



Weather & Water

How They Can Affect Your Success

How far a fish moves toward the shallows, and how long it stays active is often dependent upon the weather and water conditions at the time of the activity. by Buck Perry, Education Editor Part One of Two

If we were to ask fishermen what they predicate their fishing success on, we'd probably get a variety of answers. Some would say it is entirely a question of luck. A large group would immediately say the secret to catching fish is to have a lure with the right size, color, action or smell. Many would probably say their casting ability and rod action were the secret to their success. Quite a few would say their high-speed boats and elaborate electronic gear were the key. Others might say they only hire the best guides.

If we questioned enough fishermen we'd find some who say they only fish in well-stocked private streams and ponds. There would be those who say they spend all their fishing time on new impound-

ments loaded with young, catchable fish. We might be surprised to see the number who say they only fish waters "where there are no other fishermen."

It was quite a few years ago I decided to base my fishing success on being at the right place, at the right time, presenting lures in the right manner. At all times I would do my fishing at the places where I had the best chance to catch a fish. And I'd use any "aids" (if they fit) that would help put the fish on the stringer.

The fact is, when you and I catch a fish, we are at the right place, at the right time, fishing in the right manner. The question is, just how often are we going to make a decent catch if we "just hope" we're at the right place, etc? My thoughts are, if we don't prepare ourselves with more

than "hope" or "luck" we're not likely to make a decent catch very often!

In the past we've reviewed some of the subject matter and "guidelines" of structure fishing (Spoonplugging).

Let's list the subjects for study again:

- 1. The Movement of The Fish**
- 2. Lake Features: Structure, Breaks, Breaklines, Deep Water**
- 3. Weather and Water**
- 4. Lake Types**
- 5. Mapping and Interpretations**
- 6. Controls and Tools**
- 7. Presentation of Lures**
- 8. Mental Attitude**

If a fisherman expects to catch fish consistently he should know something about each of the above subjects. In my search
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for fish I set up my thoughts and “guidelines” to follow each of the above subjects. These guidelines would have me fishing where I had the BEST chance to catch a fish, and would ensure my being at the right place, at the right time, fishing in the right manner.

I’ve been a very happy fishermen down through the years, and much of it is due to consistently putting a goodly number of big fish in the livewell. To many people, fishing is a chore and a frustrating experience. This is unfortunate, as fishing should be a lot of fun and bring a lot of satisfaction. The older I get, the more convinced I am that the approach I took to fishing was a sound one.

At this time let’s look at and review some of the thoughts and guidelines of the third listed subject matter — “WEATHER AND WATER CONDITIONS.”

Many of you have heard me say, in one form or another, that weather and water conditions can mess up a day’s fishing, a month’s fishing, and at times mess up a whole season. Our fishing guideline states that where a fish starts from (depth), how far he moves toward the shallows and how long he stays (active or at certain depths) is dependent upon or con-

trolled by the weather and water conditions at the time of the activity. All this boils down to is the fact **our degree of success will be determined by the conditions of weather and water.** However, I must be quick to add — **provided we know where to look for the fish at different weather and water conditions.**

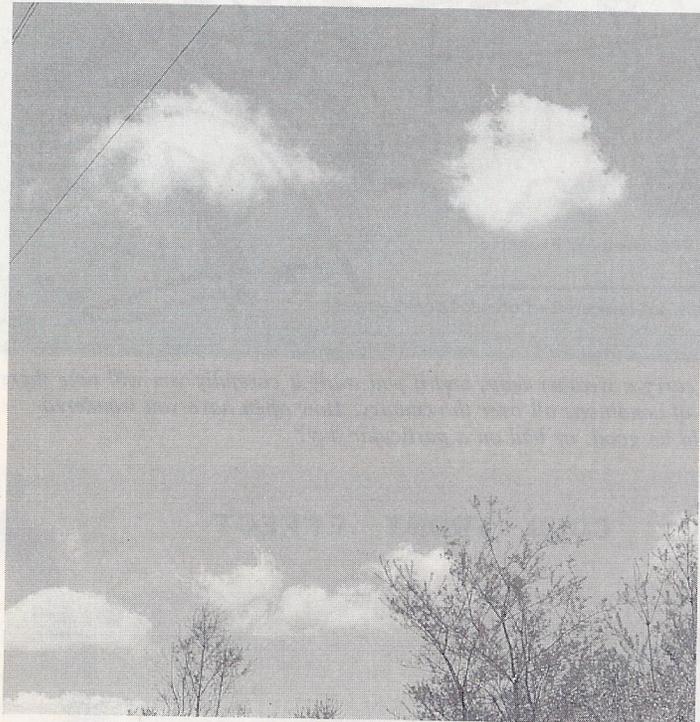
In past *Fishing Facts* articles I have discussed at length the different water conditions that exist in fishing situations. It was pointed out that water color was the most important observation you and I could make. The point was made that clear water could mean less activity, deeper fish, require better interpretation of the structure and more exact depth and speed control of lures, etc. It means that “sloppy” fishing won’t get results. Clear water means the average fisherman will have trouble making a decent catch most of the time. Our discussions covered the different water colors and which ones were considered best. In brief: **The water color you choose to fish could possibly have more to do with your success or failure than any other single thing.**

There are factors other than color that play a part in water conditions, but most of them are “unseen.” Some can be measured, such as temperature. The question is — where do I take the temperature of the water? If I take it — so

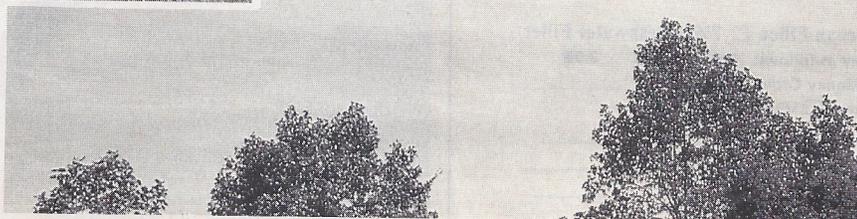
what??? Our fishing guideline on “temperature” is to check out the speed of our lures at the different depths. The guideline says as the water temperature drops, the speed at which we move the lure may drop. If the temperature is high, then our lure movement may have to be fast.

The question of oxygen content, or the pH factor, has been put forth as a key to fishing success. The only trouble with this is the area where these things are favorable may not hold any fish. Our guideline is to control the depth and speed of our lures to take care of these unseen factors. If I control the depth and speed of my lures (or natural bait) I’ll do all I can to handle whether a fish feels good or bad. It could be he has a so-called bellyache due to bad water conditions and the only response you or I could get from him is to dangle a lure or bait in front of his nose (zero speed) in extra-deep water. How deep or how active the fish might be is unknown. So you and I would be wise to use the features of the lake (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water) as guides as to where the fish will be found. Then we control the depth and speed of our lure (or bait) on or around these features to take care of how deep or how active the fish might be due to a good or bad water condition.

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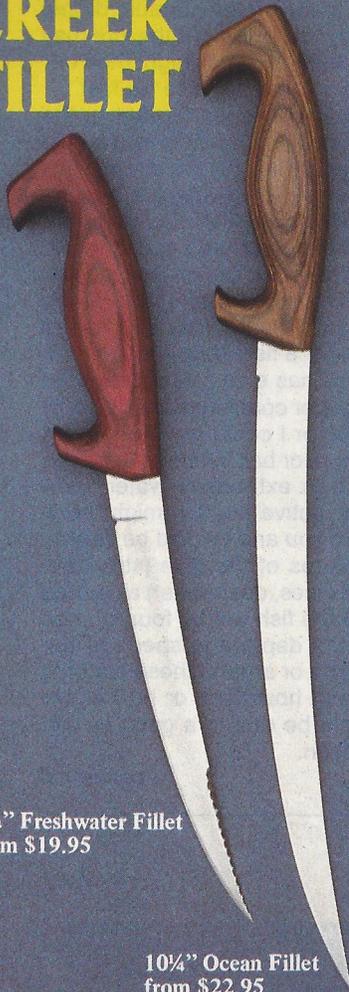
The photo shows low flying “snowball” clouds against a clear blue sky. These scattered, white, puffball-shaped clouds will be moving quite rapidly, and when they develop you can bet fishing is going to be more difficult (than it was) as long as they remain. When higher cirrus clouds start to form above them, then you can expect things to improve.



As cloud cover and air temperatures increase, fishing conditions start to improve.

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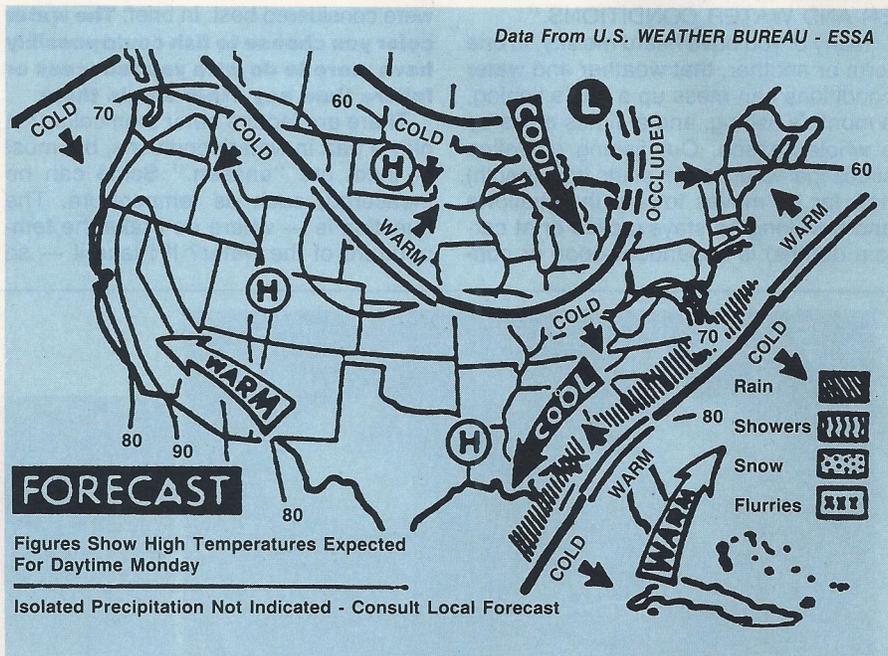
If you asked me to pick out the one thing that will determine what degree of success you or I have during a day of fishing, it would have to be the weather. Your reaction to this may be to say, "What about the water color?" My thoughts are the weather plays an important part of what water color is present. Let's not forget you and I can control (to a degree) what color water we fish.

My hope has always been that the weather will be "good" the day I go fishing. The big question is what is meant by the word "good"? My interpretation of the word would be for the weather to be good enough that the activity of the fish will be shallow enough so I will be able to present lures correctly. We could break

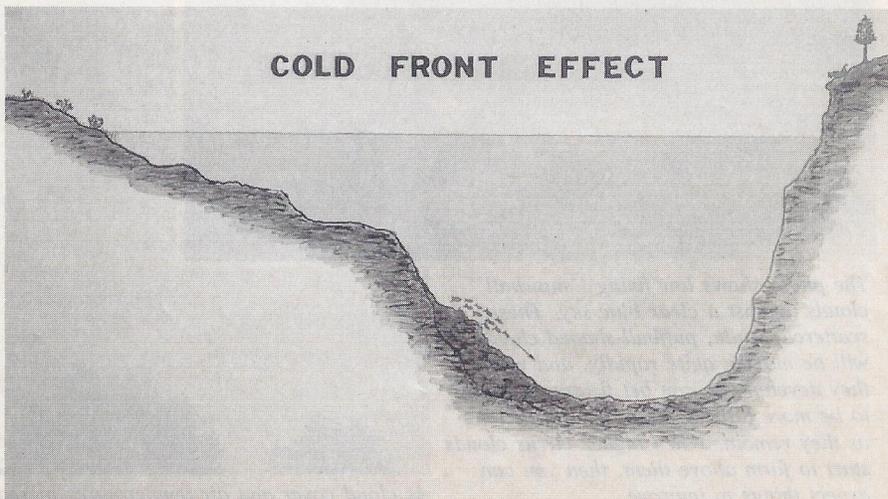
the word down into "a little good," "fairly good," "good," extra-good or excellent. (At the same time I'd never expect the last two categories to occur often. I'd expect the work to be cut out for me on most every trip.)

There is a great variety of weather conditions. In fact, we wouldn't be far wrong in saying no two days are ever going to be the same. This would indicate no two days of fishing are going to be exactly the same. My experience and observations would have me say something else at this point. Fishing can become bad while on the way to the fishing lake, but it may take days and days for fishing to become good again.

Weather conditions entail quite a few things. The ingredients in weather can come in various forms or degrees. They may be strong at times, and weak at



Many newspapers carry a weather map, and if you study it carefully you will note there are different types of conditions all over the country. How often have you wondered where fishing would be good, or bad on a particular day?



How game fish often react during a severe cold front.

others. Some that each of us is aware of are: hot or cold, wet or dry, clear or cloudy, windy or calm. We should note these things are conditions you and I can see or feel.

There are other things involved in weather that most likely affect the activity and movement of the fish. These are things you and I *cannot* see or feel; such as, certain radiation from the sun, atmospheric pressure, radiation absorption rate of the upper atmosphere, radiation from outer space, etc. Just how much magnetic radiation effect the weather has is probably not known, but my observations would have me believe they, too, have an effect on some movements and migrations of the fish.

However, as a fishermen, I do not concern myself with these "unseen" parts of a fish's environment. I can't control ANY parts of weather, but I can go about my fishing to help offset the effects weather might have on the activity and movement of the fish. In order to do this I must have some knowledge about weather and what the different conditions mean to the fish, and how it affects the way I do my fishing.

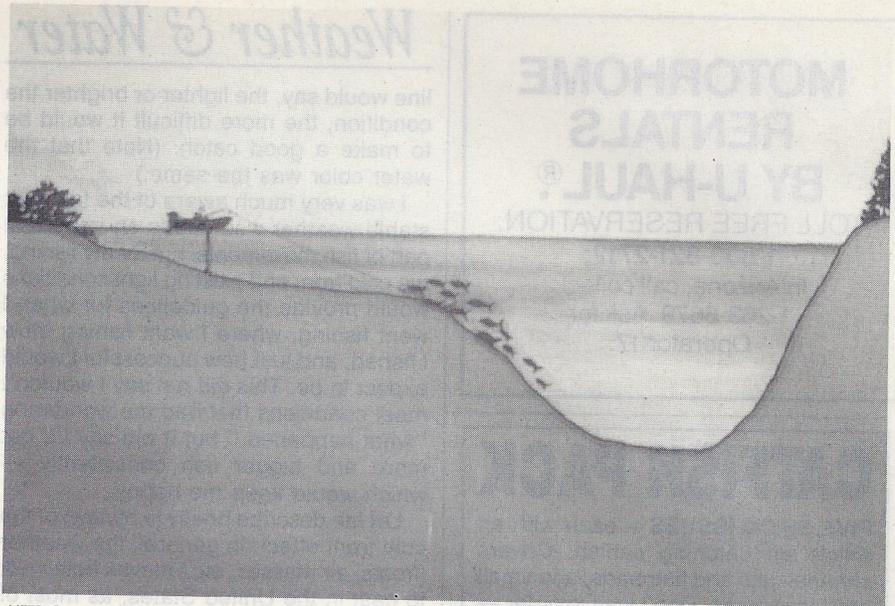
Years ago one of the highest priorities was to set up some "guidelines" on weather and how the fish reacted to the changes that occur. How else could I CONTROL the "where," "what," and "how" of my lures during all the seasons?

Most newspapers carry a weather map, and if you study them carefully you will note there are different types of conditions all over the country. If you watch the weather reports on TV, you get a clear picture of the variety of weather conditions on any particular day. How often have you wondered where fishing would be good or bad on a particular day? Did you ever think what fishing conditions would be like the day after tomorrow?

In setting up "guidelines" for MY fishing, I chose to make them on the things I could SEE. Sure, there were gimmicks that might measure some things I couldn't see, but would a particular reading or measurement point out what I should DO? Would it locate the fish for me? Why bother with these measurements if they do not tell me where the fish are, or tell me what lure to use and how to use it. My thoughts were: *I could take care of all of these things by spending my time where I had the best chance to catch a fish and control the depth and speed of my lures (or bait).*

To set up a "base" for my weather conditions, I chose the cold front. This represented, to me, the line of separation between good fishing and bad fishing. I could say a "zero" line.

The next thing I felt could be depended upon most as a guideline would be the prevailing "light" conditions. It became quite clear to me, my observations on "light" would serve as a good guideline for a major part of the season. The guide-
continued



"With a build-up of more cloud cover, there is normally an increase in air temperature, and in most instances the wind drops while a shift in its direction may be noted. During this weather change the fish are likely to be moving shallower and shallower during active periods."



Jeri Perry (author's wife) with a dandy bass that was caught under "ideal" weather conditions (warm and cloudy with slight rain and drizzle).

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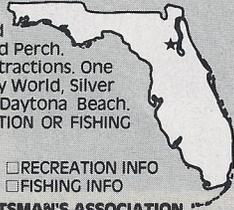
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line would say, the lighter or brighter the condition, the more difficult it would be to make a good catch. (Note that the water color was the same.)

I was very much aware of the fact that stable weather was and is an important part of fish movements, but for my fishing, the cold front and existing light conditions would provide the guidelines for when I went fishing, where I went fishing, how I fished, and just how successful I would expect to be. This did not say I wouldn't meet conditions that had me wondering "what happened," but it did say I'd get more and bigger fish consistently — which would keep me happy.

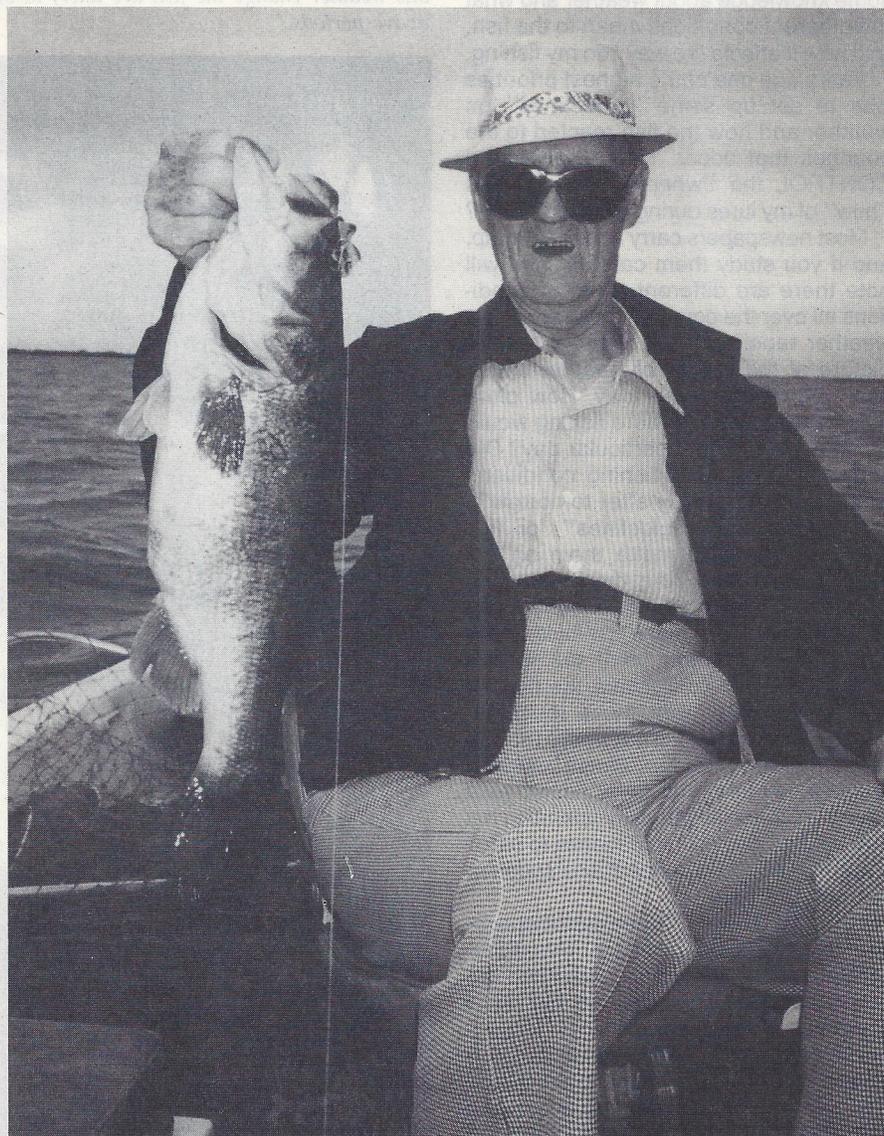
Let me describe briefly (a review) of the cold front effect. In general, the weather (fronts, air masses, etc.) moves from west to east in the United States, as most of you know. A front means a line where two

masses of air which differ in temperature and moisture come together. As we observe a cold front approaching, we will normally be exposed to rougher weather. The front itself could be represented by heavy clouds, rain, or even a squall line (line of thunderstorms). With today's weather reports (newspapers, television) the fisherman has no problem knowing the location and conditions of cold fronts.

For our observation, let us start the day after the cold front passes through. There is normally a drop in air temperature. There can be some cloud cover following the actual front, but shortly thereafter we have a bright blue sky — "washed out." There will be wind, and in some cases it will be quite strong.

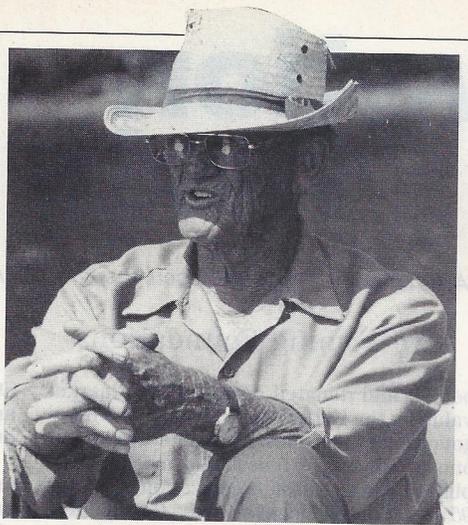
What effect does the passing of the cold front have on the fish? Our "guideline" says the fish may go so deep or become so dormant they are almost impossible to locate or catch.

As our basic guideline says, we are



On his 75th birthday Chet Perry (above) finally got in the boat with his brother, Education Editor Buck Perry. Chet was rewarded with this 7½-pounder that was one of several large bass found on a deep-water breakline.

"If you asked me to pick the one thing that will determine what degree of success you or I might have during a day of fishing, it would have to be the prevailing weather conditions." — Buck Perry



saved due to the fact the fish will not stay so deep, or so dormant all the time. What this means is there will be a change in the weather. We can't say how long the clear washed-out skies, deep or inactive fish condition will last. It could be different in different parts of the country. Just how fast the air masses are moving will determine how fast the conditions change.

As a "guideline" for most of the country, we can say things will begin to change the second or third day after the front passes. Ordinarily the first change noted is the formation of white "snowball" clouds scattered about the sky. These may be four or five thousand feet high with a clear blue sky behind. When you observe these, you can bet things will be tough. The wind may give you fits, and the fishing so dead you'll think there's no fish in the lake. You may begin to think, "I must be doing something wrong." A special name for this type "light" and sky condition was applied years ago. My daddy "whopped" me the first and only time I used it in his presence.

My guideline is that things will begin to change when some form of high cirrus clouds begin to appear. Do not confuse these with "smog" or high stuff produced by high flying aircraft. If the "vapor trails" quickly disappear — we're still in trouble. However, if they spread out and seem to grow in size, it could mean a change is coming. This means the fish will "start" to move (become active) again, but not for a long period of time, nor for much change in depth.

The next cloud cover change that occurs may come (after the high cirrus) in a day or two. This change is a build-up of more cloud cover. There is normally an increase in temperature, and in most instances the wind drops and a shift in its direction may be noted. During this weather change the fish are likely to be moving shallower and shallower during active periods.

All of these changes in cloud cover (temperature, wind, etc.) indicate that another cold front may be on the way. This

normally means further build-up in cloud cover, and eventually the wet, rough weather before the front passes through. All during the frontal conditions of cloud cover, rain, etc., the fish are moving and some fish may move so shallow the shoreline fisherman makes contact. (How sweet it is that we structure fishermen may make contact with the fish the first day the fish become active and move "downstairs." We don't have to wait — probably a week — to catch a fish in the shallows.) After the cold front passes and the bright, washed-out skies appear, we start at "zero" again.

The time periods between the fronts, type clouds, wind, etc., can vary. In some parts of the country a cold front (and changing cloud cover, etc.) may come blasting through every three or four days, while in other parts there could be weeks between them. **My guideline has always been that a change for better fishing will occur in a period of three or four days after a cold front.**

I am often asked if all the fish react to the passing of a cold front. My answer is always "yes," but I point out that some species react more violently than others. My observations have shown that bass may become dormant or less active for longer periods of time than some other

species such as the northern pike or wall-eye. It is well that in areas of the country where frequent cold fronts exist, the waters contain these species along with bass.

In some parts of the country the fisherman is exposed to bright, clear conditions for long periods of time. When exposed to such weather conditions the fisherman has to look at the "bright" conditions and act accordingly. He has to find the best water color. He has to consider when to do his fishing. He can go early or late in the day, or even check things out at night. He can watch weather forecasts and plan his trips accordingly. However, his best bet is to learn deep water interpretation and deep-water presentations of lures. After all, the areas that have long periods of bright, clear weather are likely to have "drinking water" (clear water) conditions for most of the year.

In some parts of the country, fishermen are on the water during the cold part of the season as well as the warmer. Those that have snow and ice cover on the waters have a more or less "stable" condition and fishing can be fairly good if the "hole" is in the right place. However, those who have a "freeze-up" and those who do not, can expect periods of unstable (cold fronts, etc.) weather quite often during the winter months. My "guideline" during this time has been to go fishing on the so-called "nice" (warmer) days and hope it remains stable for a period of time — at least a couple or three days.

If you were to ask me where a catchable game fish is in a body of water, I'd have to say where conditions are stable. This could include both weather and water conditions. By "stable" I mean NOT CHANGING. Do you think this could explain the cold front effect? Would this explain why we say deep water is the sanctuary (of the fish) from a changing environment?

This discussion has been a quick review of basic thoughts and guidelines for weather and water. Next month we'll look at some questions and situations to see if our "guidelines" on weather and water are fully understood. 

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