

Toward a Fisheries Management Plan For FMZ 16 (Southwestern Ontario)



Stakeholder Listening Session Summary Report

December 7, 2017 – 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Waterfront Hotel
2020 Lakeshore Road
Burlington, Ontario

Prepared by Lura Consulting for:
The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
December 2017



This report was prepared by Lura Consulting. Lura is providing independent facilitation services as part of the Fisheries Management Zone 16 planning process. The report presents the key outcomes from the December 7, 2017 Burlington stakeholder listening session and is not intended to provide a verbatim transcript. This document is provided for discussion purposes only. The views and opinions expressed reflect contributions from various stakeholders alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ministry or its staff. The Ministry makes no warranties or representations regarding the accuracy or completeness of the content of the document. If you have any questions or comments regarding the report, please contact either:

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Table of Contents

1. Project Background.....4

2. Stakeholder Listening Session.....5

3. Summary of Participant Feedback.....7

 Question and Answer Session - Feedback.....7

 Topic 1: Use and Importance of the Fishery.....7

 Topic 2: State of the Fishery Today8

 Topic 3: Towards a Fish Management Plan for Zone 16 11

4. Next Steps..... 14

Appendices

The appendices listed below can be found in the aggregated appendix document.

Appendix A: MNRF FMZ 16 Management Plan Presentation

Appendix B: Agenda

Appendix C: Individual Feedback Form

1. Project Background

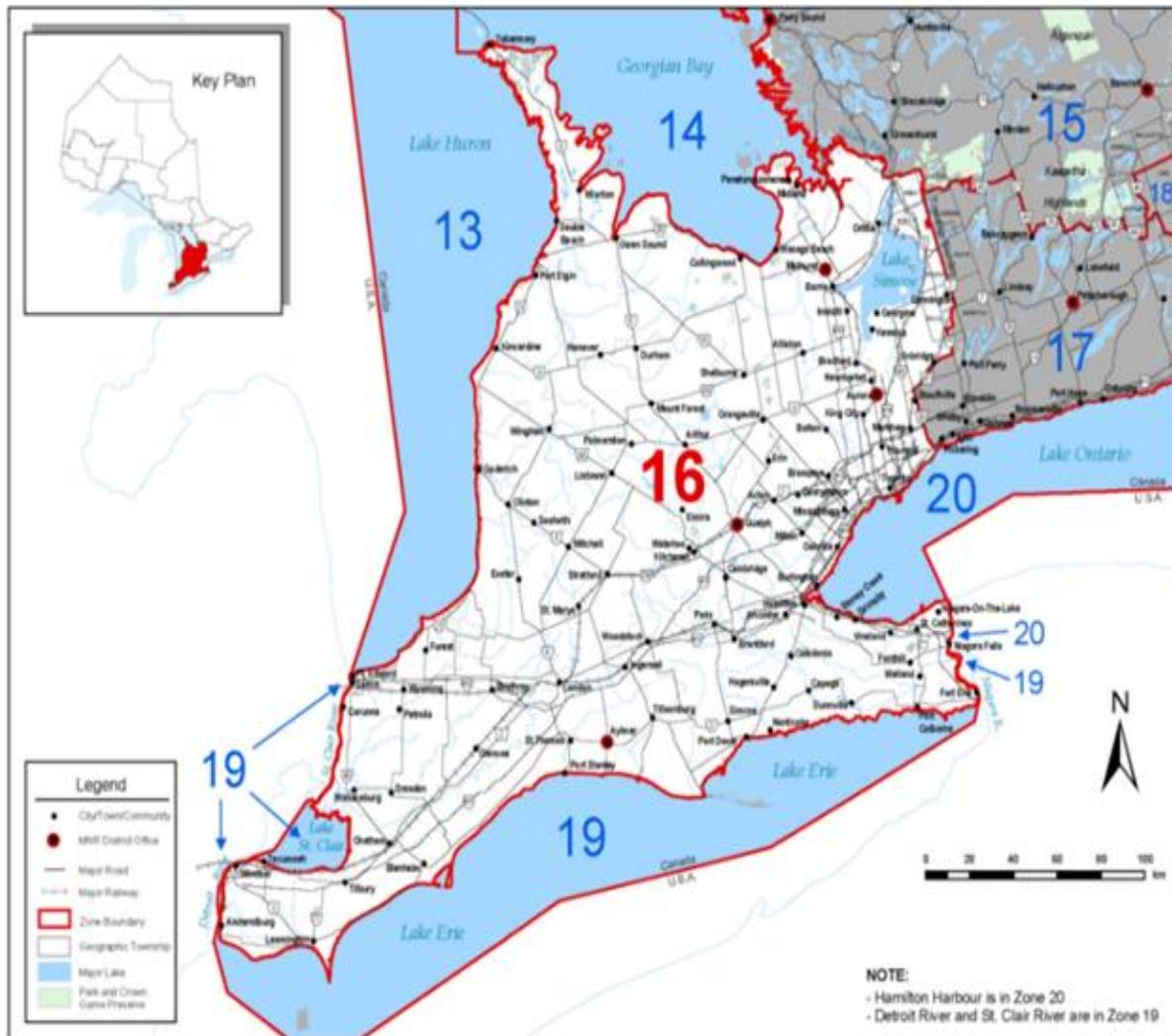


Figure 1: FMZ 16 Map

Fisheries Management Zone 16 (FMZ 16) is one of 20 fisheries management zones in the province and the most southerly inland fisheries management zone in the province (Figure 1). It has the largest urban population of any zone, as it includes all of southwestern Ontario. The zone includes many large cities, contains important recreational and tourism-based fisheries, large river systems, popular lakes, and a high fishing effort. Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching are included in the zone; however, they have been addressed through a separate fisheries management planning process.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) will be developing a plan to sustainably manage the diverse fisheries found in FMZ 16. As a result of the high level of complexity involved with Fisheries Management Planning in Zone 16, the MNRF is incorporating an enhanced engagement approach into the planning process. As a first step, Indigenous communities, key stakeholders and members of the general public were invited to participate in listening sessions. Stakeholder sessions took place throughout FMZ 16, in four locations:

- Alliston: November 28, 2017
- Walkerton: November 30, 2017
- London: December 5, 2017
- Burlington: December 7, 2017

These sessions provided stakeholders the chance to share their thoughts on what a fisheries management planning process in this zone needs to include and consider. The MNRF is taking the necessary time to consider this complex landscape, along with the interconnectedness of river fisheries with adjacent Great Lakes.

2. Stakeholder Listening Session

The fourth listening session took place in Burlington on December 7, 2017 at the Waterfront Hotel, 2020 Lakeshore Road, Burlington, Ontario from 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm.

The purpose of the listening session was to:

- Introduce the planning process to sustainably manage the diverse fisheries in southwestern Ontario; and
- Hear public feedback on what the Fisheries Management Zone 16 planning process should consider

Susan Hall, the neutral third-party facilitator from Lura Consulting, welcomed participants and reviewed the meeting agenda. Joe Halloran, Emily Gryck and David Denyes provided an overview of the context for fisheries planning and policy in Ontario, challenges facing fisheries, and an overview of the characteristics of FMZ 16 that make it unique. They also provided an overview of the typical and enhanced FMZ planning process (Appendix A). The presentation concluded with a review of the discussion questions, and provided time for participants to ask questions of clarification.

Following the question and answer session, Susan Hall led the group through a facilitated discussion that addressed the following questions:

- How do you use the fishery in Zone 16 (Southwestern Ontario)?
- What aspects of the fishery are most important to you?

Fisheries Management Zone 16 Planning Process – Stakeholder Listening Session Summary Report – December 7th, 2017

- Thinking about how the fishery is managed now in Zone 16, what is working well? What could be improved?
- What are the most important issues to be addressed in the plan?
- What opportunities do you see for better fisheries management in Zone 16?

A feedback form was also provided for individuals to submit their comment individually at or following the meeting (Appendix C).

A total of 38 individuals participated in the Burlington Stakeholder Listening Session, including participants from the following organizations:

Bay Area Restoration Council
Bob McKenzie Agencies
Brantford Steelheaders
Caledonia Bait and Tackle
Credit River Anglers Association
Drift Outfitters and Fly shop
Friends of the Grand River
Grand River Migratory Fish
Grand River Outfitting and Fly Shop
Great Lakes Fishery Commission
Grindstone Anglers
Halton Sportsmen's Association
Hamilton Harbour RAP
Hamilton Port Authority
ISC Fish Hatchery
Izaak Walton Fly Fishing Club
North Shore Anglers
Ontario BASS Nation
Ontario Heritage Trust
Ontario Live Bait Association
Ontario Steelheaders
Royal Botanical Gardens
St. Catharine's Game and Fish Association
Toronto Urban Fishing Ambassadors
Trout Unlimited (Middle Grand, Speed River, Ted Knott, Greg Clark, Niagara chapters)

3. Summary of Participant Feedback

The following provides a summary of all feedback received during the discussion and is organized by topic and prompting question.

Question and Answer Session - Feedback

The following provides a summary of the feedback received during the question and answer session. 'Q' indicates the question raised, 'A' is the response provided by MNRF; and 'C' is comment raised by participants.

- Q. How are you engaging the commercial bait fishing industry?
A. This is something that we will need to consider. We're still very early in the process. We will have to look into that and will also do so when establishing the Advisory Council.
- Q. To this point the commercial bait fishing industry has not been invited?
A. There is an ongoing process for a baitfish policy. The bait fishing industry has been engaged through that process specifically.
- Q. Do you agree or disagree that the baitfish industry's effect on the environment, whether positive or negative, should be addressed?
A. We agree.
- Q. How many hatcheries exist in this zone?
A. Ten to fifteen. They produce sport fish mainly. Mostly cold water such as trout varieties and one warm water species, which is walleye.

Topic 1: Use and Importance of the Fishery

How do you use the fishery in Zone 16 (southwestern Ontario)?

Participants use the fishery in Zone 16 in various ways, including:

- Recreational and fly fishing.
- Tributary fishing.
- Co-chair a project committee that oversees a watershed initiative.
- For educational opportunities.
- Habitat restoration and native species enhancement.
- Additional uses, including:
 - Host family fishing events.
 - Stormwater pond stocking initiatives.

- Conservation interests, including:
 - Sustainable populations, habitat quality, and rehabilitation.
 - Observing fish as a measure of environmental health.

What aspects of the fishery are most important to you?

Participants noted the following aspects of the fishery as holding importance to them:

- Sustainability, including an emphasis on:
 - Preservation, self-sustaining fisheries.
 - Biodiversity.
 - Enhancing native populations.
 - Watershed conservation.
 - Stream rehabilitation.
 - Climate change mitigation.
 - The preservation of native Brook Trout and their coldwater habitats.
- Reducing conflicts, including:
 - Native vs. stocked species.
 - Brown trout vs. rainbow trout.
- Species-dependent fishing seasons.
- Catch and release.
- Collaboration between FMZs.
- Local food source.
- Tourism and economic contributions, especially for small communities.
- FMZ 16 has some of the finest river fishing opportunities in the world.
- Dam removal.

Topic 2: State of the Fishery Today

What would you say are the key issues or factors affecting the state of the fishery in FMZ 16?

Participants noted the following key issues and factors affecting the state of the fishery in Zone 16:

- Land use impacts, including:
 - Agricultural practices which cause nutrient and sediment run off and drainage issues.
 - Urbanization.
- Management problems, including:
 - Lack of enforcement.

- Lack of on-the-ground management.
- Lack of restoration work.
- Lack of integrative management.
- Management for simplicity leads to management for the lowest common denominator not management for excellence.
- Lack of capacity (funding and staff) for MNRF to manage well.
- Cormorant control.
- Erosion control.

Thinking about how the fishery is managed now in Zone 16...What is working well? What could be improved?

Participants stated that the following aspects of current Zone 16 management are working well:

- Reproduction in tributaries.
- Special regulations.
- Existing river-specific plans.
- Local stewardship programs.
- 10 to 15-meter buffer widths.
- Access.
- Watershed-specific management plans.
- Urban ponds and stormwater ponds (e.g. Humber Bay Park).
- Invasive species awareness campaigns.

Participants suggested the following issues could be improved:

- Enforcement, including:
 - More Conservation Officers.
 - Improve the process for reporting infractions with technology such as an app or website as the call-in reporting system is not working.
- Education, including:
 - For partnerships and stewardship opportunities.
 - Multi-lingual opportunities.
 - Education for new anglers.
 - Education on safe fish consumption.
 - Better methods of engaging youth.
- Conservation, including:
 - Water temperature management.
 - Development and agricultural land use impact mitigation.

- Water quality.
- Protected spawning areas.
- Funding for scientific research:
 - Better research to facilitate informed decision making. Don't rely on observational research.
 - Research should be made public.
 - Study impacts of mercury build up in fisheries due to droughts.
- Licensing, including:
 - Educational requirements to licensing.
 - Varied licenses (E.g. special license for migratory Steelhead Trout).
 - Tag system associated with licenses.
 - Consider requiring a licensing fee for seniors.
- Collaboration and communication, including:
 - Better communication between MNRF, other ministries (e.g. OMAFRA, MOECC) and municipalities to minimize fishery impacts.
 - Better collaboration with farmers.
- Management plan structure:
 - Look to other plans (e.g. other provinces and states) as best practice examples.
 - Ensure funding sources are available.
 - Consider watershed-based plans.
 - River specific elements of the plan as each river and waterway has different management needs.
 - The management plan must be science-based.
 - Need to improve on the ground, active management.
 - Management planning needs to take other planning processes into consideration. This includes land use planning, water resource planning and agricultural management.
 - Fisheries management needs less emphasis on recreational fishing and more focus on habitat protection.
 - Management planning needs to take terrestrial management into consideration. Work with other agencies to accomplish this.
- Regulations, including:
 - Ban roe and spawn.
 - Ban treble hooks.
 - Introduce spawn limits.
 - Streamline rehabilitation application process.
 - Encourage catch and release.

- Use plain language.
- Accessibility, including:
 - Make hard copies of regulations available to the public.
 - Provide booklet on safe fish consumption at retail locations (e.g., Canadian Tire, tackle shops).
 - Regulations and licenses should have the same information in all languages. (Currently the translated versions only have the regulation elements and do not include the important information about conservation).
- Create urban fishing opportunities:
 - Urban ponds concept to attract urban populations to angling.
- Barrier removal, including:
 - Remove dams.
 - Improve fish ladders.
- MNRF funding, including:
 - Greater funding to hire more Conservation Officers.
 - More funding to implement the changes suggested in this consultation process.
- Additional feedback:
 - Monitor sewage treatment plant discharges.
 - Consider cormorant control.
 - Manage Chinook salmon reproduction.
 - Better oversight over conservation authorities.
 - Develop a community fisheries program and enlist clubs.
 - Create more urban ponds.

Topic 3: Towards a Fish Management Plan for Zone 16

What are the most important issues the plan needs to address?

Participants suggested the following issues be addressed in the plan:

- Mass agriculture (e.g. tiling).
- The process for insurance procurement is costly and onerous making it difficult for organizations to host on-the-ground fishing education and events.
- Lack of enforcement, including:
 - Enforcement on creeks and rivers during runs (e.g., Bronte)
- Management, including:
 - Subdivide FMZ 16 into distinct zones based on watershed boundaries, or create a “special waters designation.”

- Collaboration, including:
 - Ensure communication with other agencies and levels of government to ensure sustainable watersheds and healthy waters.
 - Find a way to incorporate the recommendations of local stewards into FMZ planning on a regular basis.
- Waterway degradation.
- Pressure on fisheries from growing angling interest.
- Better acknowledge the potential high-quality value of the waterways in FMZ 16.
- Enhance public engagement through education in schools and possible seminars or open public discussions.

What opportunities do you see for better fisheries management in Zone 16?

Participants noted the following opportunities for better fisheries management in Zone 16:

- Education, including:
 - Work with youth at all levels (elementary, high schools, and universities).
 - Make certain rivers educational fisheries (e.g. Humber River).
 - Provide information on safe consumption.
 - Opportunities for education at events and hotspots (e.g. Hamilton Derby, Toronto Islands).
 - Educate on ecological elements, not just how-to-fish.
 - Put fishing information in schools and libraries.
 - Ensure that judges and magistrates know the severity of infractions so that sentences are appropriate.
 - More engagement opportunities for the public, such as this.
- Regulations, including:
 - Clarify regulations by writing them in plain language.
 - Consider different regulations for different watersheds.
 - Catch and release regulations that are aligned with fish populations.
 - Tagging system for sensitive populations.
- Engagement, including:
 - Conduct more frequent meetings like this to allow the public to stay in touch with public.
- Access, including:
 - Creating more urban ponds.
 - Additional family fishing weekends.
 - More fisheries along the Toronto lakeshore.

- Enforcement, including:
 - Hire more Conservation Officers (CO).
 - Separate COs into two categories; fisheries and wildlife.
 - Allow for an auxiliary CO program similar to those in municipal police forces.
 - Improved tip line and published statistics.
 - Increase fines to provide greater funding for enforcement.
- Conservation, including:
 - Incorporated measures that respond to climate change.
 - Streamlining the rehabilitation application process to make it easier for community groups to do their work.
 - Use stewardship programs to engage, train, teach and enable better stewardship of local waterways.
 - More tree planting along water courses.
- Science-based decision making, including:
 - Allocate proper funding to support science-based decision making.
 - Create mandates for data sharing between government bodies and relevant agencies.
- Stocking, including:
 - Rely on native species where possible.
 - Provide greater funding for stocking programs.
- Increased management of invasive species.
- Collaboration, including:
 - Stronger partnerships with Conservation Authorities.
 - Collaboration and information sharing with other Ontario and federal ministries.
 - Encourage partnerships with various groups including tourism, power generation, development and developers, agriculture, recreational sport industries (e.g., golf, ski hills, etc.) to partner with the MNRF for better management.
- Promotion, including:
 - Improve visibility of MNRF and fishing opportunities (e.g. advertise during sports events).
- Dam removal and remediation.
- MNRF funding, including:
 - The incorporation of MNRF funding into general taxes.
 - Improve the capacity of MNRF Districts and Conservation Authorities to better manage watersheds.
 - Find funding partners.

- Additional feedback:
 - Revenue opportunity from tourism.
 - Shorten length of time it takes to become a Conservation Officer.
 - Reduce reliance on volunteers or develop a method of supplementing the work of volunteer organizations if they fold.
 - Reinstate Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program (CFWIP) or develop a similar program.
 - Look to New Brunswick’s social science research on how to increase stewardship. Use their engagement process.

Additional Feedback:

- Keep having these meetings to see if things are improving at the local level.
- Zone 16 is the most critical zone for the health of the Great Lakes.
- Increase funding for hatcheries.
- Consider sub-zone stewards and committees of both the MNRF and CAs with municipal membership to manage and protect established sub-zones.

4. Next Steps

The next steps in the FMZ 16 planning process includes; a discussion paper based on the listening sessions, to be posted on the Environmental Registry for public comment in 2018, A background report will be developed and an Advisory Council will be created to help guide and inform the development of an FMZ 16 plan.