2026/2027 Winter Outlook

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Updated: October 21, 2026



Lamy, NM February 14, 2023
Photo Courtesy X @HeidiSocial



Ramah, NM January 25, 2017
Photo Courtesy Jay Chapman via pexels



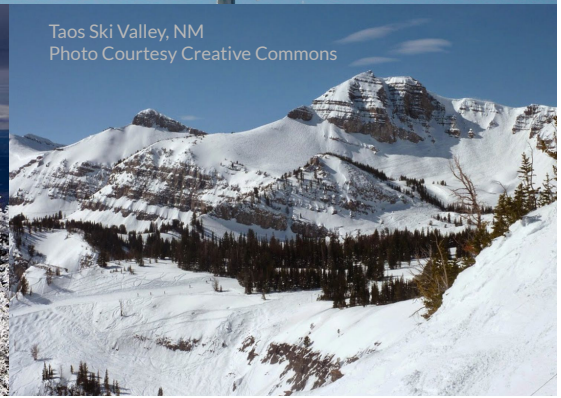
Clovis Windmill Freezing Rain January 30, 2010
Photo Courtesy Carol Nash



Taos, NM December 15, 2017
Photo Courtesy Gil Gallegos



Sandia Crest December 18, 2014
Photo Courtesy Leah Ostro



Taos Ski Valley, NM
Photo Courtesy Creative Commons

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2026/2027 Winter Outlook

Bottom Line Up Front

There are high chances that a historic El Niño will impact NM through the winter and spring of 2027. Stronger events can make certain weather and climate outcomes more likely, but they are never a guarantee. Given the unprecedented nature of this event, the winter and spring weather pattern may completely defy seasonal forecasting models.

Official CPC Outlook (Climate Prediction Center: updated December 8, 2025):

- *Precipitation:* There is a 40-50% chance that precipitation will lean above normal over most of NM for the 4-month period from December to March.
- *Temperature:* There are equal chances that temperatures will lean below normal, near normal, or above normal over NM for the 4-month period from December to March.

Forecast Confidence & Alternative Scenarios:

- There is moderate to high confidence that precipitation will be above normal for NM during the 4-month period from December to March.
- There is moderate confidence that temperatures will be near normal for NM during the 4-month period from December to March. Seasonal climate outlooks from several ensemble models indicate the potential for temperatures to actually lean below normal for parts of the area.
- While there are higher chances for above normal precipitation, it is uncertain how temperatures will influence the distribution of rain and snow. If temperatures trend warmer than normal, snow levels may be higher than normal, and lead to heavy wet snow, or, more frequent bouts of rain in lower elevation areas. If temperatures are near normal, a more beneficial snowpack may build across the region and greatly assist spring runoff.

Note: It is important to note that this summary is a seasonal outlook for the 4-month period covering December to March. There will be sub-seasonal and spatial variability that differs from the winter outlook over the four month period. Mountainous areas of NM are climatologically favored to receive greater precipitation than lower terrain areas given the greater influence of orographically driven precipitation events during the cool season. Mesoscale banded precipitation events, which are also more typical in the cool season, can often lead to extreme precipitation gradients across short distances. It is also not uncommon for one or two major winter weather events in a season to account for a significant portion of the seasonal precipitation. Major snowfall events have also occurred during the shoulder months of winter as was true in November 2024 and April 2025. The more recent September 2026 rainfall event is another example of how the seasonal precipitation distribution can be wildly misleading when reviewing the four month season as a whole. Remember, all it takes is one extreme precipitation event or one extreme cold outbreak to result in life-threatening impacts across NM.

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Motivation, Benefits, & Social Science

Motivation:
The purpose of the seasonal outlook is to deliver climate intelligence and long-range decision support to inform planning and risk management. This outlook serves as a bridge between the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) seasonal outlook and a more locally focused outlook for the winter season in NM. CPC seasonal outlooks provide real-time products and information that predict and describe climate variations on timescales of weeks to years thereby promoting effective management of climate risk and foster a climate-resilient society (CPC Mission). These outlooks do not predict specific weather for a particular day. Instead, they indicate the *probability* that the average temperature or precipitation for an upcoming 3-month period will be "above," "near," or "below" the 30-year historical average (climate.gov). Additional insight is provided for NM using an expanded suite of climate modeling products from various international resources for the period from December to March.

Seasonal Outlook Information Benefits:

- Planning and Risk Management Decisions
- Agriculture, Energy, Public Health, & Water Resource Management
- Economic & Financial Stability

Initial Exposure and Anchoring:
The CPC outlook and the local winter outlook will be updated throughout the winter and there will be changes as the season progresses to better reflect more current forecasts and modeling trends. The nature of a probabilistic forecast means that other outcomes are always possible, though they may be less likely. While people update their perceptions as events evolve, they often exhibit a tendency to "anchor" on the first forecast they receive (Losee et al., 2017). This is an example of cognitive bias.

Social Media and Misinformation:
Official weather forecasts and outlooks are intended to enhance public safety and should be verifiable, neutral, and have high scientific standards and accountability. Misinformation on the other hand may be used for social media clicks while appearing sensational and fearful to erode trust and delay response. Always verify sensational weather news by checking official sources like the NWS.

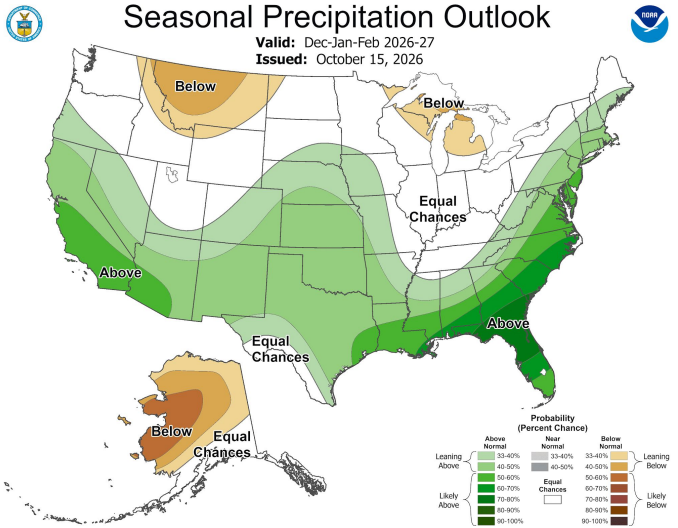
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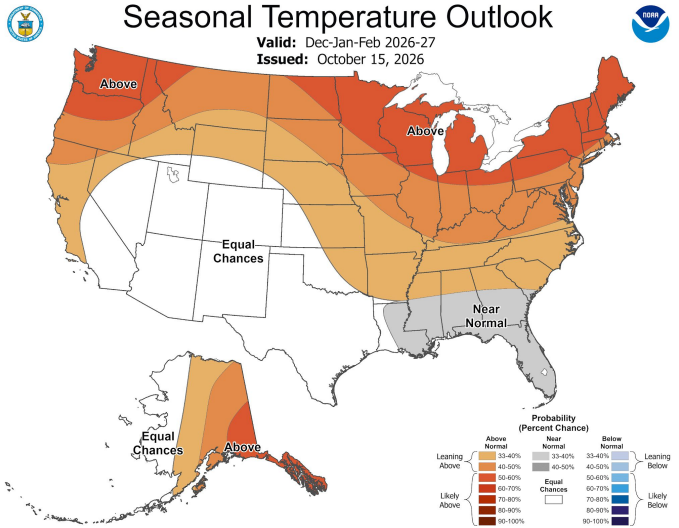
2026/2027 Winter Outlook

Climate Prediction Center (December-January-February)

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The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) seasonal outlook for the 3-month period from December through February indicates there is a 40% to 50% chance that precipitation will be above normal for most of NM. There are equal chances for below normal, near normal, or above normal temperatures over all of NM. Interactive probability of exceedance maps for precipitation and temperature are also provided by CPC to show more detailed information for each climate division. *Next CPC update November 19, 2026.*





Interactive CPC Outlook for Point Locations

Understanding NOAA's monthly and seasonal climate outlooks

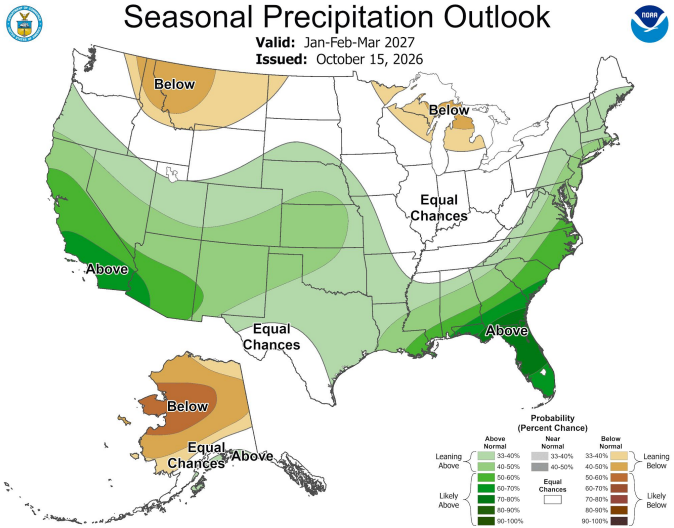
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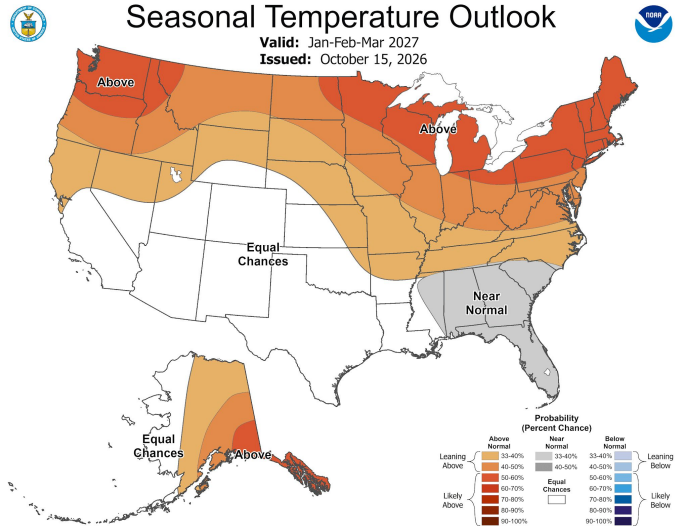
2026/2027 Winter Outlook

Climate Prediction Center (January-February-March)

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The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) seasonal outlook for the 3-month period from January through March indicates there is a 40% to 50% chance that precipitation will be above normal for most of NM while southeast NM has a 33% to 40% chance that precipitation will be above normal. There are equal chances that temperatures will be below normal, near normal, or above normal for all of NM. Interactive probability of exceedance maps for precipitation and temperature are also provided by CPC to show more detailed information for each climate division. *Next CPC update November 19, 2026.*





Interactive CPC Outlook for Point Locations

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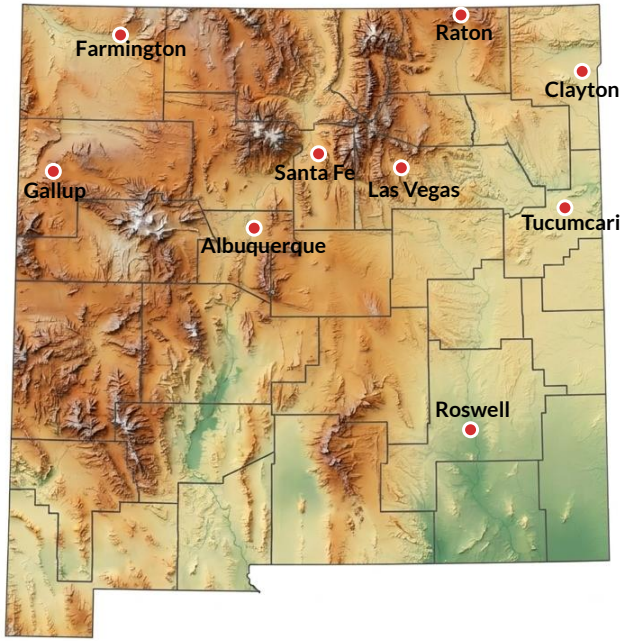
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What is Normal? (December through March)

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The table to the right outlines the four-month average precipitation, snowfall, and temperature for several airport locations across NM using the 1991-2020 climate normals.



Location	Average Precipitation	Average Snowfall*	Average Temperature
Farmington	2.54”	7.1”	35.9°
Gallup	2.87”	17.4”	33.6°
Albuquerque	1.78”	6.4”	41.4°
Santa Fe	1.96”	16.8”	35.8°
Raton	1.86”	21.1”	33.7°
Las Vegas	1.71”	15.3”	35.7°
Clayton	1.96”	16.6”	38.3°
Tucumcari	2.12”	11.5”	42.4°
Roswell	1.81”	8.0”	47.0°

*the snowfall average for sites other than Albuquerque, Clayton, and Roswell is from the nearest manual observing station

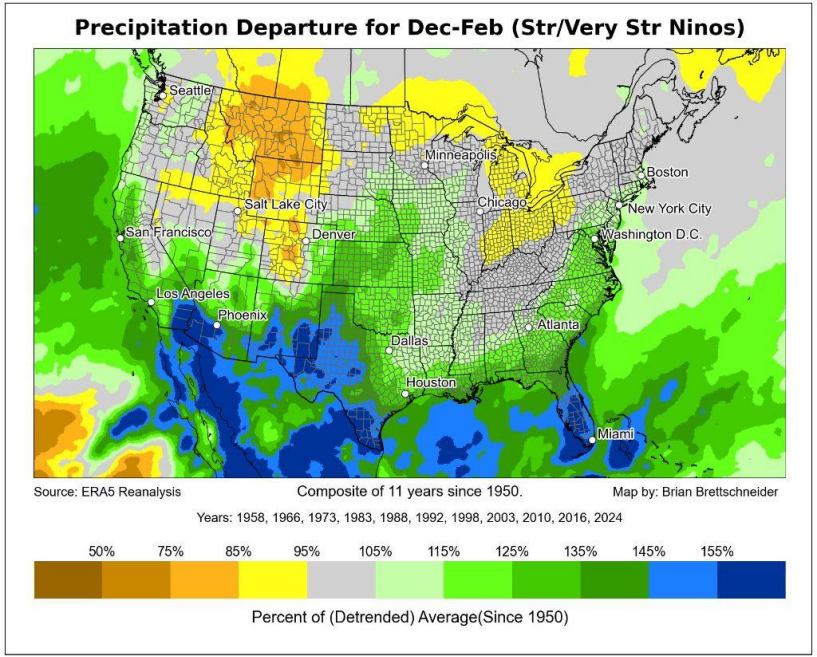
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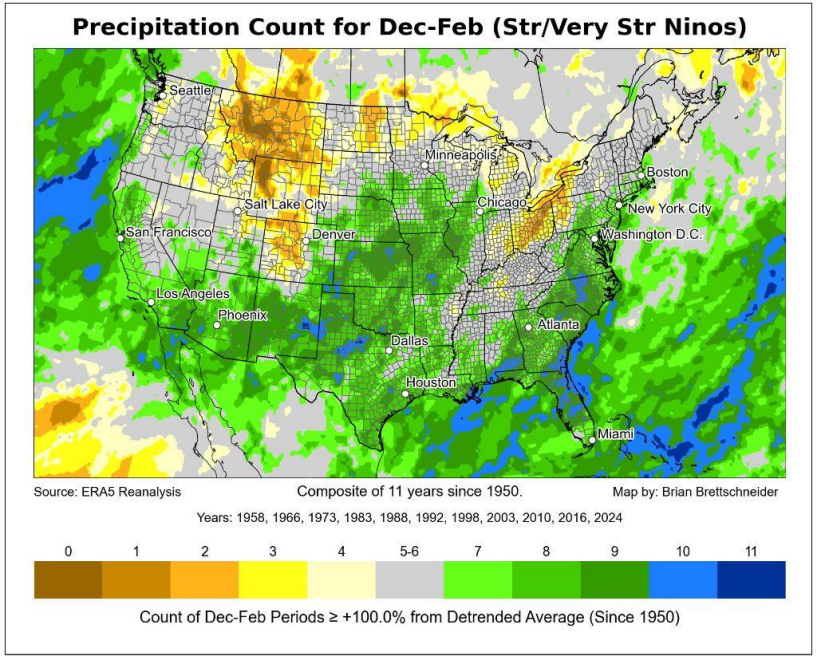
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Precipitation Composite: Strong/Very Strong El Niños

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The graphics below were compiled using the ERA5 reanalysis for 11 strong and very strong El Niño years. The bottom left chart shows a composite of the departure from normal precipitation during the associated Dec-Jan-Feb seasonal period. A large portion of NM saw near-to-above normal precipitation during the 11 years with some locations over 150% of normal. The chart on the bottom right shows the number of years that contributed to near-to-above normal precipitation. For example, the blue and dark blue colors over east-central NM indicate that all 11 years saw near-to-above normal precipitation in that area.



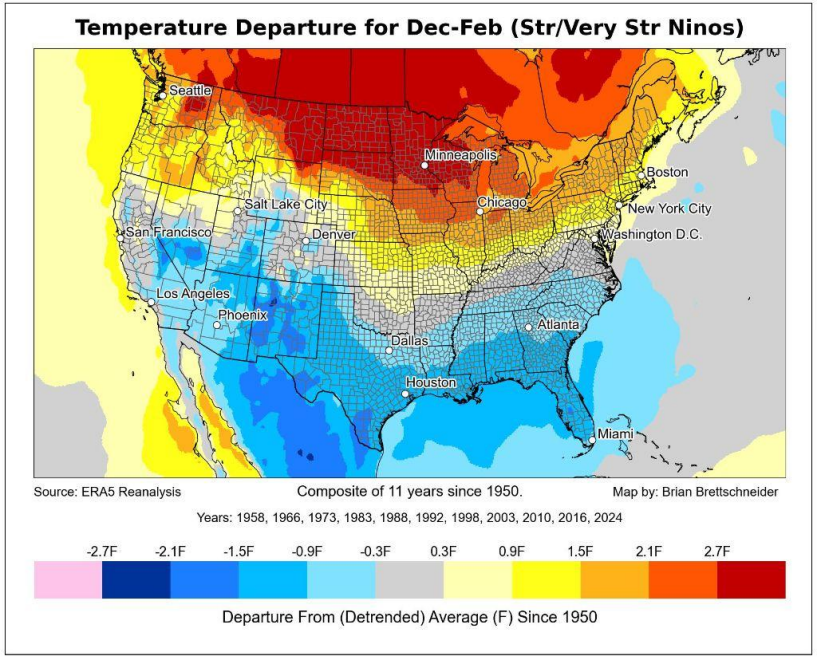


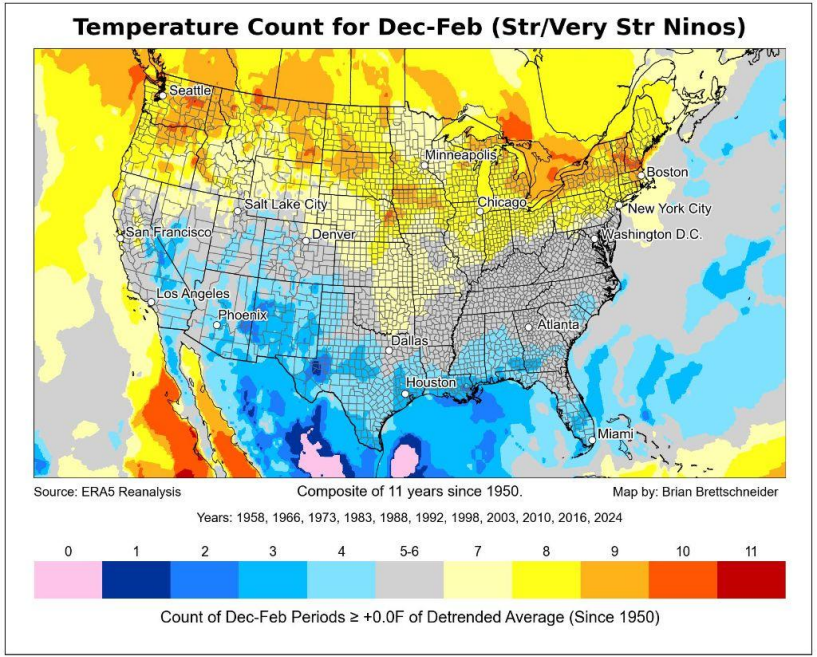
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Temperature Composite: Strong/Very Strong El Niños

The charts below are similar to the previous slide but for temperature departure during the Dec-Jan-Feb seasonal period. A large portion of NM saw near-to-below normal temperatures during the 11 composite years. The temperature count on the bottom right is presented differently than the precipitation charts, showing the number of years that contributed to near-to-above normal temperatures. For example, the blue and dark blue colors over most of NM indicate that only two to four years of the 11 years saw near-to-above normal temperatures.





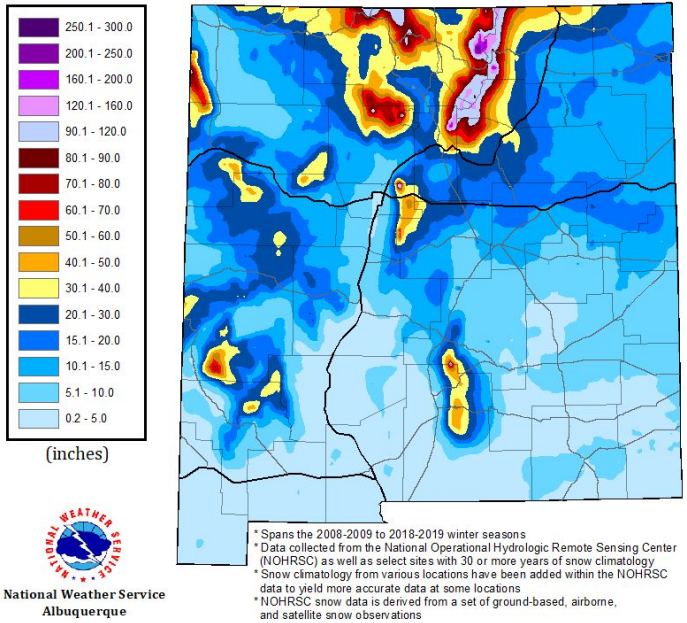
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Snowfall Snapshot & Winter Hazards

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The snowfall map on the left was created using a variety of data sets with ArcMap. A base map was constructed using snowfall analysis from the National Operational Hydrologic Remote Sensing Center (NOHRSC) averaging the 2008/2009 to 2018/2019 winter seasons. NOHRSC snowfall data is derived from a set a ground-based, airborne, and satellite snowfall observations. Numerous data points from airports and cooperative observer stations were added to the analysis to yield a more representative 30-year climatology from 1981-2010. Ski sites were included in the analysis to highlight the considerable variation and more extreme snowfall amounts across the rugged terrain of New Mexico. Click on the map to access a more detailed snowfall climatology feature from NWS Albuquerque.



It is clear from the map on the left that there is a strong relationship between higher snowfall amounts and topography across NM. A large body of scholarly articles and research confirms that greater precipitation occurs in the high terrain of the Intermountain West during the cool season. This phenomenon is known as orographic precipitation, and studies demonstrate its importance for regional water resources [Generated by Google's Gemini, September 2025]. There is another phenomenon known as mesoscale banded precipitation that is responsible for highly variable snowfall amounts across short distances and can occur anywhere across NM. This type of weather event can be difficult to forecast and is often extremely disruptive to travel, especially along interstate corridors. NWS Sioux Falls has a special feature highlighting mesoscale banded snowfall.

Typical weather hazards associated with the winter season:

- ➔ Extreme Cold
- ➔ Heavy Snow
- ➔ Snow Squalls
- ➔ High Winds
- ➔ Blowing Snow
- ➔ Flooding
- ➔ Avalanches
- ➔ Fog & Freezing Fog
- ➔ Ice Storms
- ➔ Black Ice
- ➔ Dust Storms
- ➔ Wildfires

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Historical Precipitation & Temperature for NM

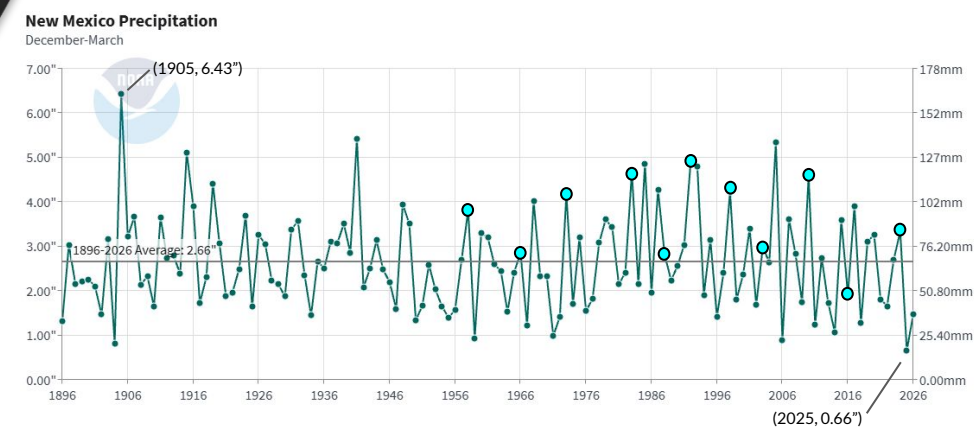
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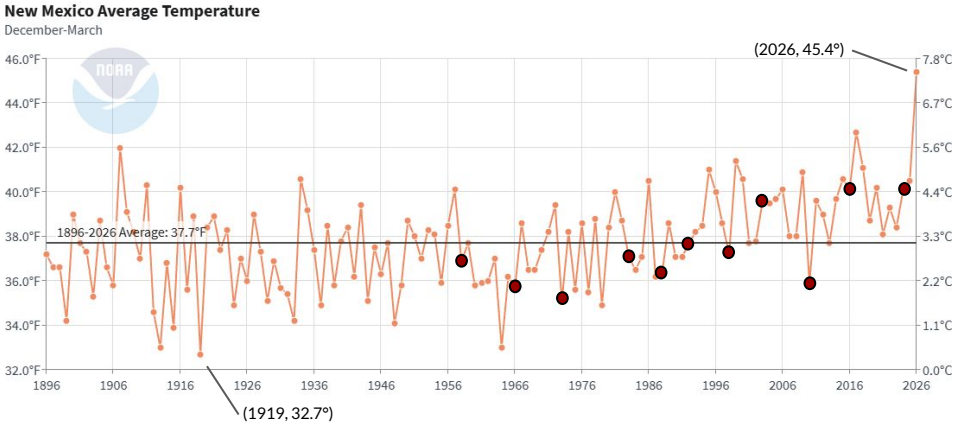
The chart on the upper right shows the December to March average statewide precipitation for NM and the lower right chart shows the average statewide temperature based on the long-term record dating back to 1896 from the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI). Blue dots have been placed on strong El Niño seasons. Note that all but one season was near-to-above normal. Red dots have been placed on temperatures for the associated seasons. Note the warming trend.

- Statewide Average Precipitation *December-March*
  - Long-Term (1896-2026): **2.66”**
  - Short-Term (1991-2020): **2.79”**

- Statewide Average Temperature *December-March*
  - Long-Term (1896-2026): **37.7°**
  - Short-Term (1991-2020): **39.2°**

Year-to-year precipitation variability can be dramatic with subtle trends in the overall long-term record. The wettest winter on record was 1904/1905 followed by 1940/1941 and 2004/2005. The driest winter on record occurred in 2024/2025. Five of the top 10 driest winters on record have occurred since 2000. LOESS filtering (locally estimated scatterplot smoothing) indicates a clear warming trend since the 1970s (not shown). Every winter since 2013 has been above the long-term average temperature. 2025/2026 was by far the warmest winter on record and 1918/1919 was the coldest on record.



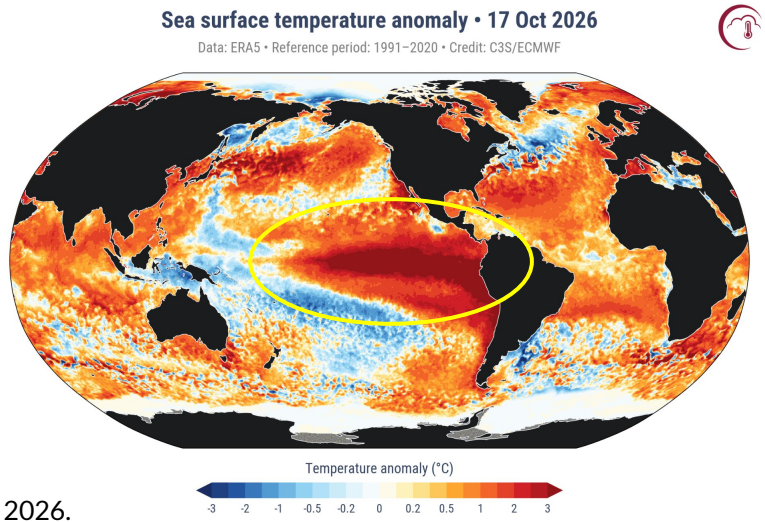


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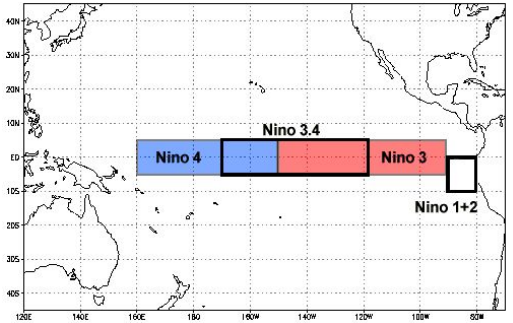
ENSO

The El Niño - Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is a naturally occurring, large-scale climate pattern involving fluctuations in ocean temperatures and atmospheric pressure across the equatorial Pacific Ocean. The phenomenon occurs in three phases; the warm phase (El Niño), the cool phase (La Niña), and the neutral phase. The three phases have drastically varying impacts on oceanic and atmospheric circulation patterns across the globe. ENSO is the greatest source of seasonal climate variability, which drives changes in rainfall and surface temperatures worldwide (qtd. in van Oldenborgh *et al.*, 2021). While ENSO is a critical driver of short-term climate variability, it operates within a complex global climate system where other forces also play a significant and sometimes interacting role.



The image on the top right is the European Centre's ERA5 SST anomaly valid on October 17, 2026. The entire region along the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean continues to warm well above normal. Above normal SSTs are also broadly present across most of the northern Pacific Ocean.

The Niño 3.4 region (5°N to 5°S, 120°W to 170°W) shown on the chart in the lower right is the standard area of the central-eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean used by climate scientists to monitor and define El Niño and La Niña events. **To classify as an official El Niño episode, the SST anomaly in the Niño 3.4 region must remain above +0.5°C for five consecutive overlapping 3-month periods.** The Relative Oceanic Niño Index is used to define the three phases of ENSO.



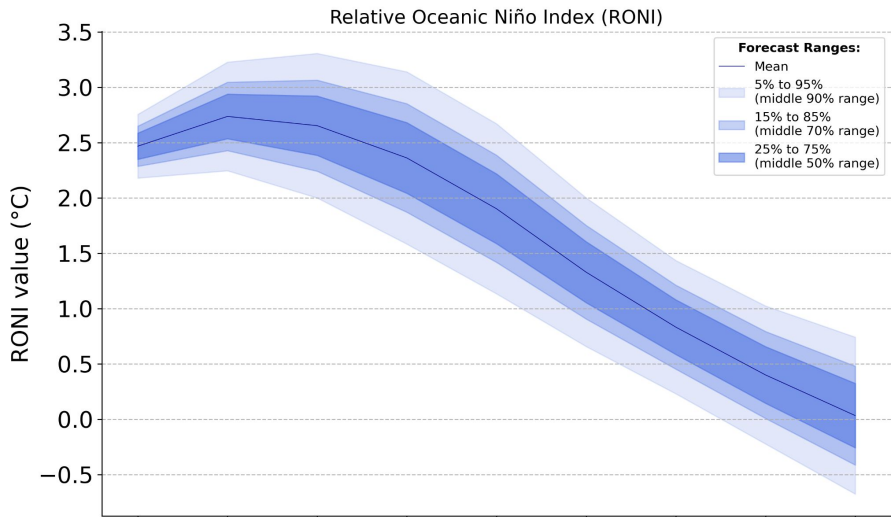
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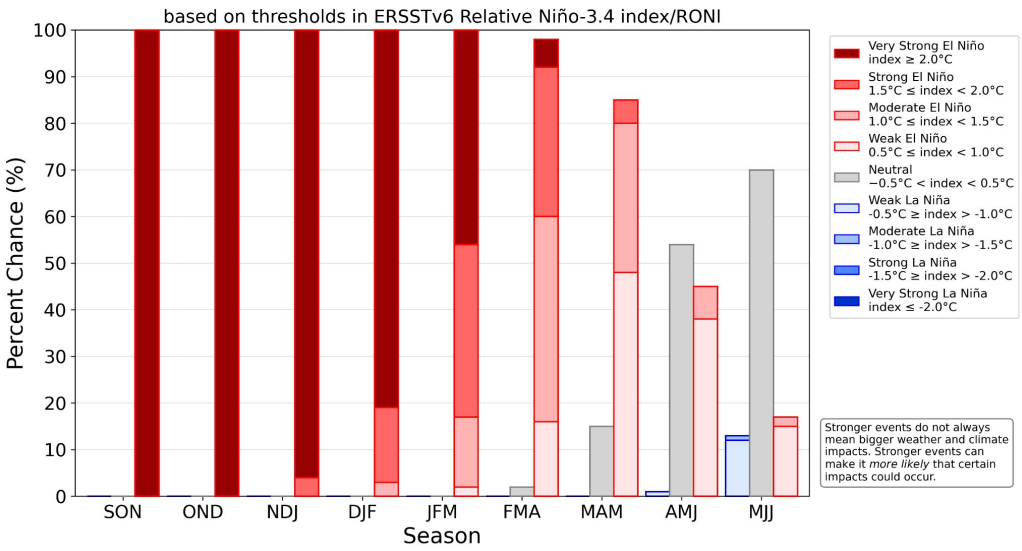
ENSO Strength

The ENSO alert system status is currently an El Niño Advisory. Equatorial SSTs are well above average across the eastern Pacific Ocean as of October 2026. There has been a lot of buzz of a “Super El Niño” or “Godzilla El Niño” event developing later this year. These are not official terms recognized by NOAA. Forecasters officially classify these events as "very strong", when SSTs in the Niño 3.4 region increase by +2.0°C or more above the long-term average (bottom left). There is a 100% chance that El Niño will become very strong during the October to December period and El Niño is favored through the Northern Hemisphere spring 2027 (bottom right graphic). For more detailed information on ENSO evolution, status, and predictions, please review the slides available from CPC.

NOAA CPC Official ENSO Outlook (issued October 2026)



NOAA CPC ENSO Strength Probabilities (issued October 2026)

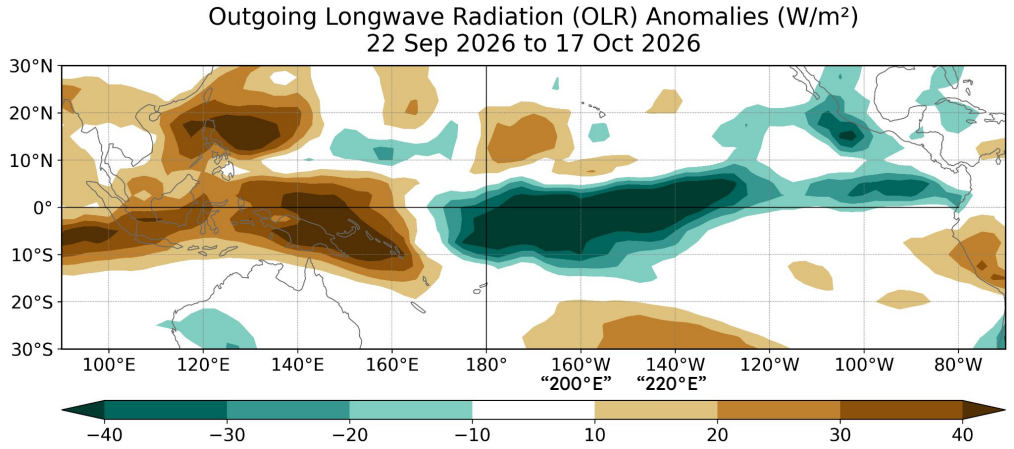


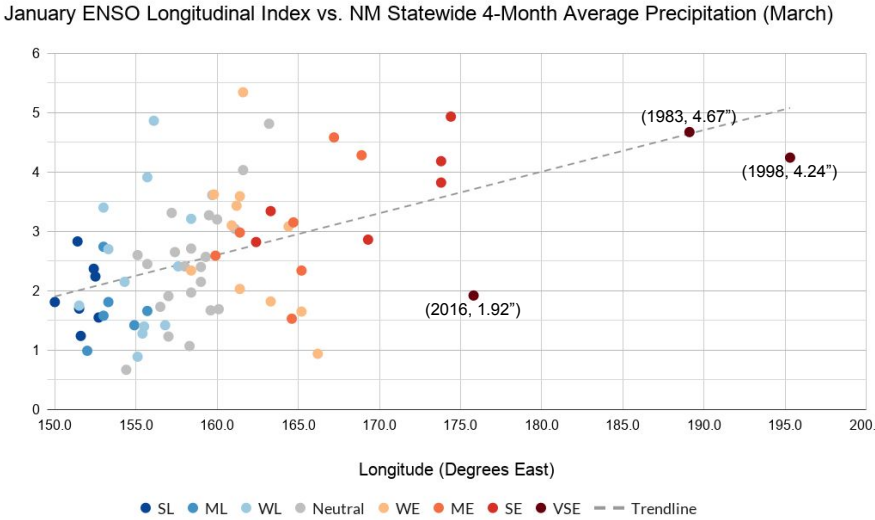
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ENSO Longitudinal Index (ELI)

ENSO Longitudinal Index (ELI) - a simple index that tracks the zonal shifts in tropical Pacific deep convection and can capture the various flavors of ENSO (Erickson & Patricola, 2023). The position of the anomalously warm water along the equatorial Pacific influences how weather patterns propagate downstream due to shifts in the large-scale circulation across the Pacific Ocean (Walker Circulation). The graphic on the bottom left shows the recent 3-week average outgoing longwave radiation (OLR) along the equatorial Pacific Ocean. The area of negative OLR (dark green | deep convection) has focused east of the dateline (180°E). This area of deep convection as measured by the ELI may provide additional insights into the flavor of ENSO impacts beyond what is typically expected from the idealized conceptual model with El Niño. The chart on the lower right is the January ELI versus NM statewide average precipitation for the four month period ending in March for each ENSO type. There is a noteworthy correlation between stronger El Niño events, deeper convection farther east in the tropical Pacific (>165°E), and above normal statewide precipitation in NM (>2.66"). The very strong El Niño event from 2015-2016 was an outlier compared to 1997-1998 and 1982-1983.





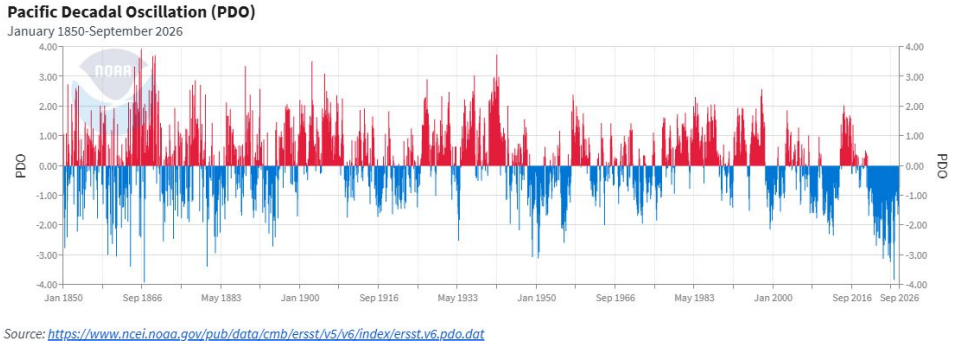
(SL=strong La Niña, ML=moderate La Niña, WL=weak La Niña, WE=weak El Niño, ME=moderate El Niño, SE=strong El Niño, VSE=very strong El Niño)

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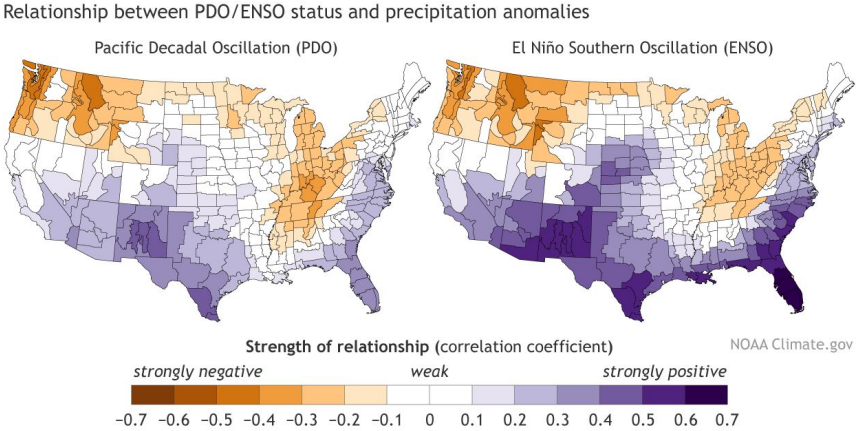
Other Teleconnection Patterns: What is the PDO?

Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) - a climate cycle (or teleconnection) describing SST anomalies over the Northeastern Pacific Ocean. As its name suggests, the SSTs associated with the PDO exhibit decadal variability. The PDO can influence weather conditions across North America and the Pacific Ocean basin with characteristic patterns occurring at different times of the year (World Climate Service). This definition is somewhat misleading. For the most part, the atmosphere is one a several factors driving the changes in the temperature pattern across the Pacific Ocean, not the other way around. Therefore the PDO is actually a response, not a direct agent of change itself. A brief summary of the PDO is also available from the Physical Sciences Laboratory. The chart on the upper right shows a time series of the PDO since the late 1800s. The July 2025 PDO value of -4.15 was the lowest on record.



Source: https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/pub/data/cmb/ersst/v5/v6/index/ersst.v6.pdo.dat

Most of the precipitation variability in NM can already be explained by the ENSO signal with a weaker correlation to the PDO phase (bottom charts). The constructive or destructive interference between atmospheric and terrestrial anomalies due to ENSO can be strengthened or weakened depending on the phase of the PDO (qtd. in Wang et al., 2012). A major concern for the traditional canonical impacts of a strong El Niño may be muted or become highly variable given the strength of the negative PDO. However, it is difficult to maintain a negative PDO during strong El Niño events since ENSO itself is one of the driving factors in the PDO regime. The September 2026 PDO value of -0.74 continues to trend more positive since the May 2026 value of -1.64. We will monitor throughout the winter season to see how the PDO reacts to a changing atmosphere.



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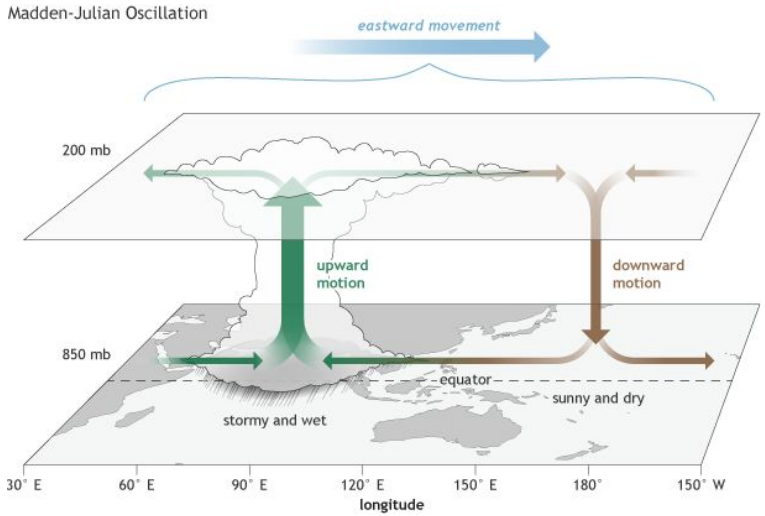
Other Teleconnection Patterns: What is the MJO?

Madden Julian Oscillation (MJO) - The MJO is characterized by an eastward-moving region of enhanced tropical rainfall, mainly observed over the Indian and Pacific Ocean. Preceding and following this area of tropical thunderstorms are regions where rainfall is suppressed. A cycle of the MJO takes 30–60 days, but it is not continuously active – there are periods when no MJO activity is apparent (Met Office). A detailed monthly MJO update is available from CPC. There is evidence that the MJO is at least partly responsible for triggering the development and demise of El Niño (Bergman et al., 2001). However, the MJO is frequently weaker in the western Pacific and over the Maritime Continent during El Niño events. This is because the warm waters associated with El Niño shift eastward, causing anomalous descending air motions in the western Pacific that suppress the moisture and convection the MJO relies on to thrive.

The impact of El Niño on the MJO also depends on the specific type of event:

- Eastern-Pacific (EP) El Niño: This traditional El Niño tends to significantly weaken the MJO, limiting how far east it can propagate. This is the expected type for 2026/2027.
- Central-Pacific (CP) El Niño: In these events, the MJO can actually propagate further and more continuously because central Pacific moisture convergence provides a better environment for the oscillation to maintain its strength.

For more details on the varying interactions between these climate phenomena, you can review the ENSO and MJO analysis provided by NOAA Climate.gov.



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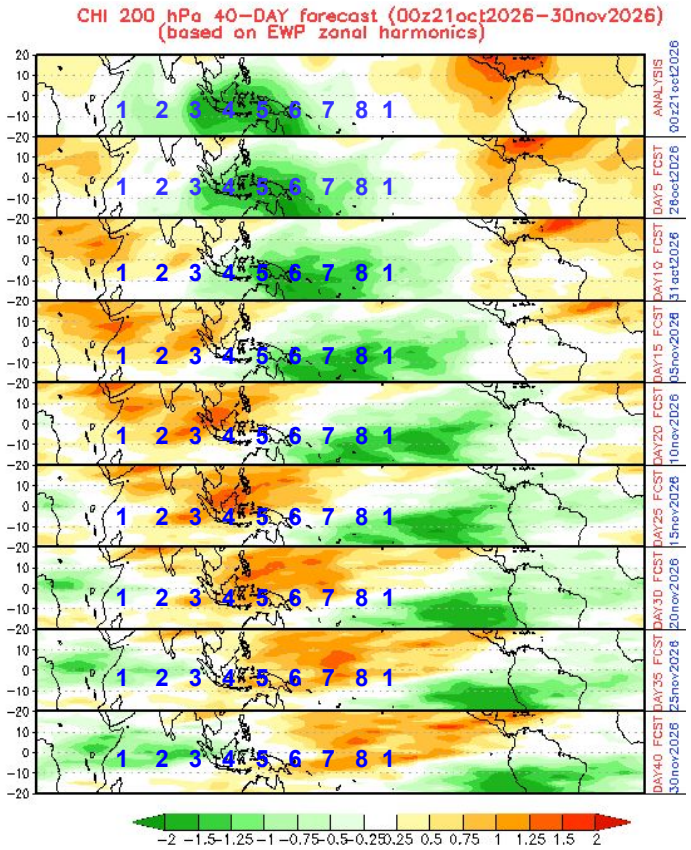
Other Teleconnection Patterns: MJO Forecast

The diagram on the right shows the 200mb Velocity Potential (X) in the equatorial regions of Earth. This forecast variable represents areas of divergence and convergence in the upper atmosphere and indicates rising air (green) and sinking air (orange) associated with large clusters of tropical convection. The current analysis period is shown in the top row (October 21, 2026) with subsequent five-day forecast intervals for each row through 40 days (November 30, 2026).

What phase of the MJO brings more precipitation to the southwest U.S. in the winter season?

- **Constructive interference:** When the MJO and ENSO patterns reinforce each other, the impact on regional weather can be significantly amplified. For example, during a strong El Niño winter (which independently favors wetter conditions in the Southwest), an active MJO in phases 1, 2, or 8 could lead to especially heavy precipitation (Arcodia et al., 2020).

- **Destructive interference:** When the MJO and ENSO patterns work against each other, their effects can partially or completely cancel each other out. For example, a drier-than-average La Niña winter could have its drying effect partially offset by an active MJO in phases 1, 2, or 8 (Arcodia et al., 2020).



Gemini was used to assist with drafting. The content has been reviewed and edited by NWS staff.

2026/2027 Winter Outlook

ECMWF (Weekly Precipitation Outlook: Oct 26 - Nov 2)

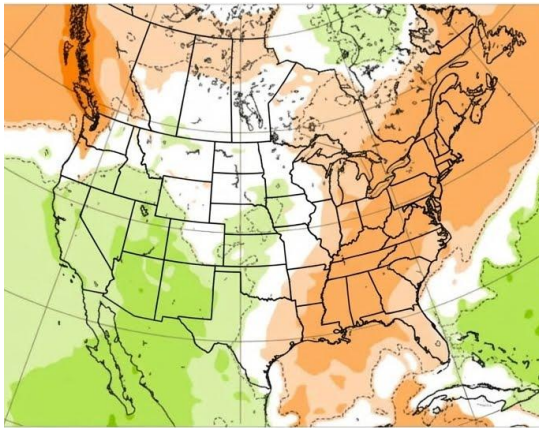
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Sub-seasonal: Precipitation weekly mean anomaly, significance level: 10 % (mm)

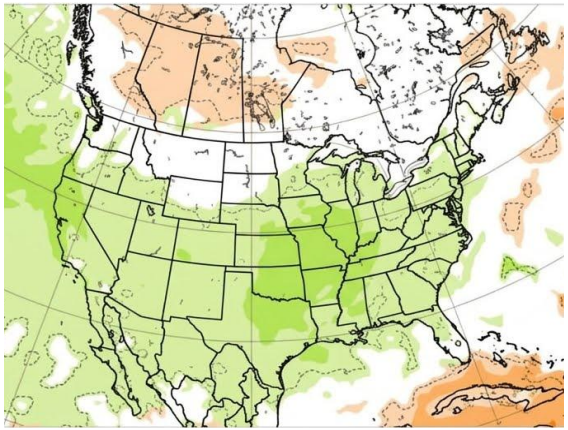
<-90 -90 -60 -30 -10 0 10 30 60 90 >90

Issued October 19, 2026: ECMWF sub-seasonal range ensemble 7-day average precipitation anomaly

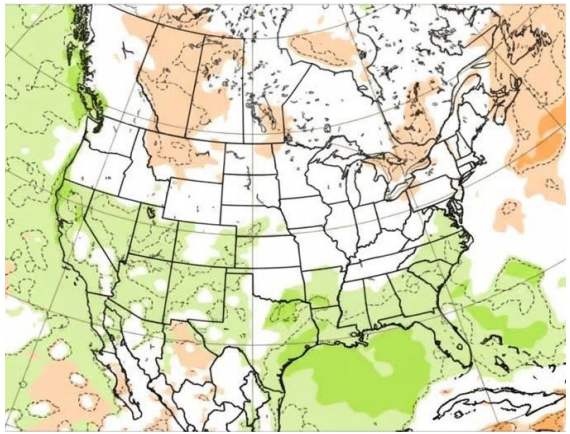
October 26-November 2, 2026



November 2-9, 2026



November 9-16, 2026



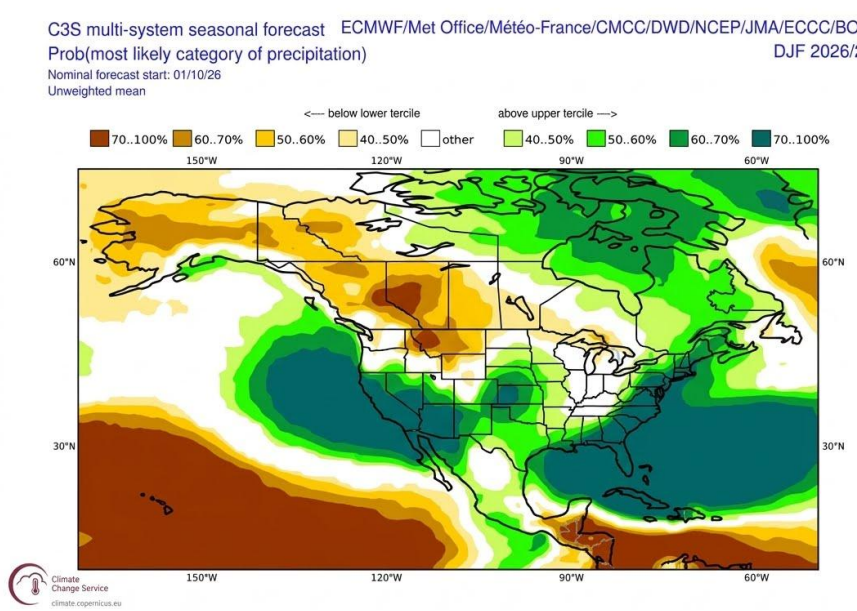
The ECMWF sub-seasonal ensemble shows above normal precipitation favored across most of NM through the end of October into mid November.

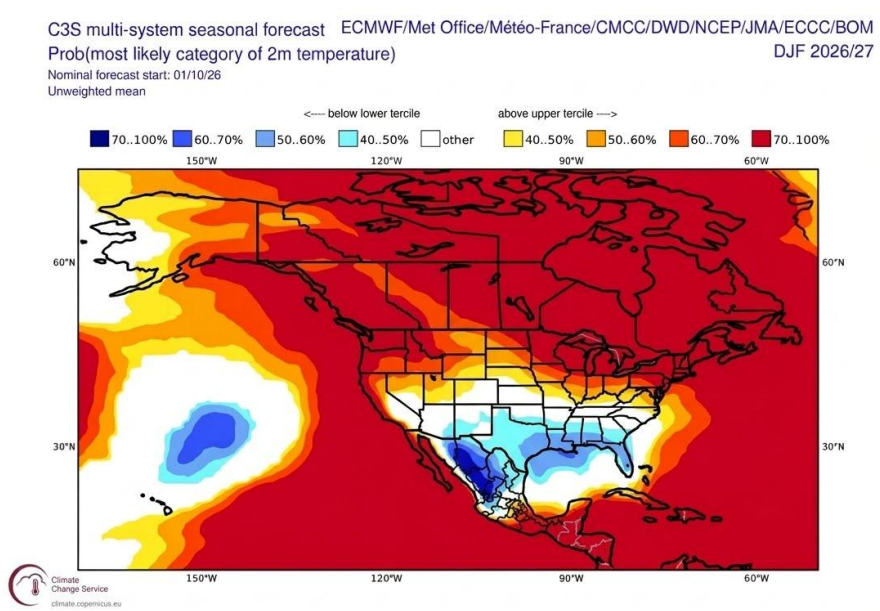
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2026/2027 Winter Outlook

C3S (December 2026 - February 2027)

The C3S seasonal forecast, hosted by ECMWF/Copernicus, for December to February shows high probabilities that precipitation will lean above normal across the southern United States and the eastern seaboard, including parts of the Great Plains. There is a greater than 40% chance that temperatures will lean below normal as well for the southern U.S. while above normal across the northern U.S. Note the similarities between this C3S forecast and the official CPC official outlook, especially for precipitation.



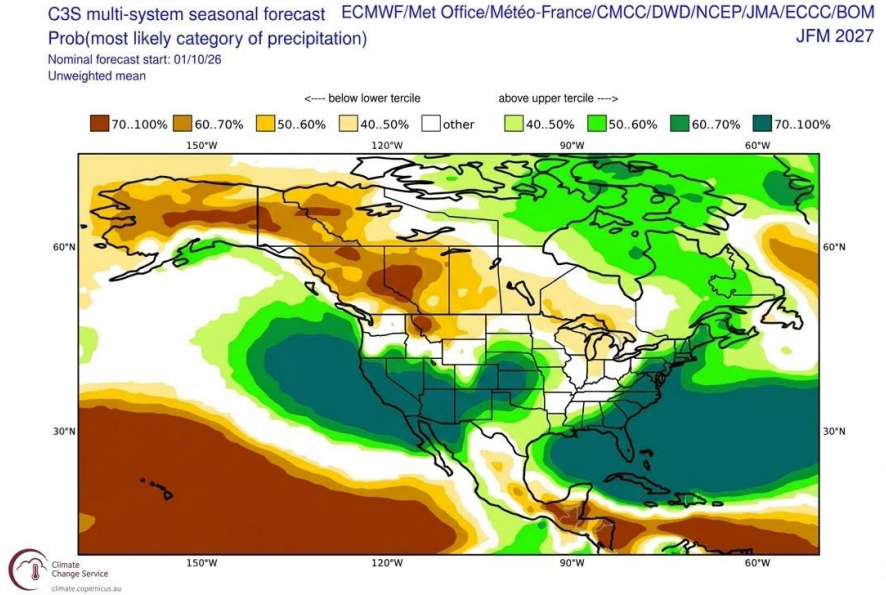


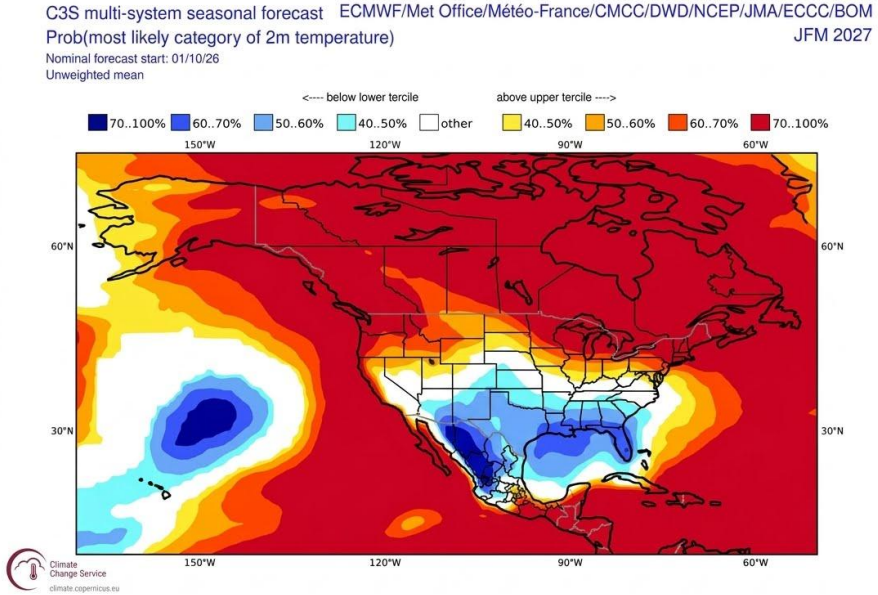
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2026/2027 Winter Outlook

C3S (January 2027 - March 2027)

The C3S seasonal forecast, hosted by ECMWF/Copernicus, for January to March continues to show high probabilities that precipitation will lean above normal across the southern tier of the United States and the eastern seaboard, including parts of the Great Plains. There is a greater than 50% chance that temperatures will lean below normal as well for the southern U.S. while above normal for the northern U.S. Note the similarities between this C3S forecast and the official CPC official outlook, especially for precipitation.



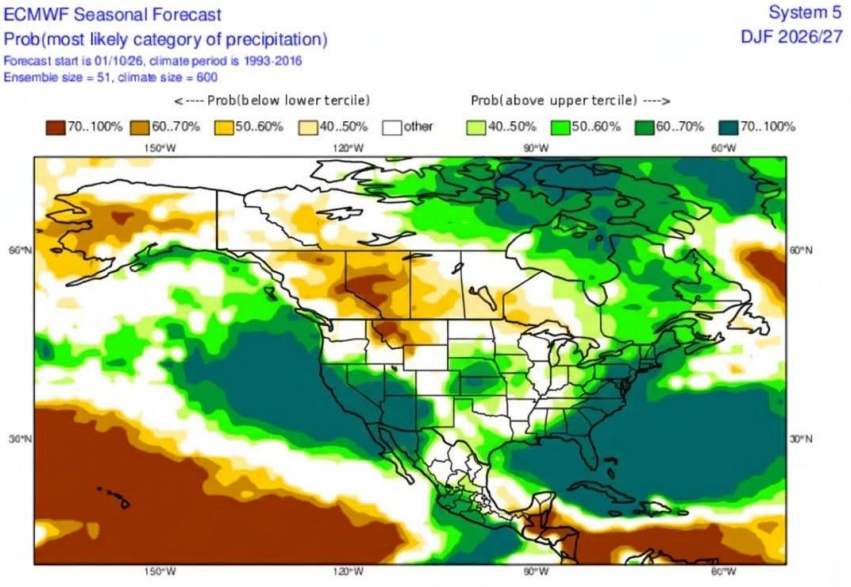


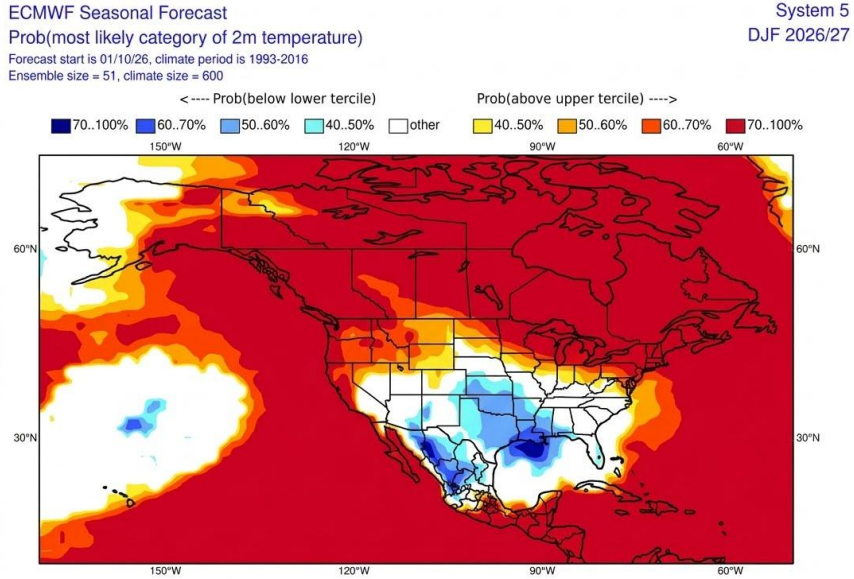
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2026/2027 Winter Outlook

ECMWF (December 2026 - February 2027)

The ECMWF seasonal forecast, a subset of the C3S, for December to February also shows that precipitation will lean above normal across the southern United States and eastern seaboard, including parts of the Great Plains. There is a greater than 40% chance that temperatures will lean below normal for the southern U.S. while above normal for the northern U.S. Note the similarities between this ECMWF forecast and the official CPC official outlook, especially precipitation.



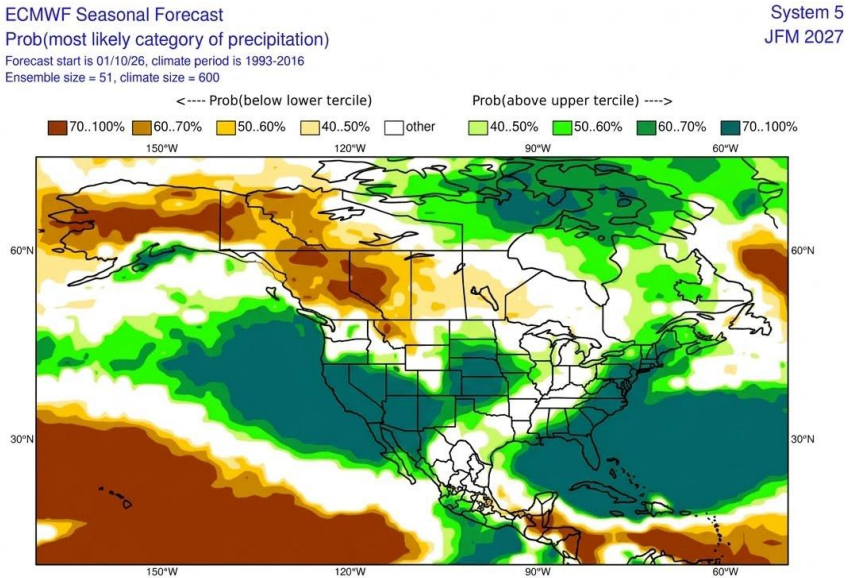


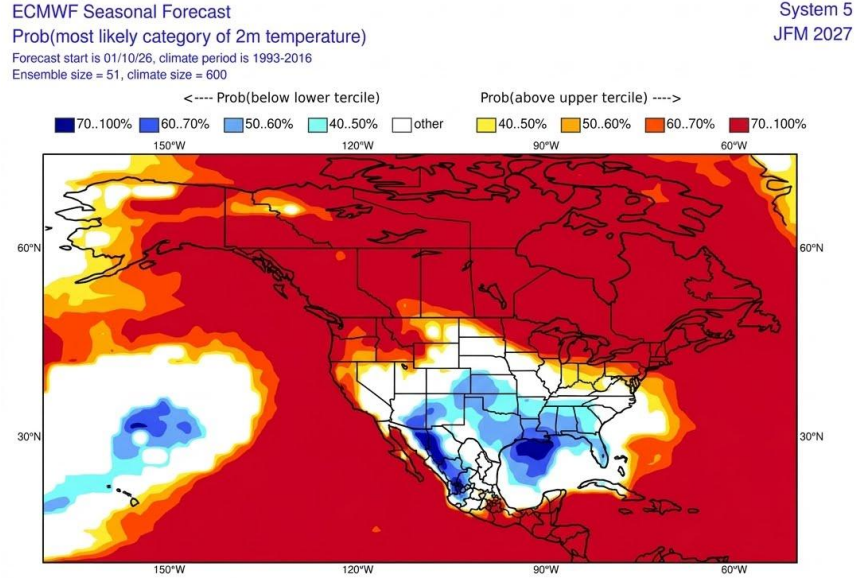
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2026/2027 Winter Outlook

ECMWF (January 2027 - March 2027)

The ECMWF seasonal forecast, a subset of the C3S, for January to March also shows that precipitation will lean above normal across the southern United States and eastern seaboard, including parts of the Great Plains. There is a greater than 40% chance that temperatures will lean below normal for the southern United States while above normal across the northern U.S. Note the similarities between this ECMWF forecast and the official CPC official outlook, especially precipitation.





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2026/2027 Winter Outlook

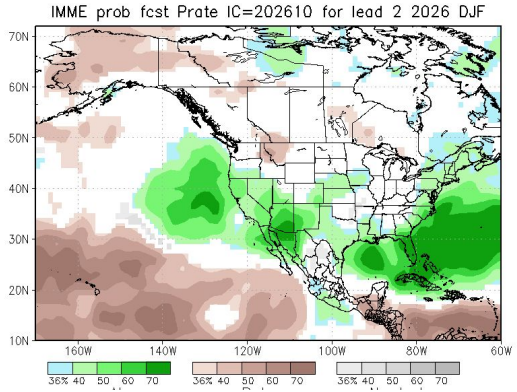
Climate Models (December 2026 - February 2027)

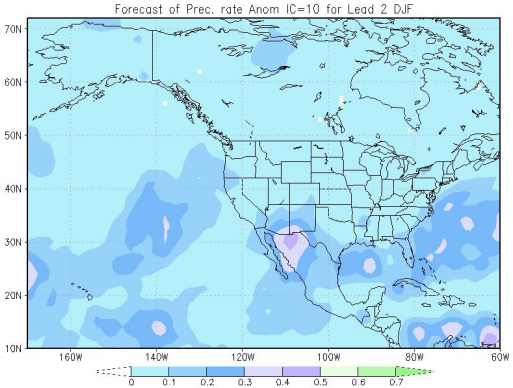
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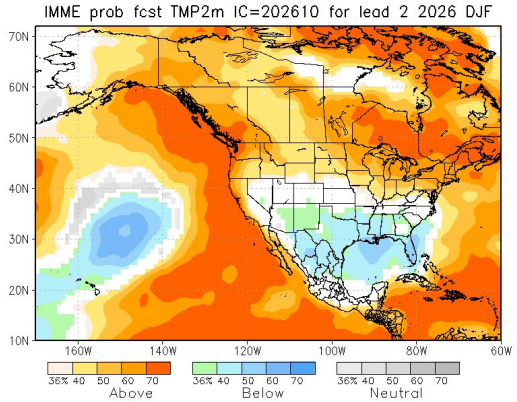
IMME (International Multi-Model Ensemble) - The International Multi-Model Ensemble (IMME) is a multi-model seasonal forecasting system consisting of coupled models from international modeling centers (AGU Abstract) hosted by NOAA/CPC. The IMME comes from the same raw dataset as the C3S but uses the standardized anomaly average forecast adjustment rather than being re-scaled for equal model variance.

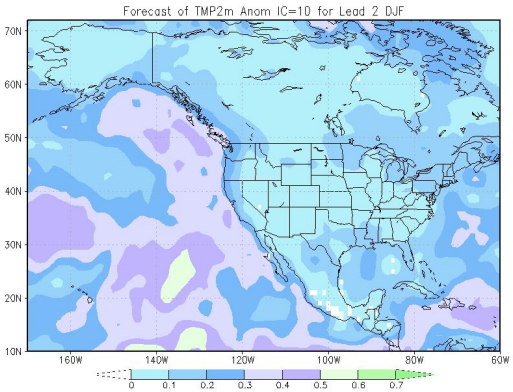
The upper left and lower left images are the updated calibrated probabilities of precipitation and temperature for the three month period from December through February, respectively. Calibrated probabilities are calculated using model hindcasts to account for biases and errors. Skill maps are also included in the upper right and lower right charts to assist with explaining model accuracy of each respective variable. In general, a higher skill score means a better model forecast.

The December through February precipitation outlook from the IMME indicates a greater than 40% chance of above normal precipitation across all of NM except a 50-60% chance of above normal precipitation for the southwestern half of NM. There is a greater than 36% chance that temperatures will be below normal for all of NM. Forecast skill is much higher for precipitation than for temperature.









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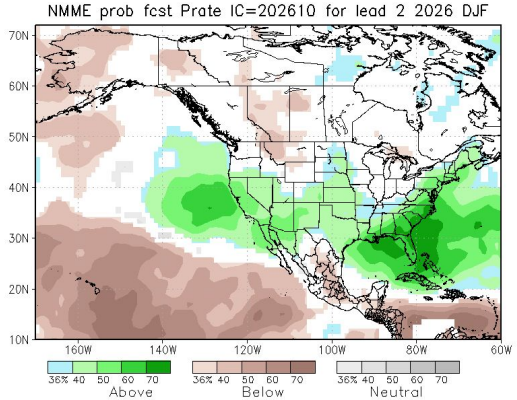
2026/2027 Winter Outlook

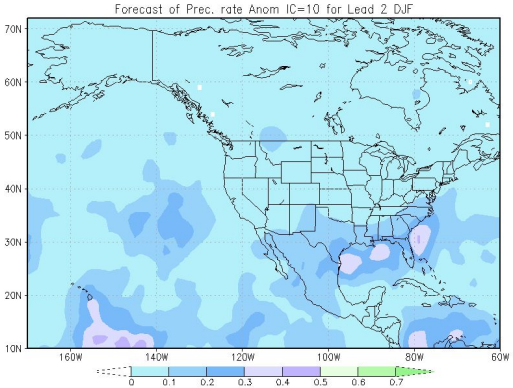
Climate Models (December 2026 - February 2027)

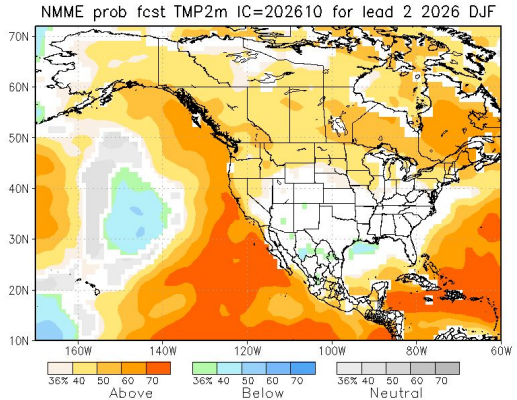
NMME (North American Multi-Model Ensemble) - The North American Multi-Model Ensemble (NMME) is a multi-model seasonal forecasting system consisting of coupled models from North American modeling centers (User's Guide). The NMME is similar to the C3S and IMME but it is derived from a different set of models and has some different background climatology and model resolution features.

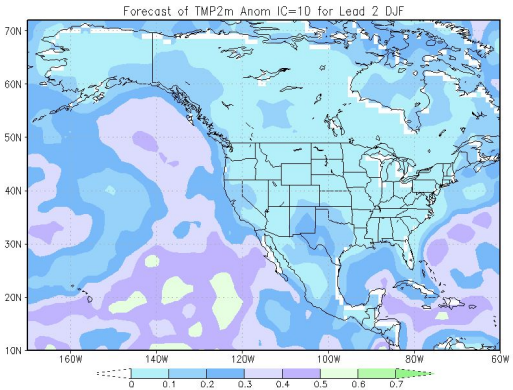
The upper left and lower left images are the calibrated probabilities of precipitation and temperature for the three month period from December through February, respectively. Calibrated probabilities are calculated using model hindcasts to account for biases and errors. Skill maps are also included in the upper right and lower right charts to assist with explaining model accuracy of each respective variable. In general, a higher skill score means a better model forecast.

The December through February precipitation outlook from the NMME indicates a greater than 40% chance of above normal precipitation for all of NM, except a greater than 50% chance for southwest and west-central NM . There are equal chances for below normal, near normal, and above normal temperatures across most of NM. Forecast skill is higher for temperature compared with the IMME.









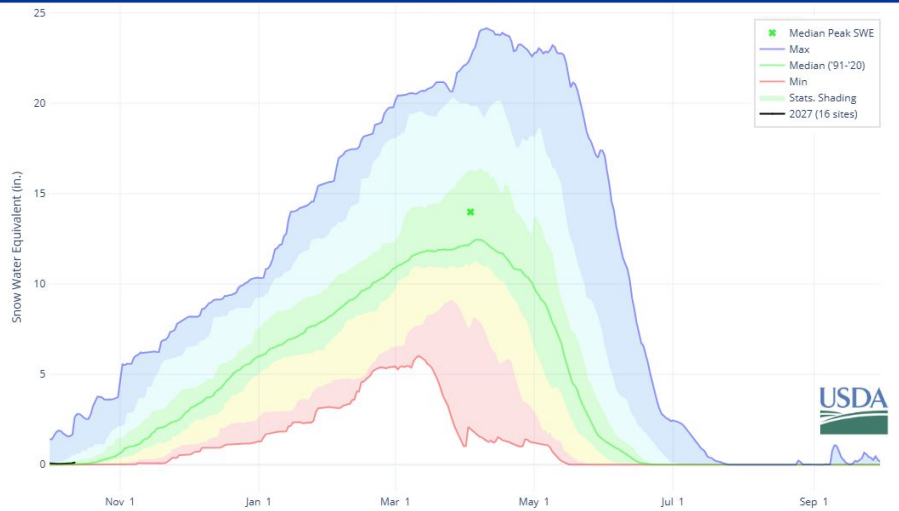
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2026/2027 Winter Outlook

Snowpack & Hydrologic Impacts

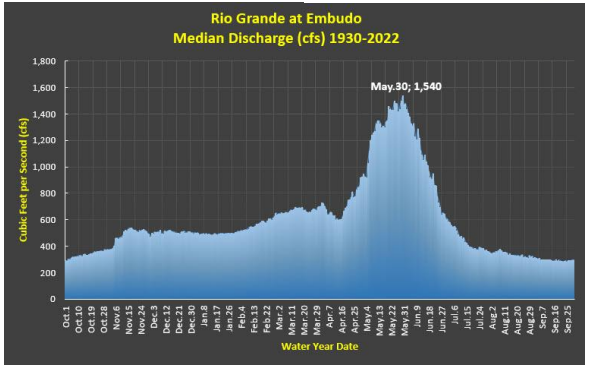
weather.gov/**abq**

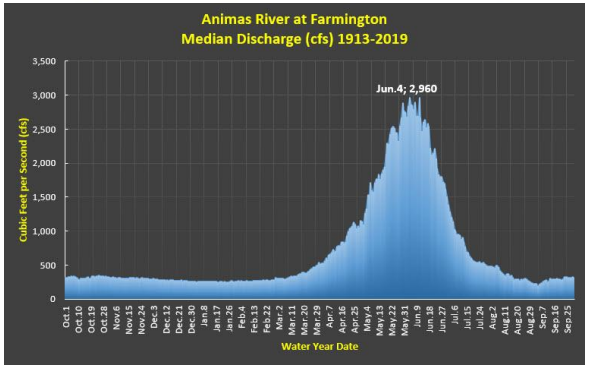
The upper right chart is a summary of the snow water equivalent (SWE) for the headwaters of the Rio Grande, including the max (purple line), median (green line), min (red line), and percentile shading (10th, 10-30th, 30-70th, 70-90th, and 90th). The peak median SWE occurs during March and April then snowmelt begins to transform snowpack into spring runoff. The two charts on the lower right are the median discharge for the Rio Grande at Embudo and the Animas River at Farmington (San Juan Basin). Peak flows typically occur in these river basins from late May to early June. Smaller tributaries across northern NM and mainstem rivers in southern NM typically see earlier peak discharge dates.



Considerations for winter snowpack:

- Antecedent soil conditions leading into the winter season can affect infiltration of snowmelt and the volume of spring runoff.
- Winter temperatures will dictate how much precipitation falls as rain or snow, especially in mid slope elevations where snowpack contributes heavily to spring runoff.
- Spring temperatures and precipitation will also regulate how fast snowmelt occurs and influence the risk of rain-on-snow events.
- Elevated flows in small streams and mainstem rivers are more likely to occur during spring 2027 if snowpack across the region is robust.





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2026/2027 Winter Outlook

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Summary

There are high chances that a historic El Niño will impact NM through the winter and spring of 2027. Stronger events can make certain weather and climate outcomes more likely, but they are never a guarantee. Given the unprecedented nature of this event, the winter and spring weather pattern may completely defy seasonal forecasting models.

Official CPC Outlook (Climate Prediction Center: updated December 8, 2025):

- *Precipitation:* There is a 40-50% chance that precipitation will lean above normal over most of NM for the 4-month period from December to March.
- *Temperature:* There are equal chances that temperatures will lean below normal, near normal, or above normal over NM for the 4-month period from December to March.

Forecast Confidence & Alternative Scenarios:

- There is moderate to high confidence that precipitation will be above normal for NM during the 4-month period from December to March.
- There is moderate confidence that temperatures will be near normal for NM during the 4-month period from December to March. Seasonal climate outlooks from several ensemble models indicate the potential for temperatures to actually lean below normal for parts of the area.
- While there are higher chances for above normal precipitation, it is uncertain how temperatures will influence the distribution of rain and snow. If temperatures trend warmer than normal, snow levels may be higher than normal, and lead to heavy wet snow, or, more frequent bouts of rain in lower elevation areas. If temperatures are near normal, a more beneficial snowpack may build across the region and greatly assist spring runoff.

Note: It is important to note that this summary is a seasonal outlook for the 4-month period covering December to March. There will be sub-seasonal and spatial variability that differs from the winter outlook over the four month period. Mountainous areas of NM are climatologically favored to receive greater precipitation than lower terrain areas given the greater influence of orographically driven precipitation events during the cool season. Mesoscale banded precipitation events, which are also more typical in the cool season, can often lead to extreme precipitation gradients across short distances. It is also not uncommon for one or two major winter weather events in a season to account for a significant portion of the seasonal precipitation. Major snowfall events have also occurred during the shoulder months of winter as was true in November 2024 and April 2025. The more recent September 2026 rainfall event is another example of how the seasonal precipitation distribution can be wildly misleading when reviewing the four month season as a whole. Remember, all it takes is one extreme precipitation event or one extreme cold outbreak to result in life-threatening impacts across NM.

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2026/2027 Winter Outlook

Resources, Citations, & Contact Information

Contact Us:

- Email: sr-abq.webmaster@noaa.gov

Resources & Citations (many links available throughout slide deck):

- NWS Winter Safety
- CPC Outlooks C3S Seasonal Forecasts IMME Forecasts NMME Seasonal Forecasts
- IRI ENSO Forecasts
- Physical Sciences Laboratory Climate Division Plots
- NOAA NCEI Monitoring
- Di Liberto, T. (2014, August 1). *The Walker Circulation: ENSO's atmospheric buddy*. NOAA Climate.gov. https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/enso/walker-circulation-ensos-atmospheric-buddy
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- Bergman, J., Hendon, H., & Weickmann, K. (2001, August 1). *MJOs and the onset of ENSO: The influence of intraseasonal variations of tropical convection on sea surface temperatures at the onset of the 1997-98 El Niño*. NOAA Physical Sciences Laboratory. https://psl.noaa.gov/spotlight/08012001/

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