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"Well...Excuses Me!" Part-1

by Dr. Bogus

Did you ever have a bad day, a bad week, a year or awful decade of fishing? Of course you have. So how did you deal with the ignominy of it all, the embarrassment of coming home empty handed? Explaining away your failure to your spouse or friends or neighbors. Did you lament to the fishing gods? Hurl well-chosen pertinent curses at a poor blameless fish? Well if this happens this season, and it will, I have alternatives for you, insults and excuses for the most ardent angler to allay any blame on the obvious. It's time to point a fickle finger at the real or perceived culprit. Well, to paraphrase Steve Martin, "Excuses Me!"

Topping the list is the myriad of natural and unnatural forces beyond your control. This includes some of the big weather hitters, a spring or late season Nor'easter or worse a hurricane stirring up the seas dirtying the water and blowing the fish to kingdom come. Remember the March 1993 "Storm of the Century" and the evil twin hurricane sisters Bertha and Fran, or the bad boys Dennis and Floyd? Of lesser weather events we have the troublesome east wind, as in "east is least and west is best"? Have you ever had a good fishing day on an east wind?

Even if you don't have to deal with officially named or unnamed mega storms, we know that any rain event causes runoff, turning the water into something resembling cappuccino and diluting the salinity to eye-popping osmotic lows. And yes we can handle excuses for all possibilities and extremes, since we the recent drought has pushed the salt-line way up the creeks and rivers as well. Neither of those extremes can be good for fishing.

On Bogue Banks we have way less piers that we used to, not only Bertha and Fran and their evil "H-word" cousins but the sweeping hand of the development wrecking ball as well has reduced our once numerous fishing piers to a paltry two and one-half piers these days. And by the way, the Oceanana Pier and Family Resort may be next. But which side of the pier is the best to fish on, the east or west? Yes east or west, remember our island is a south-facing beach. So to get your seasonal orientation right, try to remember this Bogue Banks pier-fishing ditty, "In the spring and summer east is least and west is best, but in the fall and winter west is least and east is the beast". If your seasonal geography is wrong, you will miss the

migrating throngs of spots and sea mullet and pompano and the like.

On the other hand there are those pesky calm days when the water is flat and glassy, green and clean, gin clear as it were, you know you'll never fool a speckled trout under those conditions. Then there are the days where the surf looks cloudy, a milky white right along the surf line, that's finely powdered calcium carbonate, the stuff of shells suspended in the water. Is there any self-respecting fish that wants to pump that stuff through their gills? I think not!

When we talk about weather, one of the most important factors that influences fish behavior is the water temperature. That's why I dip the pointy end of my thermometer in the surf and sound on a daily basis. But like in the case of Goldilocks, it always seems to be too hot or too cold, never juuuuust right. And of course a no-no is any rapid temperature change, heating up too fast in the summer or falling like a brick to frigid depths overnight. And then there are those all to frequent cold-water winter trout kills. Troutstices!