

Appendix Eight: Tidal Current Effect

TIDAL CURRENT EFFECTS

As a rule of thumb, you may assume that:

- Tidal current will be a very significant factor, if not the key factor, in light winds
- Tidal current will be less of a factor as the wind picks up and boat speed improves
- Flood currents will persist well past the time of high water, especially in the deepest part of the channel. Likewise, ebb currents will persist well past the time of low water.
- Tidal currents will be stronger in the direction of the wind. Likewise, they will be weaker against the wind.
- Tidal currents will be strongest in the deepest water and in constricted passages such as between Ft. Monroe and Ft. Wool. Just off Ft. Wool, you can often see standing waves resulting from the tidal current.
- When the wind is against the current, a chop will develop. Depending on the strength of the wind and current, this can result in 6-inch wavelets, or up to a three-foot chop. When the wind and tide are both going the same direction, the surface will look smooth, without wavelets.
- Tidal currents will be stronger at full moon, and weaker at quarter moons.
- In dealing with tidal currents, nothing beats local knowledge and experience, so get out and sail, and keep your eyes open!