

MAREP REPORT
Outflow Winds
04 01 11

For this column, lets look at those occasional fine late winter days which are cool, bright, and cloudless, and seem just “perfect” for a quick weekend trip over to the Gulf Islands. The Province is dominated by clear skies, with no pressure breakdown or fronts in the 48 hour forecast. However that big high pressure area in the interior of the province can give you a rude awakening.

Most of you are familiar with the outflow winds which accompany interior high pressure, as cold and very dry air pours out of the coastal inlets -- often raised to gale force by the squeeze between the bounding mountains. This is true in spades for major north-south features such as Bute Inlet – which funnels the interior air right onto the northerly end of the Strait of Georgia. This gives rise to strong northwesterly winds which can prevail for several days, and are considerably stronger on the western side of the Strait than they are along the Sunshine Coast. Combine this duration with the 50 mile plus fetch of the Strait to Entrance Island, and add in a Spring flood tide, and four metre plus steep and nasty seas can be common on the far side of the Strait. Seas could be quite acceptable on our side, but a real bear before you reach your Island destination.

This is just one of the many local conditions which are detailed in “Coastal Weather for British Columbia Mariners” – a highly recommended publication by Environment Canada. Make it a useful addition to your vessel’s library.

All the best in the New Year, and safe winter boating!

P/Cdr John Northey AP
MAREP Officer