Volume 2, Number 5

November 2009

SERVING NWS BOISE WEATHER SPOTTERS AND COOPERATIVE OBSERVERS

Sage Winds

Happy Thanksgiving

President George Washington issued the first national Thanksgiving Day Proclamation in the year 1789 and again in 1795.

Winter Weather Observing

Winter has finally arrived in the area. While the most damaging weather we experience in southwest Idaho and southeast Oregon may come from summertime thunderstorms and flooding, the most disruptive weather to our economy comes from winter storms that close roads, school, and businesses.

In the summer, the NWS 88D radar is able to see thunderstorms more than 150 miles away. This is because thunderstorms send precipitation sized rain drops high into the atmosphere. Some of these rain drops turn to hail and then when you add a water coating on the hail, the 88D radar can easily see these particles up to 200 miles away. The same is not true in winter. Our winter storms are much lower in the atmosphere and frozen particles like snowflakes reflect much less radar energy than rain drops or hail particles.

This is where your observations of snow amounts comes in. We need those observations to help us make better winter storm forecasts. Anytime more than an inch of snow falls at your location, call in your report. You can wait until the storm is over, or if the snow is accumulating at a rapid rate, call in when you receive 4 or more inches and it's still snowing. Your reports will help us make more accurate snow forecasts so communities can be better prepared for snow removal operations.

NWS Boise Staff changes

It is with a combination of sadness and happiness that one of our staff members has moved on. The previous editor of the Sage winds, Dawn Fishler has moved on to a new job at NWS Reno, Nevada. Many of you know Dawn from the spotter training sessions she gave all across the area. While Dawn will be very much missed in our office, and as editor of the Sage Winds, we know that Dawn will be much happier at her new location. Dawn is moving closer to home, family, and friends. The loss at the NWS in Boise is offset by the gain at the NWS in Reno.

We wish Dawn nothing but the best in her new location. May she have a long prosperous career, and a happy life wherever she goes.

El Niño—Where are we?

El Niño, the warming of the central and eastern equatorial Pacific, continues. Current forecasts call for el niño conditions to persist through the winter into the spring of 2010.

What does this mean for weather across the Pacific Northwest, and the rest of North America? Typically during El Niño winters, the northern tier of the United States is warmer and drier than normal. The southern tier of the United States is wetter than normal with the southeast U.S. cooler than normal. This isn't always the case, it is just a statistical forecast showing how the El Niño pattern skews the average weather patterns. Odds favor, but do not guarantee the results shown.

The chart below shows the deviation from normal for the heat content of the tropical Pacific Ocean along and east of the International Dateline. One year ago (the left side of the chart), the heat con-

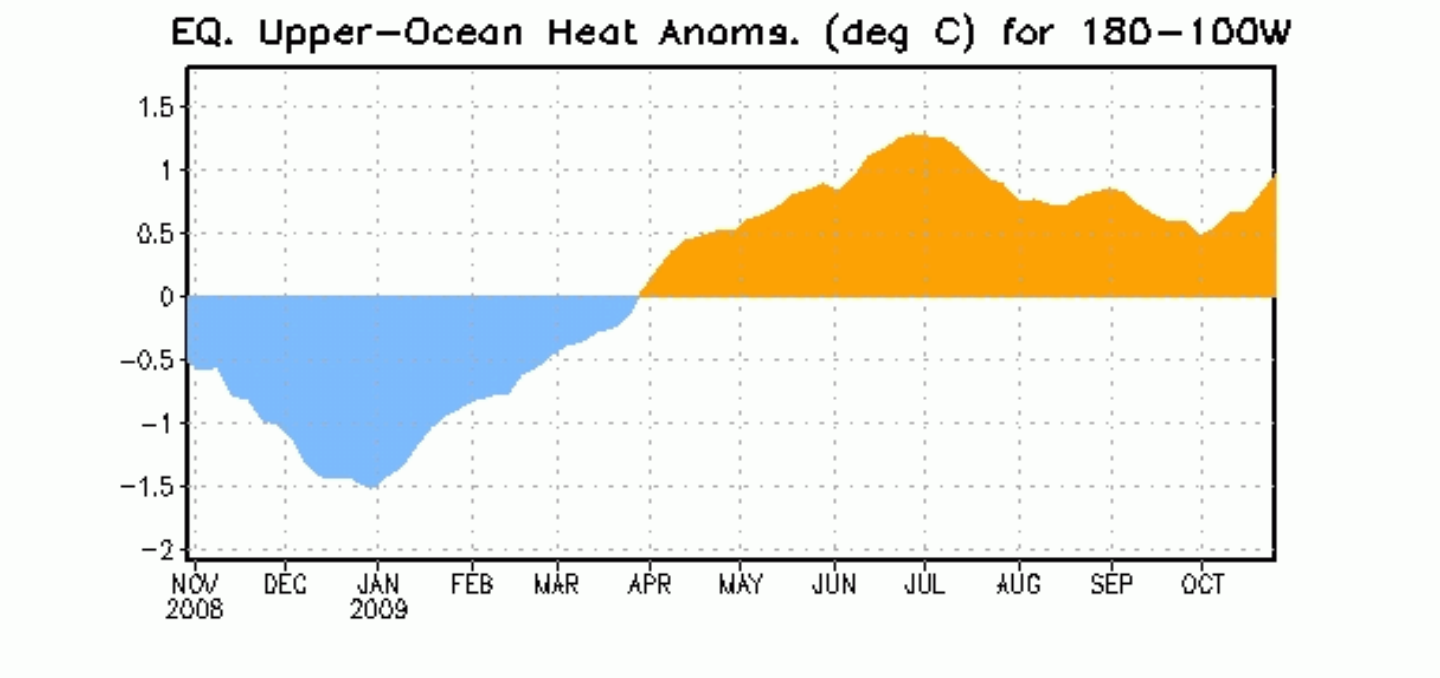
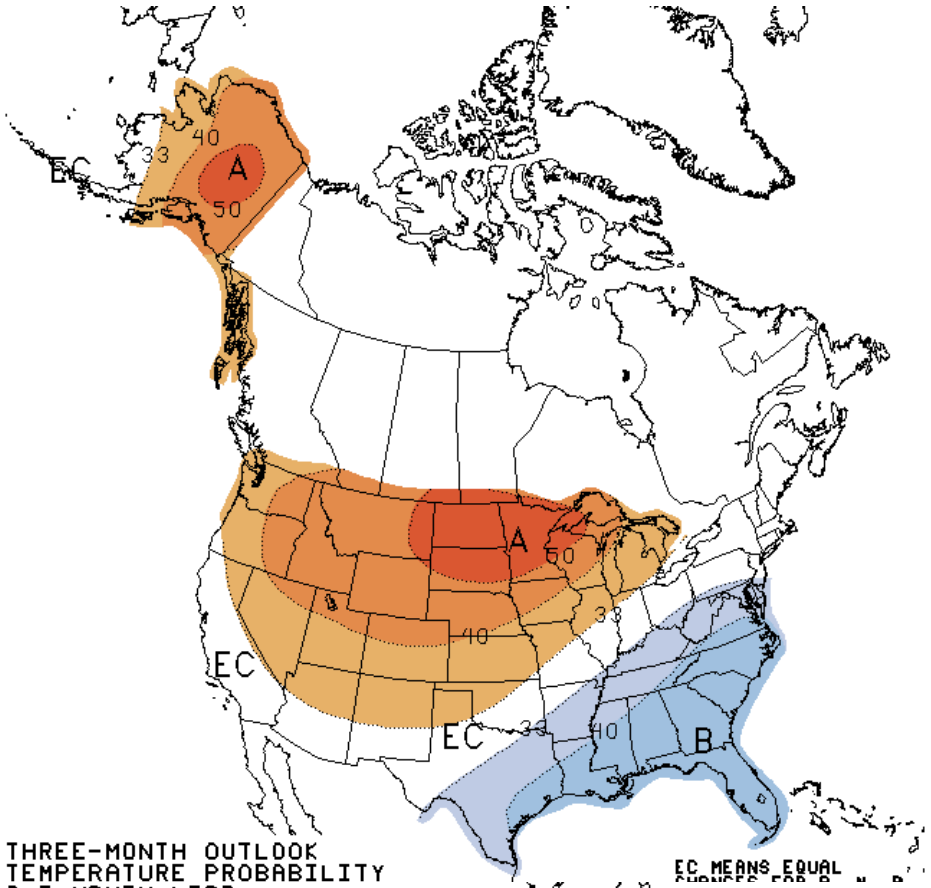


Figure 4. Area-averaged upper-ocean heat content anomalies (°C) in the equatorial Pacific (5°N-5°S, 180°-100°W). Heat content anomalies are computed as departures from the 1982-2004 base period pentad means.

tent was significantly below normal. Since spring of 2009 the heat content has been above normal. When the deviation of the temperature from normal exceeds .5 deg C, we are considered to be in an El Niño or La Niña condition. Warmer than normal indicates El Niño (the current condition) and cooler than normal indicates La Niña (last winter).

For more information on how El Nino affects weather across the United States, go to http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2009/20091015_winteroutlook.html

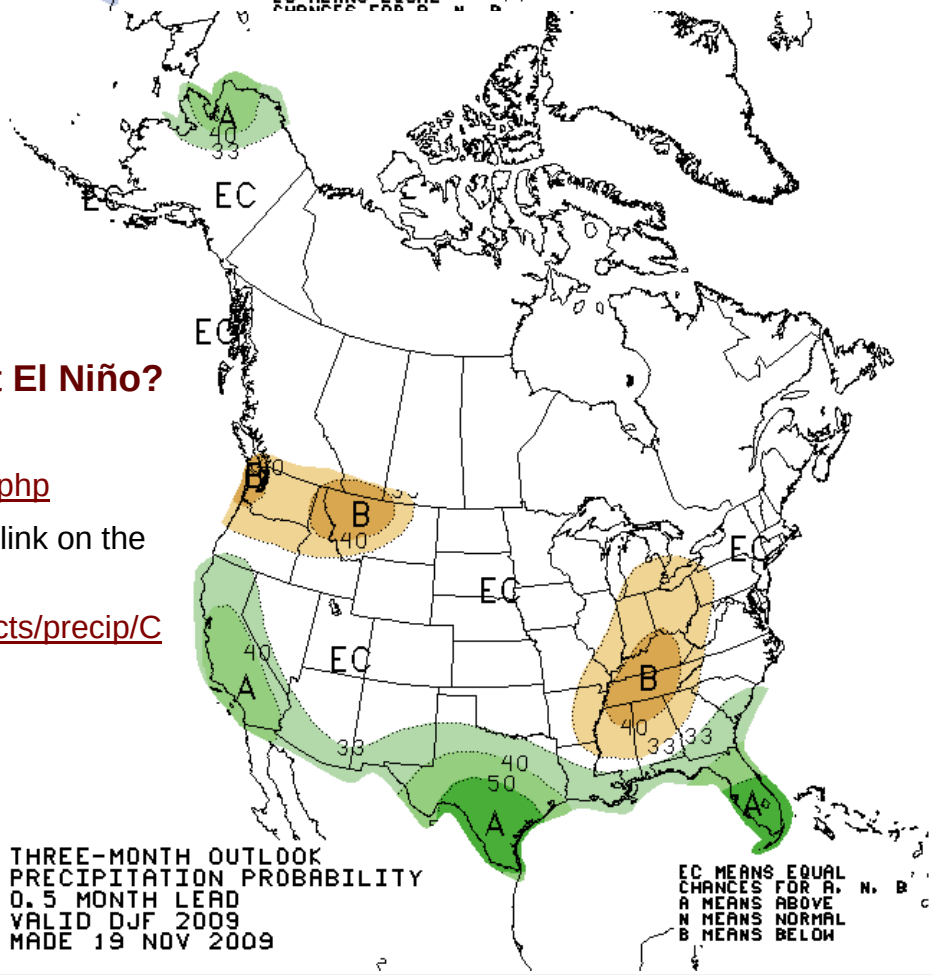


Both of these charts are the 3 month forecast valid from December through February.

On the left is the temperature forecast, below is the precipitation forecast.

These forecasts come from the Climate Prediction Center (www.cpc.noaa.gov).

These charts show the odds of the three month period being above, near, or below normal. Across Idaho and eastern Oregon there is an increased chance that temperatures will be above normal, and precipitation at or below normal.



Want to learn more about El Niño?

Go to…

http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/index.php

Click on the **El Niño/La Niña** link on the left hand side, or go to...

http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/products/precip/CWlink/MJO/enso.shtml#link

E-Spotter is here.

Have you signed up for your E-Spotter account?

http://espotter.weather.gov/

Perhaps you think that your phone call will disrupt our office because your report is not that big a deal. Or perhaps you just don't want to use the phone and you are at your computer, so why not send the report.

When you send a report via the above web site, we receive that report seconds after you hit the submit button.

If you have not registered to be an E-Spotter, please give it a try. There is a "register" link at the top of the above link.

Spotter Training in Marsing, Idaho

On Saturday November 21, a training session was held in Marsing for the CERT volunteers of Owyhee County. CERT stands for the Citizens Emergency Response Team. These are groups of people that each county trains to help with emergency situations that develop in the local area.

The training session brought several new spotters into the SkyWarn program in an area where we don't have many spotters.

Skywarn Spotter Reporting Criteria:

Call us when your observe:

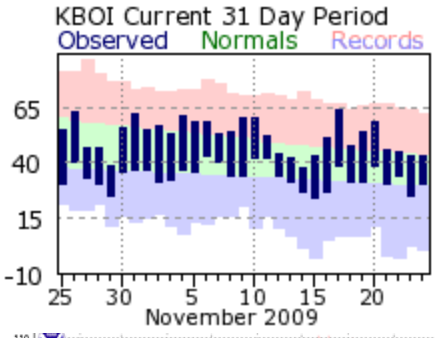
* *Tornado: All tornadoes*
* *Funnel Clouds: All funnel clouds, watch for rotation*
* *Hail: 1/2" in diameter and larger*
* *Near continuous Lightning*
* *Winds: All winds greater than 35 mph*
* *Heavy Rain: Falling at a rate of 1" per hour or greater (1/2" in 30 minutes), or more than 1" per day in the winter*
* *Freezing Rain: Any measurable freezing rain*
* *Heavy Snow: 1" per hour or greater, or storm total 4" or more, or snow causing road closures*
* *Flooding: Any water flowing where it doesn't normally or rivers flowing above their banks*
* *Low visibility: Visibility less than 1/4 mile for any reason*
* *Weather Related Damage, Death, or Injury: If weather causes damage, death or injury, please let us know*

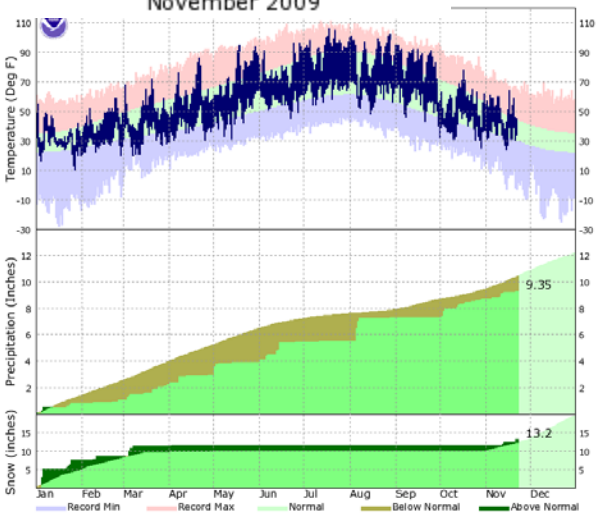
Weather in the News

Tornado on the Oregon coast— A rare tornado moves onto the Oregon coast, damaging several buildings. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/33775971#33775971

Heavy rains in Britain—Some were calling this the heaviest rain to ever hit the area. Certainly this was a rain event that has not been seen in the area in modern times.
http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34058376/ns/weather/

Did You Know?





Recent climate data is available on our web site for several locations across the area. On our web site, click on the "Current 31 Day Period" chart towards the bottom on the right of our web page (shown at left), then select the location of your choice to show the monthly data or yearly data.
http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/climate/temp_graphs.php?wfo=boi

weather.gov/boise

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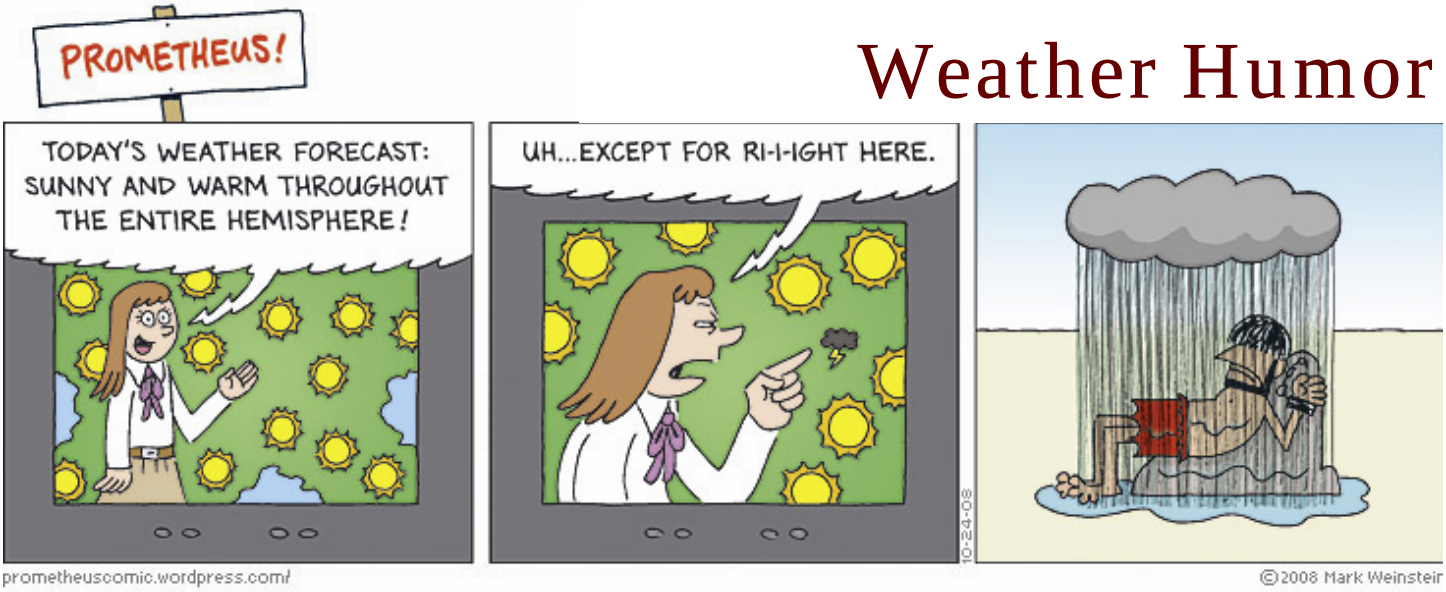
Weather Humor