



## Hurricane Misses Us - and Leaves Deadly Rip Tide



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Katia is now a Category 3 hurricane, pounding through the Atlantic and is expected to send rough surf and strong rip currents along beaches from North Carolina to Maine in the next few days. "We're looking at rip currents becoming more dangerous," said Andy Mussoline of AccuWeather. This column is about rip tides, rip currents and undertows. Lest one of us comes to grief...

### Undertow v Rip Tide v Rip Currents

Anybody that has ever been to a beach understands undertow. It is the backwash as gravity returns a breaking wave to the sea. All but small children can stand against it - and its effect ends at the leading edge of the next breaking wave. While it might knock you down and thus "suck" you under, it won't pull you out to sea. Our mothers didn't know that because they confused undertow with rip tides and rip currents.

A rip tide is the result of tides and the egress and ingress of large volumes of water flowing through inlets, estuaries, and bays. As facts would have it, most people don't swim near inlets or where bays meet the sea. They swim near beaches, where sand bars often form, and where rip currents, "the killer current", form in concert.

### The Anatomy of a Rip Current

Rip currents are by far the biggest killers of ocean swimmers. Rip currents form as waves disperse along the beach causing water to become trapped between the beach and a sandbar or other underwater feature. This water becomes the "feeder" that creates the deadly force of the rip current. The water converges into a narrow, river-like channel moving away from the shore at high speed. (see exhibit 1)

Marine scientists define a rip current as having a "neck" (the river-like channel moving away from the shore) and a "head" that is often defined by an unusual disturbance or choppiness in the water and by murky discoloration caused by sand and debris. As the water, and swimmer, reaches the "head", the velocity and strength of the rip current circulation begins to weaken considerably.

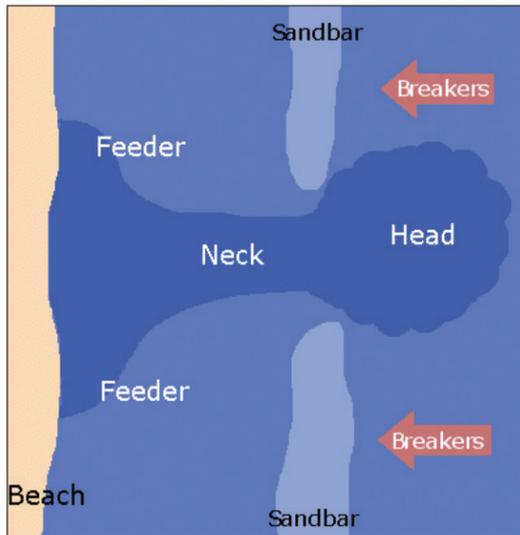


exhibit 1 - courtesy of Rip Current Information Center

### Can I See a Rip Current?

Often, yes. As a result of the current's speed, sand is forced into suspension often causing a rip current to be associated with "dirty" water. It is characterized by a strong, localized current flowing seaward from the shore; visible as an agitated band of water, which is the return movement of water piled up on the shore by incoming waves.

### Most Importantly, Can I Get Out of the Grip of a Rip Current?

If you don't panic, and play the water's power to your advantage, yes. Don't try to swim back to shore against the rip current that is dragging you out. Most likely, you will tire beyond recovery and drowning, flatly put, will follow as surely as night follows day. Swim with and across the rip current. Let it give you some speed - as you "exit - stage left!" Or right - but get out of the grip of the current and into "normal" water. Then, deal with the hand you've been dealt - swim back, or just tread water while waving your arms for help, or just float and rest. This is why swimming with a "buddy system" is so critical... (See exhibit 2)

We missed Katia. But she isn't done with us yet.

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux@aol.com or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at DSO-HR and we will help you "get in this thing..."

**RIP CURRENTS**  
Break the Grip of the Rip!

ESCAPE ESCAPE ESCAPE ESCAPE

RIP CURRENT

Rip currents are powerful currents of water moving away from shore. They can sweep even the strongest swimmer out to sea.

**IF CAUGHT IN A RIP CURRENT**

- ◆ Don't fight the current
- ◆ Swim out of the current, then to shore
- ◆ If you can't escape, float or tread water
- ◆ If you need help, call or wave for assistance

**SAFETY**

- ◆ Know how to swim
- ◆ Never swim alone
- ◆ If in doubt, don't go out

More information about rip currents can be found at the following web sites:  
www.uscgaux.org

exhibit 2 - courtesy of NOAA



by TONY SALERNO

## FISHING WITH TONY

RFA CHARGES PEW WITH RUNNING

BAIT & SWITCH

The big criticism in America today is that nothing ever gets done in Congress. As a political action organization that represents recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on saltwater fishing issues, the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) is confronted by this stark reality on a daily basis. However, according to RFA executive director Jim Donofrio, the blame should not be laid entirely at the feet of our elected officials, as he said mixed messages have helped create Congressional gridlock on important fisheries management reform.

RFA cites a perfect example in a Pew Environment Group advocacy email blast sent on August 25 with the subject line, Australia's Coral Sea: A Biodiversity Hotspot. "The RFA of New South Wales has been fighting Pew's efforts to create no take, zero access marine reserves there for years, so this latest email from Pew asking folks to sign a letter supporting the establishment of marine parks in Australia's Coral Sea is not a surprise," said RFA managing director Jim Hutchinson, Jr. "It's no secret to anyone that Pew is spearheading efforts to get anglers off the water through creation of marine reserves, that's common knowledge around the globe." Hutchinson said the confusion begins later in the Pew email missive under a separate message heading called Make Fisheries Funding a U.S. Priority, in which Pew describes how celebrity chefs, commercial "and recreational fishermen and more than 240 independent groups and businesses" are asking Congress to fully fund data collection and analysis programs to help protect and rebuild ocean fish populations.

Essentially you have industry representatives at Berkley fishing tackle, IGFA and Sport Fishing Magazine supporting Pew's request for more science, while Pew simultaneously asks supporters to sign a letter, which says the science is perfectly fine. Our own industry is being used by Pew activists to encourage the fisheries service to make strict management decisions based on existing flawed data while lobbying against the industry's own piece of legislation. "Pew is making our recreational fishing industry look ridiculous," Hutchinson said. "How can we possibly expect members of Congress to take us seriously and understand our issues when we appear to speak from both sides of the fence?"

RFA has long criticized Pew and its preservationist allies for its ongoing efforts to stop Americans from fishing. "Pew helped rewrite the federal fisheries law complete with all the restrictive language, they've openly pushed for no access marine reserves, they continually oppose angler efforts to gain access to rebuilding stocks, and they've made a hard push to privatize our nation's fisheries through catch share programs," Donofrio said. "They've obviously been able to influence a few members of the catch and release set to join their coalitions, but we're not about to let them sell out the rest of our industry."

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