

Policy on In-Year Changes to Total Allowable Catch (TAC) For Lake Erie Yellow Perch and Walleye

Lake Erie Committee, September 2005

The Walleye and Yellow Perch Task Groups use a set of combined data from all jurisdictions represented on the Lake Erie Committee (LEC) to estimate population abundance and make harvest recommendations to the LEC. These data are used in catch-at-age models that produce the abundance estimates needed to derive a recommended Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for each species. TAC recommendations are made in the spring (February to March) of each year by the task groups, with a final LEC decision on harvest levels announced in late March to early April in that year.

In rare circumstances, additional information and/or programming or analysis errors could be discovered and potentially change task group recommendations for the TAC. The type and magnitude of mistake, or TAC change, that should actually be acted upon by the LEC should be defined, as triggering such a process is a serious measure and should only occur when truly warranted by the new information while still ensuring proper and effective management of the resource.

In the event that an error is detected in the calculation of the TAC or during the TAC-setting process, the LEC requires a policy to accommodate possible changes in TAC after they have been publicly announced in late March to early April. The policy should be fair to all jurisdictions and stakeholders, have mechanisms in place that determine whether a change is warranted, and describe the manner by which it is implemented. The following points form the basis of this policy:

1. Decisions by Task Group and LEC members to consider and allow for an in-year TAC change must be reached through consensus.
2. Individual jurisdictions are not mandated or obliged to adjust agency quotas as a result of a decision by the LEC to allow an in-year TAC adjustment.
3. In-year changes are possible only as a result of a substantial quantitative error in the task groups or LEC assessment and allocation processes. A substantial quantitative error is defined as a calculation of abundance or TAC that is erroneous due to program code, spreadsheet formulas, or data input and results in a potential change in TAC of at least 30%.
4. Potential changes in TAC suggested by new information (e.g., new assessment data collected within the harvest year), or obtained by

applying different methods than those used in the published task group report from the year in question, will not be considered.

5. TAC calculation errors detected by outside parties (non-LEC agencies or stakeholders) must be well-documented and submitted to the LEC no later than June 1 of that year for consideration.
6. The LEC adjustments to TAC apply only to the year in question and are not cumulative across years. An in-year decision by the LEC to make a TAC adjustment can occur no later than August 1 of the year in question. Timelines for implementation of an LEC TAC adjustment are at the discretion of the individual LEC jurisdictions.
7. Fishers or jurisdictions will not be penalized for attaining their quotas prior to an in-year reduction.
8. Task groups will revisit population modeling and TAC recommendations in-year only at the request of the LEC.
9. The LEC reserves the right to deviate from or amend terms of this policy under unusual conditions through consensus agreement of all members.