

Soil & Water Conservation Society of Metro Halifax ('SWCSMH')

310-4 Lakefront Road, Dartmouth, NS, Canada B2Y 3C4

Email: limnes@chebucto.ns.ca

Tel: (902) 463-7777

URL: <http://lakes.chebucto.org>

Ref.: phosphorus_ccme2004 (3 pages)
From: S. M. Mandaville Post Grad Dip., Professional Lake Manage.
Chairman and Scientific Director
Date: March 10, 2005
Subject: Phosphorus management: Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment-CCME (2004)- Phosphorus Management framework; and other published and peer-reviewed international literature!

"IT IS STRESSED AT THIS POINT THAT THE CCME ENDORSES A 'NO DEGRADATION' POLICY, AND THAT THESE VALUES THEREFORE DO NOT PROVIDE, AND MUST NOT BE USED AS 'POLLUTE UP TO LEVELS'."

[I] The effects of accelerated eutrophication many of which are undesirable and some could even be lethal/sublethal:

"In Canada, the trophic status of water bodies that are impacted or unimpacted by anthropogenic releases of phosphorus range from oligotrophic to hyper-eutrophic. Typically unimpacted sites support relatively diverse and abundant communities of aquatic organisms that are self-sustaining and support various water uses. However, elevated loads of phosphorus can have many adverse effects on aquatic ecosystems. One of the most important consequences is the increased growth of algae and aquatic macrophytes. The senescence and decomposition of these organisms create oxygen deficit and can result in fish kills. In some freshwater systems, blooms of cyanobacteria contribute to a wide range of problems including summer fish kills, foul odours, tainted drinking water, and release of toxins that can kill livestock and may pose a serious health risk to humans."

"Although elemental phosphorus can be toxic, it is rare in nature, and therefore rarely of concern."

[II] The CCME (2004) framework for phosphorus:--

"The framework offers a tiered approach in which

- (i) phosphorus concentrations should not exceed predefined 'trigger ranges'; and
- (ii) phosphorus concentrations should not increase more than 50% over the baseline (reference) levels. The trigger ranges are based on the range of phosphorus concentrations in water that define the reference trophic status for a site."

"In large lakes, the 50% increase should be applied to the most sensitive area(s) (e.g., river mouth, point sources, or littoral zones) rather than averaged over the whole lake!"

Trophic level	Trigger Ranges for Total Phosphorus ($\mu\text{g/l}$)
Ultra-oligotrophic	< 4
Oligotrophic	4-10
Mesotrophic	10-20
Meso-eutrophic	20-35
Eutrophic	35-100
Hypereutrophic	> 100

The baseline (reference) levels are defined as the values for sites in similar ecotones which can be ascertained either by predictive modelling or by hindcasting using diatom inference models unless data for pristine lakes is available; see also the indicator thresholds for anthropogenic stressors of freshwater lakes in Nova Scotia, http://lakes.chebucto.org/WATERSHEDS/PIC/mandell_reference.jpg

It is cautioned that these trophic levels based on TP may not apply to coloured (i.e., dystrophic) lakes where the natural TP

may be quite high in comparison with clearwater lakes; see data of relatively undisturbed lakes within Nova Scotia in our web page, <http://lakes.chebucto.org/lakecomp.html>

When modelling shallow lakes (i.e., lakes which are completely mixed, and in which light penetrates to the bottom sediments), sediment phosphorus plays an important role in phosphorus cycling and should also be considered. Benthic and sestonic chlorophylla also needs to be considered for these systems.

While the CCME Policy is dated February 2004, the 50% over baseline (reference) level concept has been known since around 1991 as published by Hutchinson *et al.*, then of the Ontario Ministry of Environment in the NALMS journal!

The trigger ranges accrue from the peer-consensus international OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development) 14-year research culminating with the Final report in 1982!

[III] The CCME's trophic classification table below is also based on the OECD (1982) report:

Table 4.1 Trophic classifications of lakes, with their corresponding phosphorus and chlorophyll concentrations and transparency (Secchi depth) (sources: Wetzel 2001; Vollenweider and Kerekes 1982).

Trophic level	Total Phosphorus ($\mu\text{g}\cdot\text{L}^{-1}$)		Chlorophyll <i>a</i> ($\mu\text{g}\cdot\text{L}^{-1}$)		Secchi depth (m)	
	Wetzel (2001)	Vollenweider and Kerekes (1982)	Vollenweider and Kerekes (1982)		Vollenweider and Kerekes (1982)	
			Mean	Max	Mean	Max <i>Plim.</i>
Ultra-oligotrophic	< 5	< 4	< 1	< 2.5	> 12	> 6
Oligo-mesotrophic	5-10	4-10	< 2.5	< 8	> 6	> 3
Meso-eutrophic	10-30	10-35	2.5-8	8-25	6-3	3-1.5
Eutrophic	30-100	35-100	8-25	27-75	3-1.5	1.5-0.7
Hypereutrophic	> 100	> 100	> 25	> 75	< 1.5	< 0.7