

MNR and Crime Stoppers working together to try and fight poaching

by Darren MacDonald
The News

Crime Stoppers has decided to expand its scope of operations and offer rewards for information it receives on wildlife violations.

The new program is run in conjunction with the Ministry of Natural Resources.

"We're mostly targeting wildlife abuse, overfishing, hunting out of season, and overhunting," says Crime Stoppers coordinator Darryl Wilson.

Wilson was in town last Tuesday for a meeting of the local Crime Stoppers Board, and to make a presentation about Crime Stoppers to the Aguasabon chamber of Commerce.

The new program is called "Poaching is a Crime", and

Wilson says they're targeting bigger offenders.

"We're not looking for the person that catches seven fish instead of six," he says. "We're looking for the people that catch netloads and genuinely abuses the resource."

The reward process is the same as it is for the regular program, and the same toll free number used to report criminal activities is also used for reporting wildlife violations.

Instead of the police coming in to charge someone, however, the MNR will lay the charges.

Since the program started last November across northwestern Ontario, Wilson says they have received seven tips.

As a result, three people have been charged with offences, and two deer and one moose have been seized.

When Crime Stoppers first started, Wilson says they took information only on major crimes, such as murder and rape.

"But now we've expanded to include most types of offences," he says.

The idea of starting a hotline to report wildlife offences originated with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

However, because of the cost of setting up the toll-free line, and because Crime Stoppers was willing to do it, the job fell to them, Wilson says.

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continued from page 2 or Ottawa or Toronto," he says. "They're being centralized in Thunder Bay, so we're still right here in northwestern Ontario."

"I'm waiting and hoping that things will work out," says Business Development Centre General Manager Mary Long.

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