

Thanks to a couple of readers who took the time to share their thoughts about fishing channels and channel edges. First is some food for thought from Sheldon Arey, a trophy trout enthusiast who lives in Virginia and fishes primarily in river systems related to the Chesapeake Bay system. Sheldon's comments were made in response to the questions submitted by Mike Fry back in December.

"I fish edges almost all the time, as my focus is a river that has some flats, but not many like the Baffin area. Current (tide movement) is the primary factor in choosing an edge in many cases. I have a few guidelines for general scouting. I look with my depth finder for fish. We generally find them on the edges of flats where the water falls off from 4 to 12/20 feet or so, and where there is current running along the edge. We are fishing in 40 to 80 degree water, depending on the time of year.

Once the fish leave the flats, which they often do (except for night-time forays in this area) they hang on the edge of flats and along areas where the mouths of other channels intersect the main channel. These areas can bring bait past their holding position. Both sides of points which jut out into the channel are prime locations for trout to hold looking for targets of opportunity. We also look for oyster bars or rubble piles along edges; they provide ambush points for specks to find food. We have a 4-foot tidal range, so our fish are moving all the time, and we are looking all the time.

I sometimes anchor on proven migration routes and wait for the specks where I know from experience they will come through a certain location at a certain point in the tide cycle. Since wind seems to provide most of your current, I would keep that in mind when choosing one side of the channel or the other. The other thing we do is troll along edges to find fish. Once we find them, we anchor and cast to them. Sometimes they are in the middle of the river, orienting to a deep-water point that causes a current break where the water maybe 30 feet or more deep.

As you are probably aware, specks sometimes suspend in deep water. That is they will be at 12 to 20 feet over a 35-foot deep area. They will come up for a twitch bait that will go down to 8 to 12 feet, so don't be put off by deep water. I am sure there are lots of places along the ICW in your area that fit these descriptions. The trick is to find them and mark them with a GPS so you can run from one to another when things on the flats are tough."

Here's another response to Mike's questions from my fishing buddy Jason King.

"Like Kev, I don't fish the pattern much, but my favorite way to fish the ditch would be to target natural funnels that drain the flats on a falling tide. This is a money pattern for me anytime I have the urge for flounder, and I actually catch quite a few trout "on accident" during the process. You can see most of these funnels and drains clearly on Google Earth. Before the days of Google Earth, I found them either by simply spotting the obvious large funnels, or studying the shorelines (edges of the ICW) on extreme low tides when the barren

edges would give away the location of smaller drains. The largest I know of is north of the JFK Causeway on the west side of the ICW. Looking at the historical imagery of it on Google Earth, I can tell it has existed at least since 1990. This is one of my favorite patterns to fish when I take my 8 year old daughter out and want to catch good numbers from an anchored boat. We typically anchor up downcurrent from the funnel on outgoing tides and cast to the upcurrent side of the drain with a worm on a quarter ounce jighead and drag it along the bottom with the current. We vary the retrieve from the edge of the grass to every part of the depth contour."