

**WEATHER:** High-profile forecasts have been off in recent years

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receives throughout the year. As of October 2, the National Integrated Drought Information System has declared the severity of the drought in Deschutes County to be extreme.

There's no question that our region is suffering from a serious lack of water; the real question now becomes will winter bring with it any significant relief?

In an attempt to find an answer, the first order of business is to take a peek at sea-surface temperatures in the equatorial region of the Pacific Ocean. The tool used most often to determine this is the Oceanic Niño Index (ONI), which considers surface water temperature only. The current value is +0.1, putting the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) in a neutral phase. At this time, most forecasters think the neutral phase will carry into early winter. Beyond that point, however, prognosticators' opinions begin to diverge. Some believe the neutral phase will continue throughout the winter, while others think the ONI will exceed a value of +0.5, ushering in an El Niño.

The best chance for the Pacific Northwest to experience normal temperatures and precipitation is for the ENSO phase to remain neutral. An El Niño would likely result in warmer temperatures, less rainfall and smaller mountain snowpacks.

Pete Parsons, meteorologist for the Oregon Department of Agriculture in Salem, issued his seasonal forecast for the three-month period, October through December, on September 20. He's calling for relatively placid conditions early in October that will likely turn stormy by the end of the month and continue through December. Though he hasn't made specific forecasts beyond December at this time, he is leaning toward the ENSO phase remaining neutral throughout the winter.

By contrast, the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) favors the development of an El Niño later in the winter (50-75 percent chance). Because of this, their three-month forecast is quite different. Temperatures should average above normal and precipitation below normal. An important factor in the CPC's analysis is the fact that although surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific are near normal, the water temperature at a greater depth is above

normal.

It should be pointed out that despite the presence of a moderately strong La Niña last winter, the snow and cold didn't kick in until mid-February. But by that time it was too late to catch up and the springtime snowpack in the Central Oregon Cascades came in at just 65 percent of normal.

Making useful seasonal weather forecasts is difficult at best, and not for the faint of heart. But is global climate change interfering with some of the methods currently being used? While there's not yet a definitive answer to this question, certain high-profile failed forecasts (such as the super El Niño that was supposed to inundate Southern California with rain — but didn't) suggest that maybe this is so. If this is the case, perhaps atmospheric scientists can learn to identify what some of these influences are and adjust for them to improve forecasting skill. Until that happens, seasonal prognosticating may continue to be a game of hit and miss.

**FOOD BANK:** Service depends on volunteers, donations

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33,510 pounds of food in 2016-17 to 23,490 pounds in 2017-18 (October-September fiscal year). Cash donations are also down significantly — to the tune of \$35,000.

"We lost a couple of major donors," Hespe said. "In order to continue the level of food distribution that we have at this time, we have to replace those donors."

The non-profit foundation that operates the Food Bank purchased about \$80,000 worth of food last year — 51 percent of the total distributed. Foods like meat, produce, milk and eggs cannot readily be donated and must be purchased. Cash donations allow flexibility in what kinds of foods can be stocked at the Food Bank.

In FY 2017-18, the Food Bank distributed some

113,450 pounds of food to a total of just under 6,000 people.

According to figures provided by Hespe, the Food Bank served 3,711 adults and 1,324 children (to 18 years of age) and an additional homeless population of 731 adults and 182 children.

Food is distributed every Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 328 W. Main Ave. (corner of Oak Street and Main Avenue). Donation criteria are listed at [www.sisterskiwanis.org/food-bank](http://www.sisterskiwanis.org/food-bank).

The Kiwanis Food Bank operates under the Sisters Kiwanis Community Service Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit. The operation is all-volunteer; none of the food bank staff, including the manager, receive any salary. One hundred percent of funds donated to the food bank are used to purchase food and operate the food bank building.

Hespe said the foundation is pushing to restore its level

of donations.

"Ideally, we'd like cash AND food," he said. "Otherwise, we're going to have to change our business operating model. We won't be able to offer as much food."

Checks payable to Sisters Kiwanis Community Service Foundation may be mailed to P.O. Box 1296, Sisters, OR 97759.

Sisters Kiwanis will host an open house on October 14, from noon to 3 p.m. at 328 W. Main Ave. At 1 p.m. there will be a memorial ceremony and bench dedication for David Roberts, the Kiwanis member who managed the construction of the Food Bank building.

The open house offers a tour where visitors will see the state-of-the-art facilities and understand how local families choose their food "shopping style."

For more information on the open house, contact Suzy Ramsey at 541-419-0340.

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