

2020 Haudenosaunee Deer Harvest Short Hills Provincial Park

The Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority, a body appointed by the Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (“Haudenosaunee”), and the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (“MECP”) are in accord about Haudenosaunee harvesting of deer at Short Hills Provincial Park (“the Park”) between November 3, 2020 and January 28, 2021.

This protocol reflects the matters to which we have agreed, explains our mutual interests, confirms specific roles, and describes the manner in which the harvest is to take place. In this document, “we,” “our,” and “the Parties” means the Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority and the MECP together. We intend this document to be available to regional and local governments as well as to the general public.

Treaty Relations

MECP and the Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority have a relationship based on mutual respect, trust and friendship. This deer harvest in Short Hills Provincial Park takes place in the context of a treaty relationship between the Haudenosaunee and the Crown. The 1701 Treaty at Albany speaks to “free hunting” for the Haudenosaunee “expecting to be protected therein by the Crown of England” in the area now known as southwestern Ontario. The harvest at the park is an aspect of the fulfillment of that agreement in a modern context. We have implemented the Haudenosaunee right to harvest in a way that seeks to ensure that it is conducted safely, in a manner consistent with conservation, and with due regard to the interests of other users of the park. Our work together has fostered harmony and respect between the Parties and between the individuals involved in the harvest. We believe our cooperation on this matter is an example of the spirit in which treaty rights are to be implemented.

Conservation

The Haudenosaunee consider the deer to be the leader of the animals. Deer have a special place in ensuring that the people are fed. Venison is important to Haudenosaunee diet as well as Haudenosaunee culture, and it is vital that the relationship between the people and the deer should be maintained in a thoughtful and respectful way. The Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority is mindful that any authority must be accompanied by responsibility, and that the welfare of future generations must be taken into account. Its authority with respect to Haudenosaunee deer harvests is accompanied by the responsibility to work with MECP to help conserve the deer herds and the ecosystems in which they live.

MECP and Haudenosaunee monitoring and observation have concluded that the deer population at Short Hills is significantly larger than the park’s ecosystem can support in a balanced way. The biological diversity of the park is being impacted.

Based on the size of the deer population in the park and the number of deer previously harvested, MECP has no conservation concerns. Many different factors affect the size and health of the herds, and the Parties will continue to work together to evaluate the impact of those factors, and to examine the deer taken and observed, with respect to their population, health and nutrition. One important concern is the presence of ticks and other parasites, and the presence of tumors and other growths.

Safety

The Parties are committed to conducting the deer harvest at the park with a focus on safety for the public, for the harvesters, and for the MECP and Police personnel who are involved.

As a result, the Parties have agreed to restrict the times, dates, harvesting methods, and locations of the harvest within the park. This document reflects the continuing evolution of the safety protocols that have been used to govern the harvest since it began in 2013.

Concern for safety has also resulted in joint work by MECP, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Provincial Police officers, Niagara Regional Police officers and Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority personnel to address public safety concerns at the park during the harvest. The Parties want to ensure that the harvest takes place safely, respectfully and peacefully.

Only archery equipment will be used during the harvest. The short range of bow harvesting promotes public safety, but this harvesting method also requires a higher degree of skill and discipline among the harvesters.

Humaneness

Haudenosaunee respect for the deer requires that appropriate ceremonies must be conducted before the harvest, to give thanks for the deer, to request a safe harvest, and one in which the deer will be taken without undue suffering. The Haudenosaunee are committed to ensuring that the harvest practices used at the park will result in as little wounding of deer as possible, and the goal that all deer that are wounded are tracked and dispatched as soon as humanely possible.

Specific Roles and Responsibilities

The *Park Superintendent* has overall responsibility on behalf of MECP for the management of the park and for the safety of the harvest. They will work closely with the Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority with respect to the harvest. They will provide support and guidance for the harvest, will be responsible for providing equipment for MECP staff, and will have final decision making authority for MECP on all safety related issues. They will direct security arrangements on behalf of MECP and will be the liaison for MECP with the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and Niagara Regional Police. Working with both Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators, they will help resolve any issues about the implementation of the protocol throughout the course of the harvest.

The *Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators* will be the primary liaison for the Haudenosaunee with the MECP and OPP. They will work closely with the Park Superintendent and the Operations Specialist to ensure that the harvest is carried out safely and effectively. They will be responsible for ensuring all harvesters are registered with the Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority. In conjunction with other Haudenosaunee representatives, they will ensure that harvest captains, harvesters and support people are available for each day of the harvest, all harvest captains and support staff are aware of their roles, ensure that harvested deer are delivered to the gathering area for inspection and processing, and will coordinate the community distribution of the deer.

Ontario Parks Harvest Liaison will provide direct communication with MECP staff concerning activity in the park and directly liaise with the Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators in order to ensure the Park Superintendent has timely information.

The *Communications & Operations Coordinator* is responsible for coordinating MECP operational communication including the distribution of communication equipment. They coordinate security states and help resolve safety issues as directed by the Park Superintendent.

The *MECP Management Lead* will provide MECP's perspective on the harvest as required to the media and the interested public. They will provide accounts of the harvest to MECP senior management. They will work with the Communications Services Branch of the MECP to develop media releases, information packages, and media interviews where required. They will work closely with the Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators to provide for consistency and coherence of information.

During the harvest, MECP staff will have multiple shifts. There will be Park Wardens who will patrol the park boundary regularly, checking on all access points and responding to requests for assistance. Their primary responsibilities will be to prevent public entry into the park, manage the harvest zone boundary, respond to safety issues in their area; they will seek assistance as required.

The safety of the harvest, for harvesters, MECP staff and the general public, will be monitored by the Harvest Coordinators, the Park Superintendent and the management leads. The Harvest Coordinators will brief all harvesters each morning prior to the harvest to ensure there is a clear understanding of the rules of the harvest, including safety provisions. Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators, the Ontario Parks Harvest Liaison and others involved in coordinating the harvest will meet to confirm details for the safe conduct of the harvest, taking into account the number of harvesters, weather conditions, and other factors. It is understood that not all Haudenosaunee participants will be actively harvesting.

Both the Haudenosaunee and MECP will provide first aid supplies. Each MECP vehicle will carry a first aid kit.

Time

The harvest will take place on:

- Tuesday, November 3 (and the morning of the 4)
- Thursday, November 26 (and the morning of the 27)
- Thursday, December 10 (and the morning of the 11)
- Thursday, December 17 (and the morning of the 18)
- Thursday, January 7 (and the morning of the 8)
- Wednesday, January 27 (and the morning of the 28)

Additional days may be added if agreed upon between the Park Superintendent, Management Leads and the Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators.

In the interest of public safety, the park will be closed to the public all day during the first day of each harvest period until noon on the following day (each harvest date will consist of one day of

hunting and the morning of the following day will be used for animal tracking and recovery). While the harvesters will set up and travel to the tree stands and blinds before sunrise, and may leave them after sunset, harvesting will take place only between one half hour before sunrise and one half hour after sunset, and will not take place in any light or weather conditions in which the harvester cannot see clearly. While no harvesting will take place after dark, it may be necessary to track wounded animals and retrieve deer after dark.

Location

The harvest activities will be conducted in the designated central portion of the park. This area of the park has the least development and fewer public trails. The attached map shows the areas within which the harvesting shall take place. There will be a buffer zone around the perimeter inside of the park boundary. Both the park boundary and the harvest zone within the park will be delineated with clear markings.

Blinds and tree stands will not be placed in permanent locations.

There will be no designated locations for the set-up of blinds or tree stands.

Harvest Methods

Deer will be taken with archery equipment - longbows, compound bows and crossbows. The harvesters will not use bait, dogs, lights, traps or vehicles while harvesting.

Haudenosaunee harvesters will use care and discipline to harvest deer effectively and humanely. Harvesters will shoot only at stationary deer when they have a clear shot. They will target vital organs to ensure the quickest and most compassionate kill. Where a deer is wounded, it is the harvester's responsibility to track the deer and dispatch it humanely.

Since the deer herd in the park can sustain the harvest, harvesters must not be biased in their selection of animals to shoot. However, the age and sex of the deer may be monitored during the harvest.

Should a wounded deer leave the harvest zone, including moving into the buffer zone, the harvester will be responsible for tracking and retrieving the deer with support from MECP staff as required. If a wounded deer goes onto private property then the harvester must seek permission from the property owner to enter onto the property to recover the deer. If permission to enter private property is denied by the property owner, it will be the responsibility of the property owner to dispose of the deer.

Access to the Park

During the harvest, access to the park will be limited to harvest participants and MECP staff and local police agencies. For reasons of safety, all other persons will be denied access. However, where the presence of a large number of people at or near the Pelham Road entrance to the park could be a public safety concern, the MECP or the Ontario Provincial Police may identify an area inside the park for those people to stand to address any public safety concerns. MECP or the OPP may set out requirements for the granting of that access. Notwithstanding the foregoing members of the public will not be permitted into the interior of the park or the harvest zone.

The three designated access points to the park will be gated. MECP staff will patrol the park perimeter to monitor the access points. The public will be advised of the park closure, by way of news releases, resident notices and signage at each known access point to the park. Information will be provided to the general public to provide for the safety of the public, harvesters and harvest participants and to facilitate the carrying out of the harvest without interruption.

Unauthorized persons found within the park will be removed and charges may be laid where appropriate. If unauthorized persons enter the park during the harvest, harvest participants (harvesters and MECP) will be notified and harvest activities may be temporarily suspended. Suspension of the harvest is defined as harvesters disarming their firearms and remaining vigilant for non-harvesters. MECP staff will be responsible for seeking the removal of the unauthorized persons from the park. OPP will be engaged in cases of civil disobedience. Once the unauthorized persons are no longer in the park, harvesters and harvest participants will be advised.

Vehicles may be driven into the gathering area in the interior of the park. From there all harvesters will travel to their stand on foot.

Minimal ATV use will occur and where possible ATVs will be operated on established park trails. MECP staff may use ATVs for the purposes of monitoring the harvest zone boundaries, supporting staff stationed within the park, responding to issues within the park and for the safe and efficient transfer of deer to the gathering area to ensure harvester safety.

Deer Processing

Harvested deer may be taken to the gathering area in the centre of the park where MECP staff may record data including weight, gender and approximate age. The deer will be field dressed, and entrails will be disposed of by the harvesters.

Considerations will be made about the spread of Lyme Disease. Each deer taken may be examined by MECP staff on site for deer ticks, and any ticks found may be tested for the causative Lyme Disease bacteria. Participants will be instructed in general precautionary measures by MECP staff to minimize the risk of contracting the disease.

MECP may assess and record the general health of the harvested deer and may record the number of deer harvested.

Equipment

Participants in the harvest will bring their own archery equipment and any other clothing and equipment needed for the harvest. All participants in the harvest will wear blaze orange clothing when traveling in the park. Harvesters may wear camouflage while at their stands or blinds. In the interests of safety, when possible, all archery equipment should be unloaded and encased outside of the harvest hours or when outside the harvest zone.

Archery equipment will not be loaded while harvesters are in the gathering area of the park.

Suspension or Shutting Down of Harvest Activities

If a deer is wounded, or cannot be immediately located, the shooter will immediately notify the Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators. The Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators may work with the Operations Coordinator to send a team of harvesters to track and recover the deer. Harvesting activities may be suspended while the deer is located or recovered, or until the recovery team concludes that the animal cannot be recovered. MECP staff may assist.

In case of an emergency or natural disaster or in case the weather makes harvesting unsafe or excessively difficult, the Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators and Operations Coordinator may shut down the harvest and will notify the participants of termination of the harvest. All participants will safely leave the park.

Communications

Harvesters will communicate amongst themselves with their own radios and cell phones. MECP staff will use radios and cell phones and will maintain contact with the Operations Coordinator. The Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators and Park Superintendent will remain in close contact throughout the harvest to discuss any operational matters that may arise.

Opening Day

Before sunrise, if possible, the Haudenosaunee will burn tobacco together to request a safe, successful harvest. This ceremony shall be restricted to harvesters and harvest participants, including MECP staff and police who are close by and may wish to join.

At the beginning of the harvest, the Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators, and Ontario Parks Harvest Liaison will conduct a briefing session for all harvesters and harvest participants - Haudenosaunee harvesters and MECP staff - to provide an understanding of the harvest and safety measures, in order to promote a safe and successful outcome. Harvesters will arrive at the gathering area and sign in with the Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators. Harvesters new to the park will be briefed on the measures of this protocol, as well as any additional safety measures and the designated area of the harvest. Each harvester will be assigned a specific area in which to set up. Harvesters may go to their blinds or stands before sunrise. Harvesting will begin only after all harvesters are in position and all MECP staff have left the harvest area.

End of Day

At the end of each day of the harvest, harvest participants will make every effort to remove any garbage and ensure nothing is left behind. The Haudenosaunee Harvest Coordinators and Ontario Parks Harvest Liaison will confirm all clear at the conclusion of each harvest day.

Post Harvest

The Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority and MECP are committed to meeting in 2021 to evaluate the harvest.

MAP
 Short Hills Provincial Park
 Harvest Zone - 2020

