

TIDES in the HUDSON RIVER

The single most critical factor in boating on the Hudson River!



by John H. Vargo, Publisher

Photo: Gavin Vargo

Wood, full size trees, dead giraffes, you name it at one time or another captured by the ever changing currents in the Hudson

River, everything and anything can be found floating on or just under the surface of the Hudson River.

Some items will come up vertically, meaning that one end of the tree or piling is heavier than the other, thus the pressure from the currents forces the pole down and suddenly it will pop up for a few minutes somewhere else.

Unlike a lake where the height of the water stays the same, not so in the Hudson River. The water depth changes, sometimes three times in a day, thus as you innocently travel north or south from where you started you must be aware that these changes could create serious damage to your boat!

The tides affect the way we operate our boats and it is a constant, and number one factor in boating on the Hudson River.

For the most part these boaters are brand new to the sport of boating. They, whether they admit it or not, are interested for one reason, above all others in trying boating in that it allows them to get away from everyone and everything for a few hours, or days, in a clean, fresh environment.

The moon and its affect on the Hudson River.

The terminology "Moon Tide" refers to the affect that a full moon has on the water levels in the Hudson River. Usually it increases the height of the water level so high that the river water washes all the debris that has collected on the shore back into the Hudson River. Now you have a double danger of the currents capturing this debris, and with the ever-changing wind affecting the currents, you may have a solid wall of junk confronting your passage forward!

Whether you are renting the boat or own it, the same rules apply, NEVER TAKE YOUR EYES OFF THE WATER IN FRONT OF YOU, BOTH CLOSE AS WELL AS FURTHER OUT!

As captain of the boat you are responsible for the safety of everyone on board, and despite what all the other rules of boating are, keeping your eyes on the water will help you from damaging your boat or worse.

In my 70 years of being on the Hudson River, nothing is as important as, NEVER TAKING YOUR EYES OFF THE SURFACE OF THE HUDSON RIVER IN FRONT OF YOU.

Sooner or later, probably sooner, you will see a solid wall of junk floating directly in front of you. What to do?

First you must slow down, the spinning propeller on your boat could strike one of these pieces and destroy the prop or the outdrive to the tune of thousands of dollars worth of damage.

So what to do now, most importantly constantly search the area in front of you, usually there will be a weak spot in the debris, at that point, it is possible to slowly work your way through the wall of debris to the other side, and usually clear ahead. Nothing in this game has one answer, as every condition is different and demands a decision that is critical to your having a fun day on the water or a disaster. The most common practice, of slowing down gives you time to think before acting and should be your first rule.

As important as the information is to you just mention as a boater, if you are on a Jet Ski, or waverunner, the information is doubly important. With no propeller to strike and object but a high pressure pump sucking up everything around it.

Traveling at night with the above conditions.

No matter what kind of boat you are traveling in the inside cabin of your boat should be darkened, (in many cases there is a red or night condition available). Even with these lights set inside your cabin, looking through the plastic glass is a very dangerous thing to do. If at all possible, open the plastic and stare hard at the surface of the water in front of you it will help you see a slight variation in the surface where debris may be.

It takes years and some very expensive repairs for some people to realize that the above suggestions could have saved a lot of money in repairs.

Please take the above recommendations seriously and enjoy boating for what it is.