ENSO: Recent Evolution, Current Status and Predictions

Update prepared by:
Climate Prediction Center / NCEP
2 June 2025

Outline

Summary

Recent Evolution and Current Conditions

Oceanic Niño Index (ONI)

Pacific SST Outlook

U.S. Seasonal Precipitation and Temperature Outlooks

Summary

Summary

ENSO Alert System Status: Not Active

ENSO-neutral is present.*

Equatorial sea surface temperatures (SSTs) are near average across most of the Pacific Ocean.

ENSO-neutral is favored through the Northern Hemisphere summer 2025 (74% chance during June-August), with chances exceeding 50% through August-October 2025.

*** Note: These statements are updated once a month (2nd Thursday of each month) in association with the ENSO Diagnostics Discussion, which can be found by clicking here.**

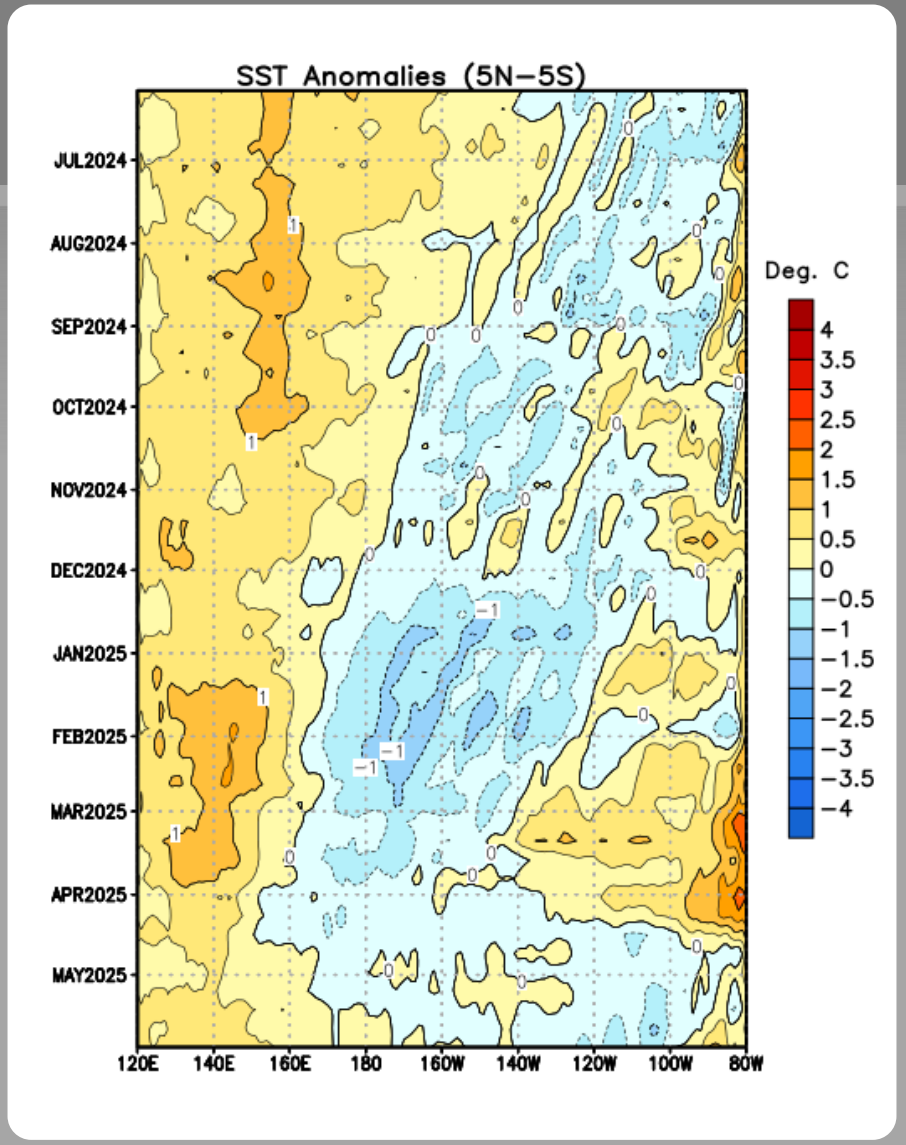
Recent Evolution of Equatorial Pacific SST Departures (°C)

Beginning in mid-March 2024, mostly near-to-below-average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) emerged in the eastern Pacific Ocean and expanded westward.

Since early December 2024, below-average SSTs persisted across the central Pacific.

During February and March 2025, above-average SSTs were observed in the eastern Pacific.

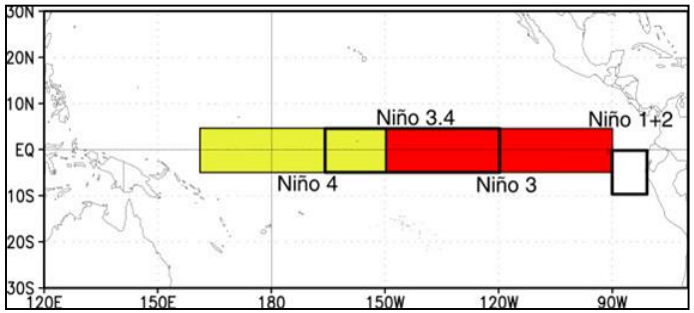
Since mid-April, SSTs have been mostly near average from the central to eastern equatorial Pacific.

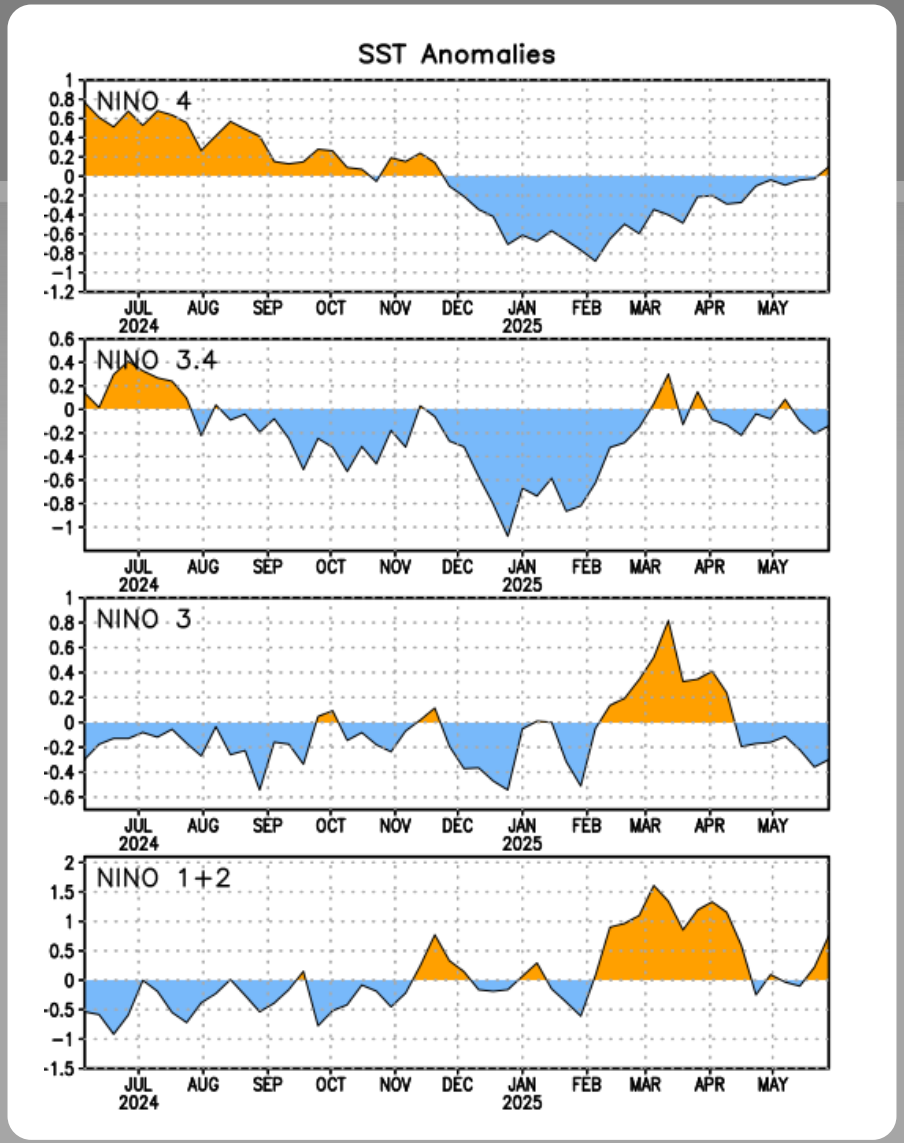


Niño Region SST Departures (ºC) Recent Evolution

The latest weekly SST departures are:

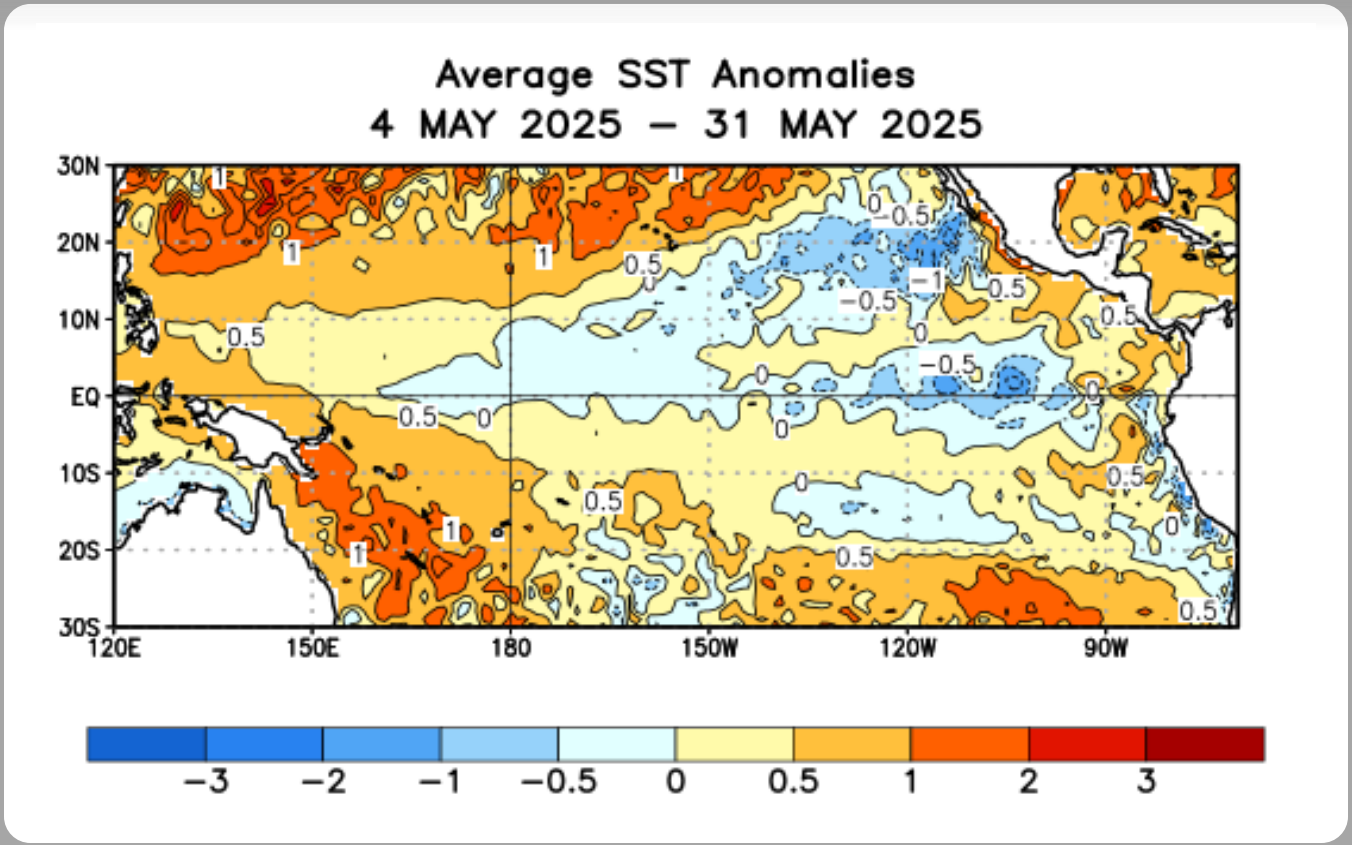
Niño 4	0.1ºC
Niño 3.4	-0.1ºC
Niño 3	-0.3ºC
Niño 1+2	0.8ºC





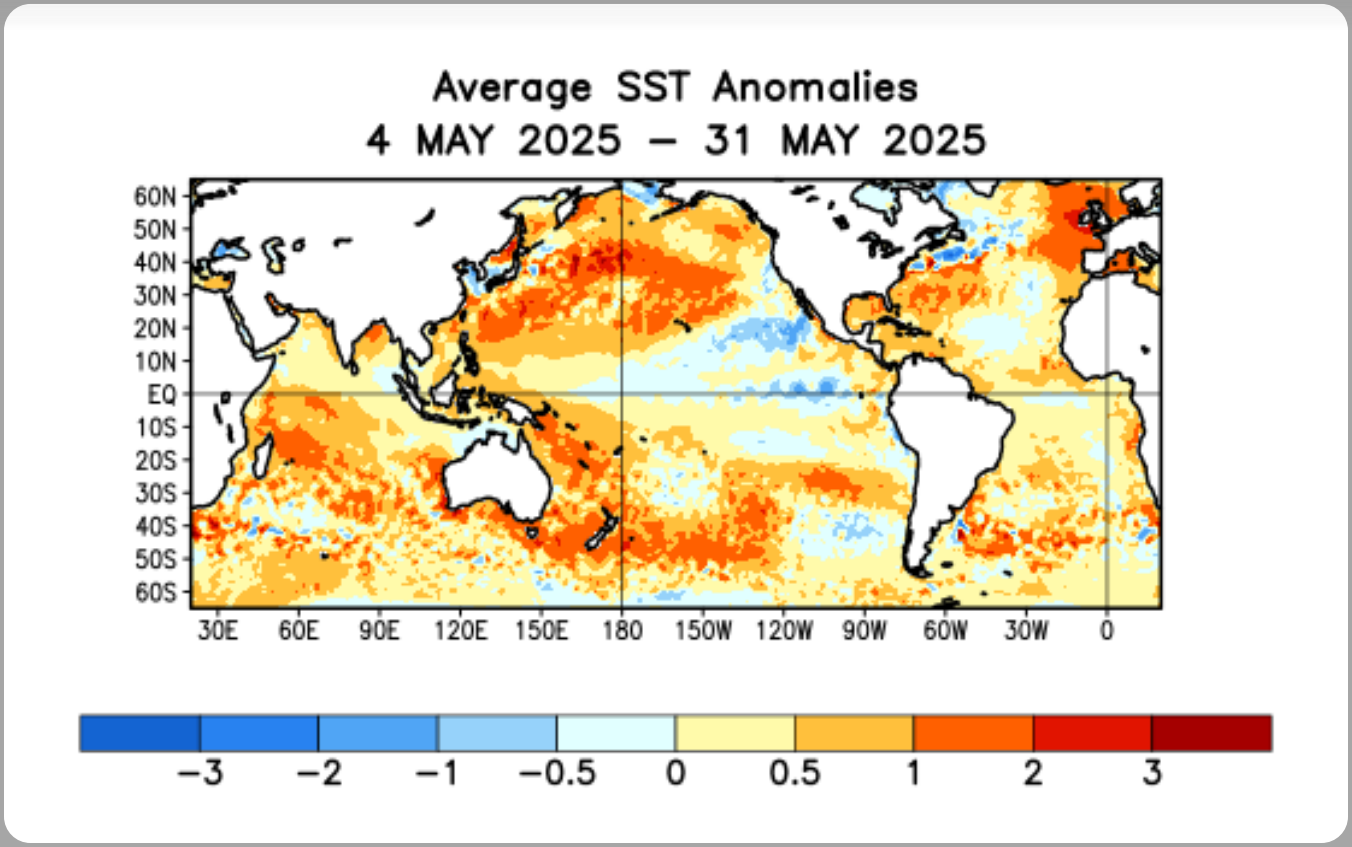
SST Departures (ºC) in the Tropical Pacific During the Last Four Weeks

In the last four weeks, equatorial SSTs were above average in the far western Pacific Ocean, near average in the central Pacific Ocean, and near-to-below average between 140° W and 90° W.



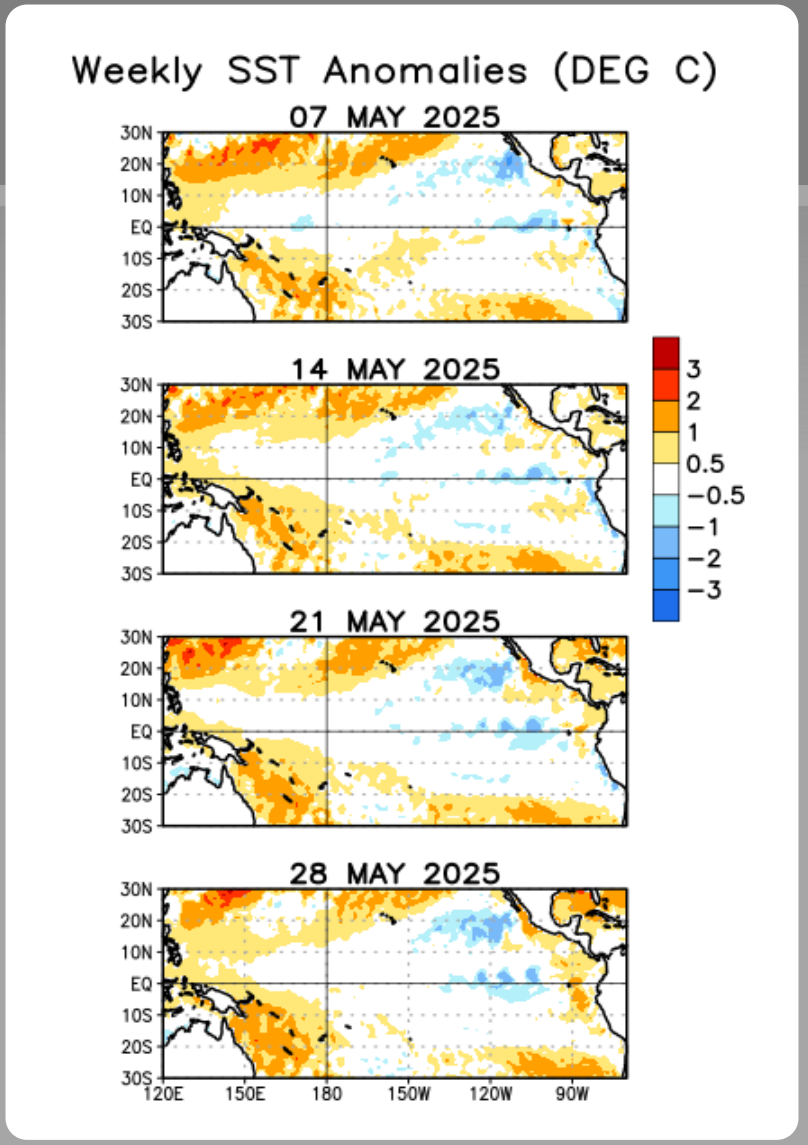
Global SST Departures (°C) During the Last Four Weeks

During the last four weeks, equatorial SSTs were mostly near average across the central Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and above average in the far western Pacific and western Indian Oceans.



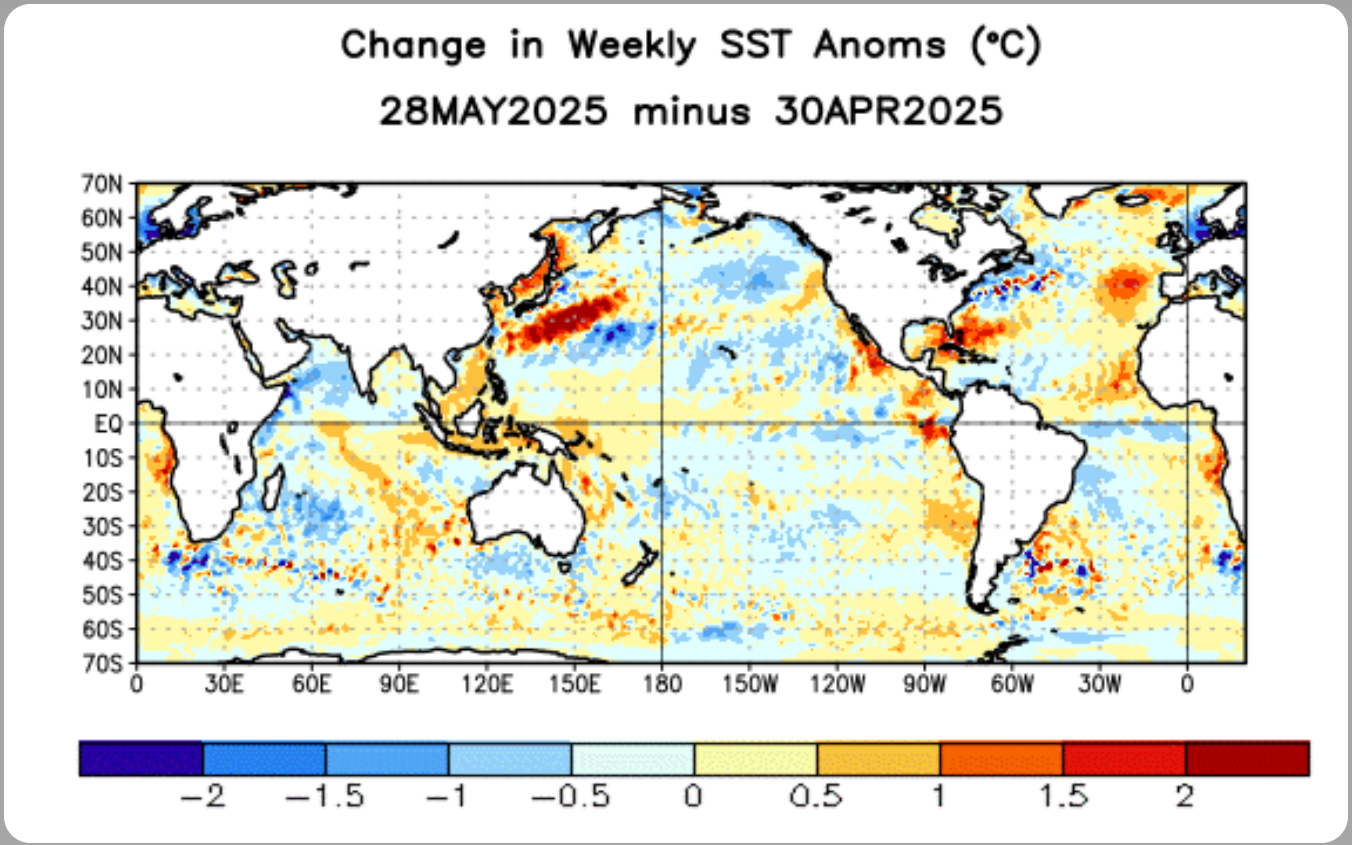
Weekly SST Departures during the Last Four Weeks

During the last 4 weeks, SSTs were near average in the central equatorial Pacific, with negative SST anomalies emerging between 140° W and 90° W and positive anomalies strengthening in the far eastern Pacific.



Change in Weekly SST Departures over the Last Four Weeks

During the last four weeks, positive SST anomaly changes were apparent in the far eastern equatorial Pacific, with negative SST anomaly changes just west of the region.



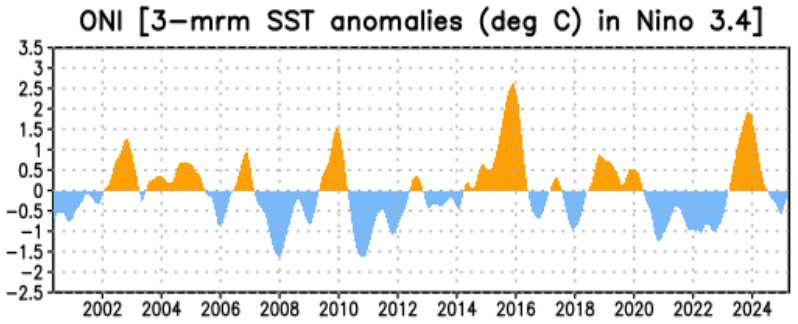
Upper-Ocean Conditions in the Equatorial Pacific

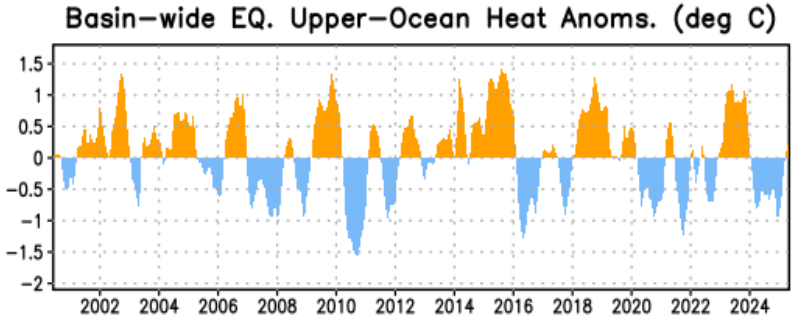
The basin-wide equatorial upper ocean (0-300 m) heat content is greatest prior to and during the early stages of a Pacific warm (El Niño) episode (compare top 2 panels), and least prior to and during the early stages of a cold (La Niña) episode.

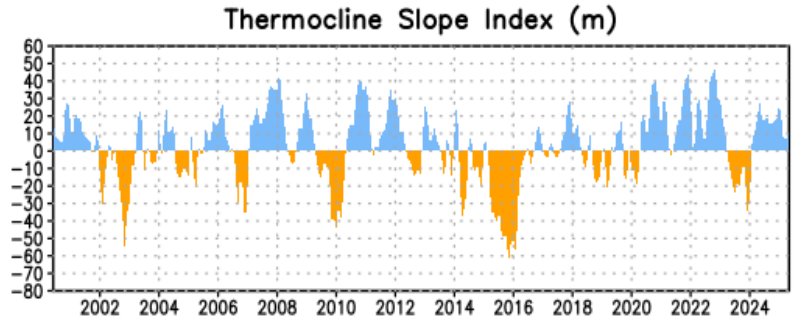
The slope of the oceanic thermocline is least (greatest) during warm (cold) episodes.

Recent values of the upper-ocean heat anomalies (near-to-below average) and thermocline slope index (near-to-above average) reflect ENSO-neutral.

The monthly thermocline slope index represents the difference in anomalous depth of the 20°C isotherm between the western Pacific (160°E-150°W) and the eastern Pacific (90°-140°W).

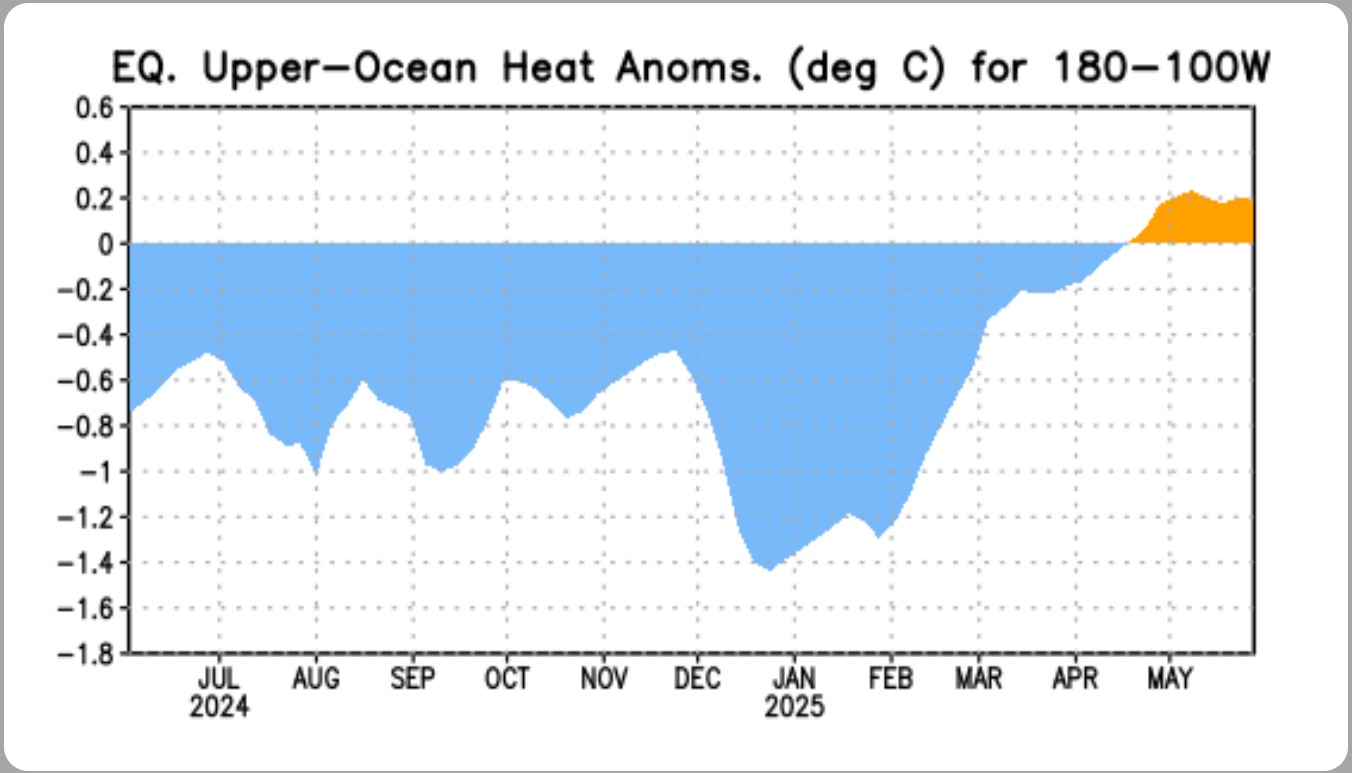






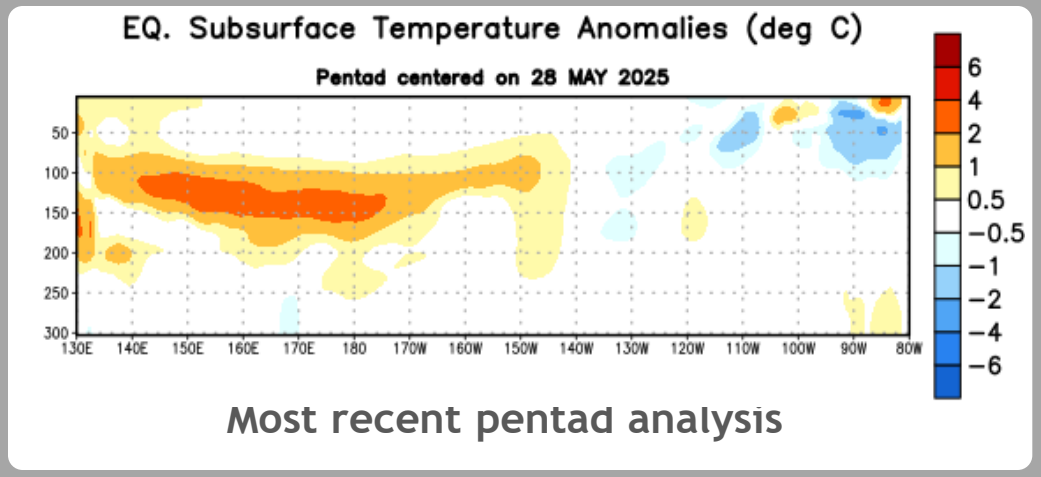
Central and Eastern Pacific Upper-Ocean (0-300 m) Weekly Average Temperature Anomalies

Since the start of the period, negative subsurface temperature anomalies have dominated. Negative anomalies strengthened in December 2024, reaching a minimum late in the month. In February and March 2025, negative anomalies significantly weakened. Since late April 2025, weak, above-average values have persisted.



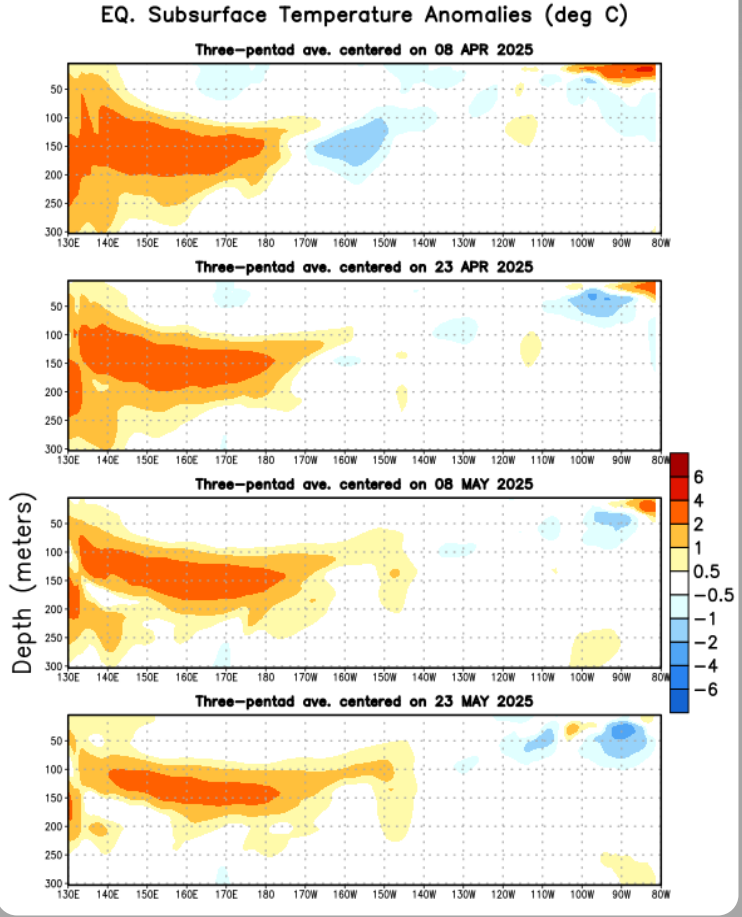
Sub-Surface Temperature Departures in the Equatorial Pacific

Over the last couple of months, above-average subsurface temperatures have prevailed in the western and central Pacific, but remain mostly at depth.



Most recent pentad analysis

Small pockets of above and below-average subsurface temperatures have emerged in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

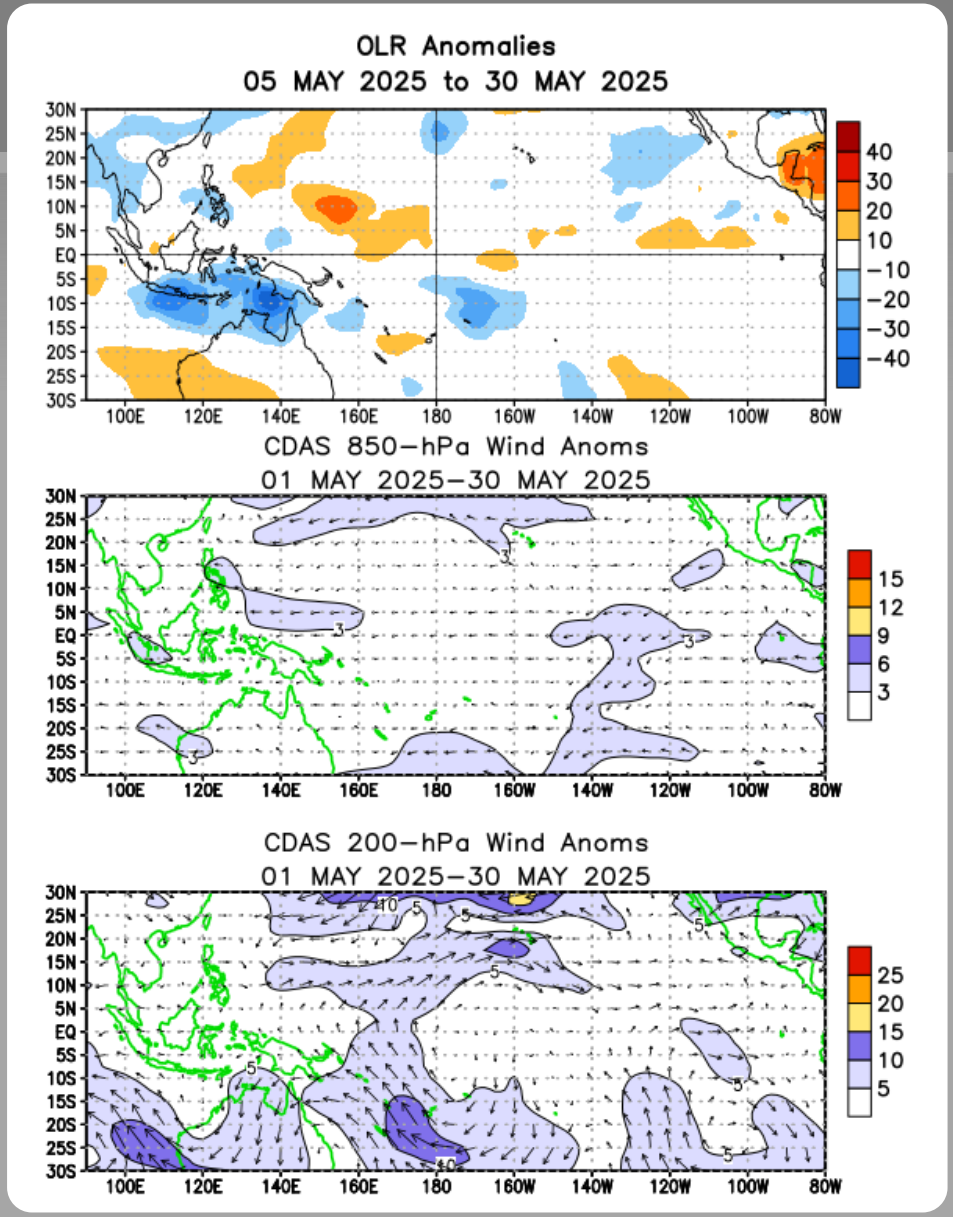


Tropical OLR and Wind Anomalies During the Last 30 Days

Weak, above-average OLR (suppressed convection and precipitation) was observed in the west-central equatorial Pacific. Below-average OLR (enhanced convection and precipitation) was evident over Indonesia, the Philippines, and northern Australia.

Low-level (850-hPa) winds were near average across most of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, with a small area of easterly wind anomalies over the east-central Pacific.

Upper-level (200-hPa) wind anomalies were cross-equatorial over the west-central Pacific and westerly over a small region of the eastern Pacific.



Intraseasonal Variability

Intraseasonal variability in the atmosphere (wind and pressure), which is often related to the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO), can significantly impact surface and subsurface conditions across the Pacific Ocean.

Related to this activity:

Significant weakening of the low-level easterly winds usually initiates an eastward-propagating oceanic Kelvin wave.

Weekly Heat Content Evolution in the Equatorial Pacific

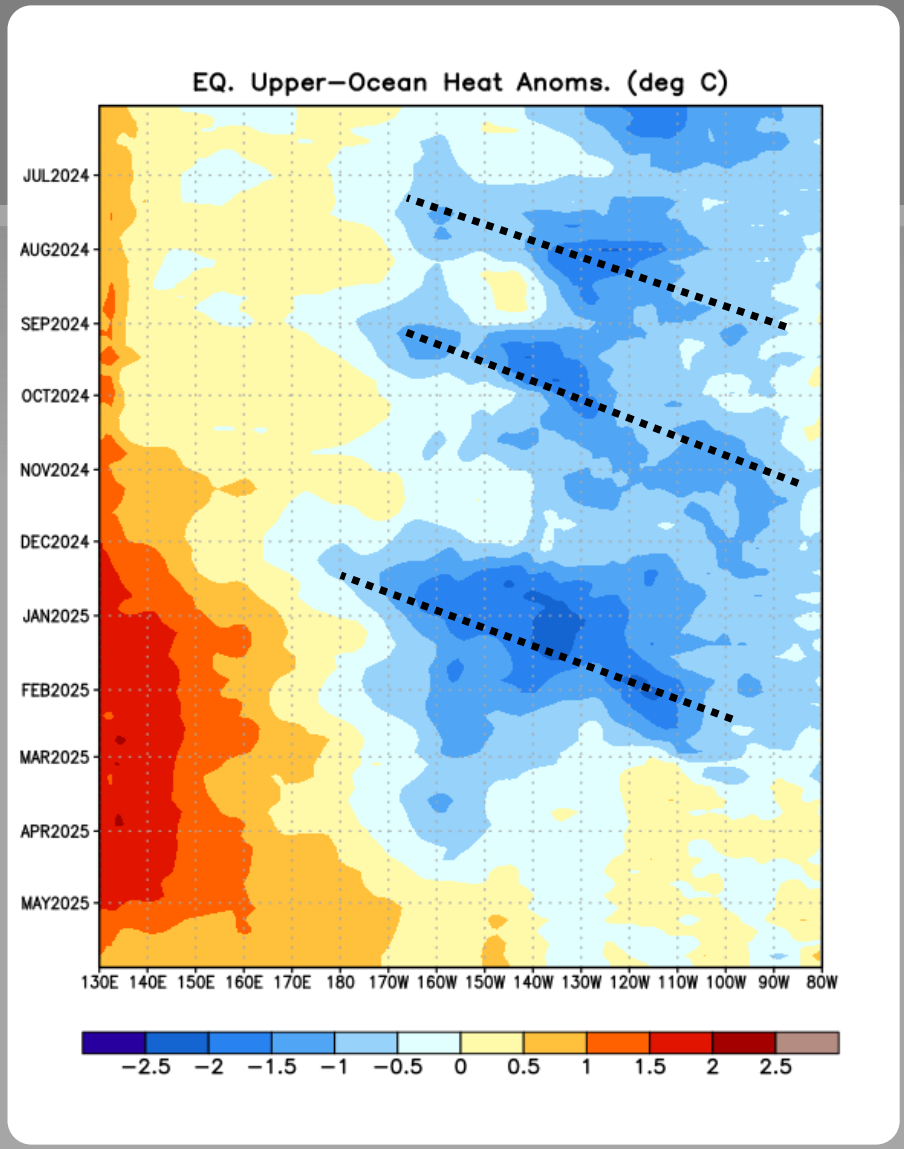
Significant equatorial oceanic Kelvin wave activity (dashed and dotted lines) has been present throughout the period shown.

Through February 2025, below-average subsurface temperatures dominated the east-central and eastern Pacific.

Upwelling Kelvin waves were initiated during July, September, and December 2024.

Since March 2025, subsurface temperatures have been above average in the western Pacific, while near-average temperatures have been evident in the eastern Pacific.

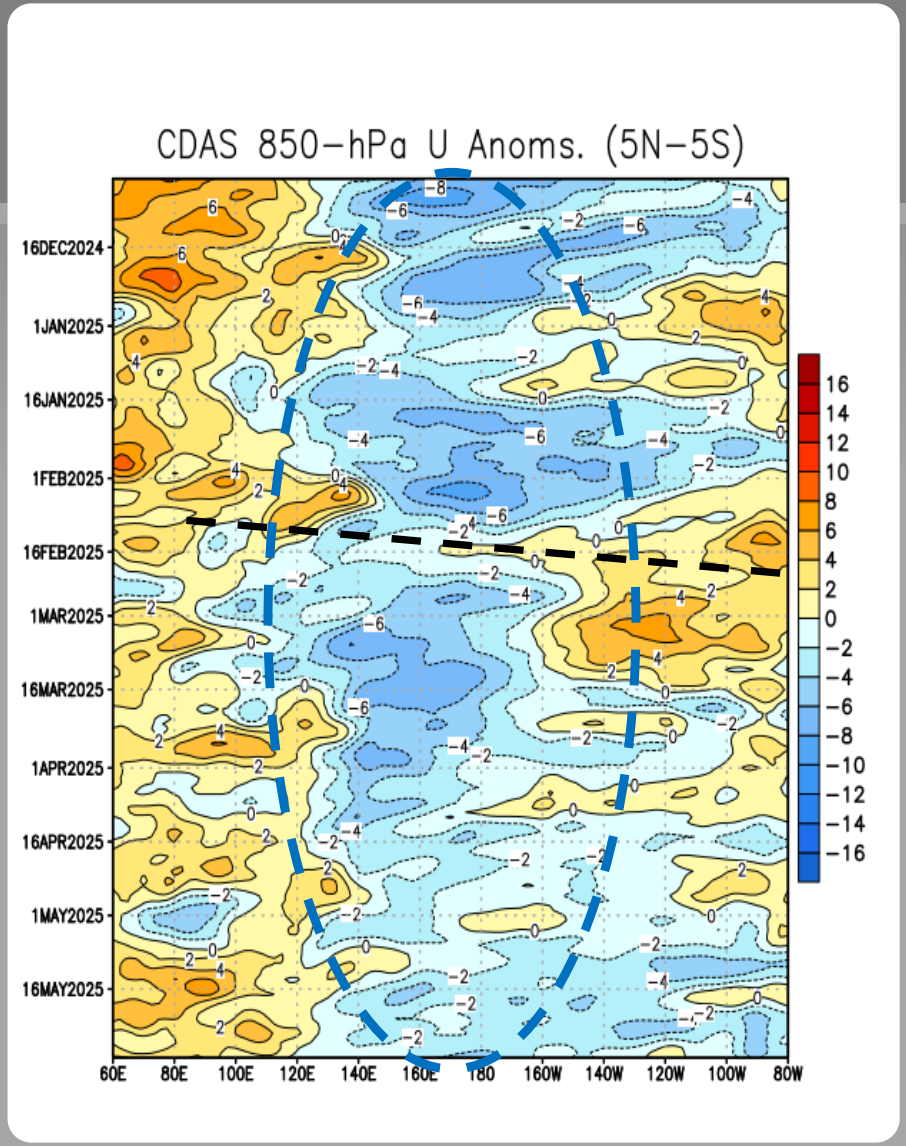
Equatorial oceanic Kelvin waves have alternating warm and cold phases. The warm phase is indicated by dashed lines. Down-welling and warming occur in the leading portion of a Kelvin wave, and up-welling and cooling occur in the trailing portion.



Low-level (850-hPa) Zonal (east-west) Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})

At times, the Madden Julian-Oscillation (MJO) has contributed to the eastward propagation of low-level wind anomalies.

Since the beginning of the period, easterly wind anomalies have mostly dominated the central Pacific Ocean. Periodically, easterly wind anomalies expand into the eastern Pacific Ocean.

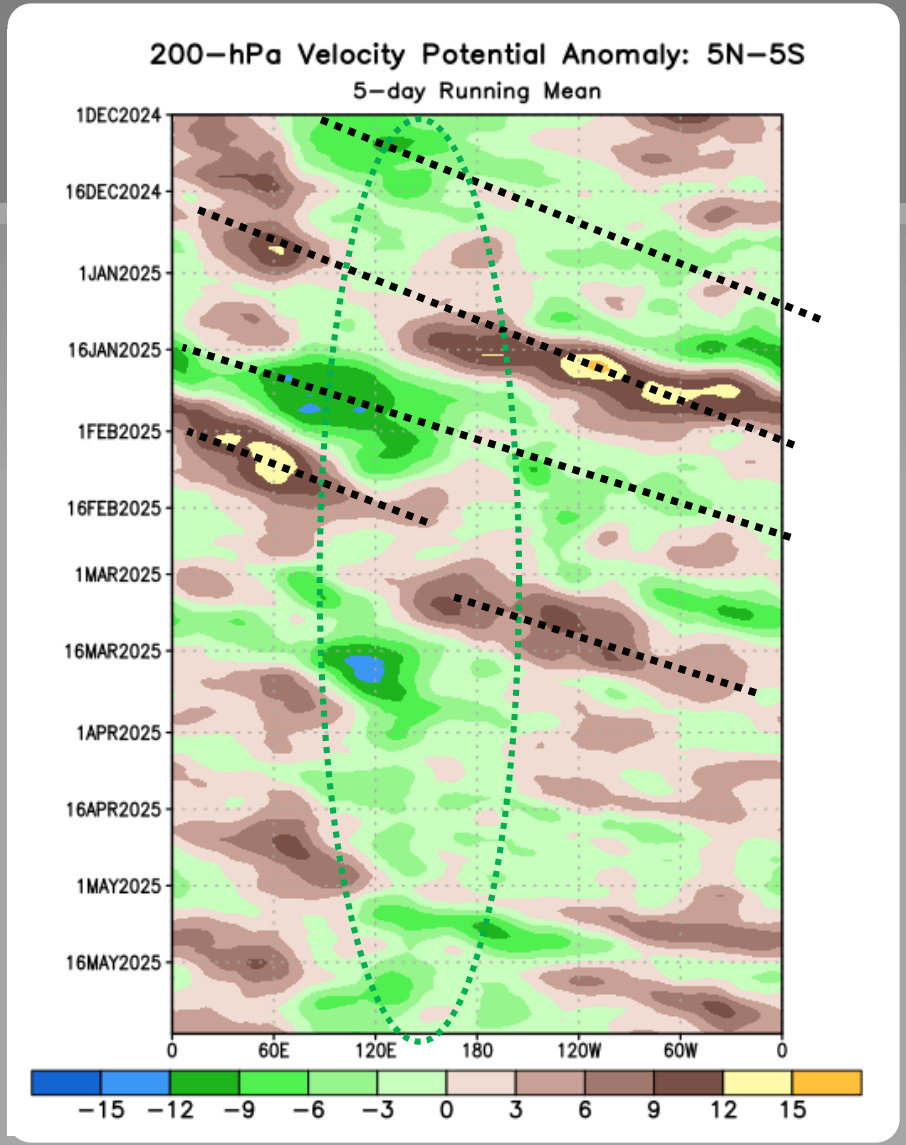


Westerly Wind Anomalies (orange/red shading)
Easterly Wind Anomalies (blue shading)

Upper-level (200-hPa) Velocity Potential Anomalies

At times, regions of anomalous divergence (green shading) and convergence (brown shading) shifted eastward.

Since the beginning of the period, anomalous divergence has been generally observed over Indonesia and/or the western Pacific.



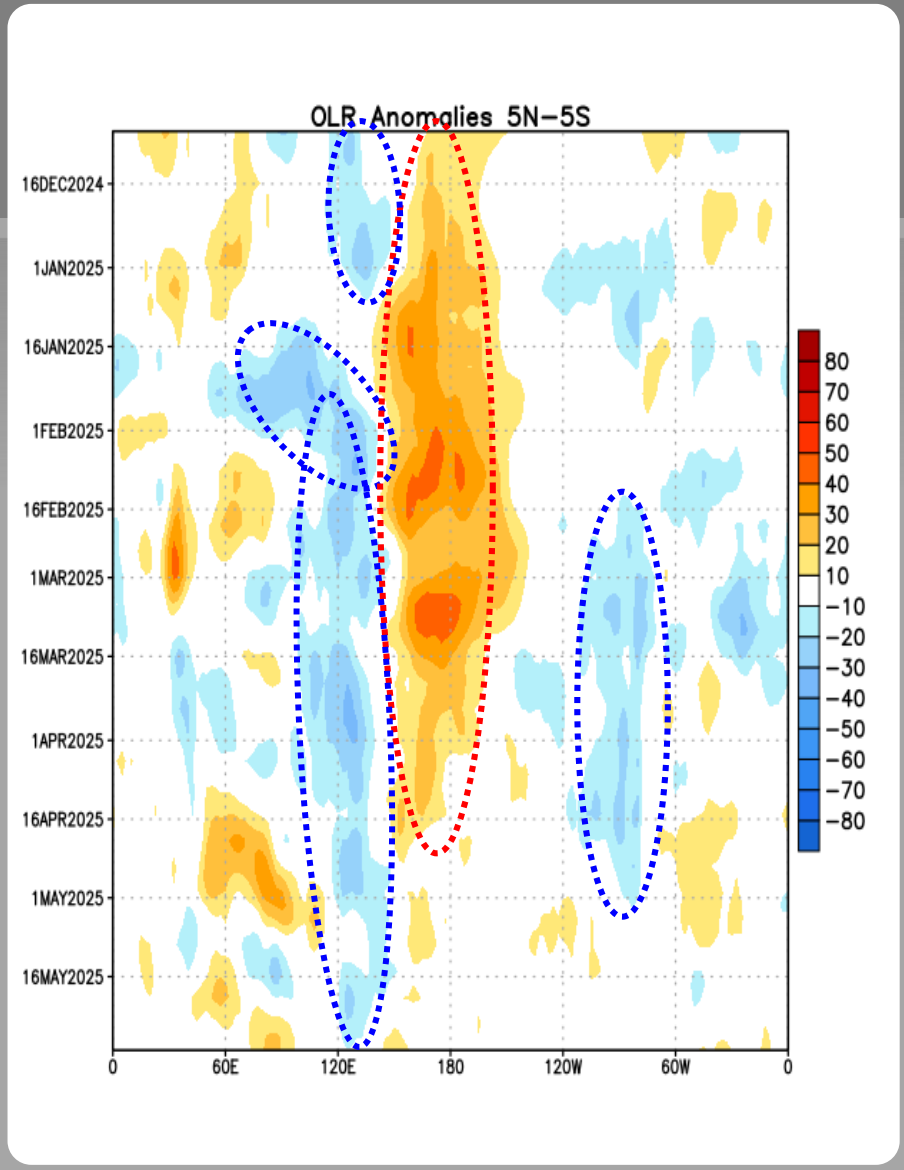
Unfavorable for precipitation (brown shading)
Favorable for precipitation (green shading)
Note: Eastward propagation is not necessarily indicative of the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO).

Outgoing Longwave Radiation (OLR) Anomalies

Through mid-April 2025, positive OLR anomalies (suppressed convection/rainfall) persisted near the Date Line.

From mid-February through early May 2025, negative OLR anomalies persisted over the eastern Pacific Ocean.

Beginning in early December 2024, negative OLR anomalies (enhanced convection/rainfall) emerged over Indonesia.



Drier-than-average Conditions (orange/red shading)
Wetter-than-average Conditions (blue shading)

Oceanic Niño Index (ONI)

The ONI is based on SST departures from average in the Niño 3.4 region, and is a principal measure for monitoring, assessing, and predicting ENSO.

Defined as the three-month running-mean SST departures in the Niño 3.4 region. Departures are based on a set of improved homogeneous historical SST analyses (Extended Reconstructed SST – ERSST.v5). The SST reconstruction methodology is described in Huang et al., 2017, J. Climate, vol. 30, 8179-8205.)

It is one index that helps to place current events into a historical perspective.

Note: a different SST dataset is used for weekly SST monitoring (slides #4-9) and is using OISSTv2.1 (Huang et al., 2021).

NOAA Operational Definitions for El Niño and La Niña

El Niño: characterized by a positive ONI greater than or equal to +0.5°C.

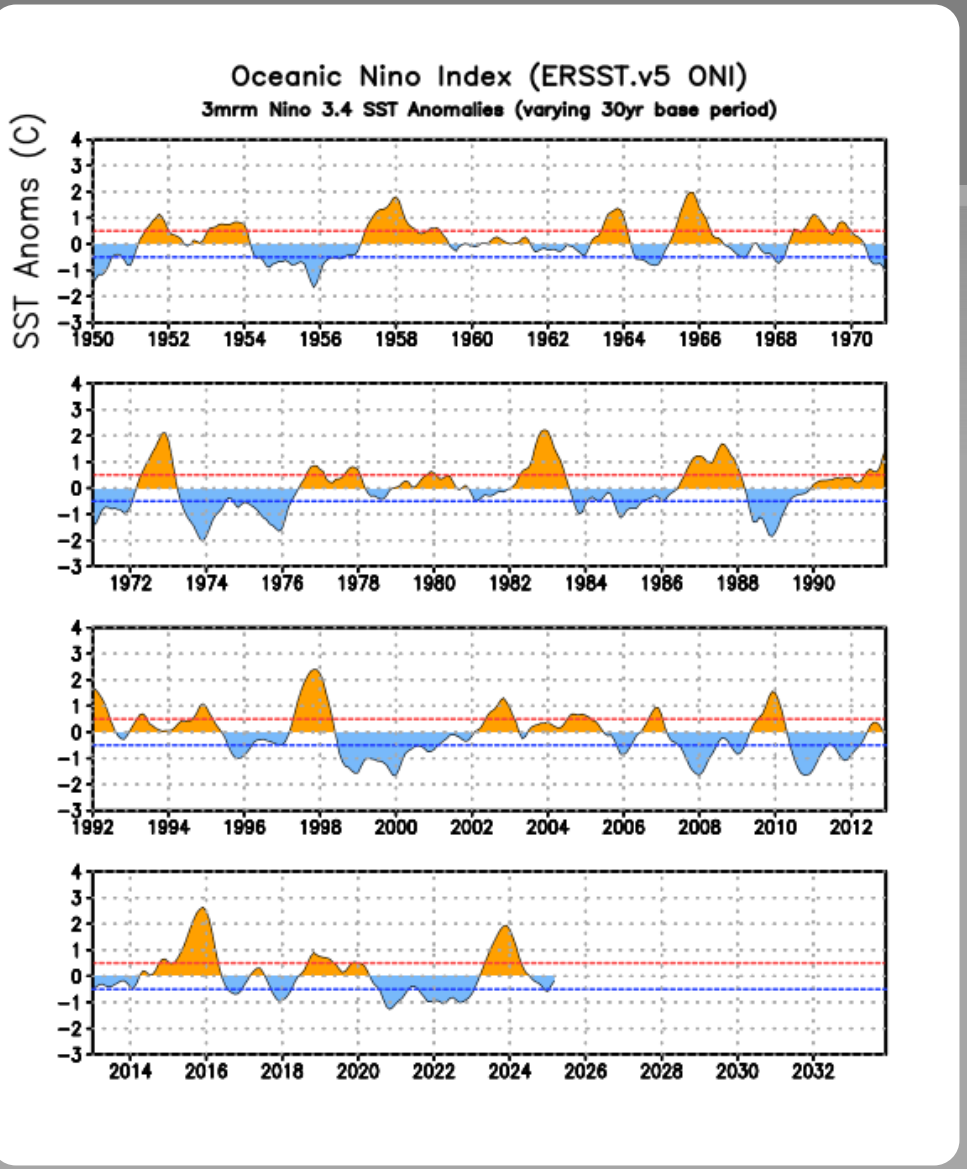
La Niña: characterized by a negative ONI less than or equal to -0.5°C.

By historical standards, to be classified as a full-fledged El Niño or La Niña episode, these thresholds must be exceeded for a period of at least 5 consecutive overlapping 3-month seasons.

CPC considers El Niño or La Niña conditions to occur when the monthly Niño3.4 OISST departures meet or exceed +/- 0.5°C along with consistent atmospheric features. These anomalies must also be forecasted to persist for 3 consecutive months.

ONI (°C): Evolution since 1950

The most recent ONI value (February - April 2025) is -0.2°C.



Historical El Niño and La Niña Episodes Based on the ONI computed using ERSST.v5

Recent Pacific warm (red) and cold (blue) periods based on a threshold of +/- 0.5 °C for the Oceanic Nino Index (ONI) [3 month running mean of ERSST.v5 SST anomalies in the Nino 3.4 region (5N-5S, 120-170W)]. For historical purposes, periods of below and above normal SSTs are colored in blue and red when the threshold is met for a minimum of 5 consecutive over-lapping seasons.

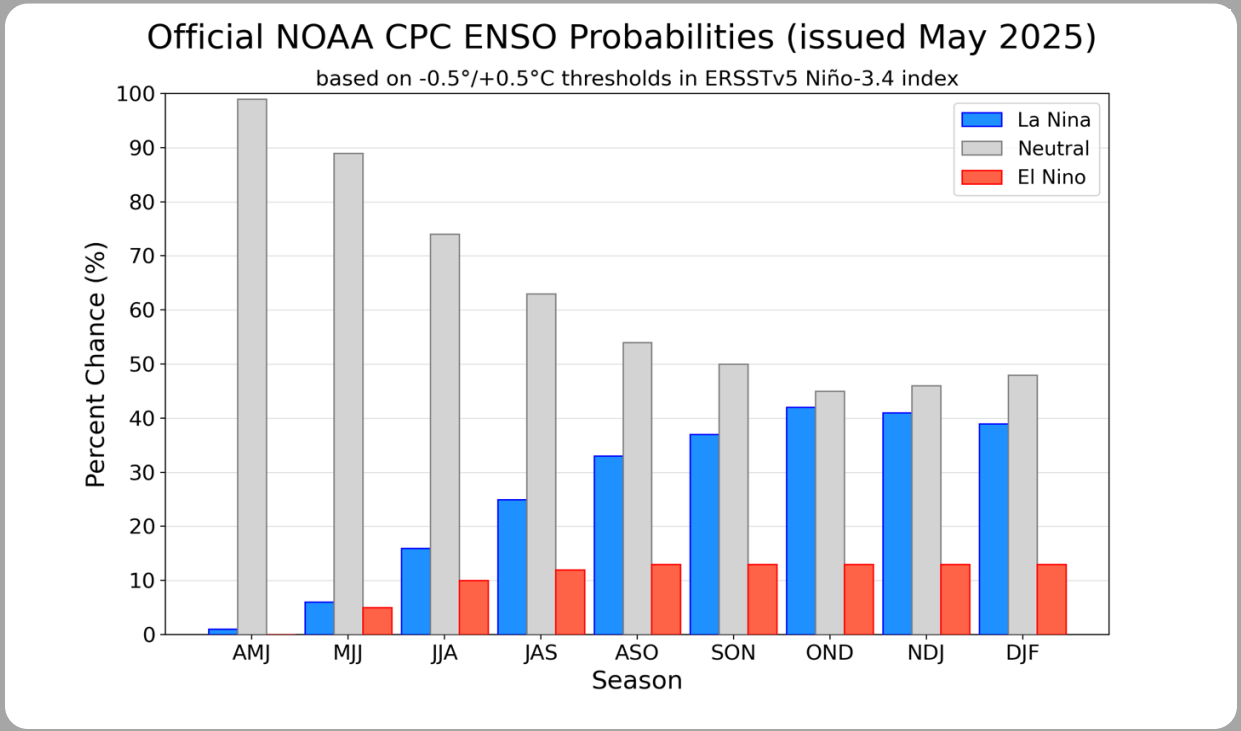
The ONI is one measure of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, and other indices can confirm whether features consistent with a coupled ocean-atmosphere phenomenon accompanied these periods. The complete table going back to DJF 1950 can be found here.

Year	DJF	JFM	FMA	MAM	AMJ	MJJ	JJA	JAS	ASO	SON	OND	NDJ
2013	-0.4	-0.4	-0.3	-0.3	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	-0.3	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3
2014	-0.4	-0.5	-0.3	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.7
2015	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.2	1.5	1.9	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.6
2016	2.5	2.1	1.6	0.9	0.4	-0.1	-0.4	-0.5	-0.6	-0.7	-0.7	-0.6
2017	-0.3	-0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.1	-0.1	-0.4	-0.7	-0.8	-1.0
2018	-0.9	-0.9	-0.7	-0.5	-0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9	0.8
2019	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.5
2020	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.2	-0.1	-0.3	-0.4	-0.6	-0.9	-1.2	-1.3	-1.2
2021	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8	-0.7	-0.5	-0.4	-0.4	-0.5	-0.7	-0.8	-1.0	-1.0
2022	-1.0	-0.9	-1.0	-1.1	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8	-0.9	-1.0	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8
2023	-0.7	-0.4	-0.1	0.2	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0
2024	1.8	1.5	1.1	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.0	-0.1	-0.2	-0.3	-0.4	-0.5
2025	-0.6	-0.4	-0.2									

CPC Probabilistic ENSO Outlook

Updated: 8 May 2025

ENSO-neutral is favored to persist through the Northern Hemisphere summer 2025, with a greater than 50% chance through August-October 2025. During the fall and early winter, ENSO-neutral is slightly favored over the possible return of La Niña.



IRI Pacific Niño 3.4 SST Model Outlook

Most models favor ENSO-neutral to prevail through the Northern Hemisphere fall and winter 2025-26.

The uncertainty increases at longer forecast horizons.

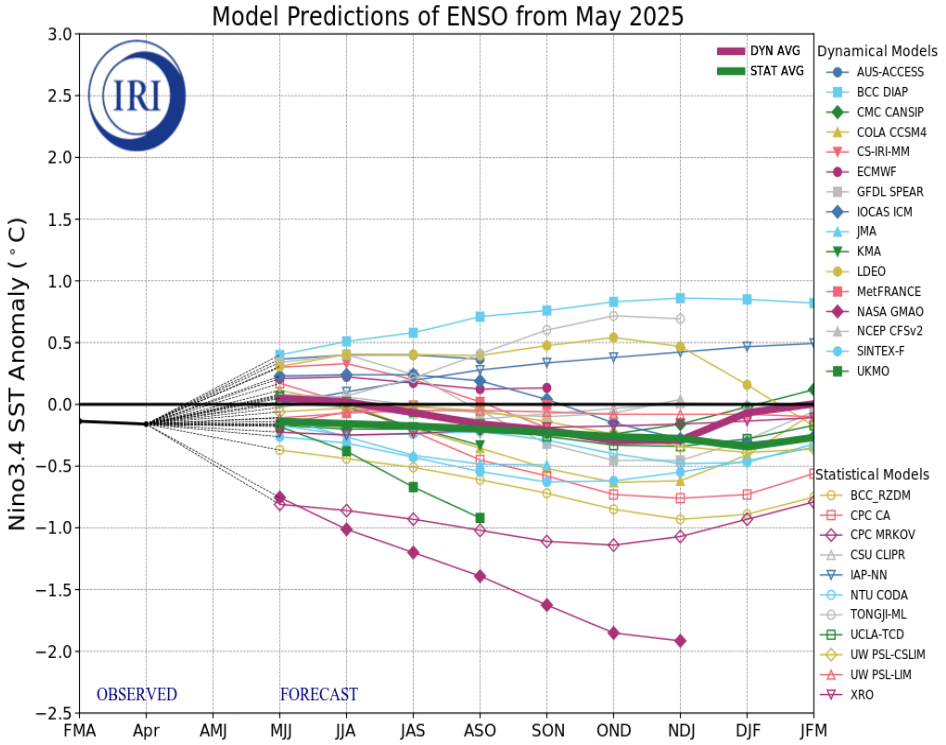
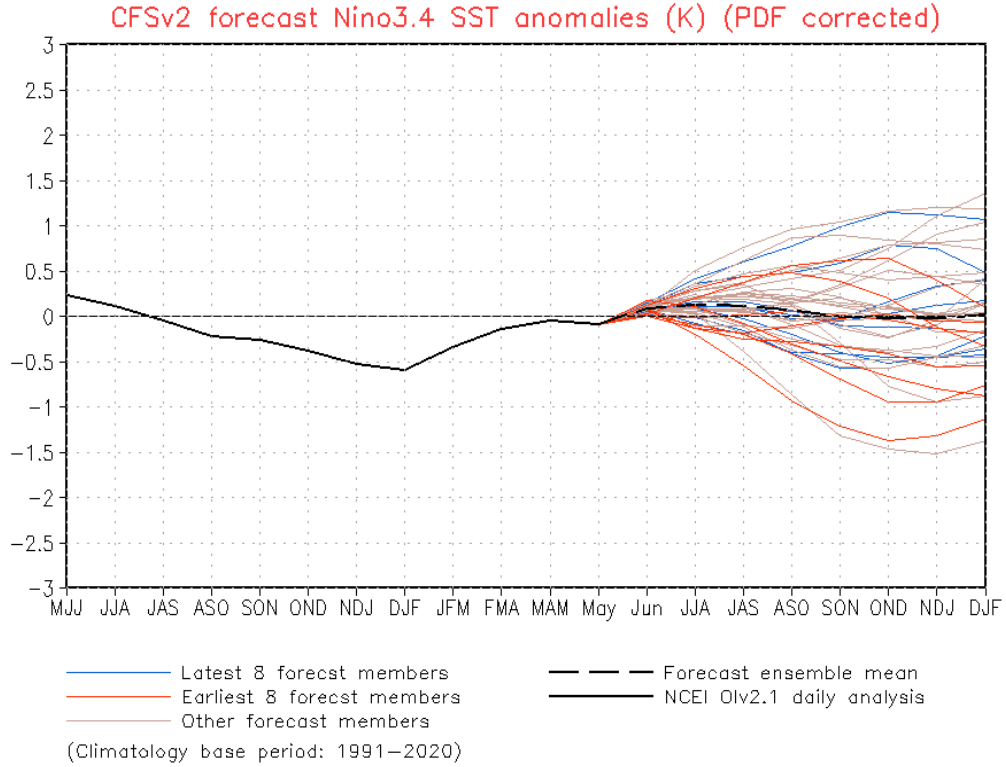


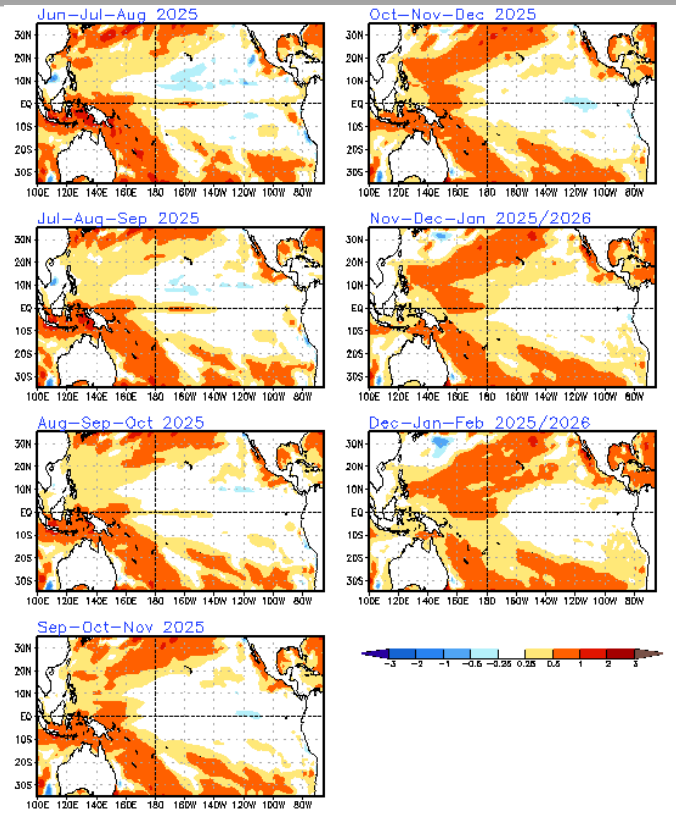
Figure provided by the International Research Institute (IRI) for Climate and Society (updated 19 May 2025).

SST Outlook: NCEP CFS.v2 Forecast (PDF corrected)

Issued: 1 June 2025

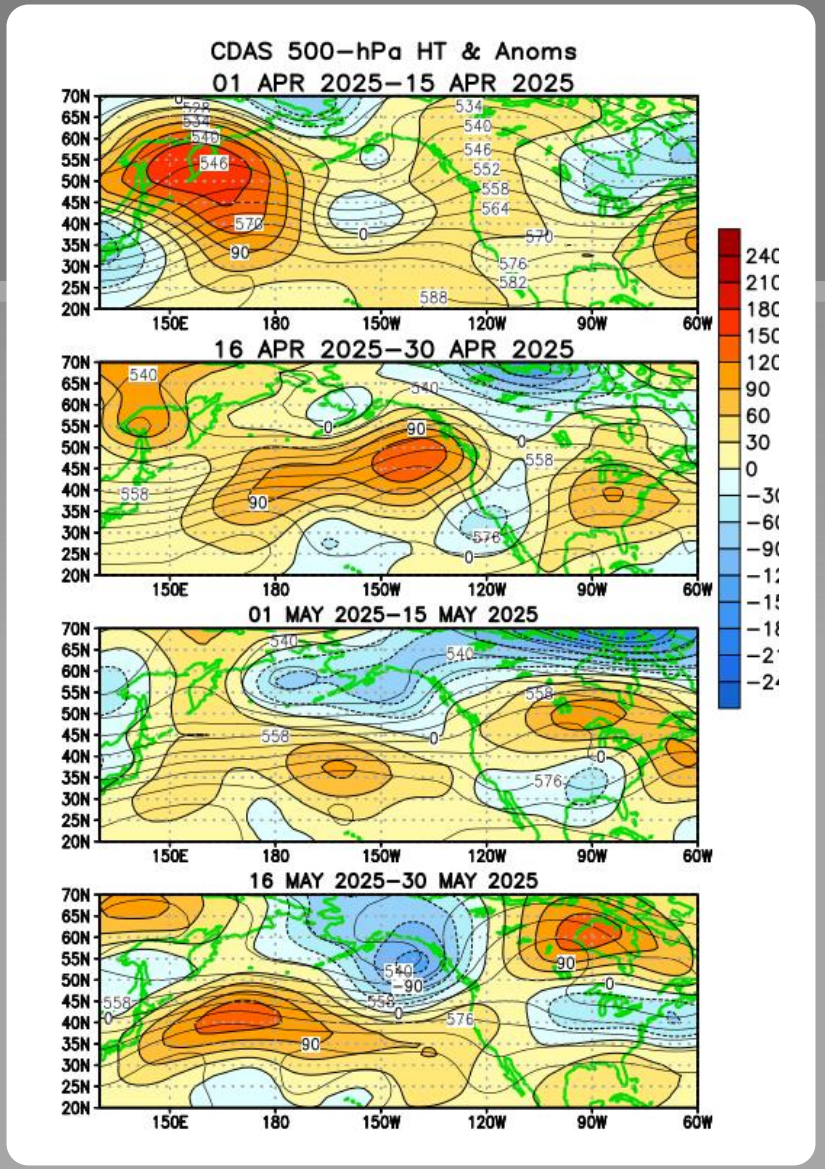
The CFS.v2 ensemble mean (black dashed line) indicates ENSO-neutral is favored to persist through the Northern Hemisphere fall and winter 2025-26.





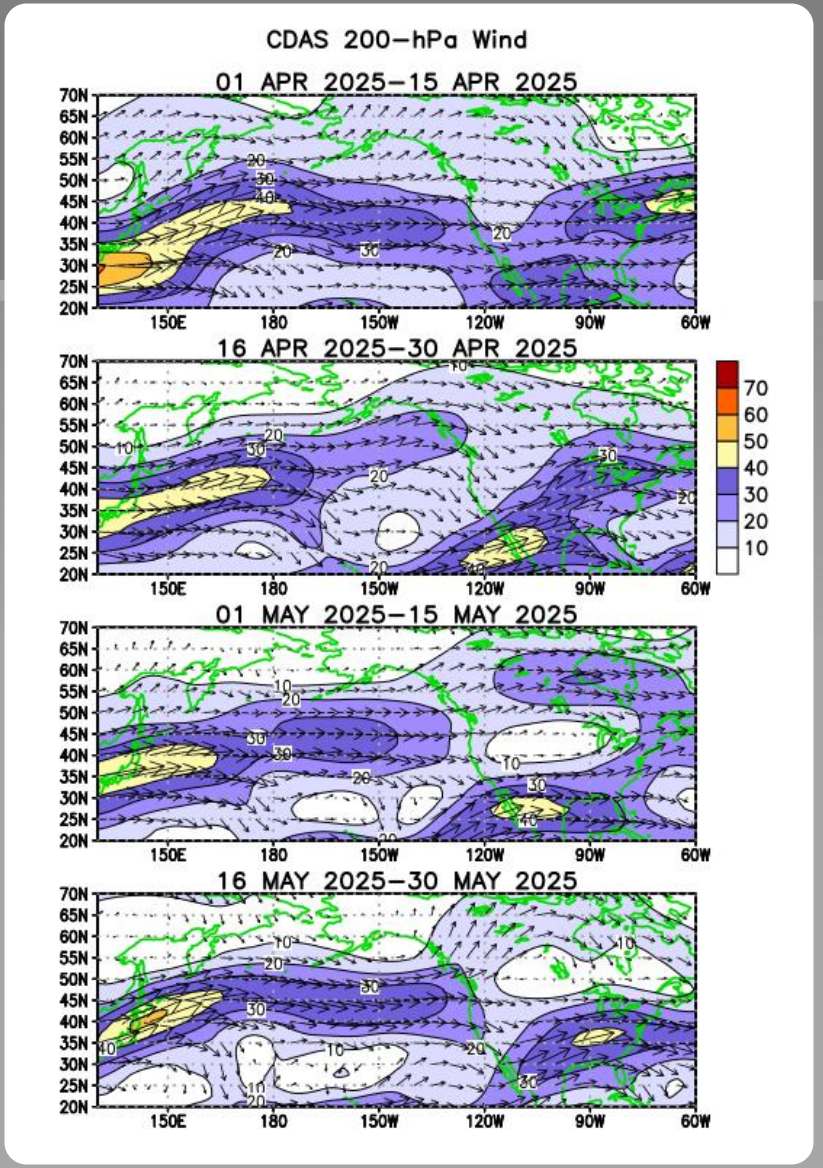
Atmospheric anomalies over the North Pacific and North America During the Last 60 Days

Since mid-April 2025, above-average heights have persisted over most of the North Pacific Ocean, with below-average heights near Alaska and the Gulf of Alaska. The pattern over the contiguous United States has been variable.



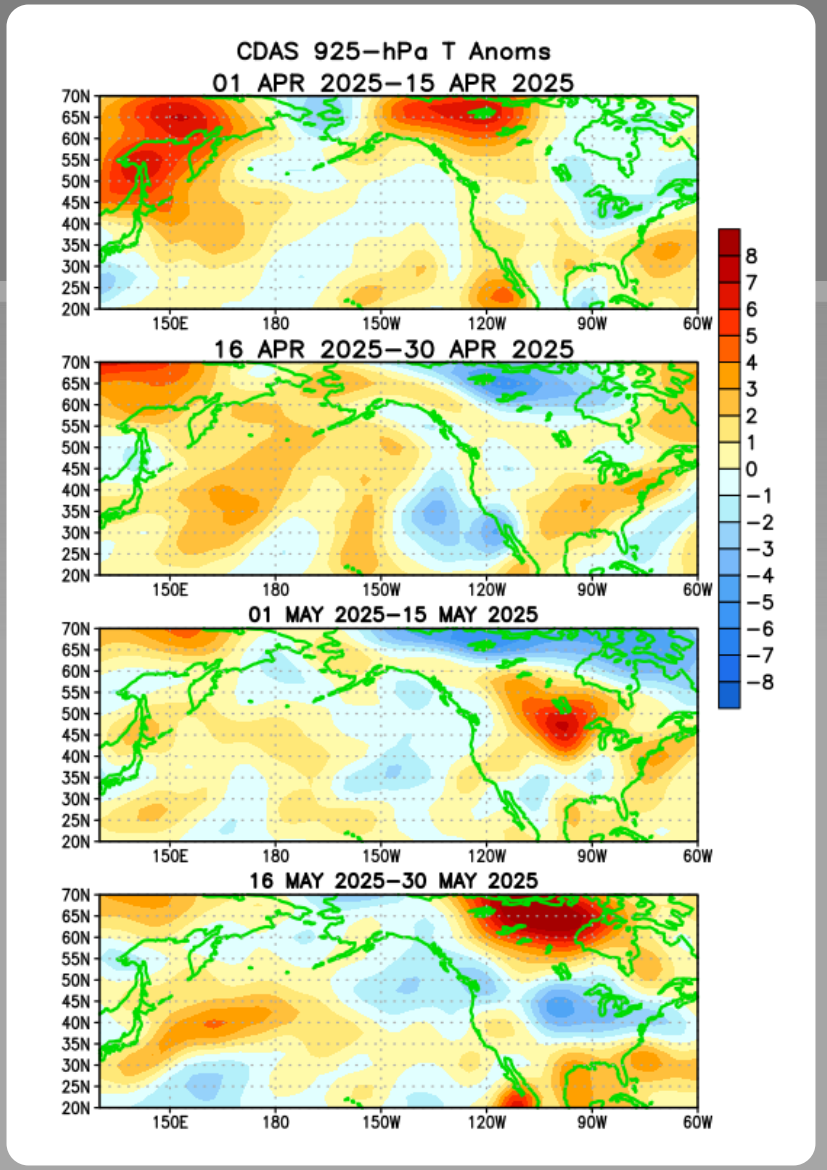
Atmospheric anomalies over the North Pacific and North America During the Last 60 Days

Since mid-April 2025, above-average heights have persisted over most of the North Pacific Ocean, with below-average heights near Alaska and the Gulf of Alaska. The pattern over the contiguous United States has been variable.



Atmospheric anomalies over the North Pacific and North America During the Last 60 Days

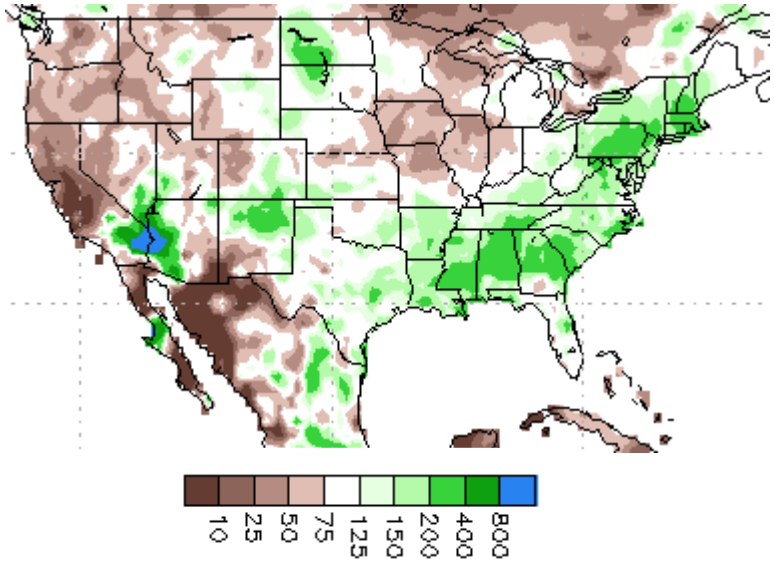
Since mid-April 2025, above-average heights have persisted over most of the North Pacific Ocean, with below-average heights near Alaska and the Gulf of Alaska. The pattern over the contiguous United States has been variable.



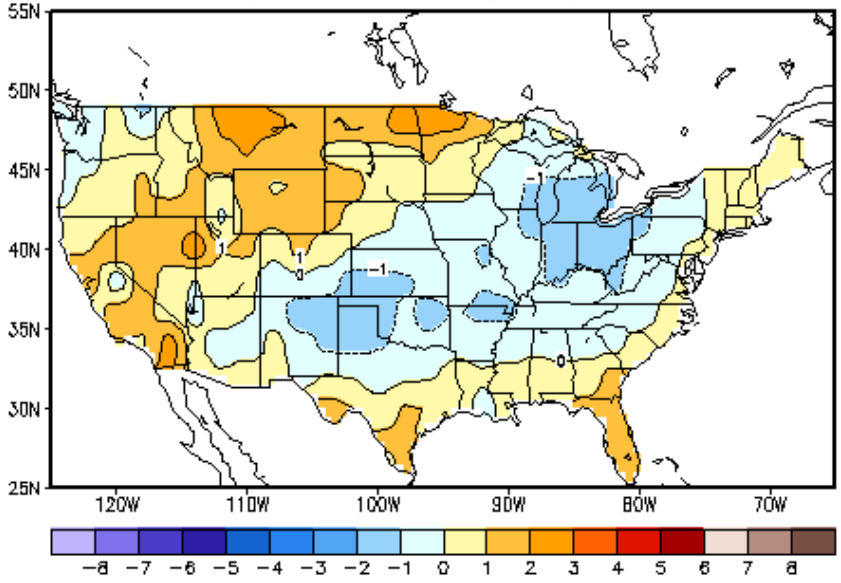
U.S. Temperature and Precipitation Departures During the Last 30 Days

End Date: 31 May 2025

Percent of Average Precipitation



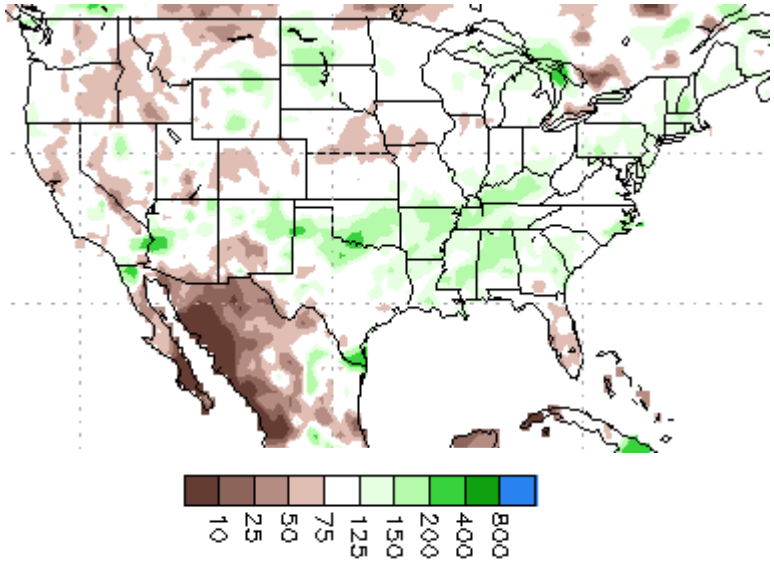
Temperature Departures (degree C)



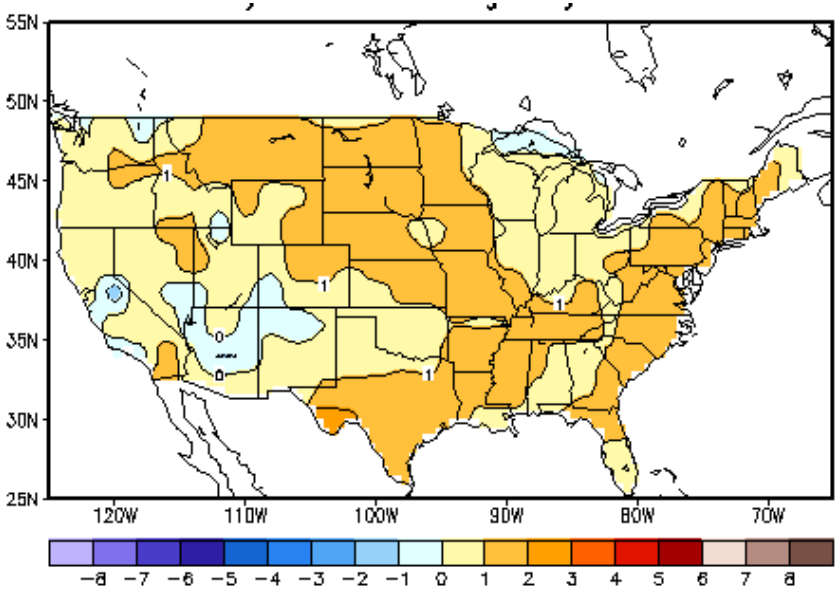
U.S. Temperature and Precipitation Departures During the Last 90 Days

End Date: 31 May 2025

Percent of Average Precipitation



Temperature Departures (degree C)

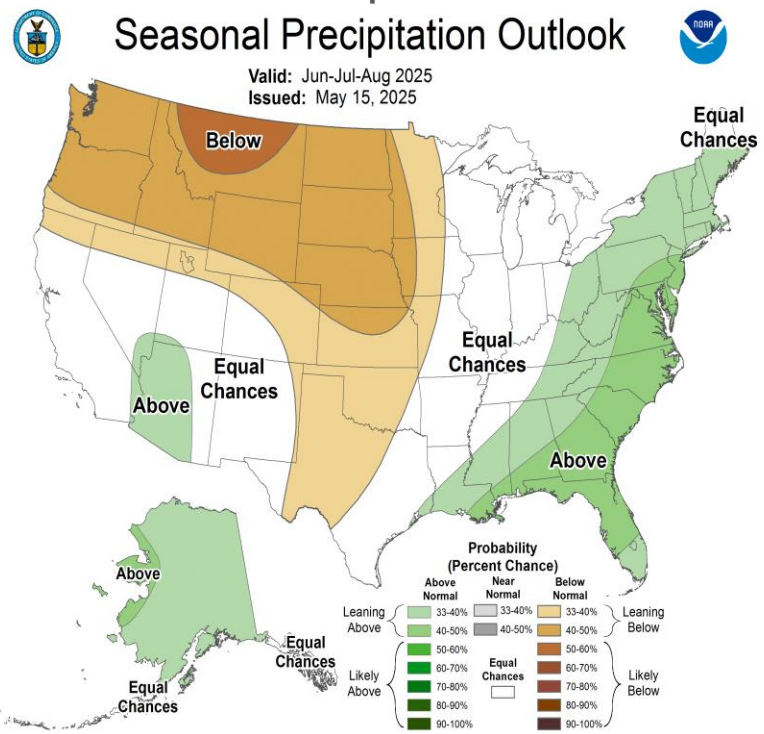


U. S. Seasonal Outlooks

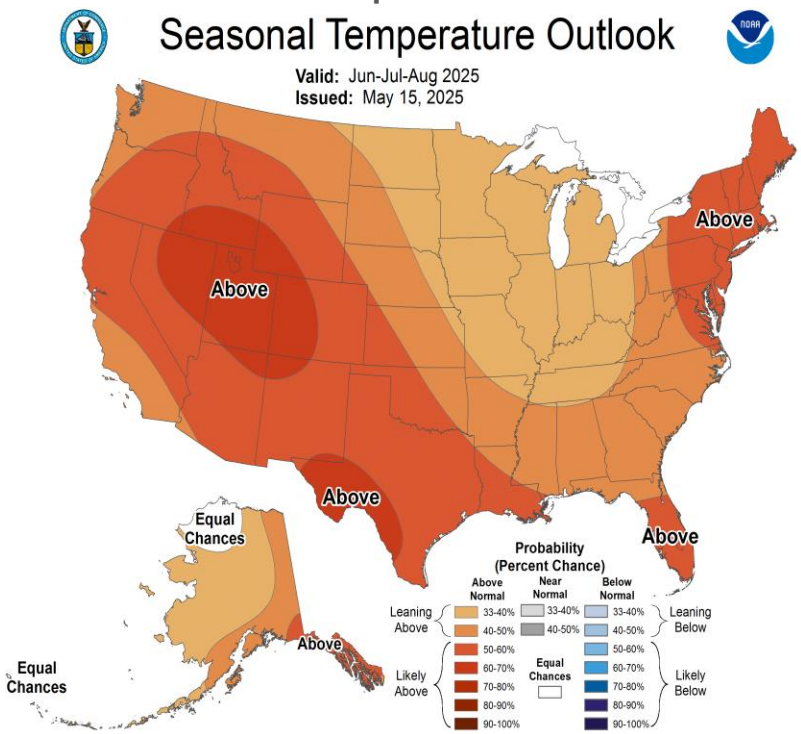
June-August 2025

The seasonal outlooks combine the effects of long-term trends, soil moisture, and, when appropriate, ENSO.

Precipitation



Temperature



Summary

ENSO Alert System Status: Not Active

ENSO-neutral is present.*

Equatorial sea surface temperatures (SSTs) are near average across most of the Pacific Ocean.

ENSO-neutral is favored through the Northern Hemisphere summer 2025 (74% chance during June-August), with chances exceeding 50% through August-October 2025.

*** Note: These statements are updated once a month (2nd Thursday of each month) in association with the ENSO Diagnostics Discussion, which can be found by clicking here.**