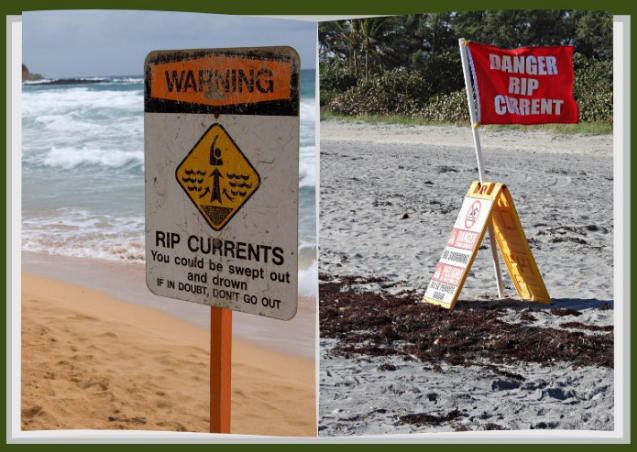
Rip Currents

WHAT ARE THEY, WHERE ARE THEY, AND RECOGNIZING THEM

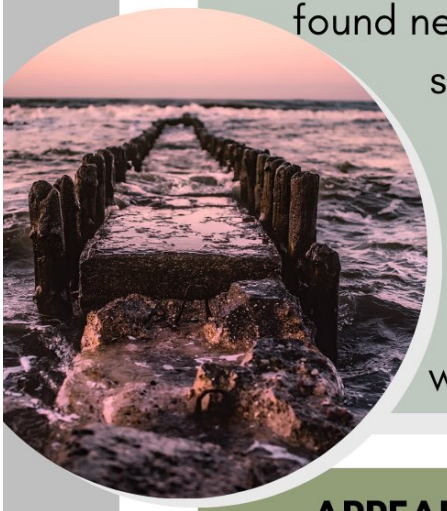
WHAT IS A RIP CURRENT

A rip current is a strong current of water that moves away from the shoreline. When waves break near the shore the water piles up at the shoreline creating an imbalance in the amount of water at the shoreline vs. the water in the deeper ocean. As the water flows back to the ocean a narrow and fast flowing stream that moves away from the shore is created.



COMMON LOCATIONS

Rip currents are often found near sandbars, structures like jetties or piers, and the surf zone where waves break.



STATISTICS

Rip currents average a speed of 1-2 feet per second but have been measured to be as fast as 8 feet per second. They are responsible for over 80 percent of rescues made by lifeguards at the beach. In the U.S. alone more than 100 fatalities occur as a result of rip currents every year. Rip currents are the leading cause of death in weather related incidents.

APPEARANCE

Rip currents can be recognized by a noticeable break in wave patterns. Foam or debris on the surface of the water will be floating away from the shoreline rather than being pushed to shore. The rip current may be a different color and foamy as a result of churned water.