

Walleye and Wind by Jason Mitchell

The affect of wind on walleye is almost cliché. Follow the wind or fish the windy shore. Wind stacks up baitfish and then the walleye follow. The reality is however that this cliché is only right half the time so this theory is just another half truth. There are so many scenarios where wind has a negative effect on walleye location and movements. There are many times where we are more productive avoiding the wind and the more we can recognize just when wind is not good for our fishing efforts, the better anglers we can become.

One obvious scenario where wind can shut down a pattern is when wind can push cold water into an area, cooling down the water temperature by several degrees. Another bad situation is when strong winds can muddy up the water to the point where visibility is limited. There are many instances where strong wind can shut down a bite and the best policy is to avoid the areas getting hit hardest by wind.

Wind really seems to have a drastic affect on fish location and movements. The extreme of these effects varies somewhat by our own ability to make adjustments. One location or situation where wind can move fish drastically are fish relating to weed beds. Wave action that is intense enough to move underwater vegetation really causes fish to either push up, out or in. What push up, out or in means is that fish will often ride above the weed bed if possible, move inside between the weed bed and the shoreline or suspend off the outside edge when wind kicks up. The reason being is that walleye just seem to not like stuff bumping or touching them. If weeds are blowing around, they pull out.

Another consideration with wind, the undertow or reverse current caused by intense wave action is generally about the same height as the wave. In other words, three foot waves often seem to accompany an additional three foot depth of pretty strong undertow. In other words, four foot rollers really mean that the top eight feet of the water column are getting mixed up pretty intensely.

Often, with an intense wave action and corresponding undertow, walleye often seem to avoid the wrath and drop just below the current. This is just a general starting point, four foot rollers generally means that the top eight feet of the water column is getting shook up, nine to eight feet would be a good starting point to look for fish. Here is another rule of thumb, fish that are big, larger than about four or five pounds are much more likely to move right into the undertow. But, fish in general seem to dodge below it, as you will seldom find walleye that wash up on shore even during the strongest storms or gale force winds. Ironically, walleyes often move much shallower after the wind recedes and the water is still stirred up. Thus we might find fish in a foot of water when the weather is actually calm but in essence, we are fishing "yesterday's wind."

When wind is constant and moderate, many of these fish movements are somewhat predictable. When dealing with walleyes relating to weeds, fish the water above the weeds or move inside or outside the weed bed depending on the velocity of the wind. The more intense the wind and wave action is however, the more unpredictable walleyes can become. Too much wind can move fish right out of the area completely. As much as we like a walleye chop or some wind, actually seeking out areas getting hit by wind, we probably spend just as much time trying to avoid the wind, finding bays and shorelines that are protected from the wrath. Blindly following wind or fishing windblown shorelines and structure will not automatically account for more walleye. There is much more to understanding the affect of how wind dictates walleye location.

Understanding the negative effects that strong wind often has will help you pick locations that are relatively stable or protected. Fishing the "calm side" is often much more productive than many walleye anglers imagine.



