



THE ATMOSPHERIC RESERVOIR

Examining the Atmosphere and Atmospheric Resource Management

"Fishing For The Perfect Weather"

By Mark D. Schneider

Ask a few fishermen what the perfect weather conditions are for catching fish and you'll likely get different answers. The weather definitely has an affect on a fishes' eating habits and there are numerous anecdotes that go along with this sport and hobby. A brisk breeze across the water constitutes what's known as "walleye chop" for some and fish are thought to feed frantically just before and during the passing of storms. Levi Fettig of Dakota Tackle in Bismarck and seasonal employee with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department said that, "Fishermen who are out on the water all the time know what to do in different weather conditions. They'll change their rigging according to whatever conditions are out there." Levi's favorite time to fish is actually when it's raining, because "only the die-hards are still out on the water and it's not so crowded with fishermen."

Because there are so many weather variables involved in fishing, some equipment manufacturers actually print information on their packaging explaining what conditions of sunlight, water temperature, and wind speed that particular item should be used with. For example, there are paints and sealcoats that fishermen can put on their lures to



reflect ultraviolet light and attract fish. For some species of fish the water temperature becomes a more important factor and fishermen have to move to either a deeper or shallower depth in order to see success. If the wind is blowing significantly, then fishermen have to adjust their trolling speeds and gear for drift so that depth and location aren't affected.

There are other factors besides the weather that encourage or discourage fish to feed. Take for example solar and lunar cycles, which have been studied by notable researchers John Alden Knight and Dr. Frank A. Brown. Both of these gentlemen theorized that the sun and the moon affected the daily and monthly feeding patterns of fish. Knight and Brown concentrated on various species of fish in their studies and found remarkable consistency between both ocean tides and the cycles of the sun and moon in relation to fish feeding

activity. In general, there is a peak in activity around a full moon or new moon and a lull around the quarter and three-quarter phases. The very first Solunar table was published by John Knight in 1936 and these tables are still published and used today to determine what times are more conducive for productive fishing.

A well-known fact among fishermen is that fish are often most active early and late in the day. That's where the phrases morning and evening bite originated. Local sunrise and sunset tables are frequently used to plan fish outings and this information can be found at the US Naval Observatory website: http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneYear.php

In North Dakota there's no shortage of fish or variable weather. Learning how to fish in different water and weather conditions can be quite difficult unless someone experienced teaches you. Chances are they've fished similar conditions before and will pass their secret wisdom on to you.

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