

False Bay Literature Review

Surrounding Waters – Regional influences

Physical Characteristics of False Bay

False Bay is a square-shaped embayment on the southwest coast of South Africa. The central coordinates of the bay, as presented by Flemming (2024), are $34^{\circ}14.0'S$ and $18^{\circ}39.0'E$ (Figure 1). The maximum meridional extension of the bay is ~ 35 km from northern shore to the latitude crossing Cape Hanglip to the south ($34^{\circ}23'S$), while the zonal counterpart is ~ 39 km between Fish Hoek and Gordon's Bay (Flemming, 2024). The embayed area is approximately 1130 km^2 (Flemming, 2024).

The average depth is ~ 41 m and the deepest point near the entrance is ~ 90 m (TALJAARD 2000). The bay is open to the sea at its southern extent, which is defined by Cape Point and Cape Hanglip to the west and east respectively. The northern extent is defined by long sweeping beaches separated nearly halfway by the eroding cliffs found from Kapteinsklip to Swartklip. The boulders and cliffs of the predominantly rocky eastern and western shores are interspersed with small sandy beaches. Mountain Group Sandstone and Malmesbury Group Shale (Flemming, 2024).

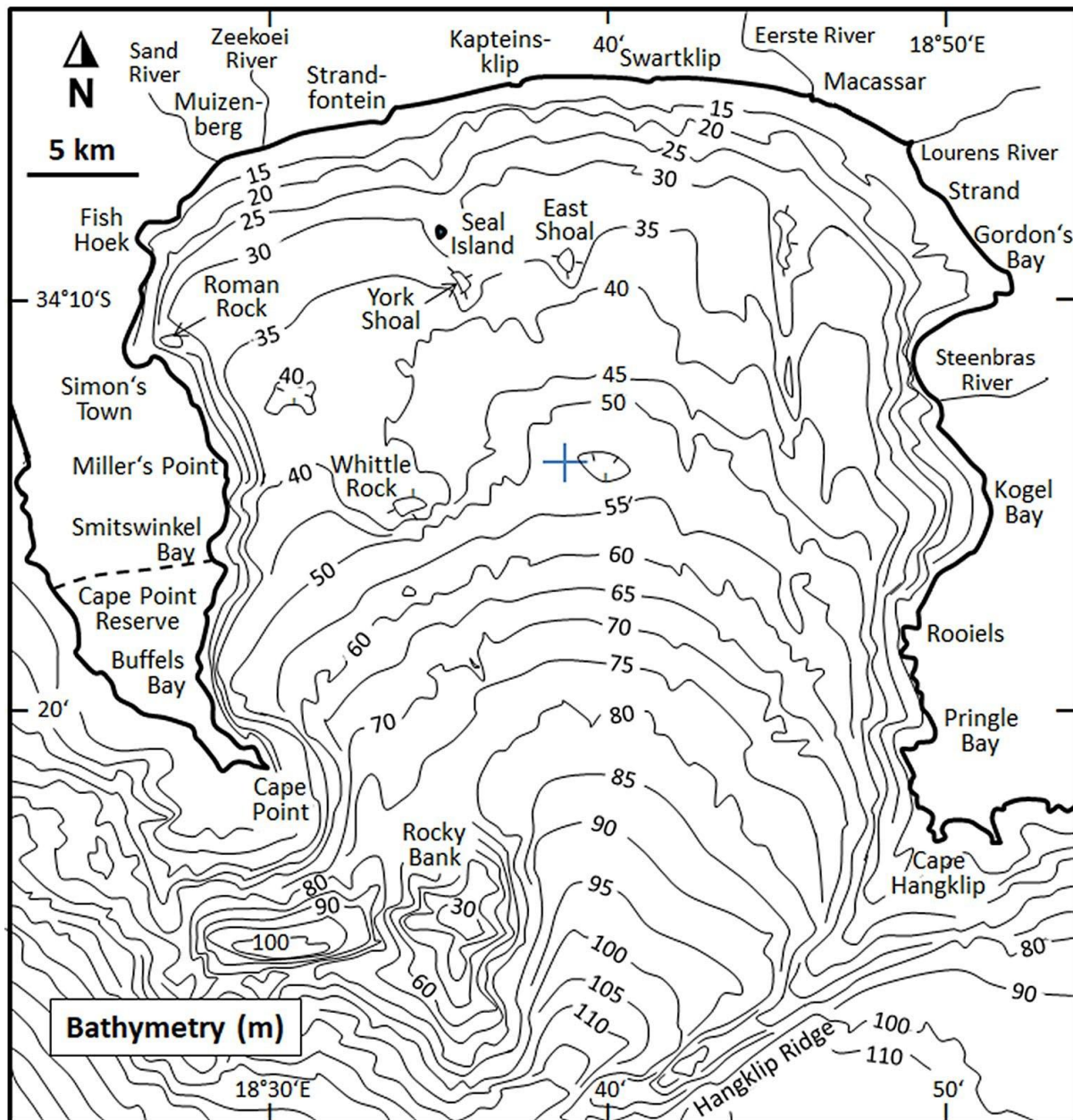


Figure 1) The bathymetry of False Bay and the names of well-known locations and features. The blue cross indicates the centre of the bay (From Flemming, 2024; based on Glass, 1976)

Bathymetry and Surrounding Topography

The bay has been split into four geographical zones which categorize sectors of the bay with similar bathymetric features (Atkins, 1970a). The northern sector is categorized by a gentle slope ($\sim 1:400$) with a fragmented rocky bottom to the west and a predominantly sandy bottom to the east (Mallory, 1970). The west zone is characterized by several large rocky features listed here from north to south: Roman Rock, Seal Island & York Shoal, East Shoal, Whittle Rock and Rocky Bank (Mallory, 1970). These features are a mix of granite and sandstone and form part of the Cape Granite and Table Mountain Group of geological formations (Flemming, 2024). The eastern side is characterized by long N-S running ridges, some of which are ~ 17 km long and ~ 300 m wide (Mallory, 1970). These ridges are

comprised of shale and form part of the Malmesbury Group (Flemming, 2024). Two distinct terraces, one between 30 and 45 m, the other between 50 and 55 m, exist in the bay and are indicative of Pleistocene (2.6 Ma to 11 700 ka) sea-level stillstands (Flemming, 2024).

Given this pre-historic context, the bay itself can be seen as the southernmost extension of the Cape Flats, a sandy valley which links the Cape Peninsula on the west to the mainland on the east. The eastern side of the bay is rimmed by the mountainous inland terrain of the Hottentots Holland Mountains, with relatively high ranges of between 1100 and 1400 m (Bonnardot et al., 2005). The Cape Peninsula mountain range belts the bay to the west and has a slightly lower range of between 600 and 1100 m (Jury, 1991). The intricate orography of the terrain is shown in Fig 2. The orography controls the wind field over the area under the varying wind regimes and creates wind shadows in the lee of the mountains (Jury, 1991).

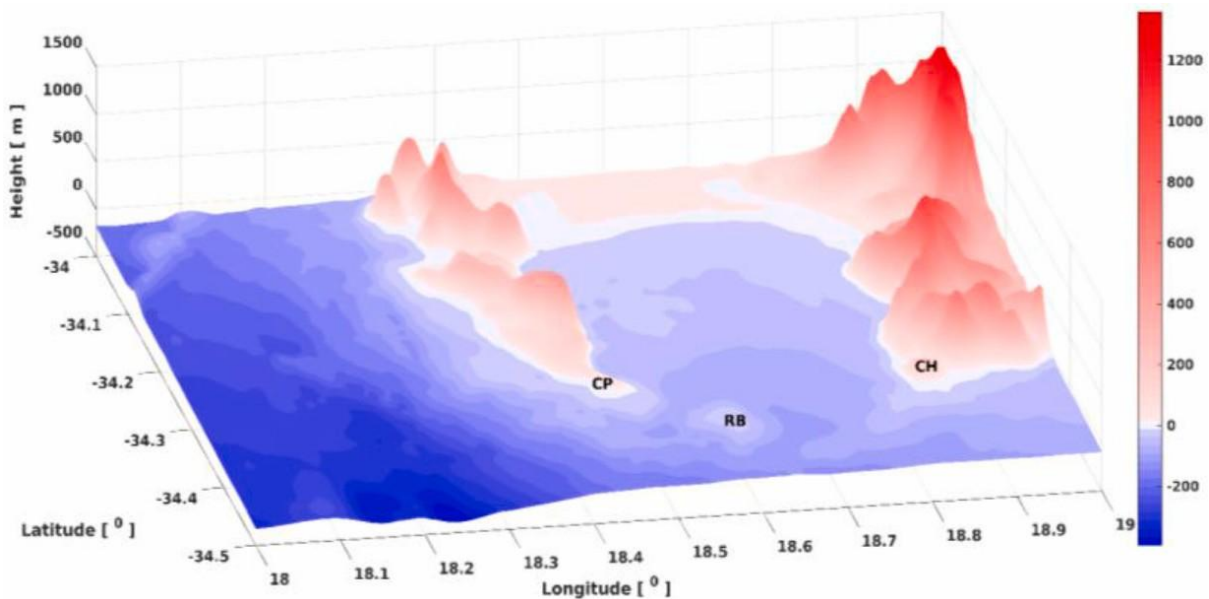


Figure 2) Bathymetry and orography of False Bay. Cape Point (CP), Rocky Bank (RB) and Cape Hangklip (CH) are shown (From Daniels et al., 2022).

Wind Climate

South African weather is primarily seasonal and dominated by large scale synoptic circulations which result from the interactions between the South Atlantic high pressure cell (SAH) and mid-latitude pressure systems that are associated with the upper-level westerlies. Wind over the bay is controlled by two main factors, the first being the nature and time scale of synoptic weather systems akin to the region, the second being the orography which leads to orographically sheared winds being common (Gründlingh et al., 1989; Jury et al., 1985). The eastward propagation of atmospheric Rossby waves and associated fronts over the Southern Ocean is the major control on the synoptic systems experienced in False Bay (Gründlingh et al., 1989; MacHutchon, 2006; Wainman et al., 1987).

Several synoptic types exist and help explain general atmospheric circulation along the coast. The SAH guides Southern Ocean fronts north-westward to toward the South African coast (Gründlingh et al., 1989). Approaching cold fronts (Mid-latitude cyclones) can generate coastally trapped low pressure systems on the west coast, which propagate eastward as the

front encroaches (Gill, 1977). These coastal lows are associated with warm, often strong, offshore Foehn (Berg) winds leading the system, and cool offshore winds trailing it (Gill, 1977). Cold fronts follow the passage of coastal lows and their approach is associated with north-westerly winds, followed by the rapid incursion of cold high latitude air masses after their passage (Gründlingh et al., 1989; Jury et al., 1985). Fronts are followed by southerly meridional flow along the pressure gradient west of the cyclone. A ridging SAH follows, leading to strong south-easterly conditions, especially in summer. These dynamics, typically cycle on a weekly basis (5-7 days) and are seasonal in nature (Gründlingh et al., 1989).

Cold fronts and coastal lows are often weaker during summer due to the southward shift of the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone. The opposite is true in winter. Summer cycles are characterised by 3-5 days of southeasterlies, where local orographic effects lead to winds speeds exceeding 30 kn at Cape Point (Le Roux, 1975). The height of the inversion layer (unstable atmospheric layer where temperature increases with height) , and by extension the vertical effect of surface winds, is modulated by the passage of these weather systems and can affect the flow and speed of the winds over the bay (Bonnardot et al., 2005; Daniels et al., 2022; Jury, 1991). The vertical extent of surface winds reaches a minimum during coastal lows, and can create a wind shadow in the lee of the eastern mountains surrounding False Bay (Jury et al., 1985; Wainman et al., 1987). This is likely the cause the pronounced slowdown of winds in the north-east of the bay recorded during June, July and August by Atkins (1970b).

The observed wind field in False Bay is highly variable and complicated. Wainman et al. (1987) analysed time series data from anemometers and found that correlations between stations was generally poor (< 0.6). The spatially varying wind field over False Bay was described as a synoptic sequence by Jury (1984):

South-west regime: Southwesterlies are associated with the ridging SAH following the passage of a cold front. Due to local orographic effects near Walker Bay (to the east of False Bay) the wind field becomes uniformly southerly and strengthens as the pressure gradients increase (Jury, 1984; Largier et al., 1992). This is illustrated in Fig 3a.

South-east regimes

Deep south-east regime: During southerly meridional flow deep southeasterlies flow over the surrounding mountain ranges and are associated with accelerated winds speeds across the bay, as well as the development of a strong easterly downslope jet in the lee of the Kogelberg mountains. Deep conditions are modified when a low level-level subsidence inversion (descending layer of air is heated as it is compressed near the surface) caps the southeasterlies below the mountain ranges to the east and west. This signals the development of the shallow south-east regime. This is illustrated in Fig 3b.

Shallow south-east regime: The ridging process of the SAH and lowers the height of the inversion layer and consequently blocks the surface wind from flowing over the Hottentots Holland mountain range. The mountain range and inversion constrain the wind to a ~600 m vertical extent, hence shallow, and deflect it seaward (Wainman et al., 1987). As a result of

this the surface winds accelerate past Cape Hanglip and a wind shadow develops in the lee of the Helderberg Mountains, which impacts surface circulation near Gordon's Bay (Wainman et al., 1987). The data analysed by Wainman et al. (1987) indicate that these winds entering the bay are deflected (likely by local orographic effects) to become increasingly southerly. The lowering of the inversion layer and subsequent change in the wind field usually occurs over three days (Jury, 1984; Jury et al., 1985) This process is illustrated in Fig 3c.

North-west regime: Northwesters signal the approach of a cold front after the passage of a coastal low. Flow over the Table Mountain range causes the wind to deflect to become more northerly over False Bay, where it blows uniformly. The winds at the mouth of the bay

become stronger and more north-westerly to westerly due to topographic steering at Cape Point. This is illustrated in Fig 3d.

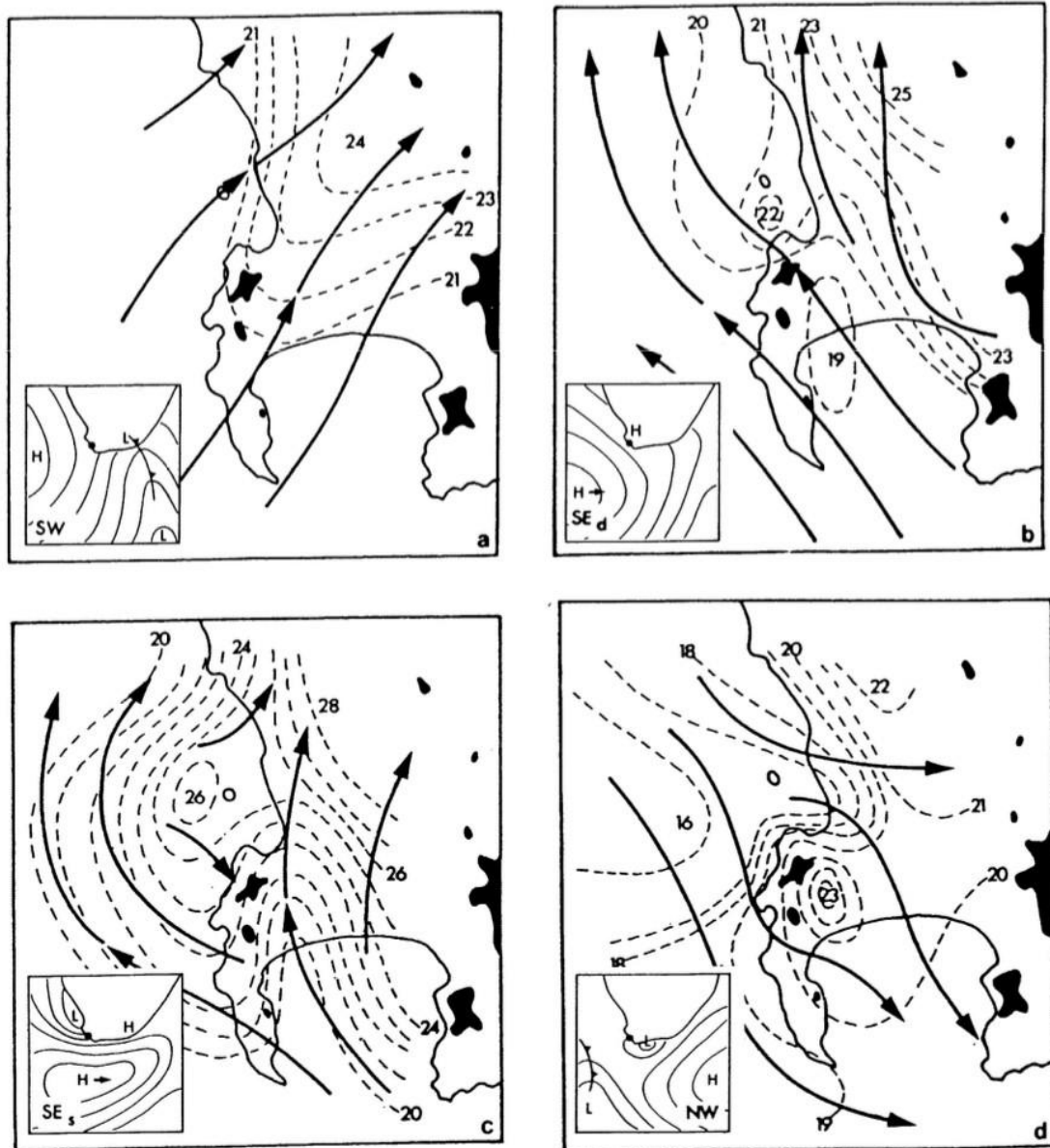


Figure 3) Four wind phases and associated synoptic systems. Southerly meridional flow - a; Ridging SAH - b & c, Coastal low - d. Isobars show truncated values of MSLP in hPa (Jury, 1984).

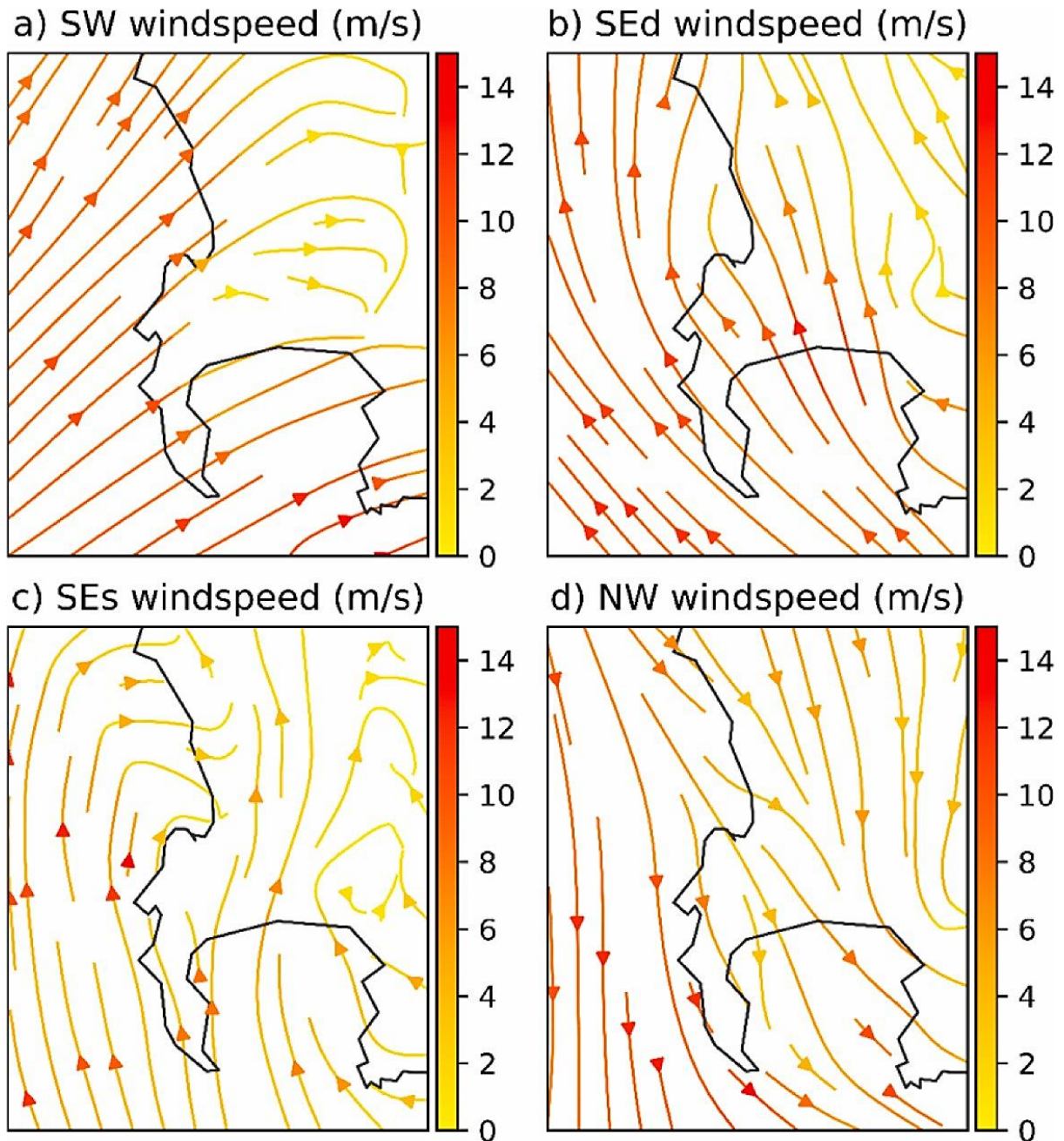


Figure 4) Wind streamlines in $m \cdot s^{-1}$ for the four primary wind regimes that affect False Bay (From Daniels et al, 2022; after Jury, 1987)

Fig. 4 shows the 10 m flow streamlines associated with each wind regime and is based on outputs from the South African Weather Service (SAWS) operational Unified Model which has a 4.4 km horizontal grid resolution (Brown et al., 2012; Cullen, 1993). The model output indicates that higher winds speeds are expected over the bay during south-west and deep south-east regimes, compared to slower speeds during the other two regimes. Average wind speed in the bay is $\sim 5-7 m \cdot s^{-1}$ according to early observational studies by Le Roux (1975) and Gründlingh et al. (1989). These values correspond well to recent observations (Bonnardot et al., 2005; Daniels et al., 2022) and modelling studies (Coleman, 2019; de Vos, 2022; Salonen, 2019).

Wave Climate

Generation

Modification

Circulation

The circulation in False Bay is highly dynamic at sub-seasonal to decadal time scales and is alternate in nature (Dufois and Rouault, 2012).

Wind dynamics are the primary driver of the mean circulation in False Bay, and are therefore seen as the main driver of the vertical temperature structure and stratification of the bay (Atkins, 1970a, 1970b; Dufois and Rouault, 2012; Gründlingh and Largier, 1988; Jury, 1991; Wainman et al., 1987)

Wind driven currents

Wave driven currents

Tidal currents

Subtidal currents

Density Structure

Hydrodynamic modelling of False Bay indicates that Rocky Bank segregates warmer western water from colder eastern waters (Coleman, 2019). Bottom waters east of Rocky Bank are consistently (under well-mixed and stratified conditions) approximately 1-2 °C colder than to its west (Coleman, 2019). Coleman's (2019) model showed (given stratified conditions) that the north-westerly winds, usually associated with warmer months, cause cold offshore water to be advected into the centre of the bay.

Historical Measurements and Observational Studies

Hydrodynamic Modelling of False Bay

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