

Salmon-Trout-Walleye Trolling Topic

By: Captain Pete Alex

It's All About the Water!

We all know this for sure, fish need water and live in water. It's their home and one of the trickiest things for an angler to figure out is how changing water impacts their house.

Most of us have heard that 90% of the fish, live in 10% of the water. This is accurate and if you ever have suffered through hours of bite less trolling, you know what I mean.

What I have found over my 35 years of trolling experience on the Great Lakes is that fish often are attracted to certain types of water, changes in water, certain water clarity conditions and of course temperature. This is not much different than you walking into a cool airconditioned home on a hot summer day. If you are warm, you will gravitate toward that "cool" spot in the home or vice versa on a cold day. Fish are not that much different. They will keep moving to find that comfort zone, or to find bait.

So, what does this mean to an angler who is hunting for a spot? This simply means you need to pay attention to water changes. These changes can be subtle or obvious like a clear water to mud watercolor line. Whether it's a color or temperature difference, these changes can often lead to the Fish Mecca that day. Sometimes the water holds clues, like debris, dead bait fish, slicks, and odd variations in the surface water from severe temp changes. These clues often will hold bait and or fish on them, especially if the water you have been trolling in has been "dead" and monolithic (without change) for some time.

Some of the toughest fishing occurs when water stratifies and becomes very monolithic. Also known as "Grind Water" and occurs when we have days of little wind, warming temps and high sun. Sometimes, there are no options but to fish it and there will be some fish in it, but they are typically random fish. These are the times when you get a bite every hour and turning back does not help. We all have seen them and the best thing to happen is for a blow day or two to occur, which will erase this dreadful scene and start another one for us. Often, that blow will change, regroup fish and give us new waters to look for. Blows also create a new edge to look for and stack food and fish up on and the savvy anglers will know what to look for after a good old-fashioned blow.

One thing that attracts me to salmon and trout fishing on Lake Ontario is the challenge of the water, in other words, finding where the new home is for the fish I am looking for. That home can be ever evolving and moving. I find that challenging and rewarding but sometimes frustrating as well. Often, the best anglers can find fish after wind events. Why? Because they understand their target's home and their tendencies.

What tools can help you understand the water or help you notice change? Lets' start with a good surface temperature gauge, followed by a sub-surface temperature device like a Fish Hawk down speed and temperature indicator. Other tools that can help are polaroid sunglasses, binoculars, surface temperature charts, buoys that provide surface temperature readings on them, and a good fish finder can indicate water temperature changes. Let's not forget your fishing buddies using their eyes to help you notice visual changes like floating debris, dead bait fish or birds working the water instead of napping on the way out.

Reading water can be a bit technical and tricky to understand but to be a great angler, one needs to better understand the water that their targets swim in. After all, it's their home and ever changing.

Remember this: Those that think outside the box are often the anglers that have more fish "inside the box".

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