

La Nina Bringing Cool, Wet to North and Warm, Dry to South

by Kindra Gordon

The winter forecast for the U.S. calls for cooler, wetter conditions across the northern tier of the country, while favoring warmer, drier conditions across the southern U.S., thanks in part to an ongoing La Nina.

Forecasters at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center – a division of the National Weather Service – are also closely monitoring persistent drought during the winter months ahead, with more than 45% of the continental U.S. now experiencing drought. The year 2020 wrapped up among the top-five warmest temperature years on record.

Currently, large areas of drought extend over the western half of the country. With a La Nina climate pattern in place, drought conditions are expected to expand and intensify across the southern and central Plains, eastern Gulf Coast, and in California during the months ahead. Drought conditions are expected to improve in the northern Rockies, Northwest, New England, Alaska and Hawaii over the coming months.

“With La Nina well established and expected to persist through the upcoming 2020-21 winter season, we anticipate the typical, cooler, wetter North, and warmer, drier South, as the most likely outcome of winter weather that the U.S. will experience this year,” says Mike Halpert, deputy director of NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

The greatest chances for warmer-than-normal conditions extend across the Southern tier of the U.S. from the Southwest, across the Gulf states and into the Southeast. More modest probabilities for warmer temperatures are forecast in the southern parts of the west coast, and from the Mid-Atlantic into the Northeast.

Below-normal temperatures are favored from the northern Pacific Northwest into the Northern Plains, with equal chances for below-, near- or above-average temperatures in the remaining regions.

Wetter-than-average conditions are most likely across the northern tier of the U.S., extending from the Pacific Northwest, across the Northern Plains, Great Lakes and into the Ohio Valley. The greatest chances for drier-than-average conditions are predicted in the Southwest, across Texas along the Gulf Coast, and in Florida. More modest chances for drier conditions are forecast from California across the Rockies, Central Plains and into the Southeast. The remainder of the U.S., including the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast, falls into the category of equal chances for below-, near-, or above-average precipitation. **HW**

Editor's note: Visit Cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/ for more information from the NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

