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Another La Niña Winter

By Mike Huston

Lead Forecaster

For the second winter in a row, La Niña will influence weather patterns across the country, but it won't be the only factor at play. As you may know, La Niña is associated with cooler than normal water temperatures across the Equatorial Pacific Ocean. These cooler water temperatures in turn promote changes in the atmospheric weather circulations which impact North America (see Fig. 1). The overall result of these changes is an increased frequency of cold-air outbreaks across the northern-tier states and considerable month-to-month variability exhibited in the storminess flowing into the northwest along the Pacific Jet Stream throughout the winter. For southeast Idaho, La Niña "typically" produces cooler than normal temperatures across the region and a somewhat less reliable wetter than normal precipitation pattern.

La Niña is not the only pattern that will likely impact the weather across southeast Idaho this winter. A number of other patterns that develop and dissipate within a single season

can also impact the overall outcome. Unfortunately, these "intra-seasonal" climate patterns are not easily forecast months in advance like La Niña and at times can overwhelm or even amplify typical La Niña impacts. Armed with the knowledge that the La Niña pattern will likely strengthen as we progress into the heart of winter and that recent data trends suggests that there is an increasing tendency toward wetter and warmer La Niña winters across the northern tier states including Idaho, the forecasters at the Climate Prediction Center have produced a preliminary forecast calling for equal chances of being above normal, near normal, or below normal with respect to temperature (Fig. 2) and a nearly 50 percent chance of being wetter than normal, a 32

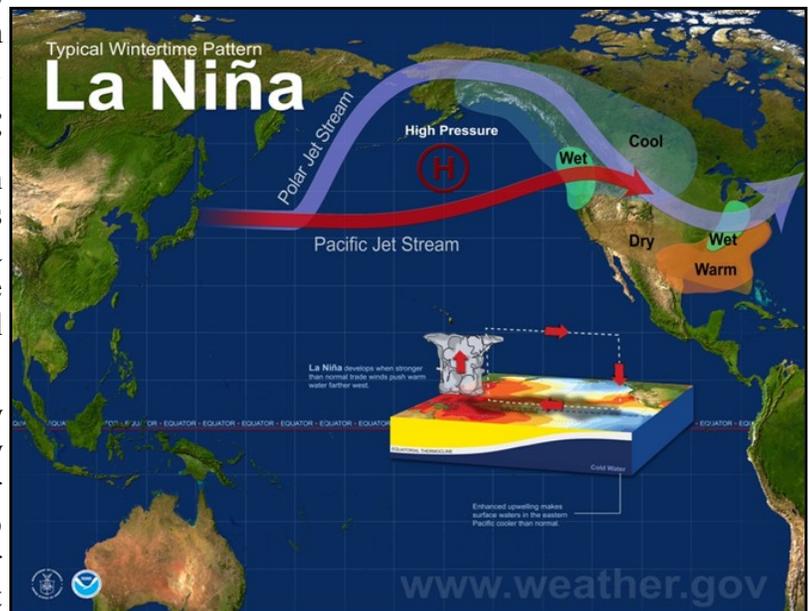


Figure 1. Typical La Niña Wintertime Weather Pattern



percent chance of being near normal, or an 18 percent chance of being drier than normal (Fig. 3) for a large part of southeast Idaho.

Updated outlooks are issued on the third Thursday of each month at:

http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/lanina/.

For now, the most prudent action one could take is to approach the winter armed with the expectations suggestive of a developing La Niña while remaining prepared for the variability that will surely accompany the winter weather of 2011-2012.

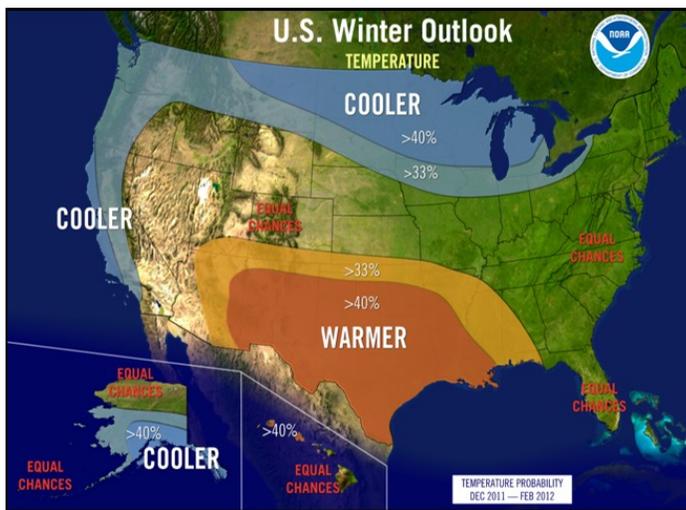


Figure 2. Temperature Outlook for December, January, and February

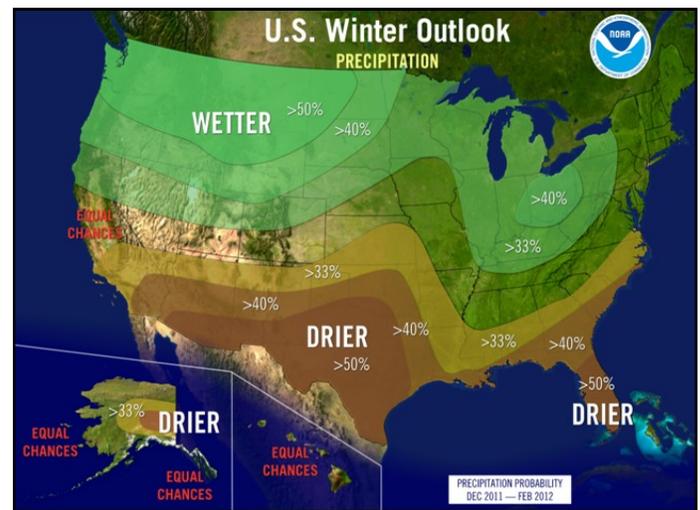


Figure 3. Precipitation Outlook for December, January, and February

Eastern Idaho State Fair

By Chris Hattings

Meteorological Intern

The National Weather Service Booth at the Eastern Idaho State Fair was a success this September thanks to the warm and dry weather along with the hard work of several National Weather Service Pocatello employees. Warning Coordination Meteorologist Vernon Preston, Lead Forecaster Dan Valle, General Forecaster Travis Wyatt, Intern Chris Hattings, Electronics Technician Dave Phelps and Administrative Services Assistant Karrie Schmidt staffed the booth from September 8 through 10.

From Thursday through Saturday, the fair had an attendance of over 28,000, many of whom passed by the NWS booth. The most popular item was the “Cloud Identification Chart” followed by the ever popular “Wheel of Disaster.” In addition, many other pamphlets concerning NWS products, weather safety and the NWS website were handed out. Many questions were also answered concerning accessing particular weather information via the internet.



Chris Hattings and Travis Wyatt staff the NWS booth

Incident Meteorologists a.k.a. IMETs

By Bob Survick

Incident Meteorologist

The National Weather Service maintains a cadre of about 70 meteorologists who are capable of deploying with portable communications equipment, observational tools, and forecast resources to provide weather information necessary for critical decision support to field management personnel working incidents that may threaten life or property. These meteorologists are generally assigned as forecasters at local or regional offices around the country and receive special training needed to support various incidents such as wildfires or near-shore ocean oil spills when called upon.



Earliest known picture of an Incident Meteorologist, 1920.

The history of Fire Weather and the Incident Meteorologist can be traced to the issuance of Fire Weather Warnings at the San Francisco and Portland Districts as far back as 1913. The first Incident Meteorologist dispatched to the field was about 1920. During the off season they would inspect more than 700 forest observation stations.

When Incident Meteorologists deploy to the incident, the level of team interaction, communication, quality of decision support for tactical operations in the field, and the overall safety of both the people who are responding to the incident and the local communities are greatly increased. Consider the fire fighters on the line who could be placed in harm's way if winds shift unexpectedly or suddenly, or severe thunderstorms and lightning affect the operations and safety of search and recovery teams.

The type of information needed by incident responders varies to some degree with the type of incident and resources deployed, but the greatest change over the past several decades is the quality and timeliness of the information we provide. The advent of radar in the 1940's, weather satellite in 1960, and the computer and Internet in the late 20th century have made it possible to provide quality decision support in near real time.

Some notable recent events where Incident Meteorologists have served response teams in the field:

- * Indians Wildfire, Los Padres National Forest, 2008 pictured on page 4.
- * The Selendang Ayu tanker carrying soy beans that ran aground near Dutch Harbor, Alaska, 2004. The incident resulted in an oil spill.
- * Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico, 2010.



IMET briefing at Tripod Fire in Washington, 2006.



IMET camper unit, 1962.



Rotating plume, Indians Fire, Los Padres
National Forest, California, 2008.

- * The Super Tornado Outbreak in the Eastern United States, 2011.
- * Space Shuttle Columbia Disaster over Texas, 2003.
- * Hurricane Katrina, 2005.
- * Australian Wildfires in New South Wales, 2007.

The role of the IMET continues to expand as the Federal Emergency Management Agency FEMA, the United States Coast Guard, local Emergency Management Teams, and others begin to call on the National Weather Service, Incident Meteorologist.

Pocatello Airport Appreciation Day

By Gary Wicklund

Observation Program Leader

On June 25th, the Pocatello airport opened the flight-line to the public for a second year to give the local community an opportunity to experience flight, see displays, and generally have a fun day with family and friends. Military aircraft ranging from vintage to active duty were on display representing the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force. The oldest military aircraft on display was the bi-wing Stearman Kaydet used for training WWII pilots. A Korean war-era aircraft, the FJ-4B Fury in Navy livery, was the rarest aircraft and the only airworthy Fury anywhere in the world. Current era military aircraft were a pair of Air Force A-10 Warthogs, a pair of Navy F-18 Hornets, and an Army H-60 Blackhawk helicopter.



A very rare FJ-48 Fury from the Teton Aviation Museum in Driggs, Idaho: First flight of this series of aircraft was in October 1954. Photo by Gary Wicklund (06/11)

General aviation aircraft were also on display with Cessnas, Mooneys, Pipers, and home-built experimental aircraft, to name a few. The local chapter of the Experimental Aviation Association (EAA), under the banner of the Young Eagles program, gave free incentive rides to children from 8 to 18 years of age. By the end of the flight period, the EAA had given over 100 children the opportunity to experience flight—many for the first time. The Utah Helicopter and AVCenter offered low-cost rides over the city for nearly 200 visitors.

Our local Army Reserve unit, again this year, camouflaged their array of equipment beneath which they set up an electronic rifle range for use by all visitors. The Army folks discovered there were many marksmen and women among the airport visitors. The H-60 Blackhawk from the Guard unit in Boise was staged nearby where visitors could chat with the crew and climb into the helicopter to get a first-hand experience of this rugged aircraft.

With a wide range of displays and activities, the day was an enjoyable one for our nearly 3,000 visitors. Fortunately, the weather was perfect, saving the weather member of the committee from a visit to a large vat and a bundle of feathers.

The airport committee will once again open the flight line to the public on June 23rd, 2012, from 9am to 3pm. The event is free to everyone, including parking. Bring the family and experience what our local airport has to offer. The 2012 event theme is “Come Fly with Us—Airport Appreciation Day.” Additional details can be found on the web at www.IFlyPocatello.com. One can also find the event flyer on this page when completed. For now, the event’s date and time is listed under coming events.

Weather Ready Nation

By Vern Preston

Warning Coordination Meteorologist

Your National Weather Service is launching a comprehensive initiative to build a “Weather-ready” nation to make America safer by saving more lives and protecting livelihoods as communities across the country become increasingly vulnerable to severe weather events, such as tornado outbreaks, intense heat waves, flooding, active hurricane seasons, and solar storms that threaten electrical and communication systems.

“Severe weather represents a very real threat to public safety that requires additional robust action,” said Jack Hayes, director of NOAA’s National Weather Service. “The increasing impacts of natural disasters, as seen this year, are a stark reminder of the lives and livelihoods at risk.”



Weather Decision Services

Improve weather decision services for events that threaten safety, health, the environment, economic productivity, or homeland security

In partnership with other government agencies, researchers, and the private sector, the National Weather Service is charting a path to a weather-ready nation through:

- ◆ Improved precision of weather and water forecasts and effective communication of risk to local authorities;
- ◆ Improved weather decision support services with new initiatives such as the development of mobile-ready emergency response specialist teams;
- ◆ Innovative science and technological solutions such as the nationwide implementation of Dual Pol radar technology, Integrated Water Resources Science and Services, and the Joint Polar Satellite System;
- ◆ Strengthening joint partnerships to enhance community preparedness;
- ◆ Working with weather enterprise partners and the emergency management community to enhance safety and economic output and effectively manage environmental resources.

The National Weather Service is also planning innovative, community-based test projects across the country, ranging in focus from emergency response to ecological forecasting, to enhance the agency's preparedness efforts to better address the impacts of extreme weather. Test projects will initially be launched at strategic locations in the Gulf Coast, South and mid-Atlantic.

"These test projects serve as tangible examples of how the National Weather Service is trying to address the impact of weather-related disasters," said Hayes. "Ultimately, these projects will provide the specific action plans necessary for us to adapt to extreme weather events and represent an important step in developing a weather-ready nation."

According to Munich Reinsurance America, one of the top providers of property and casualty reinsurance in the U.S., the number of natural disasters has tripled in the last 20 years and 2010 was a record breaker with about 250. Average thunderstorm losses have increased five-fold since 1980. For the first half of 2011 there have been \$20 billion in thunderstorm losses, up from the previous three-year average of \$10 billion.

This increase in weather-related disasters coupled with population growth and density in high-risk areas, has moved NOAA and its partners — from the emergency management community and across America's weather enterprise — from concern to action.

"Building a Weather-ready nation is everyone's responsibility," said Eddie Hicks, International Association of Emergency Managers USA president. "It starts with the National Weather Service and emergency managers, like the U.S. Council of International Association of Emergency Managers, but it ends with actions by individuals and businesses to reduce their risks. The more prepared communities are for destructive weather, the less of a human and economic toll we'll experience in the future, and that's a great thing for the country."

Report The Following Hazards By Calling: 1-800-877-1937 or email Pih.Spotter@noaa.gov

- Snowfall: Please report any amount, especially amounts greater than 3 inches.
- Freezing Rain: Any amount, especially amounts at or greater than ¼ inch.
- Strong Winds: Mainly if they are over 50 mph.
- Ice Jams: Any visible ice jam.
- Flooding: Any type or duration.
- Dense Fog: Any fog, especially dense fog with visibilities less than ½ mile.

The NWS Staff

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Observation Program Leader	Gary Wicklund
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Electronic Technicians	Rich Denning
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