

SEASONAL OUTLOOK

National Report
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For Southern and Central California

Issued: August 1st, 2012

Valid for: September 2012 - November 2012



Summary:

- Above Normal large fire Potential continuing over Southern California. Large fire potential returning to normal in Central California.
- Above Normal Precipitation Central California, Near Normal Southern California.
- Seasonal Rains Returning to Central California in November.
- 1 or 2 Offshore Flow Events Possible Per Month over Southern California.

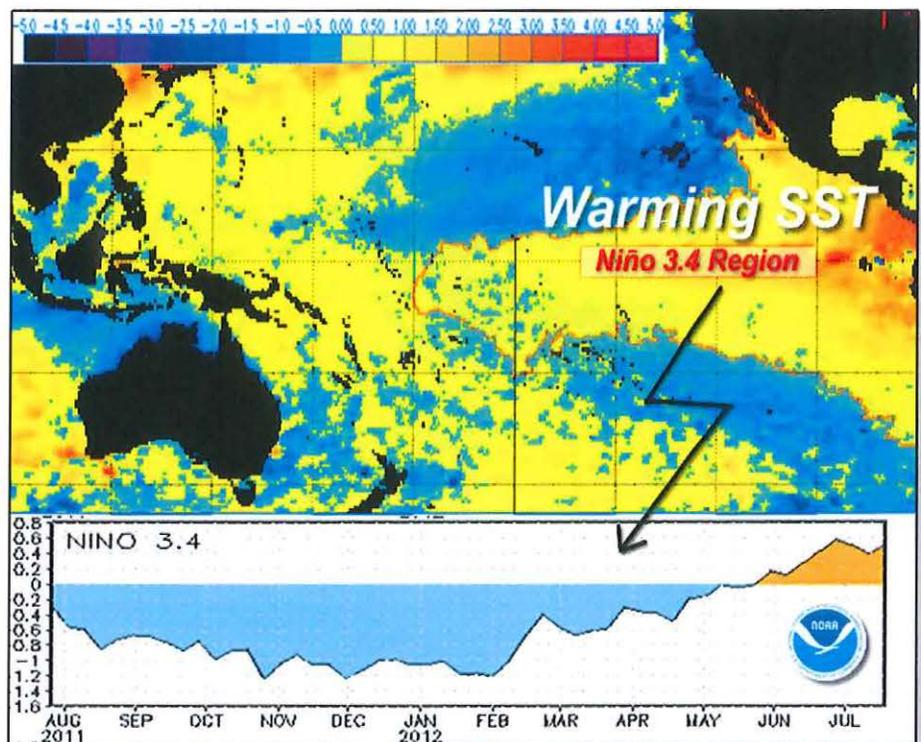
Weather Discussion

During the past two months, sea-surface temperatures have increased markedly across the Eastern Pacific. Waters have also warmed significantly over the Niño 3.4 region which is the most important region in influencing the weather across California. Sea surface temperatures in this region have crossed the 0.5° C above normal threshold over most of the equatorial Pacific and other areas near the South American coast have warmed over a degree above normal (Figure 1).

Long range models continue to indicate an El Niño is expected to strengthen over the eastern Pacific (Figure 2). In fact, the models have been trending stronger each month since the spring, and given these trends, it seems increasingly likely at least a moderate El Niño may evolve during the fall and winter.

The expected emergence of an El Niño will likely have a profound impact on the upcoming "rainy season." On average, precipitation is significantly above average

Figure 1: Sea Surface Temp., Departure from Normal



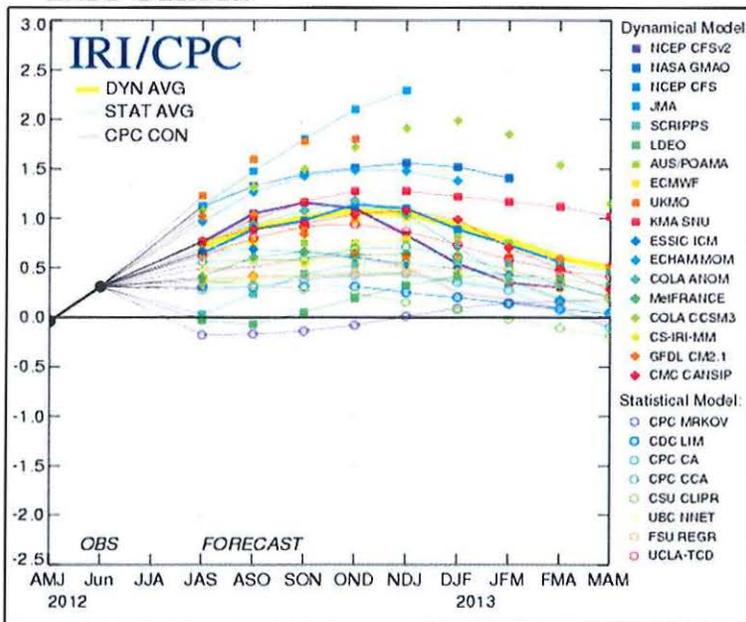
during the winter season during an ongoing El Niño compared to average. The storm track is often shifted further south which allows stronger storms with deeper moisture to reach the state.

While it remains to be seen if the emerging El Niño will, indeed, bring above average precipitation this winter, it may produce above normal precipitation to the central part of the state this fall as the storm track shifts further south. Significant rains may occur in areas north of Pt. Conception by November with an increasing likelihood of a season-ending event before Thanksgiving.

However, over Southern California, there isn't as strong of a correlation between an autumn-season El Niño and an early onset to rainy season. Precipitation may end up being above average this winter, but the onset of the precipitation may not be any earlier than usual over Southern California. Precipitation at the official recording station at the Los Angeles Civic Center is not significantly higher in September, October and November than average during El Niño's than during other conditions (Figure 3).

Therefore, given the expected El Niño onset, *above normal precipitation may occur over central portions of the state, while other areas may see precipitation closer to average.* Temperatures should be near normal.

Figure 2: Computer Model Composite ENSO Outlook



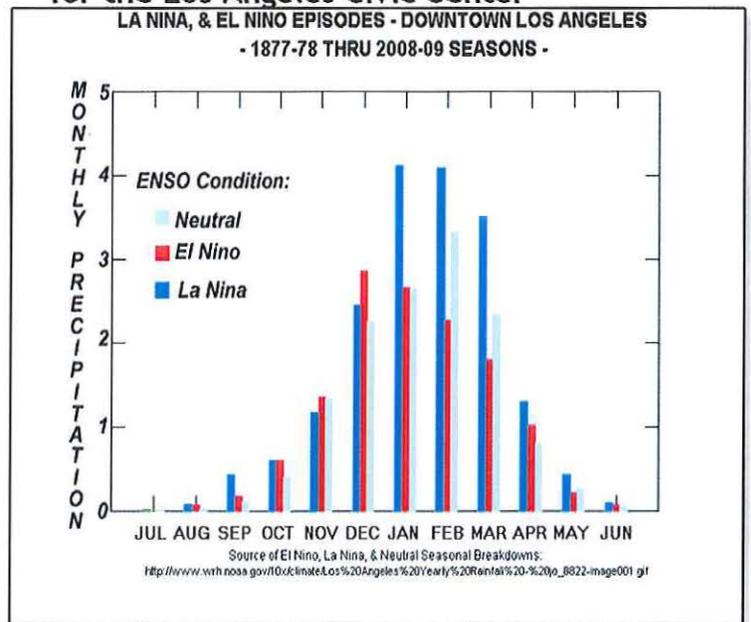
Fuels Discussion

The dry conditions currently gripping the area will probably peak in late September and October before the onset of seasonal rainfall. Fuels will likely surpass critical thresholds in all areas, except perhaps the immediate coastal areas. The lack of any significant "monsoonal" thunderstorm activity will result in fuels having virtually no moisture to carry into the fall.

Over Southern California, offshore flow (or Santa Ana winds) is expected to develop this fall with near normal numbers of events. It is likely a few of these offshore events, bringing very warm temperatures, strong winds and low RH, will happen before the seasonal rains of winter occur. During these periods, extreme fire behavior can be expected with a high likelihood of large fire growth. In the central part of the state, fires will become less likely in the latter half of October in the higher elevations, which will spread into the foothills in November. Until that time, high elevation fires will be possible.

Therefore, above normal large fire potential will continue over much of Southern California into the fall, while Central California may see the large fire threat end a few weeks sooner than average.

Figure 3: Comparison of Monthly Precipitation for the Los Angeles Civic Center*



*Data: NCDC, Analysis: Climate Stations.org



This Product was developed by the Predictive Services group, located at the South Zone Coordination Center in Riverside, California

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