentivize the work of prospectors and mining companies in the Red Lake, Geraldton-Beardmore, and Kirkland Lake areas.²⁹ Within seven years, government payments under the MEAP had reached nearly \$3

²⁵ "Miller appoints official in effort to improve forest management," *The Globe and Mail*, 29 November 1977, page 5; "Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources," *The Globe and Mail*, 14 September 1978, page B5.

²⁶ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1981): 11; Anne Koven, "Policy Networks and Paradigm Change in Ontario Forest Policy, 1988-2014," (PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 2015), 187.

²⁷ Matt Bray and Ernie Epp, ed., *A Vast and Magnificent Land: An Illustrated History of Northern Ontario* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Northern Affairs, 1985), 101.

²⁸ "Mineral policy," *The Globe and Mail*, 26 August 1977, page B2.

²⁹ "Ontario plans new incentives to aid in mineral exploration," *The Globe and Mail*, 24 August 1971, page B2.

million, while the total value of mineral production in Ontario for the year 1978 reached \$2.6 billion.³⁰

Ontario's provincial parks were centres of increasing activity and some notable controversies during the 1970s. From 1973 to 1979, tens of millions of people visited them, and in that same period the total number of parks in the province reached 128.³¹ The Ministry made considerable strides in its planning and administration of parklands during these years; in fact, it has been said that "By the mid-1970s, Ontario's Division of Parks had developed a sophisticated master planning program second to none in North America."³² Equally impressive was the MNR's ability to ease tensions surrounding logging activities in Algonquin Park. Beginning in the late-1960s, Algonquin Park had become the site of a clash between loggers and individuals who wished to see the end of logging or a significant reduction in the volume of timber harvesting there. Finally, in 1974, Leo Bernier, the Minister of Natural Resources (1972-77), introduced legislation to create the Algonquin Forest Authority (AFA), a body which would ensure that timber would be cut only in certain areas of the park according to strict guidelines outlined in the *Algonquin Provincial Park Master Plan*. The AFA and its staff ultimately "played a major part in returning a semblance of peace to the park."³³ The government also responded to public concerns over the state of the environment in other parks such as Quetico, Killarney, and Lake Superior during the early 1970s. Overall, the MNR in general and its Division of Parks in

³⁰ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1979)*: 17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3; 20.

³² Killan, 240.

³³ Mark Kuhlberg, *One Hundred Rings and Counting: Forestry Education and Forestry in Toronto and Canada, 1907-2007* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 205; Killan, 200.

particular served as a prime example of “how profoundly preservationist thinking had influenced public policy and attitudes in the civil service.”³⁴

Fish and wildlife management was yet another important area of focus for the MNR during its earliest years. The Division of Fish and Wildlife (which was amalgamated with the Division of Parks in 1978 to form the Outdoor Recreation Group) was tasked with providing and encouraging “recreational and industrial opportunities based on the fish and wildlife resources of Ontario.”³⁵ Along with conducting research into Ontario’s wildlife resources and developing policies based upon it, one of its more significant undertakings was the planning and co-ordination of the production of eggs and young fish to be stocked in selected Ontario waters. In 1976 alone, for instance, the Ministry stocked approximately 8.1 million eggs and 7.9 million fish of several species throughout the province.³⁶ The management of certain big game animals, on the other hand, presented far greater difficulties for the government. Ontario’s moose population experienced a serious decline during the 1970s, dropping about 20 per cent between 1970 and 1976. Overhunting was soon identified as a key contributor to the problem. The MNR responded by establishing a \$250,000 moose management program, known as the Ontario Moose Council, and appointed four regional moose biologists to study the matter.³⁷ However, by 1979 the issue remained unresolved, with the Ministry acknowledging that “Attempts to reduce the annual mortality ... have not effectively prevented deterioration of the herd.”³⁸ At the same time, the white-tailed deer population also experienced a notable decline, prompting the MNR to

³⁴ Killan, 202.

³⁵ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1973)*: 8; *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1978)*: 14.

³⁶ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1977)*: 13.

³⁷ “Hunting: Ontario moves to halt sharp moose decline,” *The Globe and Mail*, 21 July 1976, page S11; *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1977)*: 15.

³⁸ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1979)*: 22.

devise a deer management program – which included selective harvesting, predator control, and further research – that was operational by 1980.³⁹

From the time of the MNR's inception, the Lands and Waters Group (which replaced the Division of Lands in 1978) has likely been its most versatile department. The management of Crown lands and waters has always entailed a wide range of duties, including the administration of public lands, the acquisition of private lands for Ministry purposes, managing Crown mining lands, forest fire control and prevention, and water management. A noteworthy development in the MNR's approach to land management came in the late 1970s when it gained a Conservation Authorities Branch in order to “encourage the conservation and use of water and related land resources by Conservation Authorities by providing policy, funding assistance, and management and planning direction to the Authorities.”⁴⁰ Conservation authorities – local, community-based organizations that carry out resource management programs – had been formally established in Ontario in 1946 with the passage of *The Conservation Authorities Act*, and by 1979 there were 38 of them across Ontario.⁴¹ They focused on managing the province's major watersheds and other programs related to land use, forestry, fish and wildlife, outdoor recreation, and conservation education. Moreover, with the passage of the *Environmental Assessment Act* in the mid-1970s, environmental assessments began to play an increasingly important role in conservation authorities' agendas.⁴²

³⁹ “Ontario establishes new deer policy,” *The Globe and Mail*, 7 March 1979, page 37; *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1979): 22; *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1980): 39.

⁴⁰ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1978): 24.

⁴¹ *The Conservation Authorities Act, 1946*, Statutes of Ontario 1946, Chapter 11, 49-65; “Conservation Authorities,” *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/conservation-authorities> (accessed 11 August 2016); *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1979): 29.

⁴² *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1979): 29.

The 1980s were a much more fruitful decade for the MNR. While it still faced many of the same obstacles and challenges it had in previous years, it demonstrated that it was constantly learning from past experiences and continually striving to improve its methods of natural resource management. For example, in 1979 it produced a booklet entitled *Towards the '80s* which outlined the direction the Ministry intended to take in the coming years. Although it maintained that its general management philosophy remained relatively unchanged, it explained that “The timing is opportune to improve the management processes and controls in view of the Ministry’s experience with the management system initiated in 1972.”⁴³

Likely the defining movement of the 1980s for the Ministry, however, was its effort to build a stronger relationship with the people of Ontario. It began to engage the public far more actively in its activities, whether it was through attending open meetings on policy initiatives or by volunteering in some capacity. This new approach was also reflected in the MNR’s *Annual Reports*, which underwent a major makeover during the early 1980s. Once rather plain documents that presented information in a very prosaic manner, the *Annual Reports* began to feature colourful images and started to describe the MNR’s activities in a more readable, accessible fashion. Furthermore, by the latter part of the decade these reports were being printed in both English and French. According to W.T. Foster, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources (1981-1983), “We made these changes so that we might communicate about our Ministry’s program accomplishments in a more useful and interesting way to a broader audience.”⁴⁴ The impact of the MNR’s fresh public relations campaign was best described by Alan W. Pope, Minister of Natural Resources (1981-1985), who wrote in the *Annual Report* for 1982: “In our

⁴³ *Towards the '80s: A Guide to the Organization and Management System* (Ontario: Ministry of Natural Resources, 1979), 3.

⁴⁴ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1981): 5.

last Annual Report, I stressed my Ministry's commitment to provide information to the public and to consult them on all issues of concern ... I am pleased that we have maintained and improved our public dialogue, particularly in the areas of land use, parks and forest resources planning."⁴⁵ This increased emphasis on the public's role in the management of Ontario's natural resources undoubtedly had a positive effect on the MNR and its programs.

Issues surrounding Ontario's forests continued to provide the MNR with plenty of work. The turn of the decade began with one of the worst fire seasons in the history of the province, with a total of 1,779 fires devastating 1.38 million acres of forestland in northern Ontario over the course of 1980. The following year, the MNR received an additional \$4.5 million in funding for forest protection, and this allowed it to greatly improve its fire control systems and to be more prepared for future outbreaks.⁴⁶ In addition, this was also a difficult time for Ontario's forest industry. A worldwide recession that began in 1982 led to many layoffs for Ontario's natural resource workers and hardship for a number of towns that depended on these industries for their survival. This prompted the Ministry to implement the Accelerated Forest Improvement Program in 1982-83 in an effort to provide jobs for forest industry workers and to keep them from leaving their communities.⁴⁷ In a broader sense, the MNR began to take a more progressive approach to forest management by the late 1980s. Indeed, in its *Annual Report* for 1989-90, the Ministry explained that:

For many years, government forestry programs in Ontario worked primarily to ensure the orderly flow of timber to mills to meet the demand for wood and paper products. This emphasis has changed during the last decade, with the public's growing concern for environmental health, and the increasing demand for forest-based recreational

⁴⁵ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1982): 4.

⁴⁶ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1981): 7; *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1982): 25.

⁴⁷ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1983): 15.

opportunities. Today, [the] MNR's forest management policies and programs reflect increased forest renewal, as well as protection of fish and wildlife habitat, protection of social and cultural values, and genetic diversity within the forest.⁴⁸

The implications of this modern mandate can be seen in the MNR's greater commitment to research. For example, the Ontario Tree Improvement and Biomass Institute emerged as an important centre of forestry research for the Ministry; in 1988, it was reported that it produced approximately 160 million tree seedlings per year.⁴⁹ Likewise, the five-year, \$150 million Canada-Ontario Forest Resource Development Agreement (COFRDA), signed by the federal and provincial governments in 1984, greatly helped the MNR with its research efforts. COFRDA helped support hundreds of forest management projects, and even contributed funds to a "Forestry Education" program which was designed to teach schoolchildren about forest-related topics.⁵⁰

The Ontario government's management of its mineral resources underwent notable changes during the 1980s. Much like in the forestry sector, the mining industry was hit hard by the global economic downturn of 1982, leading to the loss of about 3,000 jobs by the midway point of the year.⁵¹ However, through a joint effort with the federal government, Minister Alan W. Pope quickly initiated an employment bridging program which provided thousands of jobs for unemployed workers in the mining and other resource industries.⁵² Around this same time the Ontario Mineral Exploration Program (OMEP) was established, replacing the aforementioned MEAP. Although MEAP had operated well for ten years, OMEP offered an expanded approach to encouraging mineral exploration by offering risk capital and other incentives to individuals

⁴⁸ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1989-1990)*: 12.

⁴⁹ "Continued research key element in growing better trees," *The Globe and Mail*, 31 May 1988, page 7.

⁵⁰ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1987-1988)*: 18.

⁵¹ "Recession may take its heaviest toll on growth in Ontario," *The Globe and Mail*, 9 July 1982, page R4.

⁵² *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1983)*: 4.

and companies. By 1985, the Ministry had dubbed OMEP “a mineral resources success story” that had facilitated exploration and development in various parts of Ontario.⁵³ In that same year, however, the government of Ontario established a new Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in order to emphasize “the province’s commitment to greater social and economic development in the North,” thereby ending the MNR’s authority over the province’s mining industry.⁵⁴

While Ontario’s park system experienced many hardships during the 1980s, the MNR managed to overcome these problems and emerge as a more efficient and effective organization.⁵⁵ The early 1980s has been described as “one of the most difficult periods in the history of the modern provincial parks system,” with budgetary constraints, inflation, and recession seriously limiting the Ministry’s ability to realize its objectives.⁵⁶ Moreover, the MNR’s broader policy of Strategic Land Use Planning (SLUP) – a process which aimed to formulate how the various components of Ontario’s lands and waters can be used most efficiently – made it especially difficult to balance the needs of the parks system with that of other competing interests.⁵⁷ Still, by the end of the decade Ontario boasted 261 provincial parks, which were divided into six classes: wilderness, nature reserve, historical, natural environment, waterway, and recreation.⁵⁸ With each passing year the public also began to play a more prominent role in shaping Ontario’s park policy through open houses, public meetings,

⁵³ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1981): 19; *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1985): 32.

⁵⁴ “Minister of Northern Development and Mines,” Government of Ontario, <http://www.mndm.gov.on.ca/en/about/history> (accessed 16 August 2016).

⁵⁵ Killan, 322.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁵⁸ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1989-1990): 26.

workshops, and volunteer work.⁵⁹ Then, in May 1988, Minister of Natural Resources Vincent Kerrio (1985-89) delivered one of the biggest park policy announcements ever made. From this point onward, he explained, there would be no commercial logging, hunting, trapping, mining, or hydroelectric development allowed in most of Ontario's parks.⁶⁰ This decision was immediately heralded by environmental groups, with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists proclaiming it "a red-letter day for provincial parks in Ontario."⁶¹

In the meantime, the Ministry also adopted many new wildlife management strategies over the course of this particular decade. In 1984, it began a co-operative venture to re-establish the wild turkey in southern Ontario, a species which had disappeared from the province at the turn of the century. The project was quite successful, so much so that a controlled hunt for male wild turkeys was authorized for the spring of 1987 in the Napanee district.⁶² In an attempt to halt the decline of Ontario's moose and deer populations, the MNR introduced selective harvesting systems and new hunting licence regulations in 1980. It also announced that it would be pursuing updated policies of predator control, more stringent enforcement of hunting laws, habitat management, and increased hunter education. The Ministry explained that it hoped to increase the deer population by 25 per cent within 10 years, while also bringing the moose population to about 160,000 within 20 years.⁶³ By 1989, the deer population had more than doubled, and Ontario was home to about 120,000 moose.⁶⁴ Perhaps the most significant shift in the Ministry's big game policy during this period was its approach to black bear management. By the early 1980s black bear hunting in Ontario was becoming increasingly popular, and thus "it was

⁵⁹ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1986-87)*: 66.

⁶⁰ Killan, 366.

⁶¹ "53 parks to be created in Ontario," *The Globe and Mail*, 18 May 1988, page A1.

⁶² *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1986-87)*: 68.

⁶³ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1981)*: 39-40.

⁶⁴ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1989)*: 22-23.

apparent that the existing management system would not be able to keep up with the demand.”⁶⁵ Beginning in 1980, the MNR made a number of adjustments to the bear licensing system, and also began to intensively study the animal from a scientific standpoint. Two years later, it established the Ontario Black Bear Working Group (OBBWG), consisting of Ministry biologists and conservation officers. It was tasked with recommending changes to the province’s bear management system. Finally, in 1987 the MNR unveiled its new Black Bear Management Program, which, for the first time ever, established “a clear set of objectives to guide the relationship between humans and black bears in Ontario.”⁶⁶

The Ministry similarly put forth a number of new programs in an effort to enhance the state of Ontario’s fisheries. For example, during the early 1980s it began to conduct studies with the Ministry of the Environment that looked into the effects of acid rain on Ontario’s waterbodies and fish.⁶⁷ In keeping with its mandate to build a closer relationship with the public, it also established the Community Fisheries Involvement Project (CFIP). This program allowed the Ministry to offer assistance to various projects pertaining to fish and fish management – such as habitat improvement, and stream rehabilitation – while providing ordinary Ontarians with the opportunity to volunteer their time and labour.⁶⁸ The MNR continued to stock Ontario’s lakes with millions of fish each year, but in 1982 it developed a general policy which recognized different objectives for stocking fish, determined that mandatory aquatic habitat inventory surveys must first be conducted to ensure proper habitat conditions, required public access, and

⁶⁵ Michael Commito, ““Our society lacks consistently defined attitudes towards the black bear’: The History of Black Bear Hunting and Management in Ontario, 1912-1987,”” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2015), 229.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 231-243.

⁶⁷ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1981): 49.

⁶⁸ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1983): 27.

suggested stocking densities for various species.⁶⁹ Another noteworthy development occurred in the mid-1980s when the Ministry began an entirely new pilot project to reintroduce Atlantic salmon, a species once native to Lake Ontario that had disappeared in the 1890s. After acquiring tens of thousands of eggs from eastern Canada and the United States, the Ministry intended to hatch, raise, and then release the salmon along the north shore of Lake Ontario by 1988.⁷⁰

Identifying future uses of Ontario's Crown lands and waters proved to be one of the MNR's most challenging objectives of the 1980s. In keeping with its broader policy of enhancing public participation, in the spring and summer of 1982 the Ministry held 140 open houses across Ontario, and presented its proposed district land use guidelines to the public. In total over 10,000 people attended these meetings, and over the years the public continued to play a prominent role in shaping the MNR's land use policies.⁷¹ The following year, after over ten years of research and public consultation, the Ministry released the bulk of its District Land Use Guidelines for Ontario, which at the time was the most comprehensive land use study in Canada. Consisting of a detailed inventory of the province's resources and plans for their proposed future use, these guidelines emphasized that the many resource users in the province – such as campers, loggers, miners, fishermen, hunters, and others – “must share Ontario's resources ... these users must co-operate with one another and with government to ensure our resources are maintained for the future.”⁷² In the realm of water management, the MNR allocated millions of dollars in grants to fund flood and erosion prevention projects, most of which were administered by conservation authorities. Furthermore, by the late-1980s the MNR began developing a Water

⁶⁹ S.J. Kerr, *Fish and Fisheries Management in Ontario: A Chronology of Events* (Peterborough: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 2010), 46.

⁷⁰ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1986-87)*: 56; *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1989-1990)*: 22.

⁷¹ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1983)*: 31.

⁷² *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1984)*: 8.

Conservation Strategy in order “to ensure the continued protection and conservation of clean, fresh water in Ontario” and to generally “encourage more efficient and sustainable use of Ontario’s water resources.”⁷³

The 1990s marked a watershed in the evolution of the Ministry’s natural resource policies. The onslaught of a severe recession at the start of the decade led to ongoing budget cuts for the MNR, and this inevitably affected its operations and efforts to carry out its mandate. In addition, this economic downturn led to a decline in concern for environmental issues among the general public in Ontario, and this only added to the wider pressures that the Ministry was facing at the time.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, in light of these events, the MNR strove to make serious changes to its overall approach to resource management. As C.J. (Bud) Wildman, Minister of Natural Resources (1990-1993), explained in 1991:

We began this decade with a sense of urgency. We realized that, on a global basis, time was running out for many natural resources unless changes were made to develop and maintain their sustainability. We recognized that sustainable development was more than a good idea – it was essential if future generations were to have the same richness of resources and quality of life we enjoy today ... We now assess the environmental, social and economic effects. Policy decisions are based increasingly on a truly integrated approach to resource management.⁷⁵

Indeed, over the course of the 1990s the MNR managed to successfully implement a wide range of programs which reflected its renewed role as Ontario’s ecological steward.

The Ministry made notable advancements in its forestry and forest management policies during these years. This shift stemmed largely from the Timber Class Environmental Assessment Hearings (1988-1994), a series of public meetings in which Ontario’s forest policy received

⁷³ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1989): 28.

⁷⁴ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1992): 7; Koven, ii; Winfield, 66.

⁷⁵ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1991): 4.

rigorous public scrutiny for the first time. By the time the hearings had concluded, the Ministry had made a major commitment to the concept of sustainable forest management. This principle was embodied in the Ontario government's *Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 (CFSA)*, legislation which sought "to manage Crown forests to meet social, economic and environmental needs of present and future generations."⁷⁶ The *CFSA* provided a definition of forest policy which extended beyond the concept of timber supply for industry and instead aimed to serve the many interests surrounding the province's woodlands. It also stressed the importance of ecological processes and biological diversity, and minimizing the adverse effects that forestry practices can have on plants, animals, water, soil, air, and social and economic values.⁷⁷ Consequently, with the passage of the *CFSA*, the role of the provincial government, namely the MNR, "shifted from being managers ... to becoming forest stewards."⁷⁸ This transformation was further solidified by the 1999 Ontario Forest Accord, an agreement between the provincial government, the forest industry, and environmental groups which aimed to ensure sustainable forest management in Ontario's woodlands and to provide the forest industry with a stable supply of timber. It was also part of a larger land use strategy known as Ontario's Living Legacy, which set aside millions of hectares of parks and protected areas in the province.⁷⁹ The MNR played a direct role in the public consultation process and negotiations that had led to these agreements, and subsequently became imbued with an even greater sense of responsibility over the province's forestland. Indeed, John C. Snobelen, Minister of Natural Resources (1997-2002),

⁷⁶ *Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994*, Statutes of Ontario 1994, Chapter 25, 767-803.

⁷⁷ Koven, 56-59.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁹ *The Making of the Ontario Forest Accord: A Background Document* (Government of Ontario, 1999), 5.

later remarked that Ontario's Living Legacy and its associated programs "launched a dynamic new chapter in the history of resource management in Ontario."⁸⁰

This was also an exciting time for Ontario's provincial parks. In 1993, the Ministry celebrated the 100th anniversary of Ontario's park system, which by that point encompassed over 200 parks and covered 2.6 million hectares of land, an area roughly equal to the size of Nova Scotia.⁸¹ More generally, the MNR made notable adjustments to its park policies during the 1990s. As historian Gerald Killan noted over twenty years ago, "No one can predict what the challenges of the 1990s hold for Ontario's system of provincial parks ... optimistic observers ... hope that the strengthening public interest in environmentalism will result in more weight being placed on the protectionist objective."⁸² Most of these so-called "optimistic observers" were likely quite pleased with the fact that the 1990s did, in fact, end up witnessing a greater emphasis on protectionism within Ontario's parks. In 1996, the MNR established a new administrative branch, known as Ontario Parks, which became responsible for protecting and promoting the "appreciation of provincially significant natural, cultural and recreational environments in a system of provincial parks and protected areas." Ontario Parks' mandate also recognized the importance of balancing the economic, environmental, and recreational benefits of these areas for present and future generations.⁸³ However, it was the aforementioned Living Legacy program which had the most substantial impact on Ontario's natural heritage. As part of this initiative, in 1999 the Ontario government added 378 areas, comprising a total of 2.4 million hectares, to the

⁸⁰ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Business Plan* (2001): 1; Koven, 60.

⁸¹ *Minister of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1992-1995): 2.

⁸² Killan, 381.

⁸³ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Business Plan* (1998): 10.

province's parks and protected areas system, which was at the time the largest one-time expansion of protected spaces in Ontario.⁸⁴

Wildlife management occupied much of the Ministry's mandate throughout the 1990s. It continued to conduct research and make policy adjustments pertaining to Ontario's deer and moose populations, both of which had experienced a steady increase in numbers since selective harvesting programs had been introduced in the previous decade.⁸⁵ In contrast, black bear management was a far more contentious and controversial issue for the MNR. In the early 1990s various environmental groups initiated a campaign to eliminate spring bear hunting in Ontario. After years of pressure and rising public concern, in 1999 the Ontario government announced it was cancelling the hunt, a decision which elicited a largely negative response across northern Ontario but a positive one in the province's southern reaches.⁸⁶ That same year, the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997* came into effect, partly as a result of proposed changes to Ontario's *Game and Fish Act, 1962* that had been recommended by the Ministry at the start of the decade.⁸⁷ This new legislation provided "a comprehensive legal framework for the conservation and management of a broader range of species and activities," and generally enhanced the MNR's ability to initiate its wildlife programs.⁸⁸ In a similar vein, the establishment of the Ontario Natural Heritage Information Centre in 1993, a repository for

⁸⁴ *The Making of the Ontario Forest Accord: A Background Document* (Government of Ontario, 1999), 11.

⁸⁵ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1991): 17-19.

⁸⁶ *Committee Report*, 260-261.

⁸⁷ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1992): 19.

⁸⁸ "Building a Wildlife Management Strategy for Ontario: A Discussion Paper," *Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry* (August 2016): 8.

information pertaining to rare, threatened and endangered species in the province, has allowed the Ministry to advance its understanding of biodiversity and species conservation in Ontario.⁸⁹

The MNR also revised many of its fisheries and fish management policies during this decade. In the early 1990s, an updated *Strategic Plan for Ontario Fisheries*, which focused on managing aquatic ecosystems rather than single fish species or bodies of water, was officially adopted as government policy. Then, in 1993 the Ministry introduced the Outdoors Card, an identification card for resident anglers and hunters, in order to streamline the process of issuing, purchasing, and verifying licences.⁹⁰ The following year it announced new regulations which restricted fishing by non-residents and aimed to protect fish stocks in a number of lakes in northwestern Ontario.⁹¹ Recreational fishing remained immensely popular throughout the province, with an estimated 1.9 million anglers harvesting nearly 40 million fish in 1995 alone.⁹² Likewise, Ontario's freshwater commercial fishing industry - one of the largest in the world - continued to generate millions of dollars of revenue annually.⁹³ Perhaps unsurprisingly, in 1998, in an effort to preserve Ontario's valuable fish supplies, the provincial government announced that it would provide \$10 million in special funding over a three-year period for fish and wildlife protection and to help improve the management of these resources.⁹⁴

The Ministry worked closely with the public and numerous agencies to enhance its administration of Ontario's lands and waters during the 1990s. Considering the fact that public lands and waters make up 87 per cent of the province, this has been one of the MNR's biggest

⁸⁹ "Natural Heritage Information Centre," *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/natural-heritage-information-centre> (accessed 14 January 2017).

⁹⁰ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1992)*: 17.

⁹¹ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1992-1995)*: 2.

⁹² *Fish and Fisheries Management in Ontario: A Chronology of Events* (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 2010): 55.

⁹³ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Business Plan (1998)*: 7.

⁹⁴ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report (1999)*: 4.

responsibilities in recent years.⁹⁵ For example, in May 1991 the provincial government allocated nearly \$50 million in funding to Ontario's 38 conservation authorities - which covered a jurisdiction of more than 100,000 square kilometres and served 90 percent of the province's population - in an effort to aid their various programs related to water management, flood damage reduction, erosion control, tree-planting, and much more.⁹⁶ The MNR also handled the management of non-renewable resources such as petroleum and mineral aggregates, aiming to achieve sustainable economic development while simultaneously ensuring a safe and healthy environment for the people of Ontario.⁹⁷ Undoubtedly the most significant achievement in terms of Crown lands management for the Ministry during these years was the "Lands for Life Round Tables." The provincial government initiated this public consultation process in 1997 in an effort to improve the strategic use of Crown land in northern and central Ontario, and to allow ordinary citizens to take part in making decisions on land and resource uses. The Lands for Life planning process contributed to the development of both Ontario's Living Legacy and the Ontario Forest Accord.⁹⁸

The early twenty-first century has been an eventful period for the OMNRF (a title it officially adopted in 2014).⁹⁹ Public interest in environmental issues in Ontario has remained relatively strong during these years, and this passion has played a central role in shaping the Ministry's mandate. Indeed, while its overarching goals have remained relatively unchanged since 1972, today the OMNRF's mission reflects a greater dedication to modern scientific and environmental principles relating to biodiversity and ecological sustainability. These concepts

⁹⁵ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Business Plan* (1998): 8.

⁹⁶ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Annual Report* (1992): 13-14.

⁹⁷ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Business Plan* (1996): 10.

⁹⁸ *Ministry of Natural Resources: Business Plan* (1999): 1; Koven, 60.

⁹⁹ "Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources adds forestry to its title," *CBC News*, 14 July 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/ontario-ministry-of-natural-resources-adds-forestry-to-its-title-1.2706127> (accessed 17 October 2016).

are infused into practically all the Ministry's core responsibilities, whether it be wildlife management, forestry, natural heritage and protected area management, or its commitment to renewable energy projects. These diverse tasks are outlined by nearly 50 different statutes for which the Ministry is responsible (or has responsibility under). Overall, the OMNRF describes itself as having authority for "protecting and sustainably managing the province's diverse natural resources, and supporting Ontario's economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and quality of life."¹⁰⁰

Today, the Ministry's modern forest policies are mainly guided by ecological objectives. The Ontario government enhanced its role in sustainable forest management throughout the 2000s, namely through the enforcement of tighter industrial regulations. The OMNRF began encouraging forest companies to adopt sustainable forest management certification processes, and also required them to engage in forest management planning as outlined in the *CFSA*. In fact, it has been said that "Ontario's forest management regime has been ... praised for being 'the most comprehensive in Canada and instrumental in enabling licensees to achieve Forest Stewardship Certification.'" At the same time, however, the forest industry began expressing its concern that the Ontario government's guidelines were too costly and complex.¹⁰¹ The OMNRF responded by announcing its Ontario Forest Sector Competitiveness Strategy in 2005, a program which aimed to provide assistance to the forest industry through additional funding and by fostering stronger business-government relations within Ontario's forestry sector.¹⁰² It has also sought to manage carbon emissions through certain forest management practices in order to

¹⁰⁰ "Published plans and annual reports 2015-2016: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry," *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2015-2016-ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry#section-0> (accessed 19 September 2016).

¹⁰¹ Koven, 14.

¹⁰² "Published Results-based Plan," *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2006-07), 11-12.

contribute to government-wide efforts related to climate change.¹⁰³ In recent years the Ministry has continually reiterated its dedication to ensuring that Ontario's Crown forests - which make up nearly 90 per cent of the province's commercial woodlands - are sustainably managed while simultaneously promoting job creation, investment, and competitiveness in the forestry sector.¹⁰⁴

The OMNRF has continued to expand Ontario's system of provincial parks and protected areas since the turn of the century. By the year 2000, Ontario's parks and protected areas comprised a total of 9.5 million hectares, an area larger than Portugal, while overall park attendance remained relatively stable at around 10 million visitors annually from 2003 onward.¹⁰⁵ Beginning early in the new millennium, the Ministry undertook a thorough review of legislation related to parks and protected areas in Ontario, the first time this had been done in roughly 50 years.¹⁰⁶ Then, in 2006, the Ontario government passed the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*, which guaranteed the protection of Ontario's provincial parks and conservation reserves and ensured the preservation of the province's natural and cultural heritage while also providing opportunities for environmentally-friendly recreational activities.¹⁰⁷ Today, this Act and other related pieces of legislation guide the OMNRF's management of Ontario's 339 provincial parks and numerous protected areas.¹⁰⁸

The OMNRF's core wildlife philosophy is grounded in recognizing the importance of biodiversity. This concept holds that "While management decisions are sometimes directed at

¹⁰³ "Results-based Plan," *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2011-12): 14.

¹⁰⁴ "Results-based Plan," *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2013-14): 16.

¹⁰⁵ *The Making of the Ontario Forest Accord: A Background Document* (Government of Ontario, 1999); "Results-based Plan," *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2009-10): 11.

¹⁰⁶ "Published Results-based Plan," *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2006-07): 23.

¹⁰⁷ *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*, 2006, Statutes of Ontario 2006, Chapter 12, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/06p12#BK1> (accessed 19 September 2016).

¹⁰⁸ "Published plans and annual reports 2015-2016: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry," *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2015-2016-ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry#section-0> (accessed 19 September 2016).

individual species, they reflect the needs of whole ecosystems,” and emphasizes that “Wildlife management must be flexible in considering ecological, social and economic factors.”¹⁰⁹ The *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997* still provides protection for many wildlife species, while more recent legislation, such as the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (which replaced the original act of 1971), has added strength to the Ministry’s preservationist agenda.¹¹⁰ In the early 2000s, the OMNRF brought together members of government, industry, environmental and conservation groups and the public to develop Ontario’s Biodiversity Strategy, a plan which aimed to ensure the sustainable management of the province’s wildlife and other natural resources.¹¹¹ In 2010, as part of the International Year of Biodiversity, the OMNRF supported the Ontario Biodiversity Council (OBC) in developing the 2010 State of Biodiversity Report, which helped fulfill Ontario’s commitment to recognizing the importance of biodiversity and ecological sustainability. The Ministry still works closely with the OBC to ensure that these objectives are met.¹¹² Of course, the OMNRF continues to oversee the management of a variety of wildlife species throughout Ontario, including moose, wild turkey, black bear, deer, elk, small game, wolf, coyote, and more.¹¹³ At the same time, it has devoted considerable energy to addressing threats posed to Ontario’s biodiversity by invasive species. By the early 2010s the Ministry had introduced the Ontario Strategic Invasive Species Strategic Plan, and had collaborated with the federal government to establish the Invasive Species Centre at the Great Lakes Forestry Centre in Sault Ste. Marie.¹¹⁴ In addition, Ontario passed the *Invasive Species Act*

¹⁰⁹ “Wildlife management,” *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/wildlife-management> (accessed 20 September 2016).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ “Published Results-based Plan,” *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2006-07): 12.

¹¹² “Results-based Plan,” *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2011-12): 32; “About – The Council,” *Ontario Biodiversity Council*, <http://ontariobiodiversitycouncil.ca/about/> (accessed 20 September 2016).

¹¹³ “Wildlife management,” *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/wildlife-management> (accessed 20 September 2016).

¹¹⁴ “Results-based Plan,” *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2013-14): 10.

in 2015, which will support “the prevention, early detection, rapid response and eradication of invasive species in the province.”¹¹⁵

The Ministry administers Ontario’s fish and fisheries with a similar sense of concern for the broader ecological and environmental implications of its actions. For the past ten years the OMNRF has been implementing the Ecological Framework for Recreational Fisheries Management in Ontario, a program which “represented a change in management approach from managing fisheries on an individual waterbody basis to a landscape level of scale.”¹¹⁶ A number of new policies have stemmed from this initiative, namely the formation of Fisheries Management Zones throughout Ontario and the adoption of ecologically based fishing regulations designed to further protect the province’s biodiversity.¹¹⁷ The Ministry’s modern fish stocking program involves the breeding and release of approximately 8 million fish per year, while Ontario’s recreational fisheries continue to attract over one million anglers and contributes over \$2 billion to the provincial economy.¹¹⁸ In recent years, after considerable public consultation, the OMNRF has prepared a draft of Ontario’s Provincial Fish Strategy, which seeks to set guidelines for future fisheries management in the province.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ “Published plans and annual reports 2015-2016: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry,” *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2015-2016-ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry#section-0> (accessed 19 September 2016); “Invasive Species Legislation Receives Royal Assent,” *Government of Ontario*, <https://news.ontario.ca/mnr/en/2015/11/invasive-species-legislation-receives-royal-assent.html> (accessed 13 January 2017).

¹¹⁶ S.J. Kerr, *Fish and Fisheries Management in Ontario: A Chronology of Events* (Peterborough: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 2010), 62.

¹¹⁷ Kerr, 62; “Published Results-based Plan,” *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2007-08): 9.

¹¹⁸ S.J. Kerr, *An Historical Review of Fish Culture, Stocking and Fish Transfers in Ontario, 1865-2004* (Peterborough: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 2006), 11.

¹¹⁹ “Published plans and annual reports 2015-2016: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry,” *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2015-2016-ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry#section-0> (accessed 19 September 2016).

In addition, the OMNRF presently employs a variety of methods to guide its effective stewardship of Ontario's Crown lands and waters. Under the *Public Lands Act, 1990*, the Ministry wields authority over the management of these resources, making it responsible for the sale of Crown lands and ensuring their sustainable use; flood, low water and drought management; overseeing the management and regulation of surveys and the surveying profession in Ontario; and the development of aggregate, oil, gas and salt resources in the province.¹²⁰ The OMNRF has also developed strategic land use policies in order to support the Ontario government's commitment to renewable energy projects, including energy generation from wind, water, and bio-fuels.¹²¹ Furthermore, because little Crown land exists in southern Ontario, the Ministry's latest land use policies reflect a growing concern for northern Ontario, a region where over 95% of the land is publicly owned.¹²² Moreover, while the OMNRF continues to work closely with the general public in terms of Crown land management, more recently it has been especially concerned with fostering a more positive relationship with Ontario's Indigenous peoples.¹²³ This progressive mentality is embodied in the *Far North Act, 2010*, which establishes a framework for joint land use planning processes between the provincial government - namely the OMNRF - and the First Nations communities located in the more northern reaches of the province.¹²⁴ For example, the Ministry has been directly involved with the Ring of Fire, the massive planned chromite mining and smelting development project located in the Hudson Bay Lowlands of northern Ontario. The OMNRF has been participating in the discussions

¹²⁰ *Public Lands Act, 1990*, Statutes of Ontario 1990, Chapter P.43, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p43> (accessed 22 September 2016); "Results-based Plan," *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2013-14): 3-4.

¹²¹ "Results-based Plan," *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2012-13): 14.

¹²² "Published plans and annual reports 2015-2016: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry," *Government of Ontario*, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2015-2016-ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry#section-0> (accessed 22 September 2016).

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Far North Act, 2010*, Statutes of Ontario 2010, Chapter 18, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/10f18> (accessed 22 September 2016).

surrounding its realization, namely “through community based land use planning with First Nations ... in order to capitalize on the economic opportunity represented by the Ring of Fire.” In addition, the OMNRF has aided in the environmental assessments and monitoring associated with the Ring of Fire.¹²⁵

Evidently, then, the OMNRF’s role in Ontario’s natural resource sector has evolved considerably over the past five decades. Prior to its inception in 1972, the public administration of the province’s forests, minerals, wildlife, parks, lands and waters was primarily driven by economic motives. As the years passed, however, the Ontario government’s approach to natural resource management underwent a fundamental transformation, becoming increasingly guided by social and ecological principles which emphasize the interconnectedness and long-term sustainability of the environment. Consequently, the OMNRF has been tasked with striking an appropriate balance between the many competing interests and values that exist within Ontario’s natural resource sector. While this has presented many challenges for the Ministry, it has undoubtedly done an admirable job of fulfilling its duty as the province’s ecological steward. Moving forward, the OMNRF will use its past experiences to improve upon its management of Ontario’s natural wealth in order to ensure that it retains its vitality for the sake of future generations.

¹²⁵ “Results-based Plan,” *Ministry of Natural Resources* (2013-14): 15.