

Many years, right around the time of the autumnal equinox (approximately three weeks into September), high tides fill our state's estuaries to their brims and even beyond. This "bull tide" can cause issues for anglers, particularly those who prefer wading as a primary method.

Some people get frustrated with the problems bull tides create. For one thing, a high tide might make wading an area impossible. If someone has been catching fish in a place by wading on low summer tides, they might be disappointed when the bull tide drowns their hopes.

Similarly, if someone has been catching fish around the fringes of a giant, super shallow flat, which has become inaccessible to fish because of scratching-low summer tide levels, they might rue the return of high water, which might scatter the fish all over the newly-flooded shallows further up the flat.

I am like many others, and acknowledge the inherent difficulty associated with locating and catching fish on extremely high tides, especially when they occur simultaneously with either cold or hot water. High tides and moderate water temperatures can make things a bit simpler, I think.

I do have strategies I use to cope with high tides in autumn. For one thing, it might make sense to consider fishing from the boat where you've been wading during lower tide conditions. Sometimes, rising tide levels don't cause the fish to move at all. So, fishing in the same place a different way might work.

Sometimes, rising tides do cause fish to move. In that case, one strategy for relocating the fish would be to look for them in a shallow area close to where the fish have been all summer which has some of the following characteristics: multiple cover elements on the bottom, relatively easy access routes for the fish and plenty of food for the fish.

When I fished on the Upper Coast mostly, I noticed the following phenomenon occurring in the fall. High tides tend to send fish to the upper corners of the bays, where small fish, crustaceans and other creatures have been growing up during the warm months. While the tide is high and water temperatures remain warm, trout, redfish and flounder will stage in shallow parts of back lakes and marshes.

Then, once strong fronts begin to drive the tide out and water temperatures down, those same predators will begin moving toward the passes connecting these bays to the open Gulf, right along with all the species on which they prey. Squawking seagulls often provide assistance in monitoring the migration.