

OK, You Want to Go Fishing ...What about the Weather?

Wind and waves determine whether smaller boats (say, less than 25 ft) can get out and fish on the sounds and near-shore safely, and if so, how enjoyable a day you might have. In talking with members, I have been surprised at how varied (or lacking) the approaches have been to figure out what the weather might be. Whatever you do may be fine. But in any case, you should have some routine or "check list" and that you use every time you fish outside. "Every time" is important, because if you use the same Check List each time, you will eventually get the feel of how good the forecasts around here on the coast are, and of what your chances are of getting caught in ugly conditions unexpectedly.

You might think that with all the available Web sites, TV, and radio stations, there are a lot of marine weather sources. Not so. Everything you hear or read can be back-traced to one, original source - NOAA. Understanding this, I'd like to share a simple approach that has worked for me (at least most of the time) to determine what the chances are for having a good boating day out (or not). While I generally adhere to "Don't make a decision from the dock," getting all the recent information about current conditions is a real safety check, and often helps make the day.

For me checking whether the weather will support my plans involves three cross-checks to figure how good (and confident - the real test) the "forecast" really is: First, 1) Look at the current NOAA Marine Forecast. Then, 2) "Look out the window" and see whether current weather and sea state conditions really are and whether they make sense with the forecast you just read. And last, 3) Look at whether conditions are trending over the past 12-24 hours in a way that make sense with the forecast. If not, this should be a "red flag." So, what do you check? Wind speed and direction. Is the wind steady or gusty? What about the atmospheric pressure? Is the trend following in a consistent manner with the forecast - is it rising or falling or chaotic? What about the sea state (wave condition)? Are waves increasing or decreasing and is this consistent with the forecast?

Where do you find this information? To help make this simple, we've posted links on the Club's Web site (pardon ... it's still under construction and we're all volunteers, so you get what you pay for - and sometimes less!) at [www.adamscreek.com/sltfc](http://www.adamscreek.com/sltfc) and click on **Marine Weather**. It'll provide you with a step-by-step suggested check list that you might want to explore. Just remember ... the final decision to cast off the line is yours. Just make sure that you avail yourself of all the best information possible before you decide to leave the dock.

Tight Lines. Lee Dantzler