

Kentucky Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources News:

2019 Spring Fishing Frenzy- Best Weather Trends for Spring Fishing

By Lee McClellan

FRANKFORT, Ky. – There is a saying in fishing that goes “the best time to go fishing is when you can.”

With the frenetic pace and busy schedules of modern life, the saying is true now more than ever. However, if you only have a few weekends each spring to fish, the experience yields more stress reduction, enjoyment and memories if the fish bite like crazy.

Studying the long range forecast before planning a fishing trip and looking for the right trends helps bring you a glory day of fishing instead of a day of a thousand casts without a bite.

Several factors play into what makes ideal environmental conditions for fishing: barometric pressure, wind direction, sunlight and precipitation all play a major role.

“I think the barometric pressure determines what the fishing success will be that day,” said Chad Miles, host of the Kentucky Afield television show and keen observer of weather trends for fishing. “The barometric pressure is a good indicator of how aggressive they are feeding.”

Barometric pressure is a measurement of the weight of an entire column of air pressing down on the Earth. Approaching storm fronts ease this weight, resulting in low atmospheric pressure. The old fishing adage that fish bite best before a storm is true.

High barometric pressure stems from a large mass of air slowly descending toward the Earth’s surface, while low barometric pressure is the opposite scenario. The rising air of a low pressure area cools and releases trapped humidity, causing either rain or snow.

Low pressure systems bring environmental conditions conducive for predator fish to feed such as increased winds, dark, cloudy skies and

precipitation. These factors decrease light penetration into the water column, providing a better environment for predator fish to ambush prey.

Lower barometric pressure also exerts less force on the water's surface which may trigger a feeding frenzy, although some debate exists on this point. However, there is nearly universal belief that approaching low pressure frontal systems provoke fish into feeding.

The opposite happens when the inevitable high pressure system follows the low. "If you see small sticks in the water floating straight up and down, then fishing will be bad," Miles said. "The sticks floating this way indicate really high air pressure. I've been in the boat too many times on high pressure days and wondered what happened to the fish."

The shimmering bluebird days following a low pressure system really hurt fishing in late winter and early spring. Fish hold tight to cover, grow lethargic and often hunker on the bottom awaiting better conditions, especially in clear water lakes. Many believe the force of the higher air pressure on the water's surface is a catalyst for this behavior.

In the Northern Hemisphere, air descending from high pressure flows out in a clockwise direction, often bringing winds from the north and eventually the east. The old saying "Wind from the east, fish bite least" has some basis in fact.

"In late winter and early spring, the best time to fish is on the third or fourth day of stable weather with a stable barometer," Miles explained. "This is true regardless of the temperature, even when it is cold."

The descending air of a high pressure system does eventually bring good fishing in spring. Air moving toward the Earth's surface warms while doing so; this warming retards the formation of clouds, bringing clear skies with lots of sunlight.

"On shallower lakes with stained water, some of your best fishing days in spring are bright days," Miles said. "Stained water in the shallows warms quicker, attracting the fish. But, on deep, clear water lakes, bright days in spring kill you as these lakes warm much slower and the fish in them are more sensitive to light."

Several apps predict the barometric pressure over a two or three day period. Miles often consults these apps when planning fishing trips. The National Weather Service offers excellent long range weather forecasts on its website at www.weather.gov.

The later sunsets of early March indicate that winter's cold grasp is lessening and spring is on the way. If you have a choice of planning upcoming fishing trips, the day before a low pressure system or three or four days afterward are best.

Remember to purchase a new fishing license as your old one expired Feb. 28.

To view the other articles in the 2019 Spring Fishing Frenzy series, click on this link: <https://fw.ky.gov/Fish/Pages/Spring-Fishing-Frenzy.aspx>. You may also visit the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife homepage at www.fw.ky.gov and type "Spring Fishing Frenzy" in the search bar at the top right of the page.