

Evidence mounts for El Nino

Could mean end to drought, but also massive storms

By BRIAN MELLEY
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Evidence is mounting that the El Nino ocean-warming phenomenon in the Pacific will spawn a rainy winter in California, potentially easing the state's punishing drought but also bringing the risk of chaotic storms like those that battered the region in the late 1990s.

In the clearest warning yet that Southern California could be due for a deluge, meteorologists said in a report last week that the already strong El Nino has a 95 percent chance of lasting through the winter before weakening in the spring.

"This is as close as you're going to get to a sure thing," said Bill Patzert, a climatologist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, calling this El Nino "too big to fail."

"In the abstract," he said, "El Nino seems like our savior." But if floods and mudslides develop, it's "not going to look like the great wet hope charging across the landscape on a white horse."

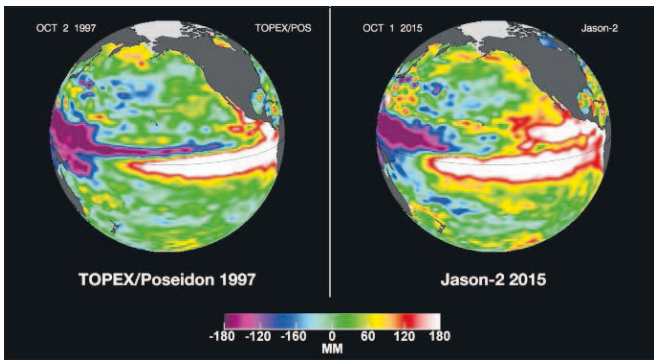
A strong El Nino arrives about once every 20 years. Ocean temperatures show this one to be the second-strongest since such record keeping began in 1950, said Eric Boldt, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. That would make it weaker than the El Nino of 1997-98 but stronger than the El Nino of 1982-83.

Both of those winters were known in California for relentless rain, strong winds and heavy snow. Waves pounded the coast, mudslides rolled down mountainsides and floods swamped homes and claimed lives.

Storms blamed on El Nino in 1997-98 killed at least 17 people, wiped out strawberry and artichoke



In this Feb. 2, 1998 file photo, work crews attempt to repair a damaged pier caused by waves that reached 15 feet from the massive El Nino-driven storm in Ventura, Calif.



These false-color images provided by NASA satellites compare warm Pacific Ocean water temperatures from the strong El Nino that brought North America large amounts of rainfall in 1997, left, and the current El Nino as of Oct. 1, 2015, right.

crops, pushed houses off hillside foundations and washed out highways. Damage was estimated at more than \$500 million.

The 1982-83 tempests left 36 people dead, damaged or destroyed more than 7,900 homes and businesses, and caused \$1.2 billion in losses, according to the weather service.

The NASA lab has been observing El Nino and other ocean trends for decades. In 1992, JPL, in collaboration with France, launched the first in a series of satellites capable of observing the

phenomena on a global basis.

Still, El Ninos can be unpredictable. Some have produced little rain, and some of the most damaging storms have come in non-El Nino years.

In the last 65 years, there have been just six strong El Ninos and only two produced major precipitation statewide, according to the California Department of Water Resources.

Weather models this year show a 60 percent chance of above-average rainfall in Southern California, but that figure declines farther north,

Boldt said.

From the San Francisco Bay Area to Sequoia National Park, there's a 50 percent chance of above-average rainfall. From Eureka to north of Reno, Nevada, that estimate drops to 33 percent. It's likely to be drier in the Pacific Northwest and the northern Rocky Mountains.

California public agencies have been warned to prepare for large storms. Boldt said he can't count all the meetings he's been to with emergency managers and local officials.

"That's been pushed hard, and people understand this is going to potentially be a bad winter for water issues," he said.

State officials are watching weather models and updating emergency plans, said Kelly Huston, deputy director with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

"We worry that people won't take it seriously because they're so desperate for water," Huston said. "If it downpours heavily over a short period of time, it's going to be dangerous, not just a welcome relief they perceive to be helping the drought."

Democratic debate a breakout chance for O'Malley

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Stuck far behind Hillary Rodham Clinton and Bernie Sanders in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, Martin O'Malley needs a breakout moment in the party's first debate to catch up to the front-runners.

And he knows it. "This will really be the first time that nationally voters see that there's more than one alternative to this year's inevitable front-runner, Secretary Clinton," O'Malley said.

"It's a very, very important opportunity for me to not only present my vision for where the country should head, but also 15 years of executive experience, actually accomplishing the progressive things some of the other candidates can only talk about," he said.

The former governor of Maryland and mayor of Baltimore got into the race at the end of May, after telegraphing for some time his plans to seek the White House in 2016. The entries of the two others who will be onstage Tuesday night in Las Vegas, former Virginia Sen. Jim Webb and former Rhode Island Sen. Lincoln Chafee, were surprises to most.

But all three have one thing in common — an inability so far to generate any of the enthusiasm among voters that has pushed Sanders into and kept Clinton at the top of the field. All three poll in low single digits in early preference surveys, well below even Vice President Joe Biden, who has yet to say if he'll make a late entry into the race.

O'Malley has been openly critical of the Democratic National Committee and the decision to hold six primary debates, with four scheduled in early primary states before the Iowa caucuses on Feb. 1. He has mounted a push for the party to expand the number, even encouraging protests in front of Democratic Party headquarters.

The party hasn't budged, but O'Malley is undaunted. He has campaigned aggressively in Iowa and New Hampshire, far more than Webb or Chafee. He is critical of Clinton for her



In this photo taken Aug. 28, 2015, Democratic presidential candidate, former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley speaks in Minneapolis.

recent shifts on policy issues, among them her opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, which he calls a "reversal."

O'Malley also touts his executive experience in dealing with issues such as gun control, in which Sanders' record matches more with his largely rural home state than his place in the race as a liberal firebrand promising political revolution.

"We have to draw contrasts," O'Malley said.

"I think we can do it in a respectful way."

Expect Chafee, the former senator and governor from Rhode Island, to go after Clinton for her 2002 vote to authorize the war in Iraq. Chafee, at the time a Republican, opposed the invasion and he's said Clinton's support for the war, which she has more recently called a "mistake," is at the center of his decision to run.

Webb, a Vietnam veteran and former Virginia senator,

has deep experience on military issues and foreign policy and has been critical of Clinton's handling of the conflict in Libya. Last year he said the Obama administration's unilateral decision to use military force in Libya was improper.

One unknown is whether any of her challengers will poke at Clinton for her use of a private email account and server while serving as secretary of state. It's been a constant refrain from the GOP candidates, and the Republican National Committee released a new television ad Monday that focuses on Clinton saying she didn't send any classified information via the server.

Neither Chafee nor Webb has campaigned as much as the others in the race, but the highly rated Republican debates have proven that a good night can lift a candidate. Carly Fiorina has emerged as a contender in the GOP race after two strong showings.

BRIEFLY

Amid wave of stabbings, Netanyahu accuses Arab leaders of incitement

JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinians carried out three stabbings Monday in Jerusalem, leaving a teenage Israeli boy in critical condition, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu angrily accused the country's Arab leaders of helping incite weeks of violence. Two of the attackers, both teenage boys, were killed.

In a fiery speech at parliament, Netanyahu accused Arab parties of "undermining" the country. He called on Israel's Arab citizens to "kick out the extremists among you."

Netanyahu spoke on another bloody day, the latest in a monthlong wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

In a new setback for efforts to restore calm, the Quartet of Mideast mediators — the U.S., the U.N., the European Union and Russia — postponed a trip to the region. Edgar Vasquez, a spokesman for the State Department's Bureau of Near East Affairs, said it was at the request of the Israeli government due to the circumstances.

Israeli police reported three separate stabbings across the city, including an assault by two attackers in the east Jerusalem area of Pisgat Zeev. Police said the pair seriously wounded a 20-year-old man before attacking a teenage boy on a bicycle.

Putin craze takes hold in Middle East

BEIRUT (AP) — Amid the ornate walls of Damascus' famed Omayyad Mosque, preacher Maamoun Rahmeh stood before worshippers last week, declaring Russian President Vladimir Putin a "giant and beloved leader" who has "destroyed the myth of the self-aggrandizing America."

Posters of Putin are popping up on cars and billboards elsewhere in parts of Syria and Iraq, praising the Russian military intervention in Syria as one that will redress the balance of power in the region.

The Russian leader is winning accolades from many in Iraq and Syria, who see Russian airstrikes in Syria as a turning point after more than a year of largely ineffectual efforts by the U.S.-led coalition to dislodge the Islamic State militants who have occupied significant parts of the two countries.

The reactions underscore that while the West may criticize Putin for supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad, there is some relief in the region at the emergence of a player with a coherent — if controversial — strategy.

"Putin does more than just speak," said Sohbhan Elewi of Damascus, summing up the views of Syrians on opposing camps who regard U.S. policy in Syria and Iraq as fumbled and confused.

Princeton economist wins Nobel for work on consumption and poverty

Angus Deaton has dug into obscure data to explore a range of problems: The scope of poverty in India. How poor countries treat young girls. The link between income inequality and economic growth.

The Princeton University economist's research has raised doubts about sweeping solutions to poverty and about the effectiveness of aid programs. And on Monday, it earned him the Nobel prize in economics.

For work that the award committee said has had "immense importance for human welfare, not least in poor countries," Deaton, 69, will receive a prize of about \$975,000 from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Deaton's research has "shown other researchers and international organizations like the World Bank how to go about understanding poverty at the very basic level," said Torsten Persson, secretary of the award committee.

U.S. dentist not wanted in Zimbabwe

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Zimbabwe is no longer pressing for the extradition of James Walter Palmer, an American dentist who killed a well-known lion called Cecil, a Cabinet minister said Monday.

Palmer can now safely return to Zimbabwe as a "tourist" because he had not broken the southern African country's hunting laws, Environment, Water and Climate Minister Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri told reporters in Harare on Monday. Zimbabwe's police and the National Prosecuting Authority had cleared Palmer of wrongdoing, she said.

Through an adviser, Palmer declined comment. Palmer was identified as the man who killed Cecil in a bow hunt. Cecil, a resident of Hwange National park in western Zimbabwe, was well-known to tourists and researchers for his distinctive black mane.

Man charged in killing Memphis officer

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Terence Orlidge was heading to his job as a police officer when he and a neighbor were involved in an argument that escalated into a shootout in a normally quiet neighborhood in suburban Memphis, authorities said.

Shot multiple times, Orlidge tried to make it back to his house to get help. He was later taken to a hospital, where he died Sunday afternoon — becoming the second Memphis police officer to be killed in a shooting in less than three months, police said.

Details about what caused the altercation between Orlidge, 31, and Lorenzo Clark, 36, in the suburb of Cordova, on a street lined with similar looking single family homes with garage doors and trees in the front yard, are still not clear. At least two garage doors have bullet holes in them now.



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