

KDCA Annual Spring Mtg.

May 1, 2026 - PACE Office, Dryden

DRAFT MINUTES

Present:

Scott Ellery	Lac Seul Wilderness Resort
Greg Waites	Standard Insurance
Shannon Wogenstahl	PACE
Harald Lohn	Kabeelo Lodge
Terry Kluge	Merkel's Camp
John Wogenstahl	Wogenstahl's North of 50 Outposts
Ryan Runge	Slate Falls Outposts
Devon Denzler	Fisherman's Cove
Mal Tygesson	Evergreen Lodge
Gerry Cariou	Sunset Country
Laurie Marcil	NOTO
Debra Donaldson	CBSA
Meagan Moriarty	CBSA
Steve Bobrowicz	MNRF - Fisheries Branch
Raven Ouellette	MNRF - Biologist
Megan Boyd	Destination Northern Ontario
Darren Ellery	MNR - Kenora
Ruth McMillan	

President Scott Ellery called the meeting to order at 9:40 am and welcomed everyone. Introductions were made around the room and from those attending virtually. He stated that KDCA is one of the last local tourism associations left in Ontario and that we represent the voice for local members. Scott thanked PACE for the use of the Boardroom.

Additions/Corrections to agenda - None

Motion to accept agenda - Motioned by Terry Kluge, seconded by John Wogenstahl to accept the agenda. Carried

Minutes of Prior Meeting- Motioned by Shannon Wogenstahl, seconded by Harald Lohn to accept the minutes the 2025 meeting as presented. Carried

Treasurers Report - Harald reported that KDCA has both a chequing account and an investment portfolio. There is approximately \$9000 in the chequing account and this will increase with membership payments coming in. The investment account has a balance in the mid 5 figures. KDCA has supported colleagues in the tourism industry such as NOTO and Sunset Country. KDCA is always open to new opportunities to support the industry.

1) Canada Border Services Agency - Debra Donaldson & Meagan Moriarty.

Both thanked KDCA for the opportunity to be part of the meeting. There have been no changes to the import and export of goods. Encourage your guests to check the government website for things such as food restrictions and limits. If bait was alive at one time (frozen/dried/salted), it is not allowed for personal use. The commercial importation of bait is a process which involves licencing, etc. If interested, please contact them. CBSA has been engaged about commercial bait import with the MNRF and Oceans & Fisheries. Commercial importing is now fully integrated and onboarded with the CARMs system. Food for guests or workers is considered a commercial import. CBSA has seen an increase in camps using commercial brokers but you can still act as your own broker. If a client/friend/guest is not paid, there is only one mechanism to import - use a broker. What

is the best way to streamline? Make sure you have original receipts for consumables and anything being left behind. There are still limits on the amount of food allowed. For more info go to <https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca> There will also be applicable taxes and different rates will apply for different items.

There has been an increase in confusion with CITES permits as there has been a change in how and when the documents are issued. Please reach out to the appropriate channels as documents are still required. If proper documentation is not available, the pelt may be bounced back and/or possibly seized.

Boats have to be clean and dry and free of dirt. You can decontaminate at home by air-drying your boat and equipment for at least 30 days. Make sure to check livewells. Boat inspections will be done to monitor for invasive species. ATVs and recreational vehicles also need to be clean and dry before entry. Full regulations can be found on the Oceans & Fisheries and Invasive Species Acts websites. The DNR may divert you to a contamination cleaning station depending on which body of water you are coming from or going to.

On the immigration side, camps have the opportunity to apply on-line for work permits but they will also process same day applications and will take appointments. The wait time will depend on the number of people there at the time. You don't need a work permit if there are no guests at your facility. CBSA recommends applying 2-3 weeks in advance. Any foreign national worker will need assessment. Most of these cannot be done at the border and need to be done on-line in advance. There is one change to work permits: under IRCC, there needs to be a separation of business funds from source funds. If you don't own the business or are going to work at the business, you need to prove that you are able to support yourself and return to the US. CBSA is not concerned with actual numbers but you will need to prove this to an officer this year.

To anyone offering hunts, make sure that you have the appropriate number of licences and tags in place. For example, a BMA is required for those camps offering bear hunts. You should have your letter stating your tag allocation. Information on this can be found in the Work Permit Section of the CBSA website. Work permits do not include guiding.

DUIs could still affect entry. If the DUI was after December 2018, you may be inadmissible to Canada as this is now considered as serious criminality. There are very few officers who can address serious criminality issues so it is best to apply on-line. Applications for temporary resident permits can be made through Los Angeles and have been taking up to 24 months to process. Criminal rehabilitation is a permanent rehab and the person needs to carry their letter. Apply 5 years after the end of your sentence but be aware that processing time may be 18-24 months. If crossing the border with children, they need a birth certificate and if over 16 years, picture ID and a birth certificate or a passport. A letter from a parent is not necessary but does make things easier. The letter should include a phone number. US residents with a clean abstract do not need a passport but anyone 18 years and over needs government issued photo ID. There are no changes to the process for US media personalities but they will need clearance documents and any gear will need to be accounted for. Apply for a Carnet through the US Chamber of Commerce. For more information on any topic go to <https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca> More info on invasive species go to <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/ais-eae/index-eng.html> or canada.ca

2) MNR - Steve Bobrowicz - Regional Fisheries Specialist

Steve introduced Raven Ouellette, a Biologist in the Sioux Lookout Office. Steve explained that the Policy Foundation for Planning's goals, objectives and tactics result in the Publication "Ontario's Provincial Fish Strategy - Fish for the Future". All MNR activities associated with fish, fishing and fish habitat are expected to be consistent with the Provincial Fish Strategy. Advisory Councils are made up of volunteers from around the Zones and are involved in the planning process. The primary role of the Council members is to share information with and represent the interests of their organization/community. A

Fisheries Management Plan is focused on ensuring the sustainability of fisheries and informs the allocation of fisheries resources in the planning area. Since 2008, most changes to fishing regulations in Ontario are made through formal fisheries management planning processes. The shift has been made from individual lakes to designated zones. The Zone 4 Fisheries Management Plan's scope includes recreational fishing, stocking and all recommendations outlined in the FMZ Plan. Scott Ellery sits on the committee as a KDCA representative. In the planning progression, the plan examinations of walleye, lake trout, bass & pike, other species & miscellaneous topics and stocking have all been completed. The committee is just starting discussions about Lac Seul. Any changes to fishing regulations are always effected on January 1 of any given year. Zone wide species discussions have stated that walleye is doing well so stay the course; lake trout are also doing well and relaxing the size limit may be possible; bass and crappie limit expansion and possibly liberalize the regulations and pike size limit may be revised to allow for limited harvest for food. Planning for stocking at a FMZ level is strategic; it doesn't deal with which lakes specifically to stock or how many fish each year. Brook Trout, Rainbow Trout, Splake and Brown Trout (1 lake in Kenora) have being stocked. Other parts of the province do stock walleye but as we have a healthy population in Northwestern Ontario, this is not necessary.

The timeline for the FMZ4 plan is ideally this summer but it will depend on how quickly the discussions go. The regulations should be in place for 2028. For further information, contact Steve at steve.bobrowicz@ontario.ca or Raven at raven.ouellette@ontario.ca

3) **Sunset Country - Gerry Cariou**

Gerry reported that SSC is closely monitoring the last season. In 2025, 10 months of the year showed decreased border crossings into Ontario with 8 straight months of decline. There appears to be a stabilization of the number of people crossing with February and March showing recovery of 5 - 6%. The most recent data comes from March. With the uncertainty in Iran, gas prices could be an indicator of uncertainty in discretionary expenses. We cannot pinpoint inflationary pressures which may have limited impacts. For previously booked trips, Gerry does not think the extra costs (ie fuel) will impact the decision to cancel. However, the situation does impact the food supply chain and operating inputs. Organic search activity is down 27% with not as many bookings for travel. The digital page search is down 62%. There has been a change in strategy but also a change in travel plans. SSC does marketing in conjunction with Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) to promote angling in Northwestern Ontario. While most camps are saying the upcoming season is looking good, it will be an uncertain year based on costs (food, mortgage rates, fuel, etc.) The camp owners are the best indicator of what the season will be like. Last month saw a decrease in organic traffic. In order to do a better job in creative positioning, more awareness is needed which helps to trickle down to the tourism industry. The biggest immediate impact is commodity prices. SSC did 3 shows last year and also had Superior Country distribute their literature. Attendance at the shows was flat with the distribution of SSC's printed material probably down 15% over last year. Member brochure distribution was similar to last year. April 2025 to March 2026 saw active users down 50% when comparing visits to the website. Organic traffic saw a 62% decrease in page searches and a 72% decrease in page social searches (purchased ads). You have to look at your website and Gerry suggested to start answering questions through a "FAQ" page. The questions can be specific to your camp but should also include pertinent topics and general questions as the answer engine bots and AI summaries search for websites that have something to do with the actual search. Get in touch with your website provider to go over your landing pages. Gerry is also happy to chat about AI topics. The SSC AGM is next week and Gerry will be proposing a new website build. He also suggested getting active on Facebook, LinkedIn and/or Reddit.

4) **NOTO - Laurie Marcil** - Laurie, who is the Executive Director for NOTO, thanked KDCA for inviting her to speak. She explained that NOTO is a membership based organization that supplies advocacy and support to resource based tourism in Northern Ontario. NOTO is directly backed by the operators and conducts surveys and polls, has targeted task forces and working groups as well as putting out a regular newsletter. The NOTO Summit will be held in Sault Ste. Marie the first week in November. The members are the eyes and ears on the ground. NOTO works closely with the federal and provincial governments and now is working with municipal governments as well. NOTO also participates in calls with the various Ministries, Northern Economic Development, FedNOR, etc. NOTO Also attends lobby days. Support is provided through employee manuals, boater safety checklists and how to comply with regulations or direction on where to find answers. They support new industry owners who need some extra help. NOTO has created a partnership with CFIB and NOTO now pays for your membership. CFIB can provide assistance with HR support, contracts, legal support, staff issues etc. Watch your inbox for details about a partnership with Camping Ontario. A promo for new members with SSC is in the works. NOTO hired a lobbyist to deal with flight restrictions from Transport Canada and a coalition of air services was created to assist the stakeholders impacted on the fly-in side. Laurie thanked KDCA for their support. A paper which provides exceptions for the 2022 regulations is currently on the Minister's desk awaiting sign-off. Once approved, there will be a need to talk about implementation. NOTO is talking to the MNR next week about the asks in the final proposal on BMA allocations. The MNR sent out a request to identity helpers (guides, baiters, etc.) and Laurie stressed the importance of completing the form. The request is for an eligibility review in which the MNR will check back 5 years for criminal offences. There has been a decrease in the number of moose tags and NOTO is pushing for the Ministry to look at non-hunter implications. A moose and wolf collaring study is being conducted in the Thunder Bay area. NOTO has tabulated the info received from the Moose survey sent out and the results will be presented to the Minister and BGMAC as well as being posted in the NOTO newsletter. NOTO has developed a coalition to deal with border waters (Kenora, Fort Frances, Sioux Narrows, First Nation etc. operators). There has been an increase in the number of US guides that are bringing anglers into Canadian waters. They are not supposed to touch land but have been seen having shore lunches. There are no border checks and they would require a work permit. The OPP and MNR are working together to increase their presence at certain pinch points on Lake of the Woods. It is the Federal fishing regulations that need to change. NOTO has been spending a lot of time these days reminding the government that tourism is important and we need to use resources correctly. We don't want the tourism industry resources to be impacted. If you invest in NOTO, they can go a long way. We are important and can do wonderful things with a little bit of support from all parties. NOTO has an internal working group and they are looking for people from across the north. Laurie thanked KDCA for their continued support. For more info go to noto.ca

5) **Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) - Megan Boyd** - Covering 802,000 square kilometres, DNO covers Ontario's largest of the 13 provincially funded Regional Tourism Organizations. Their five strategic pillars are product development, investment attraction, marketing & communications, workforce development & industry training and partnerships. Product Development involves building and strengthening tourism experiences that align with Northern Ontario's new Destination Master Plan, responding to evolving traveller demand and supporting sustainable growth across the North. The priorities are: integrated, year-round experiences, regional collaboration and industry evolution, strategic infrastructure and connectivity and authentic Northern identity and stewardship. With investment attraction, DNO takes a complimentary role in investment, attraction, supporting and aligning with agencies such as FedNor, NOHFC and relevant provincial ministries. The

key activities and programs include: Incorporation Project in partnership with the CFDCs, working with federal and provincial ministries to make the case for a capital investment program for tourism businesses, leveraging relationships with the Economic Developers Council of Ontario and other organizations, creating plans for community development and communicating and sharing research on investment opportunities with industry. DNO invests approximately \$2 million annually in marketing the region through partnerships, sub-regional marketing activity and pan-northern campaigns. DNO engages consumers through its content program: over 3 million annual visits to Northern Ontario Travel, 200+ new content pieces published annually, domestic traffic to the portal is up 13% YoY with the largest contributor being the GTA, 5.8 million visits to partner sites and Indigenous content (84+%) and paddling content (22+%) continue to be emerging products of interest across all markets. The Workforce Development and Industry Training/Tourism Excellence North program supports tourism operators, communities and destinations through practical training, coaching and tools that strengthen workforce capacity and improve the visitor experience. TEN supports the industry through personalized coaching and mentorship for tourism operators, group workshops, webinars and self-led online learning, self-assessment tools and practical business resources and support for experience development, service quality and business readiness. Partnership initiatives are selected based on potential outcomes and alignment with priorities set out in DNO's strategic and annualized business plans reflecting all pillar areas. DNO's Board of Directors has set a goal of 50% of initiatives being in non-marketing pillars. If you are looking for more information, please contact DNO at destinationnorthernontario.ca

6) Patricia Area Community Endeavours - Shannon Wogenstahl - PACE is a Community Futures Development Corporation funded by the federal government. There are 61 across Ontario. PACE offers funding, seminars and a loan program. The limits on the loans are up to \$300,00. They can also help with bridging financing if you are getting FedNor or NOHFC funding. PACE is not in competition with the banks and they will think outside the box to assist you. The Business Development Corporation (BDC) is also government funded but separate from the community futures corporations. PACE is looking at partnering with BDC with loans up to \$500,00. They would purchase back 50% but the interest rates would be higher. PACE funding is limited to 15 years while the BDC funding is 25 years. BDC also provides advisory services at a cost. The closest office is in Kenora. This provides another funding option outside of the traditional banks and PACE works with BDC a fair bit. They provide equipment loans and loan guarantees for operating lines. PACE provide cash collateral but there is an admin fee charged. PACE also does monthly seminars; the last one being the first part of a 3 part series on AI. The seminars are typically conducted during the day but they are recorded. If there are things you need, don't hesitate to give them a call or go to www.pace-cf.on.ca

7) Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry - Darren Ellery, Acting District Manager Darren attended the meeting in person in order to meet everyone. He reported that Brian Kilgour is scheduled to be back in August. Black Bear - The 2026 Black Bear Hunting Validation Certificate quotas were released in the fall of 2025. There have been no changes to the allocation process or the Bear Management area reallocations process for the 2026 season. Barbed wire hair traps surveys are planned for the spring of 2026 in WMUs 2, 3 and 4. Moose - A landscape scale survey in WMU 2, 3 and 4 was done in the winter of 2026. Moose population in WMU 2 and 4 were estimated as being above their WMU-specific population objective range (POR) while the WMU 3 population was estimated at being within it's POR. 2027 tourist industry moose tag quotas are to be released in the summer of 2026. There have been no changes to the timing of the Northwest Region 2026 moose seasons. White-Tailed Deer - As of fall 2025, the estimated WMU 6, 7A and 7B deer populations remained below desired levels as do others across most of the Northwest Region (NWR)

deer range. Deer harvesting planning efforts for the 2026 season are in progress. There have been no changes to the timing of the 2026 NWR deer seasons. Wildlife Compliance - Common offences continue to be hunting without a licence or individuals buying a licence **after** successfully harvesting an animal. As an Outfitter, you can help by ensuring clients carry their licence and tag on their person, ensuring clients understand and are aware of boundaries for Bear Management areas and WMUs. Darren spoke about the Whitefish Bay Lake Trout Spawning Assessments. 225 Lake Trout were caught in October of 2025. The results indicated a healthy, naturally reproducing population with consistent annual recruitment. The largest fish was 42 inches, 26+ lbs and aged at 22 years. Over a period of 3 years, 532 lake trout have been tagged and over 40 fish have been reported by anglers. For more information or to report a tagged fish contact john.peacock@ontario.ca

Expanding Fish Stocking Opportunities - the Kenora MNR District has 13 stocked lakes and they are currently exploring opportunities to expand the program. The process from finding a candidate lake to fish being stocked typically takes from 1.5 to 3 years. Forestry Implementation - to view all approved Forest Management Plans and the associated Annual Work Schedule or the Annual Reports, go to the "Natural Resources Information Portal". Annual work schedules for all Forest Management Units are effective April 1, 2026. Forestry Planning - to view the list of management units and the associated forest management plan renewal schedule go to <https://www.ontario.ca/page/management-units-and-forest-management-plan-renewal-schedules>

Aulneau Peninsula Prescribed Burn - this area is a large, mostly undeveloped peninsula on Lake of the Woods and covers 820 sq km. Compounding natural disturbances, lack of forest management activities and high fire suppression efforts have resulted in old degraded forest stands. The project goal is to use a prescribed burn to reduce forest fire fuel, enhance wildlife habitat, reset succession of degraded forests and increase the quality of wood for future harvest rotations. The goal is to complete a pilot burn in 2027 and if successful, this may become a multi-year project. For more information contact jayme.caron@ontario.ca

Any questions, reach out to one of the Offices: Dryden 807-223-3341, Fort Frances 807-274-5337, Atikokan 807-597-6971, Kenora 807-468-2501, Red Lake 807-727-2253, Sioux Lookout/Far North 807-737-1140, Thunder Bay 807-475-1471 or Ignace 807-934-2233. The website is ontario.ca

New Business

Several suggestions were brought up for KDCA:

- 1) A bursary program for high school students entering the Tourism field. There are 3 school boards in our jurisdiction.
- 2) A possible contribution to the SSC website overhaul.
- 3) A possible joint membership (ie. SSC and/or NOTO). This would give an incentive to belong to the organizations. Shannon will speak with Laurie.
- 4) A program that would allow members a discount from our allied members.

Fall Meeting: There has not been a fall meeting for a number of years.

Elections: Ruth reported that there had been no interest expressed from the members.

Shannon Wogenstahl opened the floor to nominations for President. Motioned by Harald Lohn, Seconded by Greg Waites to nominate Scott Ellery. The floor was closed and Scott accepted.

Shannon Wogenstahl opened the floor to nominations for Vice-President. Motioned by Scott Ellery, Seconded by Shannon Wogenstahl to nominate Greg Waites.

Motioned by Greg Waites, Seconded by Harald Lohn to nominate Ryan Carlson. The floor was closed. Greg declined the nomination. Ryan Carlson was acclaimed.

Shannon opened the floor to nominations for Treasurer. Motioned by Scott Ellery, Seconded by Greg Waites to nominate Shannon Wogenstahl. The floor was closed and Shannon accepted.

Directors: Greg Waites, Mal Tygesson, Ryan Runge, Harald Lohn, Devon Denzler

Ruth agreed to stay on as Secretary.

Shannon Wogenstahl motioned to adjourn meeting at 2:32 pm.