Special Weather Statement

La Niña Update

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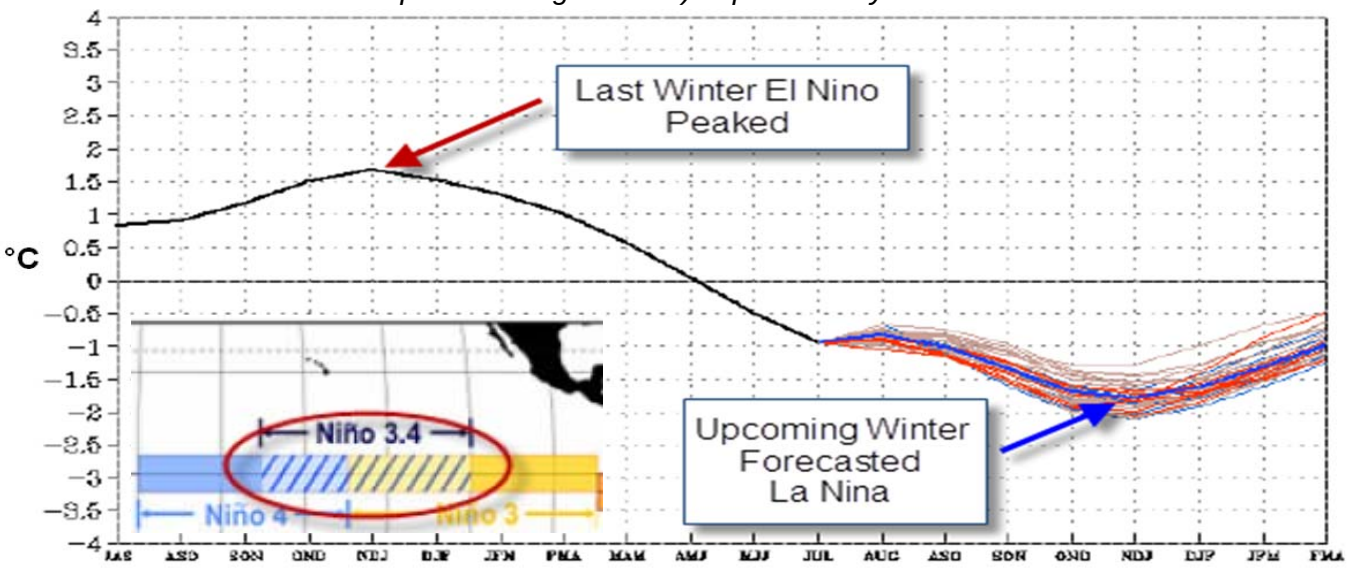
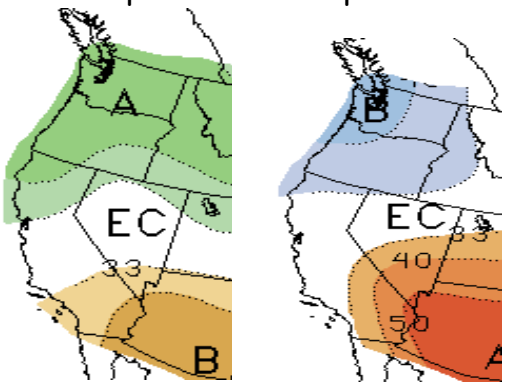
Last winter we observed moderate to strong "El Niño" conditions, in which sea surface temperatures along the equatorial Pacific ran about +1.5 to 1.8°C above normal. Precipitation totals across the state ran generally near to a little above normal, which was nice after three consecutive "dry" years, but for the most part this latest "El Niño" did not produce rainfall totals that were as impressive as past El Niño winters of similar magnitude. Fortunately, we did see a healthy snow pack up in the Sierra. Through the late spring we saw a quick end to El Niño conditions and a transition to La Niña by the beginning of summer. La Niña is the opposite of El Niño, in that sea surface temperatures along the equatorial Pacific run below normal instead of above. Most of the longer range models call for moderately strong "La Niña" conditions through the upcoming winter, with sea surface temperatures along the equatorial Pacific projected to run about -1.5 to 2.0°C *below* normal. Looking at climate records, there are a few "similar" El Niño to La Niña transitions, and most reflect near or below normal rainfall for NorCal. For La Niña years in general, climatology suggests above normal precipitation for the Pacific Northwest and NorCal through the fall and early winter, near normal across Central California and below normal for SoCal. However, from the mid winter through early spring, all of California generally experiences below normal precipitation (driest in SoCal). Meanwhile, temperatures should average near normal over much of California through the winter, then trend toward below normal for NorCal heading into the spring.

The chart below shows the departure from normal sea surface temps in the Nino 3.4 zone along the equatorial Pacific, peaking +1.5°C above normal last winter (black line) & projected by models (blue line represents avg forecast) to peak nearly -2.0°C below normal next winter.



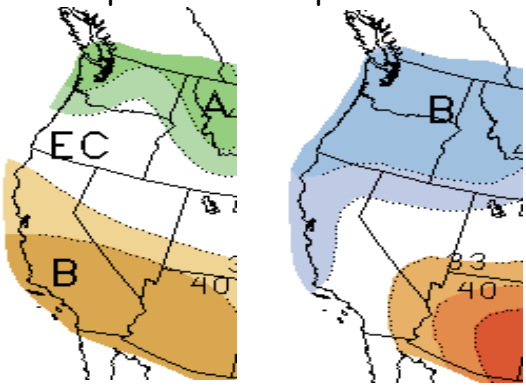
Seasonal Forecasts (A=Above Normal, B=Below Normal, EC=Equal Chances)

Precipitation Temperature



Nov-Dec-Jan 2010-2011

Precipitation Temperature



Feb-Mar-Apr 2011