

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Ontario Government gives go-ahead to hunting species in decline**  
*Environmental group shocked that science is ignored*



(April 25, 2012 - TORONTO) – Despite submitting a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly signed by 11,000 people calling for an end to the snapping turtle hunt, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) has decided that hunting a once common species, now listed under the Endangered Species Act, may continue.

“We’re shocked,” said John Urquhart, conservation science manager with Ontario Nature. “I can’t think of a single good reason to permit hunting a turtle defined by this government as at-risk. But there are lots of reasons not to.”

Says Anne Lewis, who helped spearhead FROST (Friends of the Snapping Turtles), the citizen’s group that drafted the petition, “In southern Ontario, the list of species at risk increases every year. Yet our government still allows killing an animal we know is in decline.”

Earlier this year, the David Suzuki Foundation, Ontario Nature and the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre released *The Road to Extinction: A Call to End the Snapping Turtle Hunt*, documenting the plight of Ontario’s snapping turtles, prehistoric creatures that have been around for 40 million years, but are now suffering serious decline. All three organizations asked that MNR put a stop to the hunt.

“Snapping turtles have extraordinarily low rates of reproductive success so to maintain their populations, these animals have to live for a long time,” said



Urquhart. “An increase of even 1 percent in adult mortality could eventually wipe out an entire population of snapping turtles.”

Moreover, many of Ontario's snapping turtles are hazardous for human consumption. Researchers found that 9 out of 12 turtles sampled had PCB concentrations that were unsafe for consumption. MNR has not responded to this finding.

Snappers are Canada’s biggest and longest-lived turtle – some estimates suggest that the reptile can live to be over 150 years old. Their decline is largely the result of road kill and habitat loss. Despite their decline, a person may kill up to two snapping turtles per day over the course of two to 12 months, depending on where the turtles are hunted.

MNR has responded to requests to ban the hunt by submitting a post on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry recommending that annual reporting of hunting snapping turtles be mandatory. MNR has not indicated how this directive would be enforced or whether the data yielded would be relevant.

All but one of Ontario’s turtles are now classified as species at risk, raising the disturbing spectre of a province where turtle populations have all but disappeared.

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