

For the last couple years, my fishing partners and I have noticed the tide is normally higher than what we expect. For a while, I didn't think much of it, because I know better than to make a big deal out of a short-term bull tide, even one of ridiculous proportions.

In the fifteen years I've lived here in the Corpus Christi area and tracked the tide levels in the Baffin/ULM system, we've seen bull tide events on a regular basis. Historically, extremely high tides tend to occur around the time of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, often lingering for a good while after these celestial events. Accordingly, we have grown accustomed to dealing with high water levels in the months of April, May, October and November.

We also learned we'd usually see some "scratching ass" low tides around the two solstices, at the beginning of summer and winter, so we began to expect the tides to move out dramatically during June and into the first part of the blazing season, and also soon after Thanksgiving.

I recently checked the TCOON Buoy system and found a way to collect data from the Baffin Buoy going back in time. I wanted to see if the data held in the system verified our anecdotal perceptions. Though the buoy was not functional for the entire time-frame, I was able to gather most of the data related to the measured tide level, dating back to June of 2013.

For the most part, the data from the middle of 2013 to the middle of 2014 matches with my general perception of what is "normal". The stated "mean sea level" at the site, when expressed in feet and inches is 13.43". So, nearly thirteen and a half feet of water cover the measuring device when the water is at the average level of the open sea.

Significantly, I and others have always perceived a 13.43 tide as "low", not as "medium". Seems to us the "normal" tide, over the long-term, going back to when we started paying attention, was about 13.8 or so.

The people running the system now have it set to express the tide level "with relation to MSL", using 13.43 as the "zero" point. So, historically, we perceived a normal tide level to be about .4, as it is currently stated.

When I averaged out the data from June 2013 to June 2014, the numbers came up almost exactly as I'd expect, somewhere around .4, or 13.8. Significantly, almost no readings below 0 or above 1.0 showed up. In other words, the tide hovered between about 13.4 and 14.4 throughout a vast majority of the period.

However, from the beginning of 2015 through the end of May, 2016, things have been significantly different. The average for that time frame comes out about .85, or 14.3. Numerous readings above 1.3 (up to 1.6) have appeared. A 1.6 tide can also be expressed as a 15. I don't recall EVER seeing a 15 tide except briefly when tropical storms and hurricanes caused tide surges in the Gulf, until the last eighteen months or so.

The data backs up what we "felt" to be true. On average, the tide level in the Baffin/ULM system has been significantly higher than normal over the last year and a half, at least as compared with the values in the year prior to that, and to what I and my partners remember as the norm.

I have no desire to theorize why this is true, or whether it will continue to be true, or if tides will get higher on average, or return back to historic levels.

I do know anglers who fish in the area will be forced to adjust their strategies if tide levels

remain where they have been for the last eighteen months or so, especially anglers who prefer wading. The extra inches of water have made some places we historically like to wade too deep. High water levels also tend to allow fish to venture into areas historically considered too shallow for them and us, or at least to stay in those places a much higher percentage of the time. So, the extra high tides make fishing some places impossible; they also make locating fish more difficult much of the time. Only by properly acknowledging these two facts and adjusting strategies accordingly can people continue catching fish at historically average rates.

Anyone venturing into the Baffin/ULM system should check the tide level (and wind speed, direction and water temp much of the time) before making a trip, ideally just before leaving the dock. Tide level can affect aspects of navigation safety, in addition to altering angling strategies. The other variables have obvious relevance too.

Here's the url for the site..... <http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/stationhome.html?id=8776604>