

# **THE MAREP REPORT**

## **Crossing the Gulf**

### **05 03 28**

As we advance into Spring and the beginning of warmer temperatures, many of us look to a weekend in the Gulf Islands, and the associated run across the Strait. Before heading out, there are a few conditions which should be borne in mind when the weather forecast is interpreted.

April winds in the Strait are 36% from the NW and 44% from the SE – both directions which can result in long fetches – particularly on the Vancouver Island side. Depending upon where one crosses both directions can be experienced, which in turn may be based upon the location of a “lee low” which can lie between Comox and the Ballenas Islands. For a destination south of Gabriola the Haro Strait forecast should be checked along with that for the SE Georgia Strait, with particular comparison of the forecast with actual winds at East Point compared in turn with Sisters, Ballenas and Entrance Island.

In otherwise fair weather, westerly winds through Juan de Fuca can be opposed by NW winds in the Strait. A convergence zone can occur over the Islands, and depending upon the ambient moisture in the air near the cold water surface, fog, low cloud and rain can be triggered. There are no reporting points to advise of this situation – a problem which also affects aircraft which undertake visual flight to and from Victoria.

The Gulf Islands are the pivotal point of wind flows in the Georgia Basin. Local winds are created by air which moves into the Islands as a result of pressure relationships external to the area, plus the unique impacts of local topography on related airflows. Good idea then to check the overall pressure relationships and the Pressure Slope, to have a better idea of likely local winds. For example, and despite the strong drying influence of subsiding air from the Olympics in a “benign” SW upper air flow, due to topography the surface wind can be markedly different from the S or SE. A strong SE wind can be funneled down Trincomali with no matching wind in the Strait – or vice versa if the basic flow changes by a few degrees. SE winds which exit Otter Bay can be magnified by the “squeeze” of North Pender after entry at Port Browning, as another example.

Be weather wise in these somewhat fickle shoulder seasons!

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(With due respects to “Coastal Weather for British Columbia Mariners”)