

Weather Forecast: A Mixed Bag

The 2020 weather forecast is offering a little of everything — warm and cold, wet and dry — across various parts of the U.S.

by Kindra Gordon

The beloved “Farmer’s Almanac” describes winter 2020 as “freezing, frigid, frosty” but also notes there may be so many ups and downs on the thermometer it could be dubbed a “Polar Coaster.” Specifically, the almanac predicts the country from the Rockies to the East Coast will be cold with ample snow across the northern tier of the country.

Meanwhile, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) official winter seasonal outlook

from the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) for the months of December through February are slightly more optimistic with regard to the cold.

While no part of the U.S. is favored to have below-average temperatures this winter, the CPC is forecasting that through February modest probabilities exist for above-average temperatures spanning large parts of the lower 48 states from the West across the South and up the Eastern Seaboard. Alaska and Hawaii have the greatest likelihood for warmer-than-normal conditions.

The CPC says the Northern Plains, the Upper Mississippi Valley and the western Great Lakes region have equal chances for below-, near- or above-average temperatures.

This temperature forecast is a mixed bag because there is currently an absence of either an El Niño or a La Niña. The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) typically influences the winter climate pattern. The lack of El Niño and La Niña is anticipated to persist through the spring.

“Without either El Niño or La Niña conditions, short-term climate patterns like the Arctic Oscillation will drive winter weather and could result in large swings in temperature and precipitation,” Mike Halpert, deputy director of NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center, explained when the forecast was released.

Regarding precipitation, drier-than-average conditions are most likely for Louisiana, parts of Texas, Mississippi, Arkansas and Oklahoma as well as areas of northern and central California. These conditions could compound the drought which rapidly developed across much of the South during the summer and early fall. Currently, approximately 20% of the country is dealing with drought conditions, with the most severe areas being the Four Corners region of the Southwest, central Texas and parts of the Southeast.

Wetter-than-average conditions are predicted across the Northern Plains, the Upper Mississippi Valley, the Great Lakes region and parts of the Mid-Atlantic region and the Northeast, as well as Hawaii and Alaska.

The remainder of the U.S. falls into the category of equal chances for below-, near-, or above-average precipitation.

With that wide-open forecast, it will be best to stay tuned to the 10-day outlooks, which are typically much more accurate at predicting temperatures and storm trends.

And, to give yourself a laugh, do not forget the words of comedian George Carlin when it comes to forecasting the weather. Carlin once quipped, “Weather forecast for tonight: dark. Continued dark overnight, with widely scattered light by morning.” **HW**

