

Lake Erie Committee

Renaissance Fallsview Hotel
Niagara Falls, ON
30-31 March 2005

Executive Summary

Members: Rick Hoopes, Chair (PFBC), Mike Morencie (OMNR), Kurt Newman (MI DNR), Roger Knight (OH DNR)

1. Sea Lamprey Update (handout)

Last year each lake committee set specific targets for sea lampreys. This year the lake committees are asked by the GLFC to consider three things: 1) whether they agree with the GLFC on the interpretation of the current sea lamprey population and wounding rates, 2) whether they approve of the near term (2005) and the long term plans for sea lamprey control, and 3) whether they have any other concerns pertaining to sea lamprey in Lake Erie.

Terry Morse gave a synopsis of the current population and wounding rates in Lake Erie. In comparison to the other lakes, Lake Erie is the closest to target levels. There are three stream treatments planned for 2005, as well as assessments on many streams that are known to be producers of lamprey. Lampricide control has been and still is well funded by the GLFC and Lake Erie was given additional funding this year to hire extra staff. Paul Sullivan reminded the LEC that there are also plans to assess Big Creek, as the inflatable barrier on that stream failed last year during the entire sea lamprey spawning run. This failure eliminated the ability to assess spawning phase sea lampreys at this trap. The LEC discussed the comments they have heard from anglers regarding an increase in lamprey wounding on multiple fish species, although there appears to be less wounding on lake trout. The LEC would like to see an updated lake trout management plan that includes the sea lamprey targets. Sea Lamprey wounding rates on steelhead have increased, which could be due to increased steelhead abundance, but also may be an indicator that the lowered lake trout wounding is inaccurate. Therefore the LEC feels they need to learn more about the Steelhead population to better gage lake trout wounding. Morse reminded the LEC that the original plan on Lake Erie was to treat all the sea lamprey producing tributaries simultaneously, and this could still be done in the future if necessary. That treatment would almost certainly bring the lamprey numbers below target levels. The LEC agreed that it was not necessary at this time, but will keep the option in mind if wounding rates increase.

The LEC agreed with the GLFC's interpretation of the current sea lamprey population status and wounding rates, as well as with the GLFC's plans for short and long term treatments. The LEC feels that if an increase in treatments is necessary in the future, they will inform the GLFC at that time.

2. LEC Hydroacoustic Equipment Sharing Agreement

Hoopes announced the LEC will be receiving the equipment soon, and the committee agreed on the following division of cost:

Ontario - \$7,500	Pennsylvania - \$7,200
New York - \$7,200	Ohio - \$7,000
Michigan - \$1,500	GLFC - \$6,100 plus shipping charges not to exceed \$150

3. LEC Position Statement on Water Levels (handout)

The LEC agreed that the position statement on water levels was written well, but wanted an abbreviated statement to be made available for attendees at the LEC meeting the next morning.

4. Yellow Perch TAC

Morencie reminded the LEC that he agreed to the TAC that was established at the pre-LEC meeting, but wanted to emphasize the need for further investigation into the methods and lambdas used to calculate the TAC. Morencie feels that the increase in yellow perch numbers is disproportionate to the rest of the fisheries. Knight recalled that Mike Jones and Jim Bence are charged with a decision analysis of the TAC calculations for walleye and yellow perch once their quantitative science center is established through MSU. Jones and Bence will be asking for additional financial support for the center at the next Council of Lake Committees meeting.

After a strong year in 2004, yellow perch TAC was set at 11.752 million pounds, a 7% increase from last year. Ontario will receive approximately 5.5 million pounds of the TAC, and Ohio would receive approximately 5.4 million pounds. Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania will share the remaining allocation. Lake Erie Management Units 1-4 would receive 3.716, 4.387, 3.340, and .309 million pounds, respectively.

5. Walleye TAC

Morencie commented that there seems to be more anglers crossing into other jurisdictions to fish. Newman agreed, stating Michigan had made regulation changes this year and a lot of Michigan anglers fished in Ohio instead. A chart is being developed so that the cross over of anglers can be captured. The LEC agrees that this needs to be addressed. It seems that anglers harvested more fish this past year, but were mostly small age 1 fish that did not count toward bag limits. Morencie suggests that the TAC be set by numbers of fish and then converted to pounds.

The TAC is set at 5.815 million fish due to an increase in abundance of age 2 and older walleye. The LEC remains committed to the harvest policy that was articulated in the walleye task group report and will be presented in the walleye management plan. The LEC is committed to maintaining their regulatory responsiveness by adjusting TAC according to potential shifts in walleye abundance. The LEC will look at lambdas and will do a decision analysis assessment on walleye and yellow perch over the next year through the Quantitative Fisheries Center at MSU.

6. Walleye Management Plan

The LEC received a disc containing the Walleye Management Plan from Brian Locke. This is the most current version of the plan, but does not include the 2004 data. Locke would like comments from the LEC by the end of April. He also pointed out a highlighted section on the disc in which he needs more information from the LEC.

7. Decision Analysis

Beth Wright presented the LEC with the updated draft of the Decision Analysis document, which includes the LEC's comments from the previous draft. The LEC is asked to send comments regarding this current draft to Wright by the end of April

Continued the next day:

The LEC made grammatical changes to the two TAC statements prior to the public announcement. Marc Gaden will be creating two separate news releases regarding the TAC statements this year. One news release will be Canadian and include quotes from the Minister. The second will be released in the U.S. and will be similar to last year's news release. Newman suggested that the news releases include an optimistic paragraph addressing the evolution of the process for developing TAC. Over the past few years, additions such as public comment sessions have been introduced to the LEC meetings.

Krueger announced that the LEC State of the Lake report has not yet been received by the GLFC, and the LEC now has the option of using the new standardized format the Council of Lake Committees approved. Kenyon announced that the report has been written and is in the editing process, but would like assistance with this. Krueger informed Kenyon that the GLFC would be able to assist in the editing process. Newman would like to see the report re-formatted to reflect the new standardized format if possible. Krueger and Kenyon will correspond on this issue.

