

Weak El Nino conditions likely to develop for winter 2013-14

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The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center reports that weak El Niño conditions have a 60-65 percent chance of developing this fall and winter. El Niño is a set of ocean and atmosphere conditions that affect global weather, generally producing wet and warm winters in western North and South America and dry conditions in the western Pacific and Southeast Asia. The strong El Niño of 1997-98 was responsible for frequent storms in coastal California, resulting in costly floods and landslides.

Californians hope that an El Niño event will provide drought relief, but the weak conditions predicted may not provide enough precipitation to refill depleted reservoirs and aquifers. According to NOAA, southern California is likely to receive above-average rainfall, but forecasters predict only a one-third probability of above-average precipitation in central and northern California. In contrast, El Niño will likely result in mild winter conditions in the northeast U.S. This would contrast with the extreme cold temperatures of 2013-14, which caused widespread travel disruptions and stressed power grids.

Sources: E&E News, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
