

Indicators of Approaching Weather Systems

Cloud Cover

High, thin cirrus cloud moving east followed by successively lower stratus clouds indicates precipitation likely within 24 to 48 hours

Wind Aloft

Cirrus clouds moving from westerly direction indicate weather systems including rain soon. Clouds moving from North to Northeast indicates dryer, colder air in next 24 - 48 hours.

Surface Winds

Strong surface winds to be concerned about are from SE (stormy) and NW. The NW wind may be from a fast moving High pressure region moving onshore N of our area. Strong NW winds in Juan de Fuca may translate to strong SW local winds.

Wind direction changes may also say:

Winds veering (changing direction clockwise) to N or NE expect clearing

Winds veering to E or SE watch for increasing clouds and precipitation

Winds veering from SW to NW indicate a frontal passage, cooling air and showers

Winds backing (counter-clockwise) from S to SE or E means low approaching with increasing clouds

Barometric Pressure Changes

Small pressure changes over 3-hour period (0.02 to 0.04 inches or 0.6 to 1.2 millibars) are normal

Larger pressure changes indicates successively worsening weather. On a weather chart this is seen as tightly spaced pressure lines, either around a Low or a High pressure area

Fog

Summer fog usually forms overnight in localized areas such as Rosario Strait or among the islands. It is characterized by light winds and usually burns off within 12 - 24 hours.

Special Notes for San Juan Islands

Winds and Waves:

In narrow straight channels such as East Sound and Harney Channel generalized wind flow through the channel may be accelerated to gale force winds (greater than 33 knots) These winds, if counter to a tidal current, may generate dangerous wave conditions.

This is especially true in Deception Pass, San Juan Channel (by Cattle Pt, San Juan I) Rosario Str., Obstruction and Peavine passes.