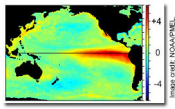




September 25, 2009

## Starting Next Week: Taking El Niño to the Street

It was a long, hot summer in parts of the nation, with destructive wildfires in California and a historical drought in Texas. Attention now is shifting to the coming seasons, especially the El Niño-influenced winter looming on the horizon.



El Niño is marked by a strip of warm water in the Pacific, as seen above (in red) in this striking image from December 1997.

NOAA's National Weather Service is about to embark on a "roadshow" to brief people on what to expect. Next week, the roadshow begins in Texas and Washington state, and then moves onto Florida, North Carolina and other states.

National climate experts from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center will join their colleagues from local and regional NWS offices to alert industries, state and local governments, and emergency managers to the likely impacts of this year's El Niño.

El Niño is a periodic warming of central and eastern tropical Pacific waters (part of a complete cycle known as ENSO <http://www.pmel.noaa.gov/tao/elnino/.noaa/enso.html>) that influences global weather patterns — primarily in the winter season. El Niño can also affect marine life, for example, by increasing marine mammal strandings and accelerating coral reef bleaching.

El Niño, which first appeared early this summer [http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2009/20090709\\_elnino.html](http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2009/20090709_elnino.html), is likely to strengthen over the coming months, according to the Climate Prediction Center <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>.

Why are monitoring and forecasting El Niño important?

- \* In California, officials and residents may wonder if El Niño will bring a distressing winter of heavy rain, intense storms and dangerous mudslides.
- \* In Texas, El Niño could mean more rainfall to relieve what has been the worst drought in 50 years. However, will too much rainfall in too short of a time produce flooding?
- \* Although Florida might emerge unscathed from a relatively quiet hurricane season to date, will the effects of El Niño spur severe winter thunderstorms and tornadoes?
- \* Will warmer temperatures extend to northern states, making for less heavy snowfall, better road conditions and lower heating bills?

These are some of the possible impacts of an El Niño, many of which are likely this winter. NOAA provides valuable insight about these and other scenarios for this year through a suite of climate-related products ranging from the monthly El Niño outlook [http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/products/analysis\\_monitoring/enso\\_advisory/ensodisc.html](http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/ensodisc.html) to seasonal weather predictions.

### Keeping an Eye on Ocean Warming

Scientists and forecasters from across NOAA are monitoring El Niño using a rich array of observation technologies that comprise the ENSO observing system <http://www.pmel.noaa.gov/tao/elnino/.noaa/enso.html>, which detects, observes and predicts El Niño events. For example, Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory's moored TAO buoys <http://www.pmel.noaa.gov/tao/> closely monitor ocean and atmospheric temperature in remote areas of the Pacific, as NOAA satellites receive data from our data buoy network to capture El Niño "signatures" from up above.

Data from the ENSO observing system are fed into dynamic and statistical models created by NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Prediction <http://www.ncep.noaa.gov/>. These models serve as the basis for critical El Niño forecasts and outlooks, and offer keen insight into other global phenomena that result in climate variability.

Our advanced capabilities in climate science are helping decision-makers anticipate necessary preparations. Improved forecasts of seasonal and interannual climate variations such as El Niño not only save lives, but also save hundreds of millions of dollars for the U.S. economy and abroad.

By producing seasonal forecasts and communicating critical climate information, NOAA continues to demonstrate how we are a world leader in the delivery of credible and timely climate services to those who need it most.

Thanks to our talented and dedicated team for advancing our scientific knowledge, monitoring and modeling changing conditions, and for providing useful and relevant services to the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Lubchenco". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jane" written in a large, stylized loop.

Dr. Jane Lubchenco  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator

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This message was generated for the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator by the NOAA Information Technology Center/Financial and Administrative Computing Division