

TIDES AND WIND

By John Mathews

On 18 August, I decided to wade the high tide and fish my favorite tidal marsh. The tide was predicted to be 7.7 feet at 15:45 hrs. I did not check the winds or any other factor that might affect the tide heights, I just needed to wade and fish. I arrived to wade at just ninety minutes before the high tide. Much to my delight, the tide turned out to be on the order of an 8.2 to 8.4 tide. I waded less than 200 yards during all of the incoming tide, saw four fish, got a shot at three and broke one off with the hook set, all in just ninety minutes. Regrettably, an approaching storm ran me out of the marsh so I did not fish the outgoing tide.

Having had such a good day, I returned the following day. The tide was predicted to be 7.6 feet, just 1 foot less than the previous day. Much to my disappointment, there was barely any water in the marsh on that day's high tide, probably on the order of a 7.0 tide or about 18 inches less water.

Here's why:

On the evening of the 17th the winds turned east at about 19:00 hrs and blew at about 6 to 9 mph from the east (or an easterly direction) and continued until 24:00 hrs on the 18th, this being about 16 hours prior to the high tide in the afternoon of the 18th. This was enough easterly winds to push an additional 10-14" of tide into the Port Royal Sound and Broad River basins.

After midnight on the 18th, the winds went calm for a period of time then switched to the west at 6 to 8 mph at about 06:00 hrs. The tide predicted for 19th was 7.6 feet at 15:45 hrs. Again, a fishable tide without taking into consideration any wind influence. However, at high tide the afternoon of the 19th, there was barely any water in the marsh. The tide was only in the 7.0 foot range after only nine hours of light to moderate westerly winds.

This was about a foot to foot and a half swing in tidal heights in 24 hours and all from moderate winds and a shift in wind direction.

Sources: Wind Data; NOAA Beaufort SC MCAS weather.cov
Tides; tides4fishing.com

About the author: *John Mathews, a long time Sea Island Fly Fishers (SIFF) member who has made close to 500 wading trips into our local marshes, conducts the club's "Marsh Sense Clinic" where he educates club members in the basics of successfully wading and fishing in the tidal marsh environment and, above all, doing it safely.*

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