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Type of Posting: Policy

Ministry: Natural Resources

Status of Posting: Decision

Date Proposal Loaded: 2004/12/15

Date Decision Loaded: 2005/10/19

Comment Period: 45 day(s)

Written submissions were permitted between December 15, 2004 and January 29, 2005.

NOTICE OF DECISION FOR POLICY

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Proposal Title:

Enhanced Wildlife Rehabilitation Program

Proposal Decision:

To proceed with the proposal as described, subject to the changes made below as a result of public consultation.

Number of Comments Received: 196

Effect of the Comments on the Decision of the Ministry:

The Ministry considered all input received during the EBR posting period and has incorporated many of the recommended changes into the wildlife rehabilitation program as follows:

- All rehabilitated immature wildlife outside a rabies High Risk Area (HRA) shall be released as close as possible to where it was found up to a maximum distance of 15 km. The maximum release distance for adult wildlife will remain at 1 km.
- Rehabilitation of rabies vector species (RVS) (raccoon, skunks, foxes) will be permitted in the rabies HRA after an authorized custodian has completed mandatory RVS training.
- All rehabilitated RVS wildlife inside a rabies HRA shall be released as close as possible to where it was found up to a maximum distance of 1km.
- All rehabilitated immature non-RVS wildlife inside a rabies HRA shall be released as close as possible to where it was found up to a maximum distance of 15 km. The maximum release distance for adult non-RVS wildlife will remain at 1 km.
- The proposal to restrict intake of RVS to within 50 km of a wildlife rehabilitation facility has been withdrawn.
- Mandatory training for all wildlife custodians on the rehabilitation of RVS to begin January 2007. This new mandatory training will include bats as a RVS.
- New basic skills course and exam for new applicants for a Wildlife Custodian Authorization.
- Foster care individuals may continue to care for wildlife as an agent for their sponsor wildlife custodian.
- Numerous other proposed conditions of authorization revised to respond to custodian concerns.
- Implementation of the changes will be initiated on January 1, 2006. Some new conditions of authorization may require additional time and effort by custodians, and will be implemented January 1, 2007.

Below is the text of the proposal as it was first published.

Short Description:

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is proposing to enhance the wildlife rehabilitation program by improving conditions of wildlife care and by establishing proficiency levels for new wildlife custodians.

Authorized wildlife custodians must adhere to a set of conditions that are placed on their authorization. These conditions of authorization are intended to protect public health and the health of wildlife populations. The proposed conditions reflect new minimum care standards related to medical care, housing, release and record keeping requirements.

The proposed new custodian qualifications will ensure a basic level of skill prior to a custodian receiving authorization. It is proposed that new custodians be required to successfully pass a basic skills exam in wildlife rehabilitation prior to authorization. It is also proposed that to obtain authorization for the rehabilitation of rabies vector species (foxes, raccoons, skunks and bats) all custodians be required to successfully complete a one-day rabies course and pass an examination.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 (FWCA), proclaimed January 1, 1999, allows an authorized wildlife custodian to keep native wildlife in captivity for the purposes of wildlife rehabilitation. Wildlife rehabilitation refers to the process of taking wild animals that are believed to be unable to survive in their natural habitat, either because they are injured, sick or immature, and providing them with the necessary care to facilitate their successful return to the wild wherever possible, in a socially acceptable and responsible manner. There are approximately 100 authorized wildlife custodians currently in the province.

The proposed changes are to take effect on April 1, 2005 for some conditions, and on January 1, 2006 for others, depending on the complexity and degree of change reflected in the conditions in order to afford custodians sufficient time to meet the new conditions.

Draft copies of the new custodian conditions and policy (qualifications), can be viewed by entering the link provided in this posting.

Purpose of the Proposal:

The ministry is consulting on the proposed enhancements to Ontario's wildlife rehabilitation program that are intended to ensure that wildlife rehabilitation continues to be a socially acceptable and responsible activity.

Other Public Consultation:

MNR has consulted with the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre, the Ontario Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Network and the Rabies Advisory Council.

Comments were directed to the following Contact Person:

Wildlife Section
MNR Fish and Wildlife Branch
5th Floor, North Tower, 300 Water Street
Peterborough, Ontario, K9J 8M5
PHONE: (705) 755-1940 FAX: (705) 755-1900

Additional material in support of this notice is available by clicking the following hyperlink(s):

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/ebr/wildlife_rehab/index.html
http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/ebr/wildlife_rehab/fr/index.html

The EBR stipulates that the Ministry must take every reasonable step to ensure that all comments relevant to the proposal received as part of the public participation process are considered in this decision (S. 35 ebr). Only comments relevant to this proposal were considered in this decision.