

## Howard Prairie Wind Patterns

In the Pacific Northwest, wind patterns are generally from the northwest in the summer, and the southwest in the winter. Southwest flow in the winter is driven by counterclockwise circulation brought in by low pressure systems arriving at the Oregon coast. Late spring frontal passages (May/early June) can bring NW winds 18-20 kts., while summertime at Howard Prairie yields a calmer northwest flow. This is driven by thermal flow, as the land inland heats up and cooler air from the ocean moves in to replace the rising inland air each afternoon. Howard Prairie lies lengthwise in a general northwest direction, which results in wind blowing directly down the length of the lake (green arrow) on most summer days. These winds usually pick up by noon to 1:00 pm, and will blow 8-12 kts., winding down at sunset, with wind usually absent at night. There are some days it will be blowing NW at 8:00 am. These winds are very steady in their direction, generally never varying more than 5-10 degrees. Occasionally, on very hot days in the Rogue Valley an offshore flow can develop after sunrise, which results in a SE wind direction flowing over the Howard Prairie dam (yellow arrow). As noted, this SE flow usually occurs in the morning hours, and many times will dissipate before noon. Generally, there can be a period of 1-2 hours, sometimes more of no wind before the prevailing northwest wind overcomes the SE flow and fills in, which occasionally will occur at 4:00 pm or later. On those days, you can literally see the wind line filling in as it moves down the lake. There is the mostly rare day in the summer, if under the influence of monsoonal moisture from the south that winds can come from the southwest, or even west and will generally be light and very shifty. As long as there is no threat of a thunderstorm, it's safe to be on the water. As we move toward fall, mid-September and beyond, winds are generally light and more variable in direction, resulting in less days of those 8-12 kt. winds.

In summary: Howard Prairie is one of the finest inland sailing lakes in the west, steady NW winds 75% of our sailing days. The lay of the lake with respect to the prevailing wind makes for long downwind runs, followed by inspiring upwind beats. We are lucky to have such a fine sailing venue this close to the Rogue Valley.

