MIAMI-SOUTH FLORIDA

National Weather Service Forecast Office

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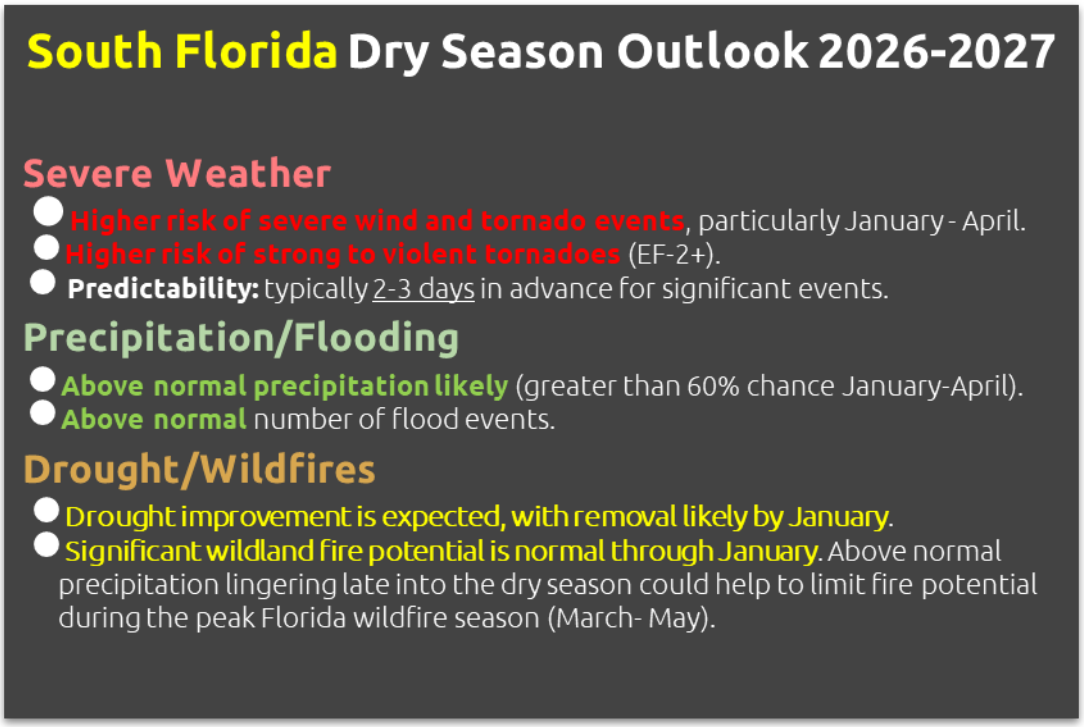
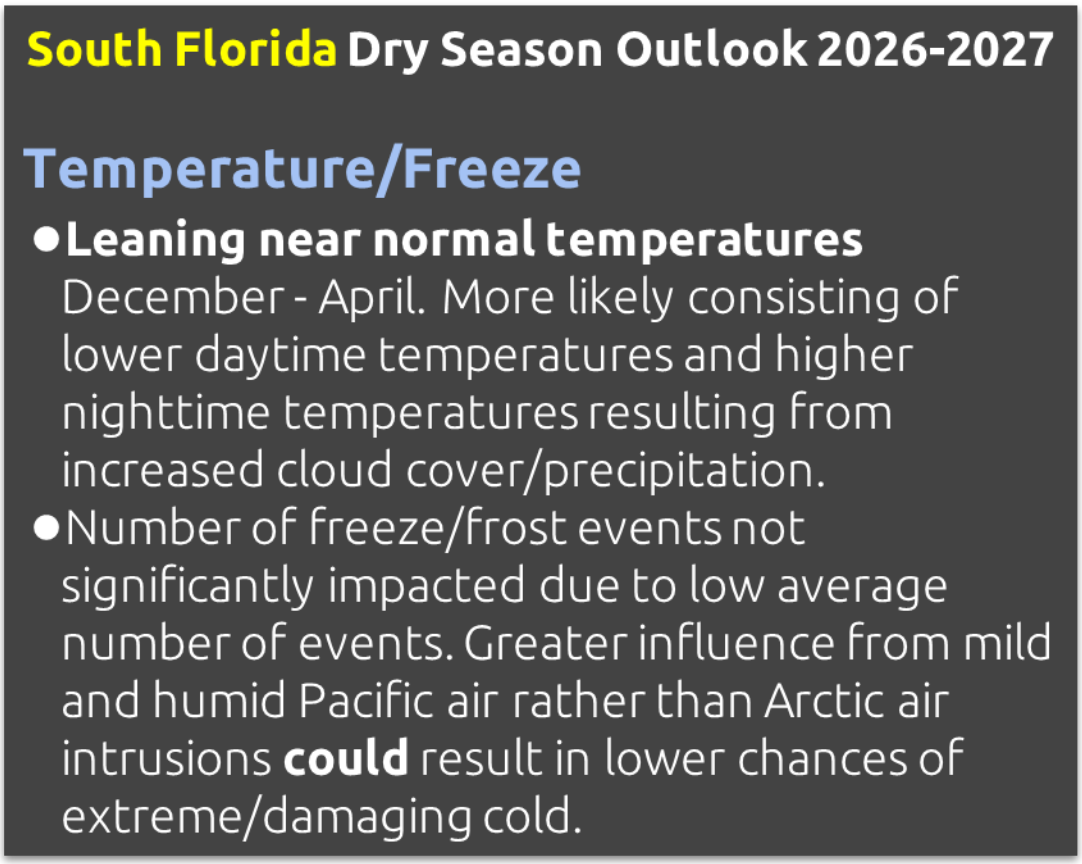
South Florida 2026-2027 Winter/Dry Season Outlook

Very Strong El Niño Tilts Odds Towards Wetter and Stormier than Normal Season

November 3rd, 2026: The emergence of a very strong El Niño episode through most of this dry season will likely set the stage for a wetter and stormier than normal winter and dry season across South Florida. Below is a snapshot of the outlook for severe weather, precipitation, temperature, and drought/wildfires.





Dry Season 2026-2027 Factors

El Niño conditions are expected to persist through most of the dry season, with a high likelihood of a strong to very strong El Niño through March 2027.

As the warm phase of the ENSO (El Niño/Southern Oscillation) cycle, El Niño typically drives a atmospheric pattern shift which features a powerful Pacific subtropical jet stream farther south across North America during the winter and dry season (Figure 1). This pattern frequently steers storm systems eastward across the southern United States, including Florida. When surface low-pressure systems interact with this strong upper-level jet stream (Figure 2), conditions become favorable for severe weather and severe dry-season episodes—such as tornadoes—throughout Florida.

Confidence in this scenario is particularly high due to the strength of this season's El Niño, which could match or exceed the historic 1997–1998 event as the strongest recorded since 1950. Comparable strong El Niño events in the past, including 1997–1998

and 2015–2016, both triggered multiple severe weather and tornado outbreaks across southern Florida.

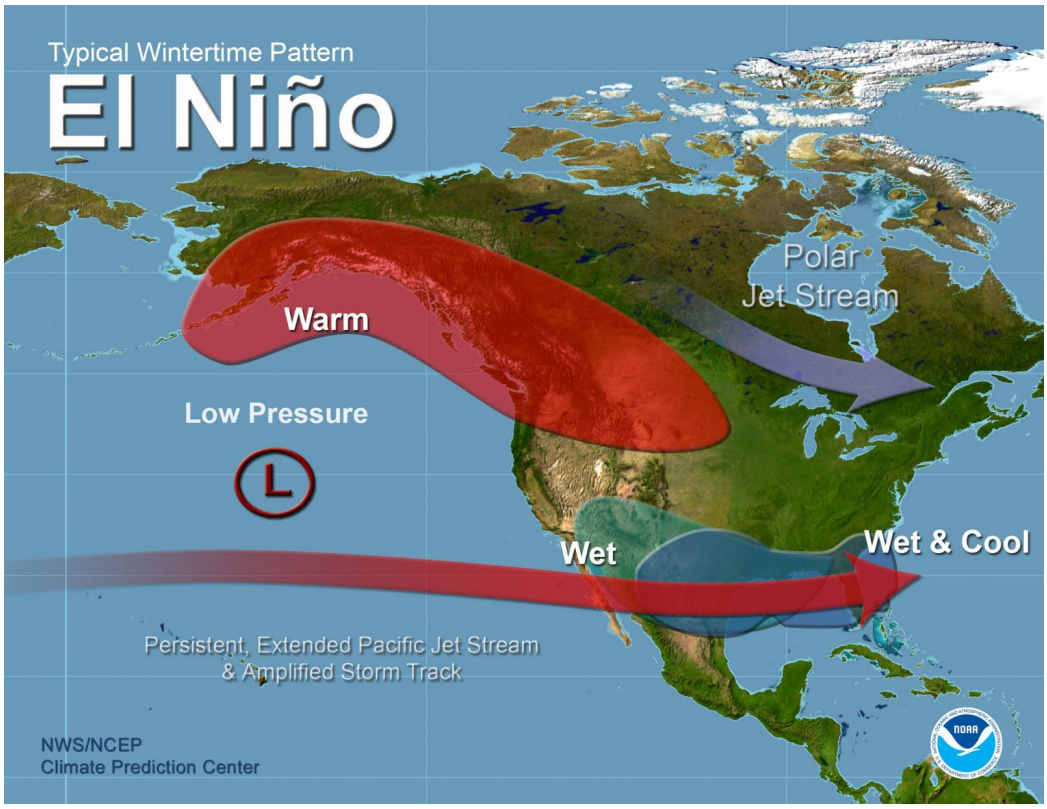


***Figure 1**: Typical El Niño Wintertime Pattern*

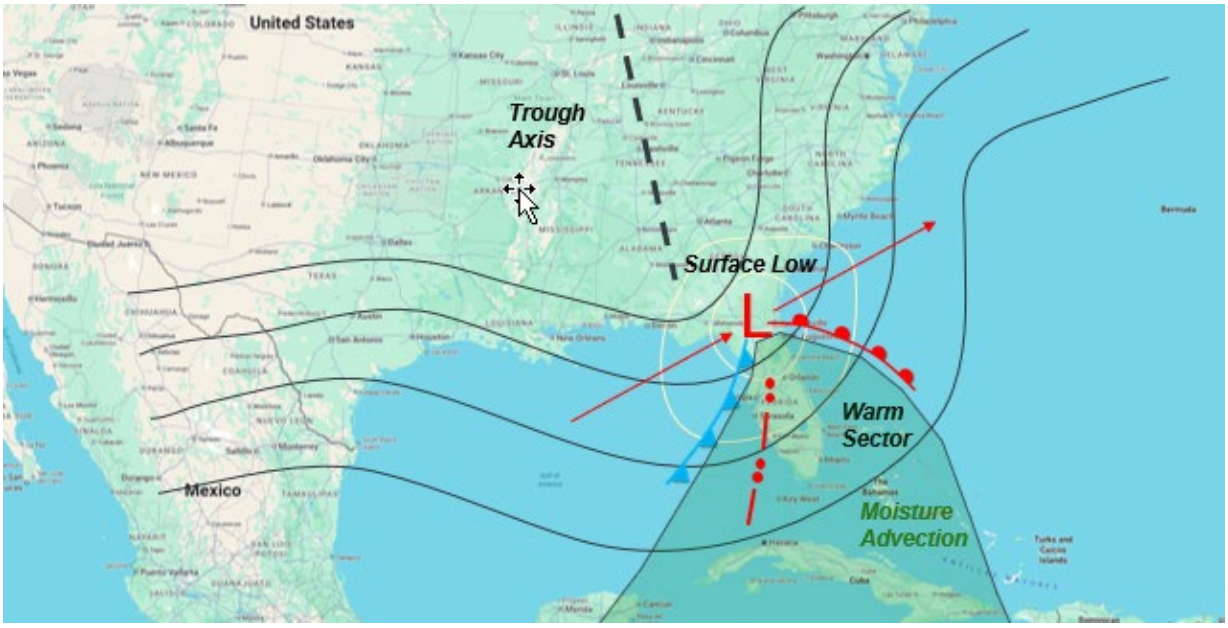


***Figure 2**: Typical El Niño Severe Weather Pattern*

Severe Weather/Storminess

Historical data shows that El Niño dry seasons in South Florida bring a 46% increase in tornadoes and twice as many strong to violent (F2/EF2+) events compared to La Niña. Although specific severe weather events cannot be predicted far in advance, the expected very strong El Niño ***heightens the risk for severe weather (including tornado) episodes this dry season***. Residents should stay alert and prepare reliable ways to receive weather warnings.

Precipitation/Flooding

More frequent winter and dry-season storm systems across the southern U.S. and Florida generally leads to higher-than-average rainfall in South Florida. Reflecting this trend, the most recent NOAA/CPC outlooks (Figure 3) indicate a ***high probability (60-70%) of above-normal precipitation*** from January through March, with similar probabilities of above-normal precipitation during the December to April time frame. This aligns closely with historical patterns seen during strong to very strong El Niño events, which historically bring 9 to 16 additional days of measurable rainfall (relative to normal) to South Florida during the dry season.

Increased rainfall elevates the risk of singular flood events across South Florida. Additionally, the coastal flood threat is higher than usual this winter and dry season—especially along Florida's Gulf coast, where powerful low-pressure systems moving east from the Gulf of Mexico bring strong westerly winds that push tide and water levels higher along the coast, bays, and inlets.

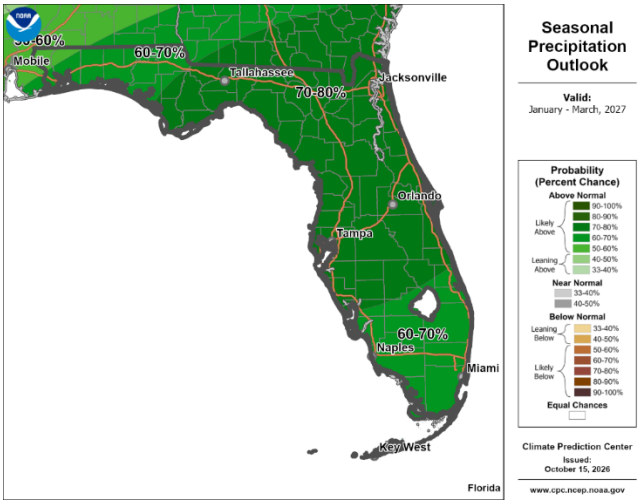


***Figure 3**: CPC Precipitation Outlook January-March 2027*

Temperature

Strong to very strong El Niño events typically lead to near normal winter and dry season temperatures in South Florida. Reflecting this trend, the most recent NOAA/CPC outlooks (Figure 4) indicate a ***medium probability (33-40%) of near normal temperatures*** from January through March. Increased cloud cover associated with more frequent storm systems tends to depress daily high temperatures, while persistent streams of milder Pacific air keep overnight lows higher than normal. Because the dominant subtropical jet stream drives a progressive pattern of southern storm systems, cold air masses of Arctic origin rarely penetrate into Florida, lowering – but not completely eliminating - the overall likelihood of freeze or extreme cold events this season.

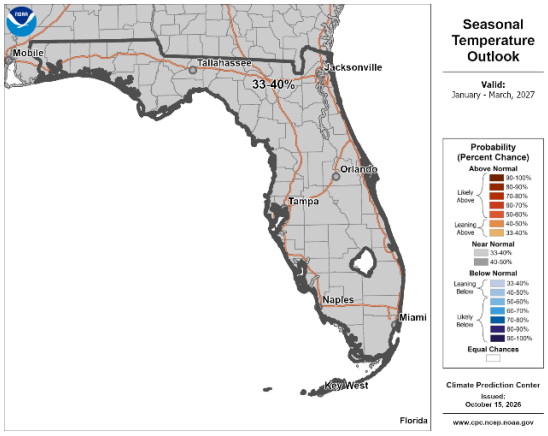


***Figure 4**: CPC Temperature Outlook January-March 2027*

Drought/Wildfires

Heavy rainfall early in the dry season, paired with the likelihood of above-average precipitation continuing through the period, is expected to fully eliminate drought conditions across South Florida by January. Consequently, the risk of drought forming during the latter half of the dry season remains lower than typical. Due to these moist conditions, significant wildland fire activity is projected to remain below normal through January and February (Figure 5), with the trend potentially extending into the spring.

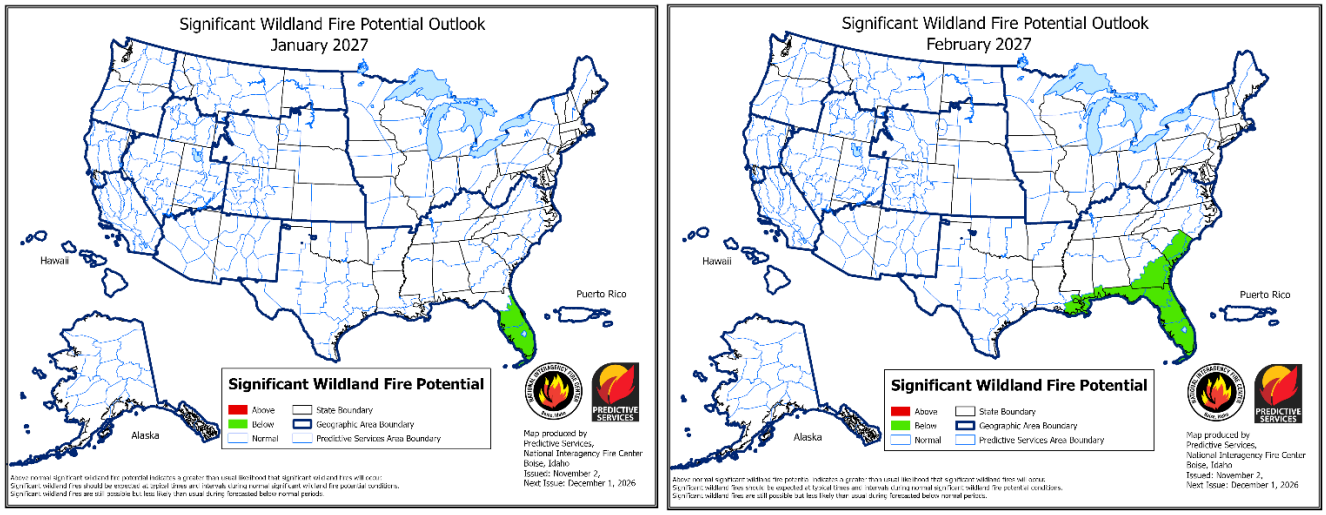


***Figure 5**: Significant Wildland Fire Potential January-February 2027*

Important Notes and Caveats:

- Seasonal outlooks provide probabilistic forecasts rather than guaranteed outcomes, even when confidence is high. While seasonal outlooks have skill in predicting seasonal averages, events such as the current very strong El Niño shifts the odds rather than guarantee an outcome. Some expected impacts are more likely or persistent during the strong and longer lasting El Niños.

- No two El Niños are the same. Historical correlations provide the most probable expectation of impacts, but they are not a guarantee. Outlooks always reflect weather conditions in a probabilistic sense. For example, the 1991-1992 dry season was drier than normal with no reported tornado events across South Florida, despite the presence of a very strong El Niño.

- The conditions reflected in this outlook are average conditions over the course of an entire season, and not representative of what is expected every day or week, and temporal variability can be expected. El Niño does not mean that weather will be the same through the entire winter season. El Niño influences the main storm tracks, but variability can occur at any time during the season, which could allow for more 'normal' conditions or even a reversal of the expected impacts at times. Most of the potential impacts discussed here are associated with short-duration storms. Therefore, seasonal outlooks are most useful for **general planning** and overall awareness.

Visit the NOAA Climate Prediction Center website for more details on the seasonal outlook for the United States, including discussions and other background information.

Stay tuned to local media, NOAA Weather Radio and the National Weather Service South Florida website at weather.gov/southflorida for the latest weather information, including outlooks and forecasts of significant storm events. You can also visit our Facebook and X pages for the latest weather information.