



WILDLANDS LEAGUE

A chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

June 3, 2013

Ontario Guts Endangered Species Protections

New regulations cut big hole in safety net for species on brink of extinction

Toronto- Today CPAWS Wildlands League warns that Ontario has shattered its once North American leading legislation as it bends over backwards to help industries at the expense of more than 60 threatened and endangered species in the province. Broad and sweeping regulations released late last Friday confirm that Ontario is proceeding with permanent exemptions and longer transition exemptions for industries and activities from the *Endangered Species Act*.

“It is our worst fear. Make a law then gut it. Even a great law can be castrated,” says Janet Sumner, Executive Director of the group. “And that’s exactly what they’ve done. The province has taken what we applauded as the gold standard and neutered it through backdoor regulations. Might as well say goodbye and lay your bets on which species winks out fastest,” Sumner adds. The Ontario *Endangered Species Act* is a safety net intended to be a series of last gasp measures needed to pull species back from the brink of extinction and then help them recover. “Ontario has cut a big hole in the safety net with these regulations,” Sumner said.

In a letter addressed to Premier Wynne last week, CPAWS Wildlands League resigned from the *Endangered Species Act* Stakeholder Panel because its participation in the Panel was being used to provide green cover for the MNR’s broad sweeping use of exemptions. The panel’s recommendations did not include support for broad sector wide permanent exemptions.

With the new regulations, forestry, Ring of Fire mines, transmission lines, wind power, mineral exploration, drainage works, hydro electric generating facilities, sub-divisions, condominiums, pipelines, waste management projects, transit, and pits and quarries would all benefit from exemptions from the Act. The group is alarmed that not one habitat regulation for the species affected was put forward.

“The proposed new rules outlined are more complex, bureaucratic and byzantine in nature than that Act itself with the only difference now is proponents caught by the regulations won’t need to actually meet the test of the Act,” says Anna Baggio, Director Conservation Planning for the group. “MNR has turned the *Endangered Species Act* on its head by focusing on how to exempt industries instead of how to take care of species at risk. That’s quite a feat for a ministry whose core mandate is natural resources stewardship including endangered species,” Baggio noted.

The regulations being made by Ontario fail to provide the meaningful protections needed for Woodland caribou, Wolverine, Acadian Flycatcher, Blanding’s Turtle, Lake Chubsucker, Forked Three-awned grass and Eastern Hog-nosed snake to list a few of the more than sixty species that will be affected by these regulations. In terms of next steps, the group is considering all its options including legal.

-30-

For more information please contact:

Janet Sumner 416-579-7370 mobile or Anna Baggio 416-453-3285 mobile