

# ENSO: Recent Evolution, Current Status and Predictions



Update prepared by:  
Climate Prediction Center / NCEP  
22 April 2024

# 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: **El Niño Advisory** / **La Niña Watch**

El Niño conditions are observed.\*

Equatorial sea surface temperatures (SSTs) are above average across the central and east-central Pacific Ocean.

The tropical Pacific atmospheric anomalies are weakening.

A transition from El Niño to ENSO-neutral is likely by April-June 2024 (85% chance), with the odds of La Niña developing by June-August 2024 (60% chance).\*

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

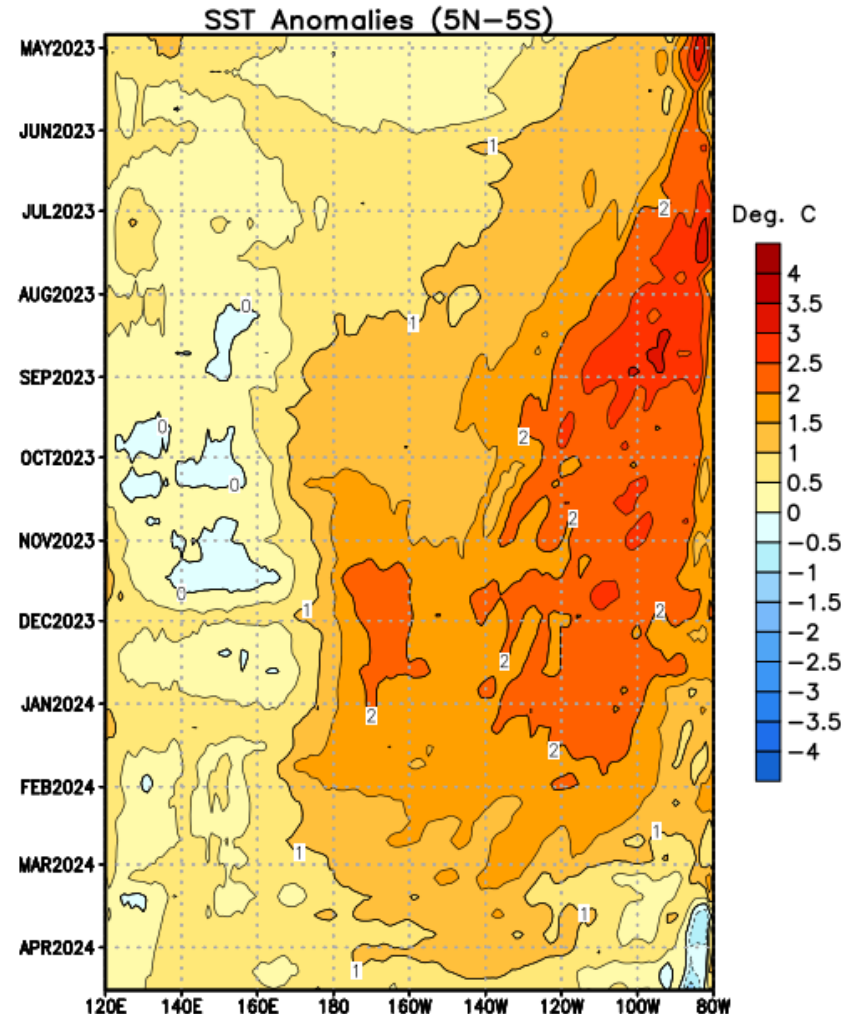
# Recent Evolution of Equatorial Pacific SST Departures (°C)

From March-October 2023, positive sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies in the eastern Pacific Ocean expanded and shifted westward.

In October and November 2023, SST anomalies increased in the central and east-central Pacific.

Since late December 2023, positive SST anomalies have weakened across most of the Pacific.

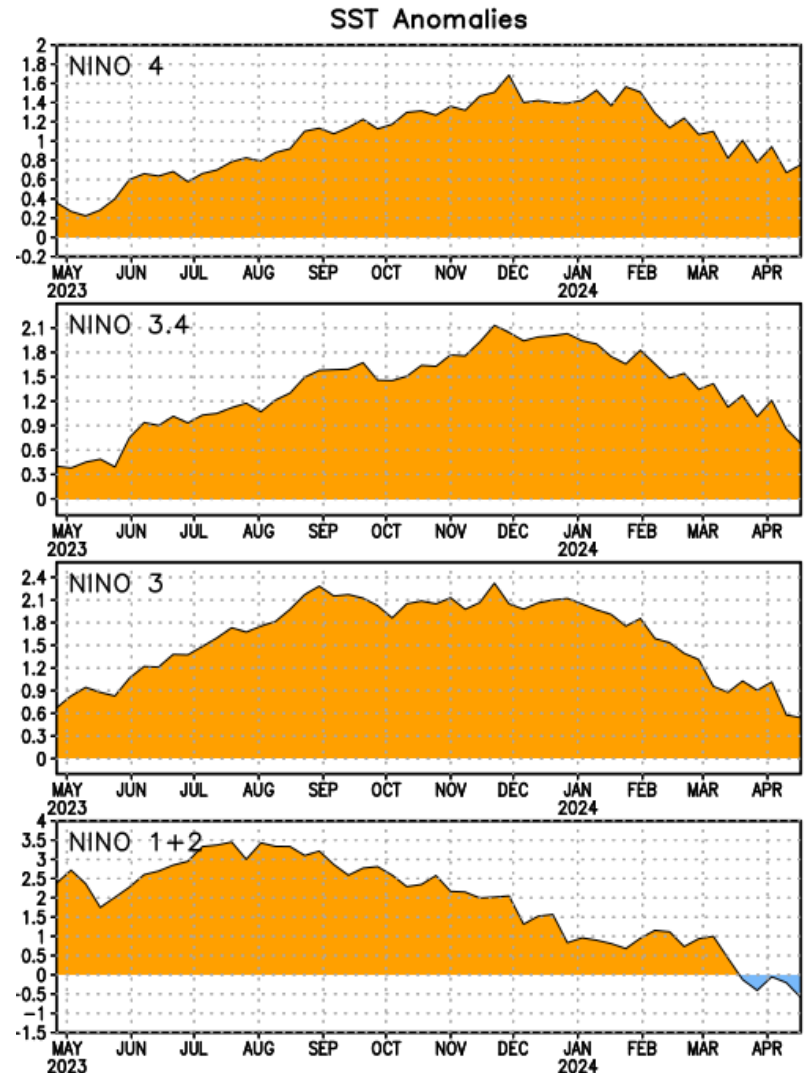
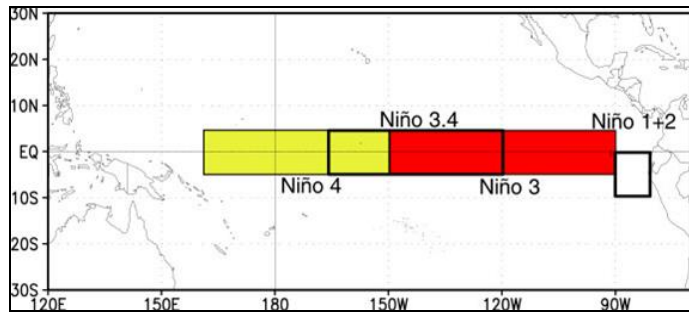
Recently, below-average SSTs emerged in the far eastern Pacific.



# Niño Region SST Departures (°C) Recent Evolution

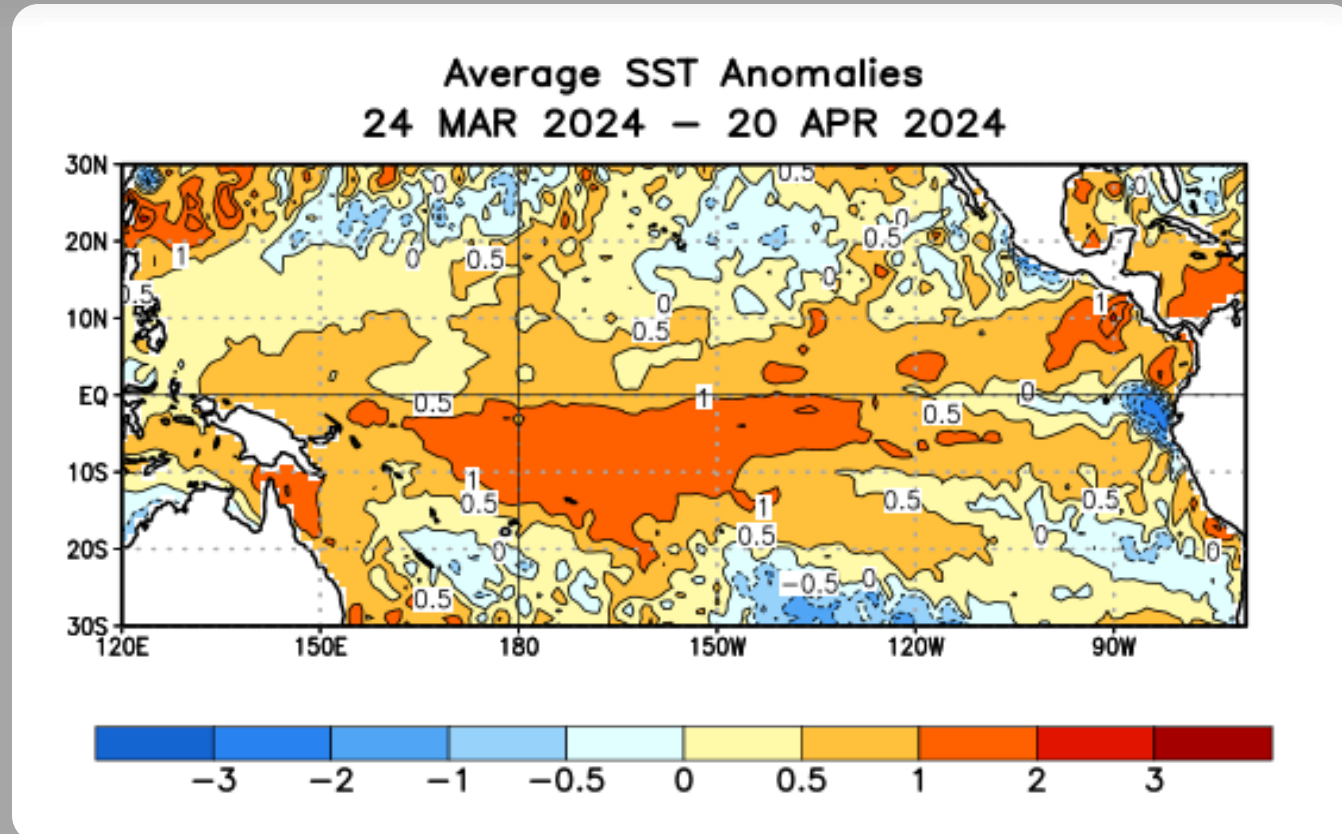
The latest weekly SST departures are:

Niño 4	0.8°C
Niño 3.4	0.7°C
Niño 3	0.5°C
Niño 1+2	-0.6°C



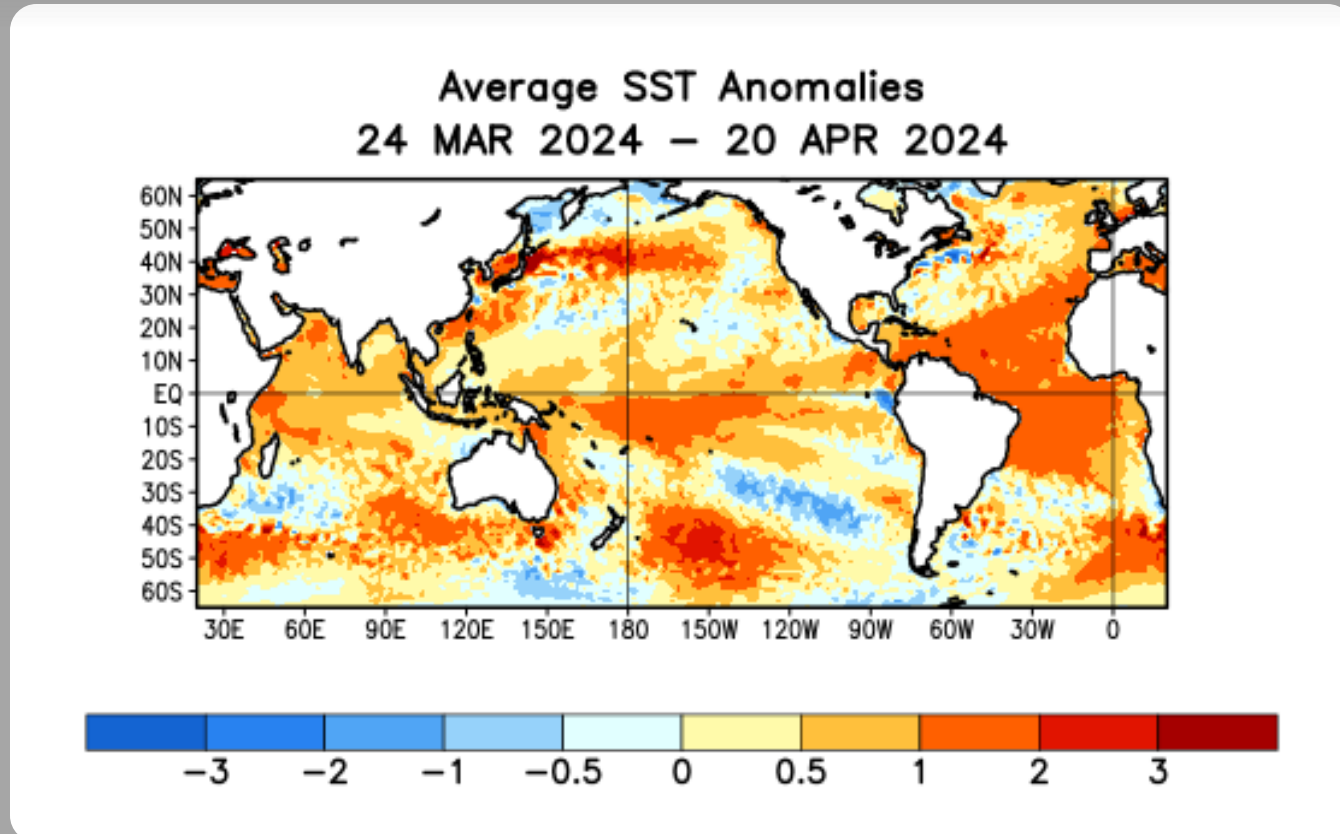
# SST Departures (°C) in the Tropical Pacific During the Last Four Weeks

In the last four weeks, equatorial SSTs were above average across most of the Pacific Ocean, with the largest anomalies in the central and east-central Pacific. Below-average SSTs were evident in the eastern Pacific Ocean.



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

During the last four weeks, equatorial SSTs were above average across most of the Pacific Ocean (except for the eastern Pacific), the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean.

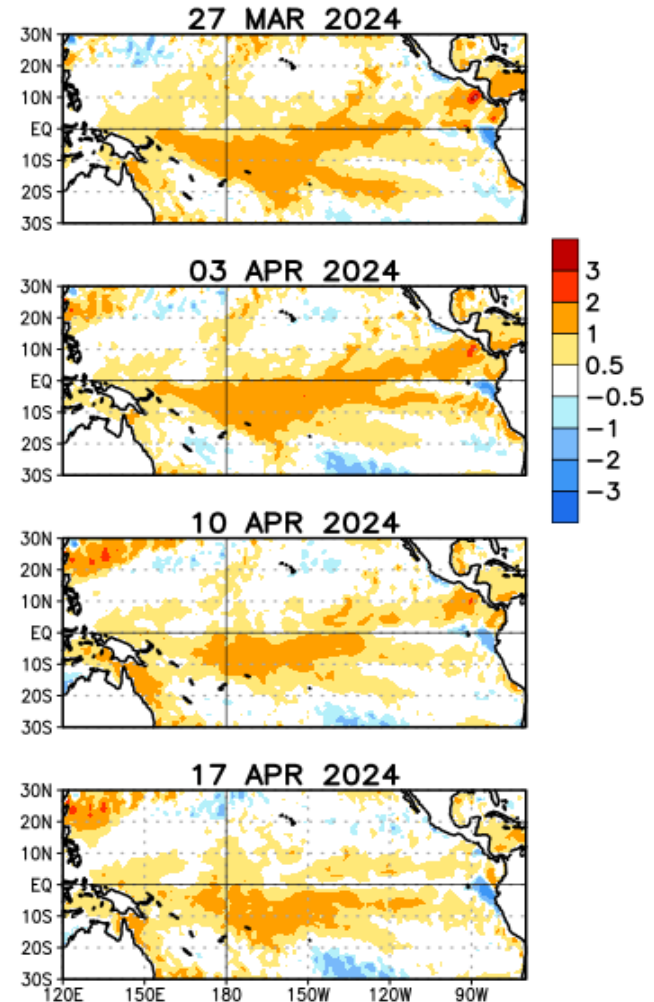


# Weekly SST Departures during the Last Four Weeks

During the last 4 weeks, above-average SSTs weakened across most of the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

Below-average SSTs have persisted in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

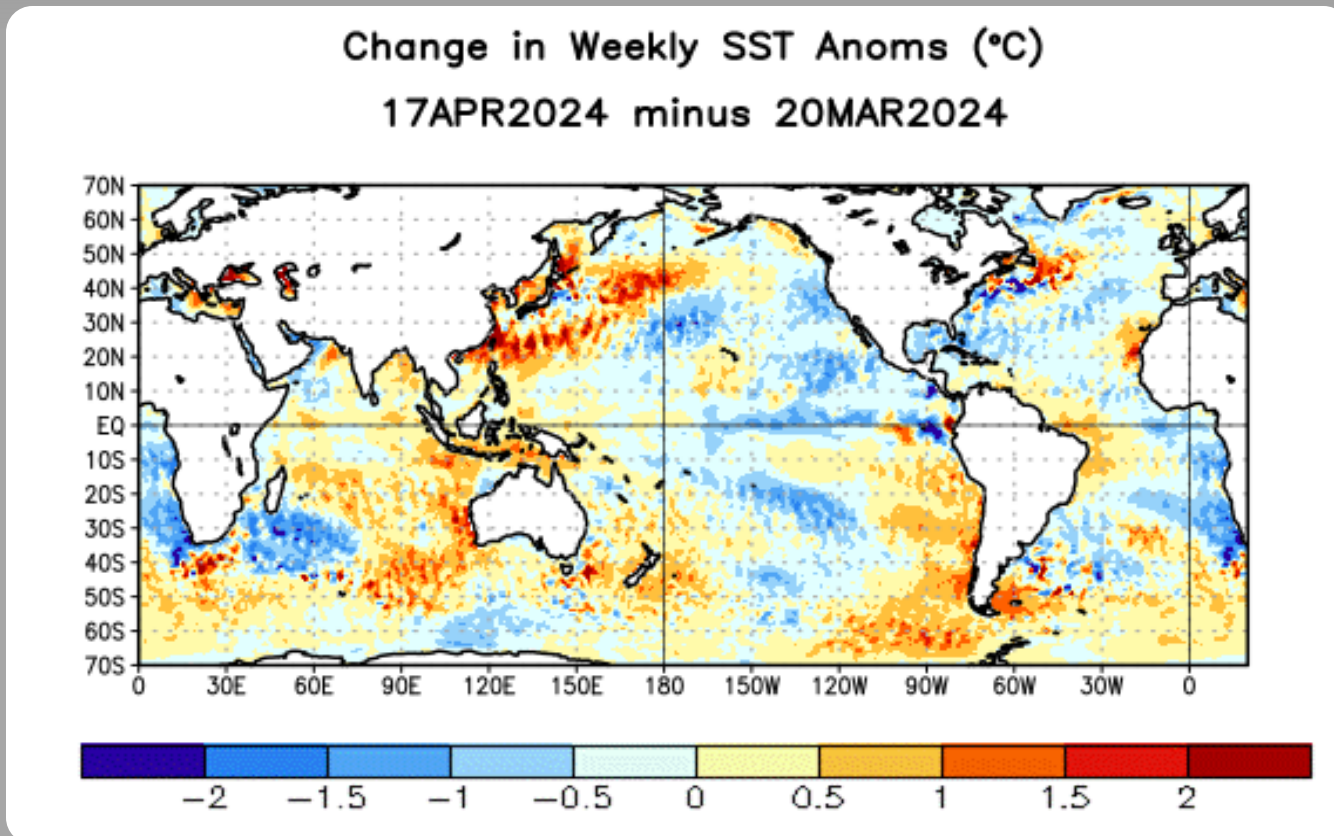
## Weekly SST Anomalies (DEG C)





# Change in Weekly SST Departures over the Last Four Weeks

During the last four weeks, negative SST anomaly changes were observed over most of the east-central and eastern equatorial Pacific.



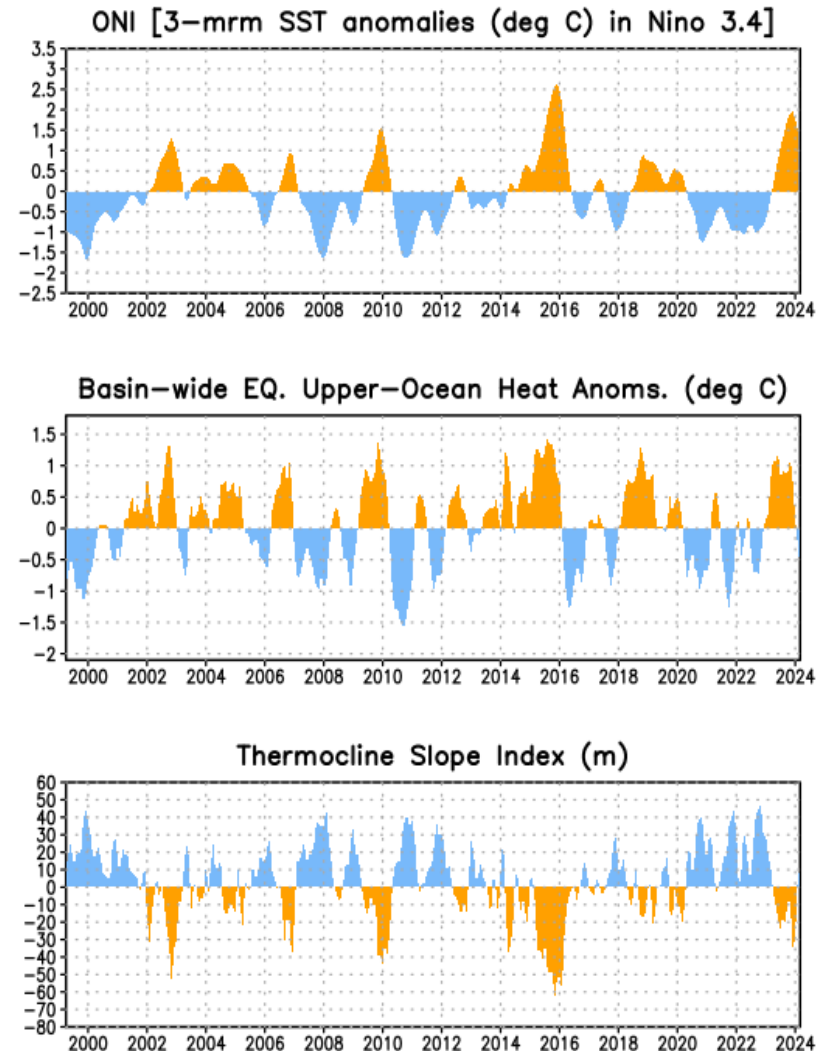
# Upper-Ocean Conditions in the Equatorial Pacific

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.

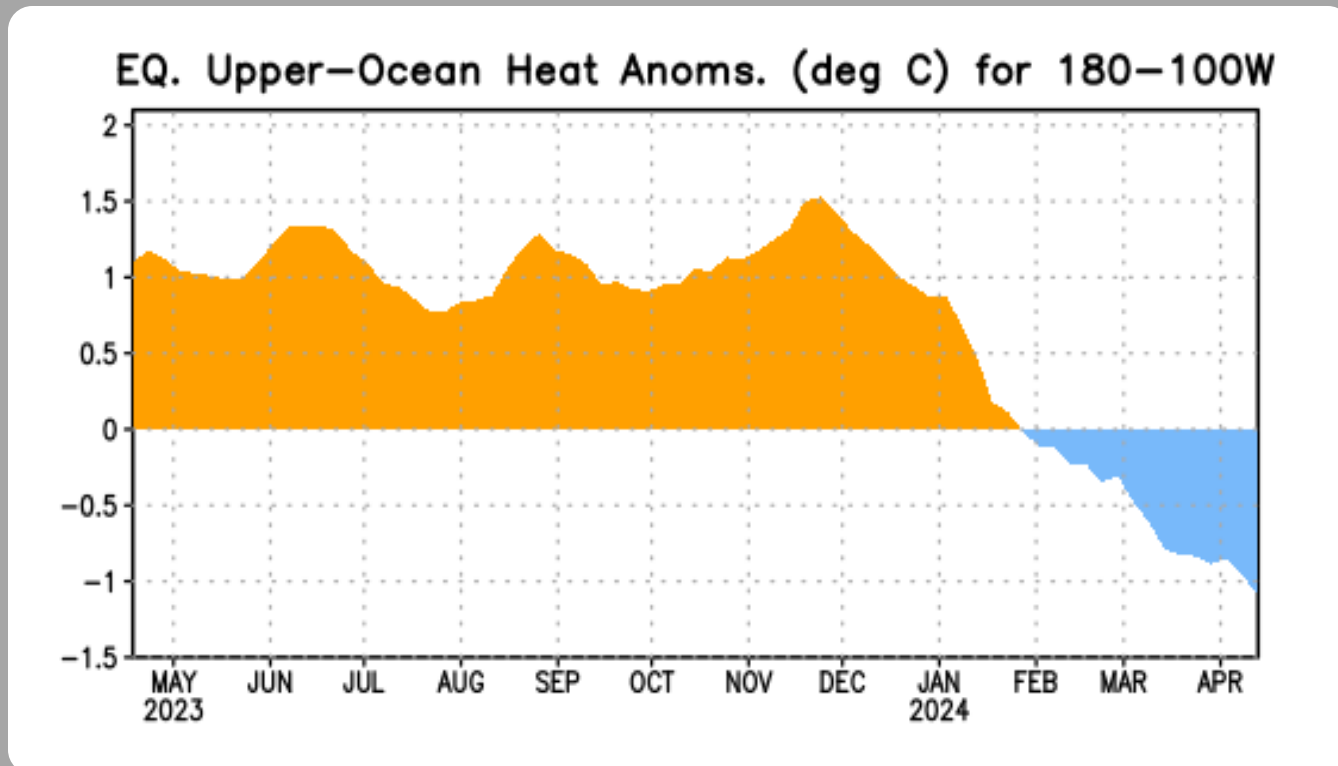
Recent values of the upper-ocean heat anomalies (below average) and thermocline slope index (slightly above average) reflect a weakening El Niño.

*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).*



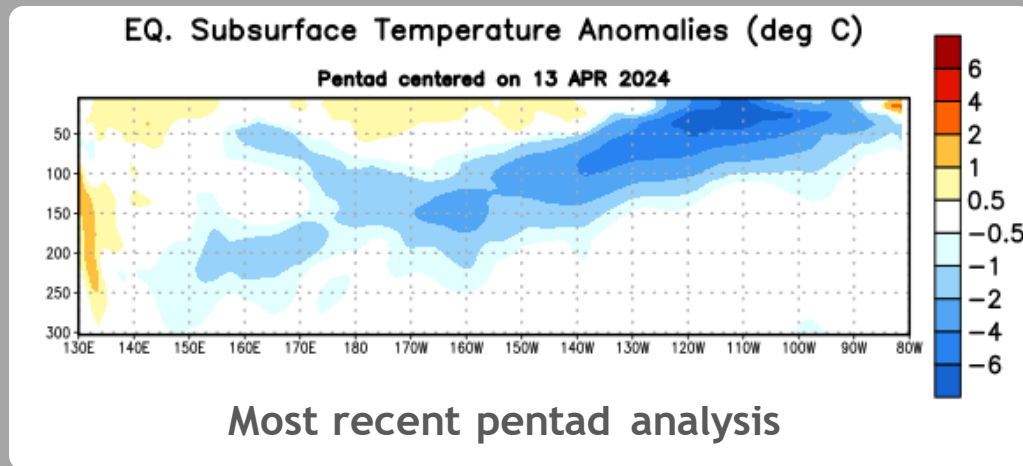
# Central and Eastern Pacific Upper-Ocean (0-300 m) Weekly Average Temperature Anomalies

Positive subsurface temperature anomalies persisted through mid-January 2024. Variability in the anomalies was associated with several oceanic Kelvin waves. Subsurface temperature anomalies have weakened since late November 2023. Since late January 2024, negative temperature anomalies have gradually strengthened.

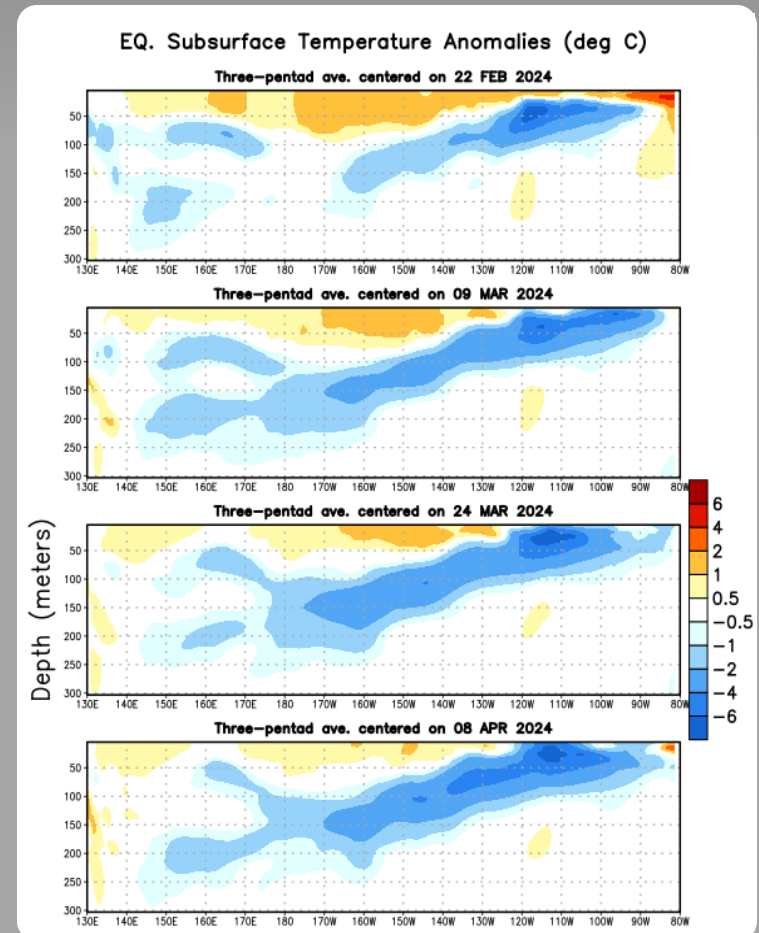


# Sub-Surface Temperature Departures in the Equatorial Pacific

Over the last couple months, negative subsurface temperature anomalies have strengthened across the equatorial Pacific Ocean.



Below-average temperatures reached the surface in the eastern Pacific Ocean (near 130°-90°W).

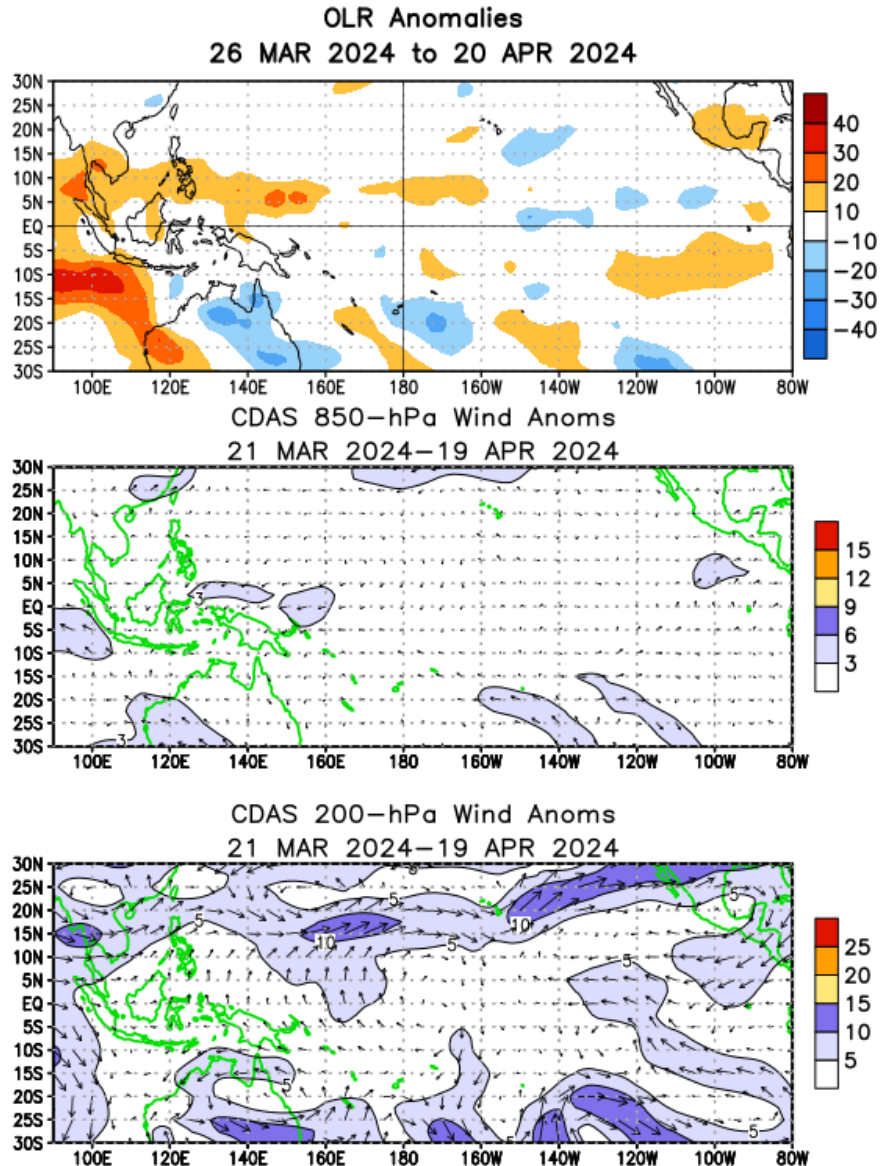


# Tropical OLR and Wind Anomalies During the Last 30 Days

OLR was near average across most of the equatorial Pacific, and slightly above average (suppressed convection and precipitation) around the Philippines and Malaysia.

Low-level (850-hPa) wind anomalies were easterly in small regions over the western tropical Pacific Ocean.

Upper-level (200-hPa) wind anomalies were easterly over the eastern equatorial 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

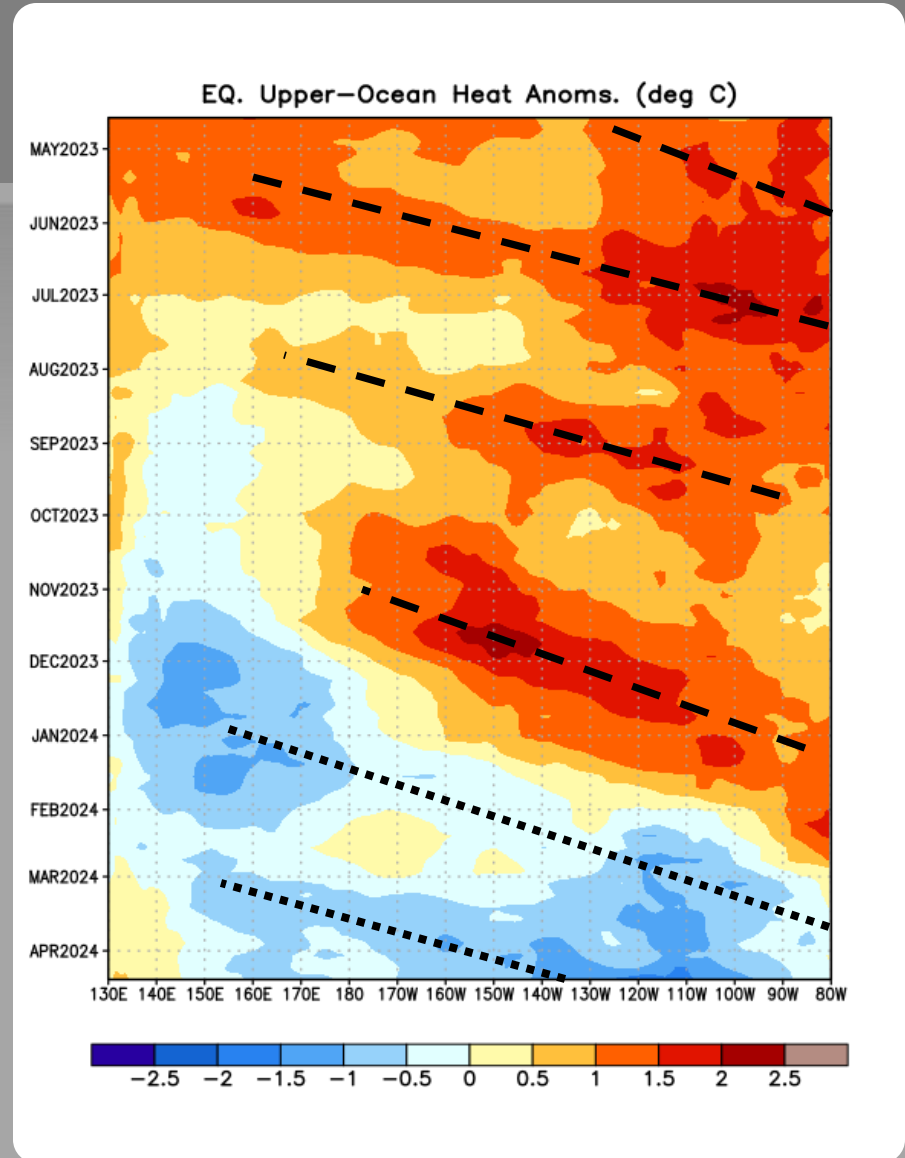
Significant equatorial oceanic Kelvin wave activity (dashed and dotted lines) has been present throughout the period shown.

Through January 2024, above-average subsurface temperatures persisted across most of the Pacific Ocean.

From November 2023 through March 2024, below-average temperatures strengthened in the western Pacific Ocean and shifted into the eastern Pacific.

Since late February 2024, another upwelling Kelvin wave has shifted eastward.

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.



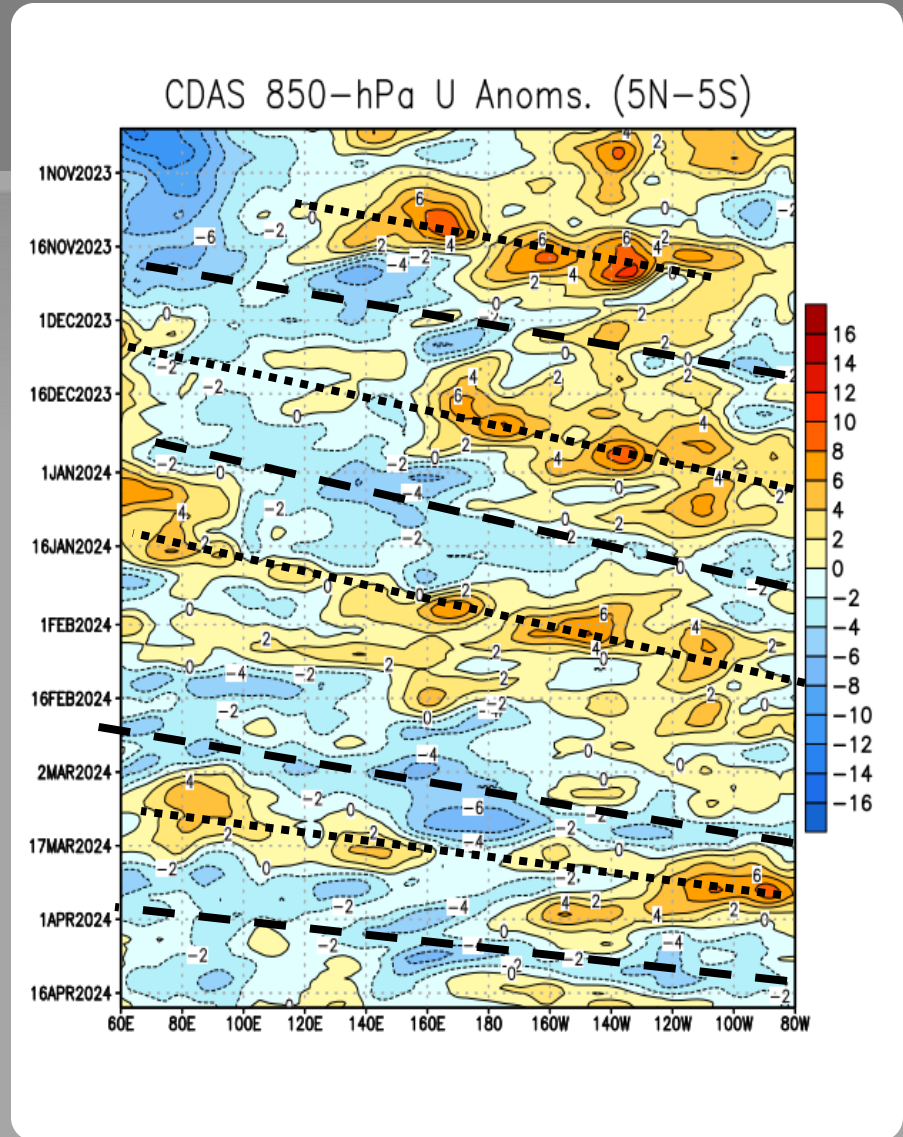
# Low-level (850-hPa) Zonal (east-west) Wind Anomalies ( $\text{m s}^{-1}$ )

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

An eastward propagating pattern of westerly and easterly wind anomalies was evident starting in November 2023.

Westerly Wind Anomalies (orange/red shading)

Easterly Wind Anomalies (blue shading)





# Upper-level (200-hPa) Velocity Potential Anomalies

Since the beginning of the period, regions of anomalous divergence (green shading) and convergence (brown shading) were generally propagating eastward.

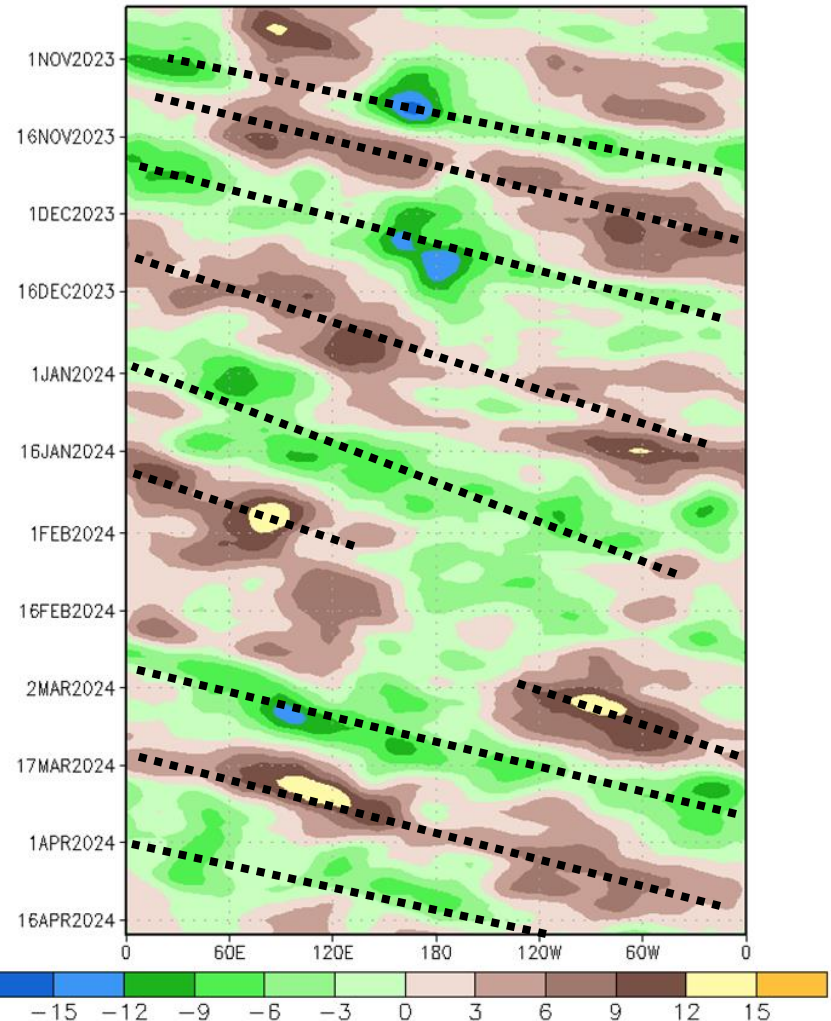
From early December 2023 to mid-March 2024, anomalous divergence persisted over the central Pacific.

Unfavorable for precipitation (brown shading)

Favorable for precipitation (green shading)

Note: Eastward propagation is not necessarily indicative of the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO).

200-hPa Velocity Potential Anomaly: 5N–5S  
5-day Running Mean



# Outgoing Longwave Radiation (OLR) Anomalies

Through early March 2024, negative OLR anomalies (more convection) persisted over the central equatorial Pacific Ocean

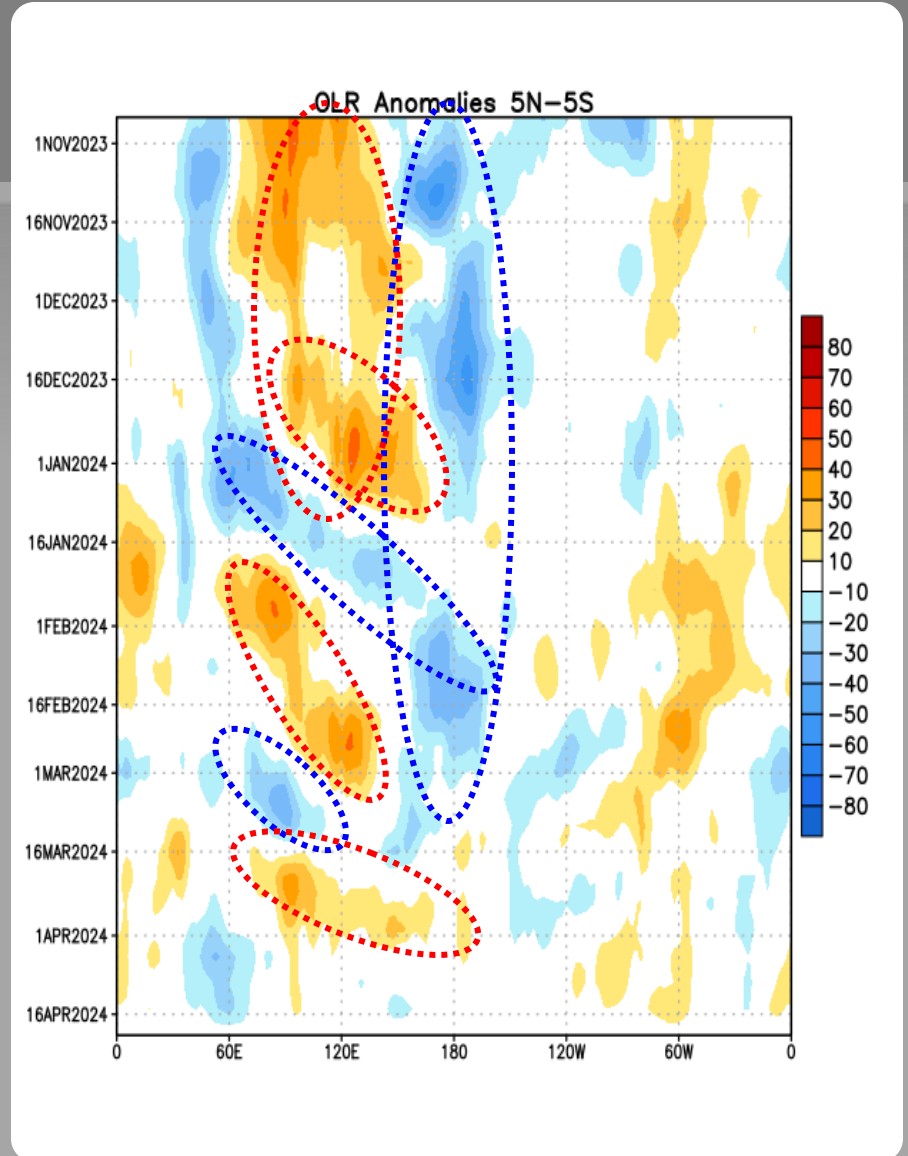
Through December 2023, positive OLR anomalies persisted around Indonesia.

From mid-December 2023 through March 2024, OLR anomalies shifted eastward from the Indian Ocean/Indonesia to the western Pacific/Date Line.

Since early April 2024, OLR was near average across most of the equatorial Pacific.

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  $+0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

La Niña: characterized by a negative ONI less than or equal to  $-0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

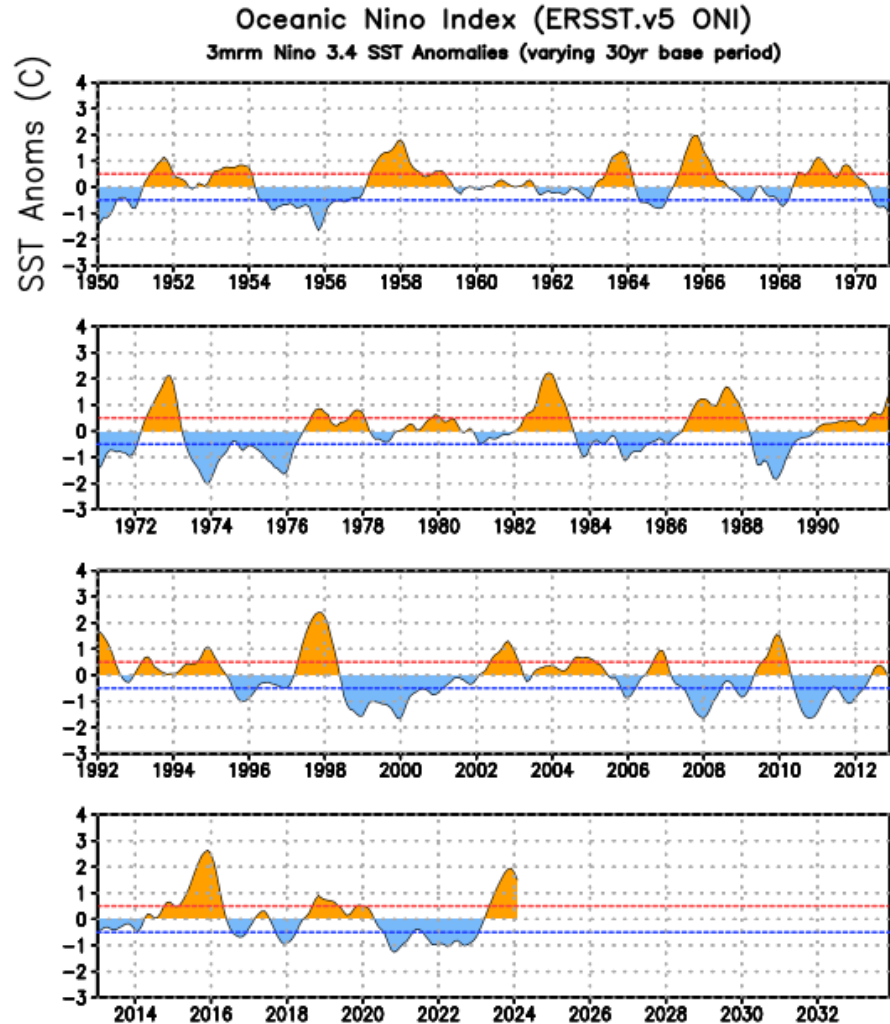
By historical standards, to be classified as a full-fledged El Niño or La Niña episode, these thresholds must be exceeded for a period of at least 5 consecutive overlapping 3-month seasons.

CPC considers El Niño or La Niña conditions to occur when the monthly Niño3.4 OISST departures meet or exceed  $\pm 0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  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 (January - March 2024) is 1.5°C.

El Niño ↑  
Neutral  
La Niña ↓

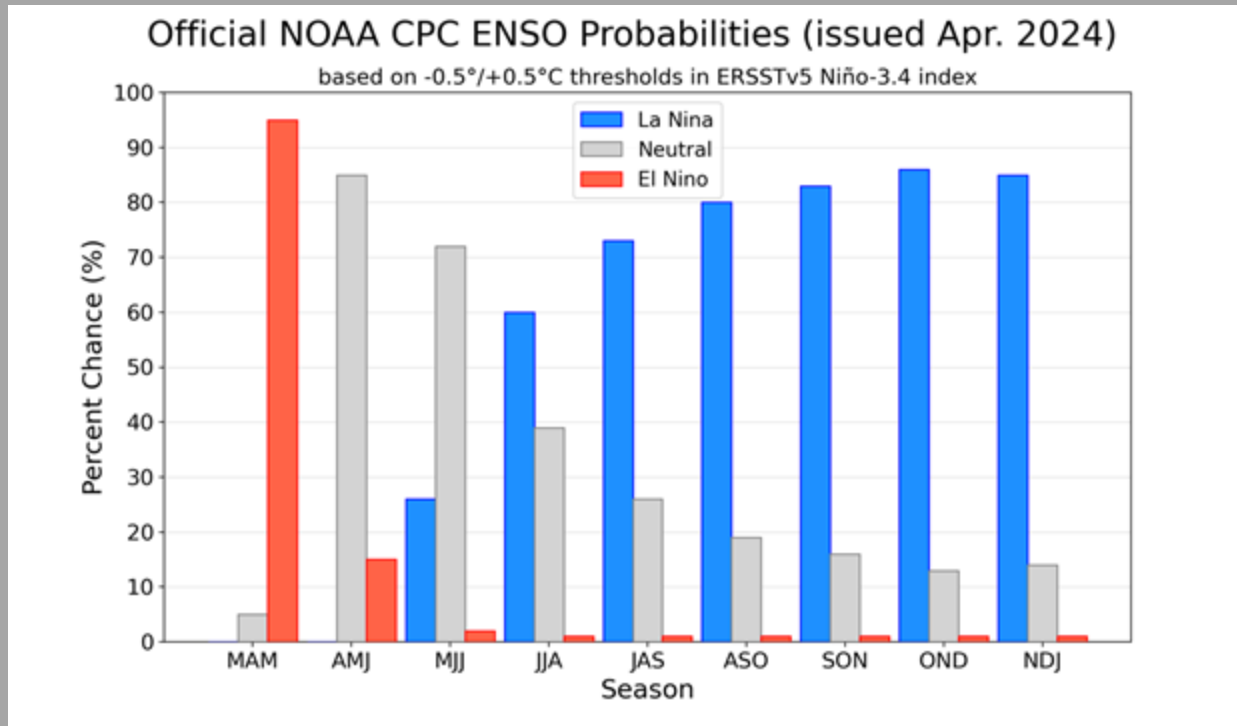




# CPC Probabilistic ENSO Outlook

Updated: 11 April 2024

A transition from El Niño to ENSO-neutral is likely by April-June 2024 (85% chance), with the odds of La Niña developing by June-August 2024 (60% chance).



# IRI Pacific Niño 3.4 SST Model Outlook

The majority of models indicate a transition to ENSO-neutral during April-June 2024.

After a brief period of ENSO-neutral conditions, most models indicate a transition to La Niña around July-September 2024.

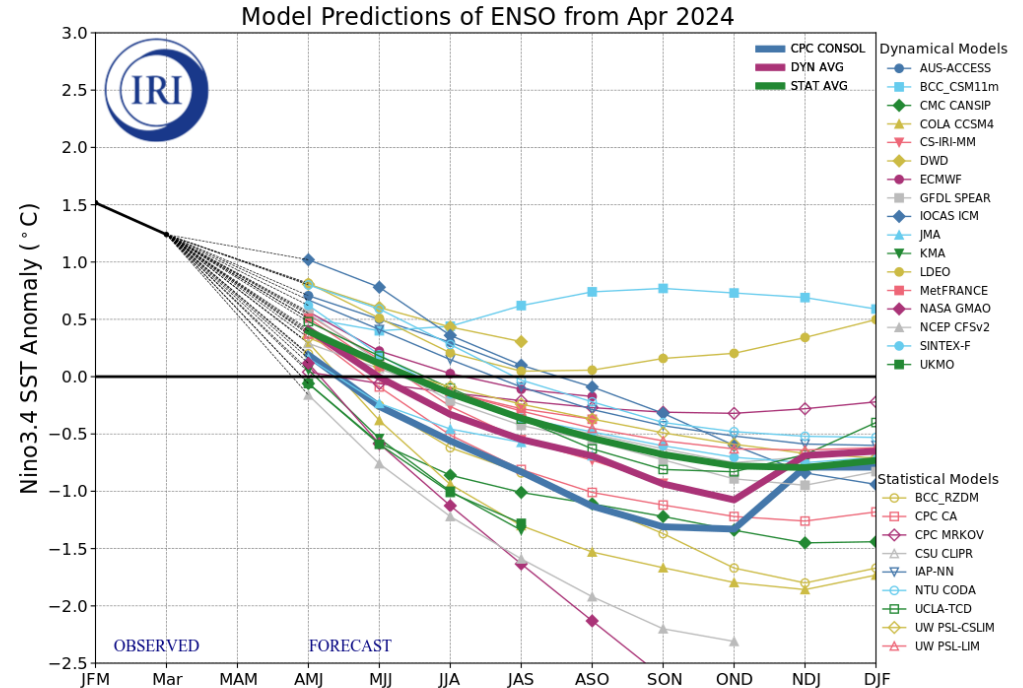


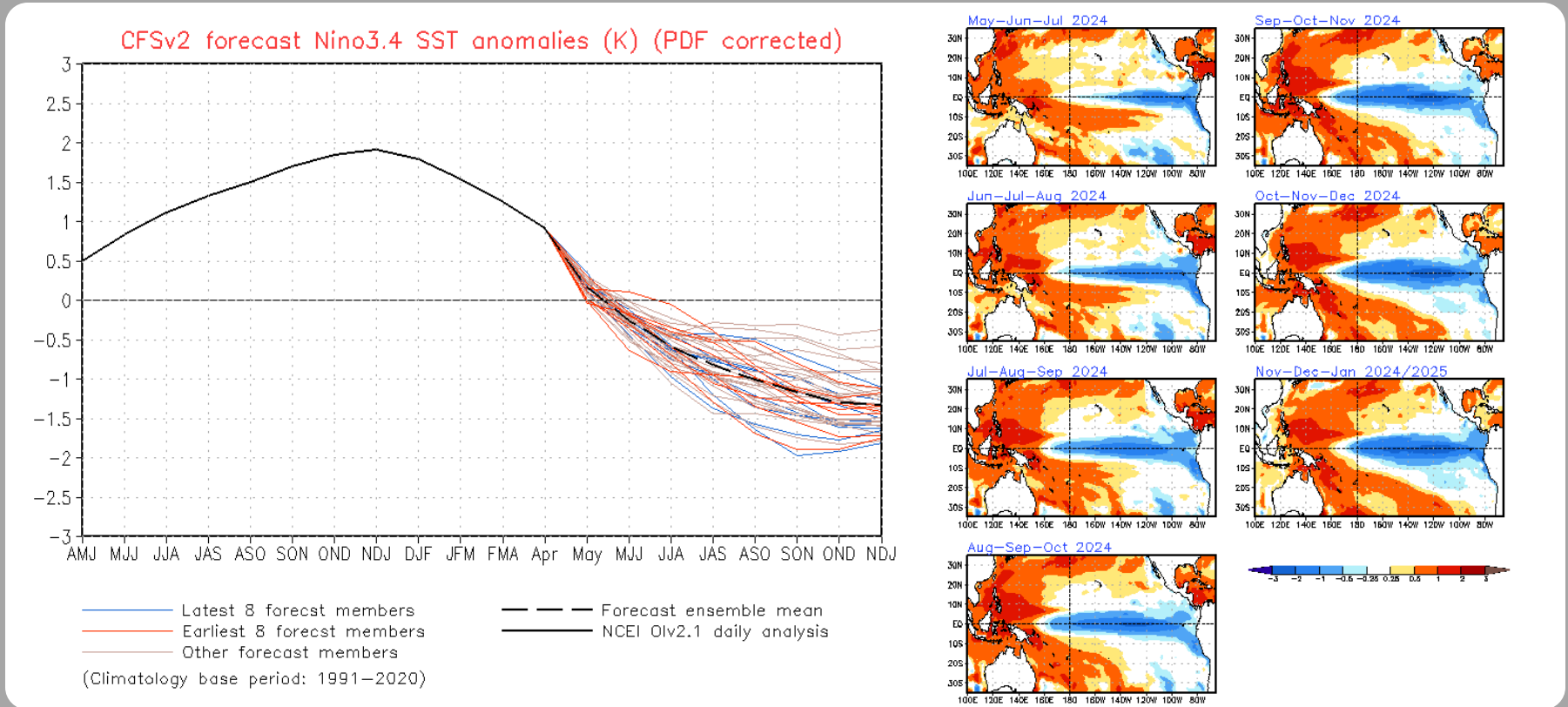
Figure provided by the International Research Institute (IRI) for Climate and Society (updated 19 April 2024).



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

Issued: 22 April 2024

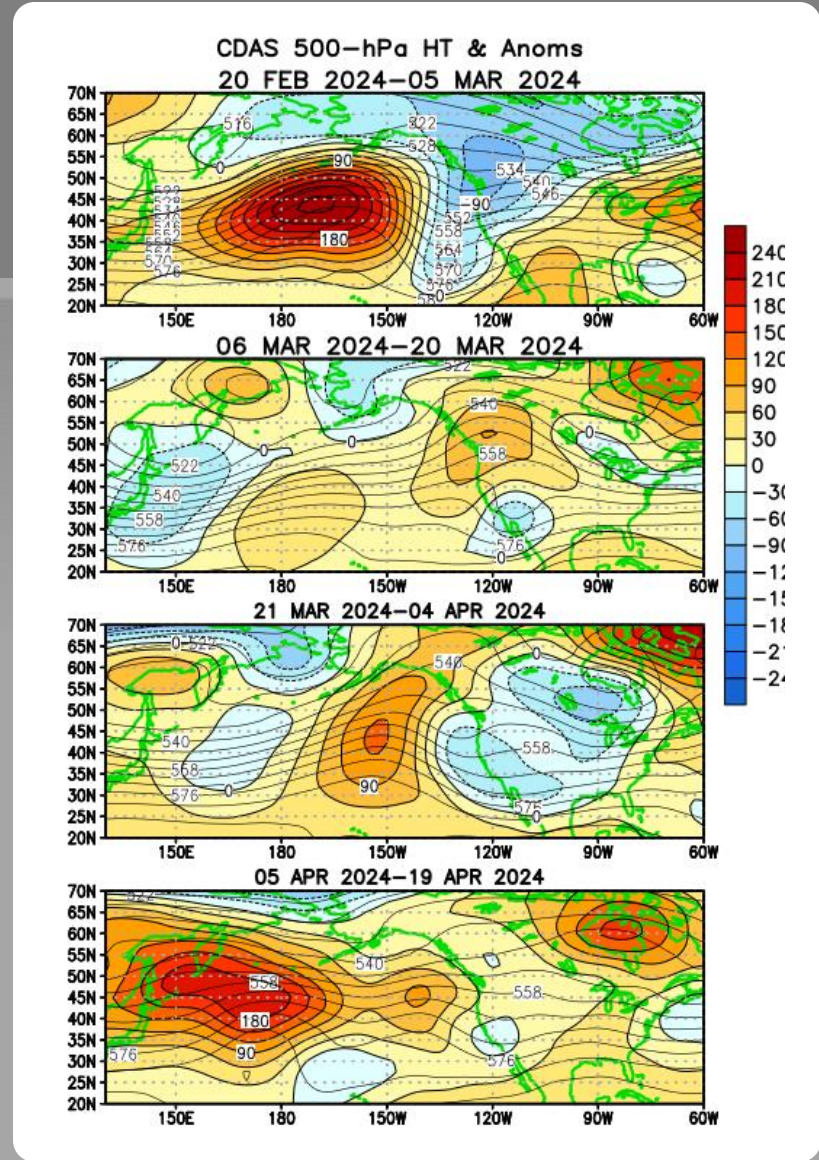
The CFS.v2 ensemble mean (black dashed line) indicates El Niño may transition to ENSO-neutral in May, followed by a transition to La Niña around June-August 2024.



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

During most of the period from late February through mid-April, below-average heights and temperatures persisted in the eastern North Pacific Ocean and western contiguous U.S.

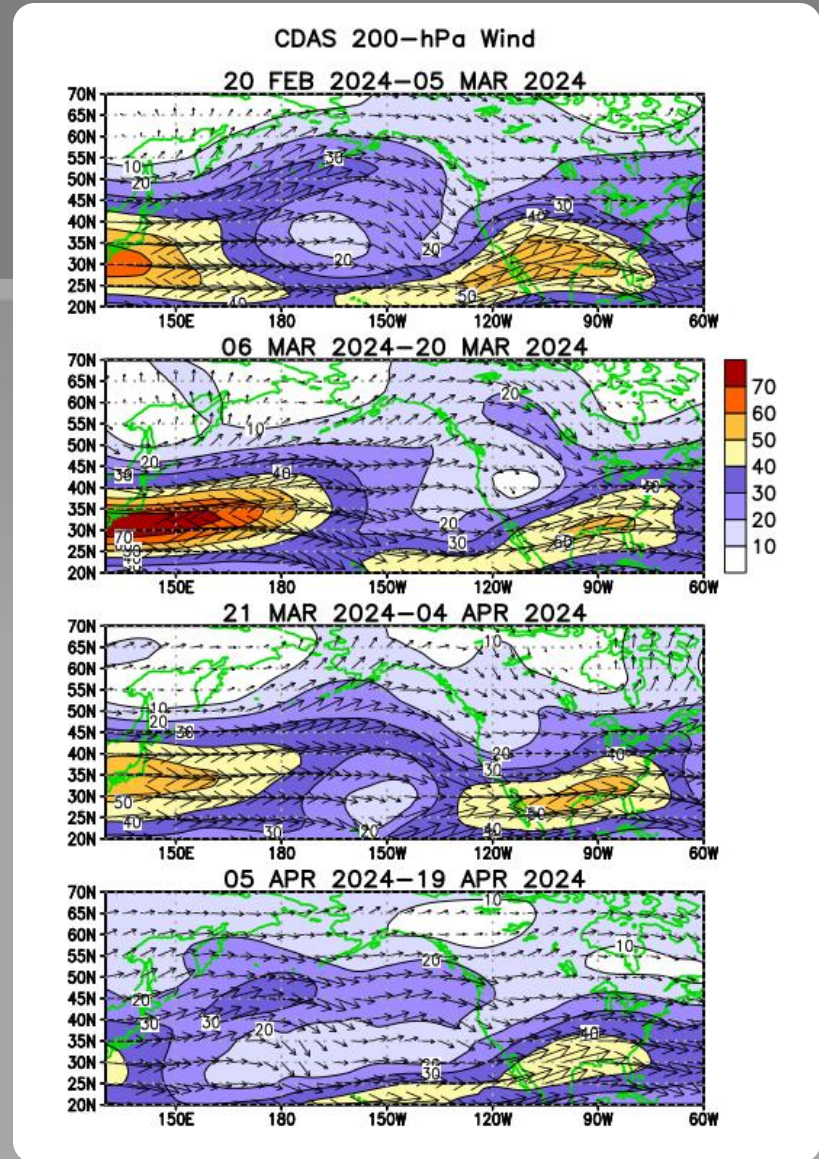
The pattern of heights and temperatures over the contiguous U.S. has been quite variable since late February. Recently, above-average heights and temperatures have dominated the eastern U.S.



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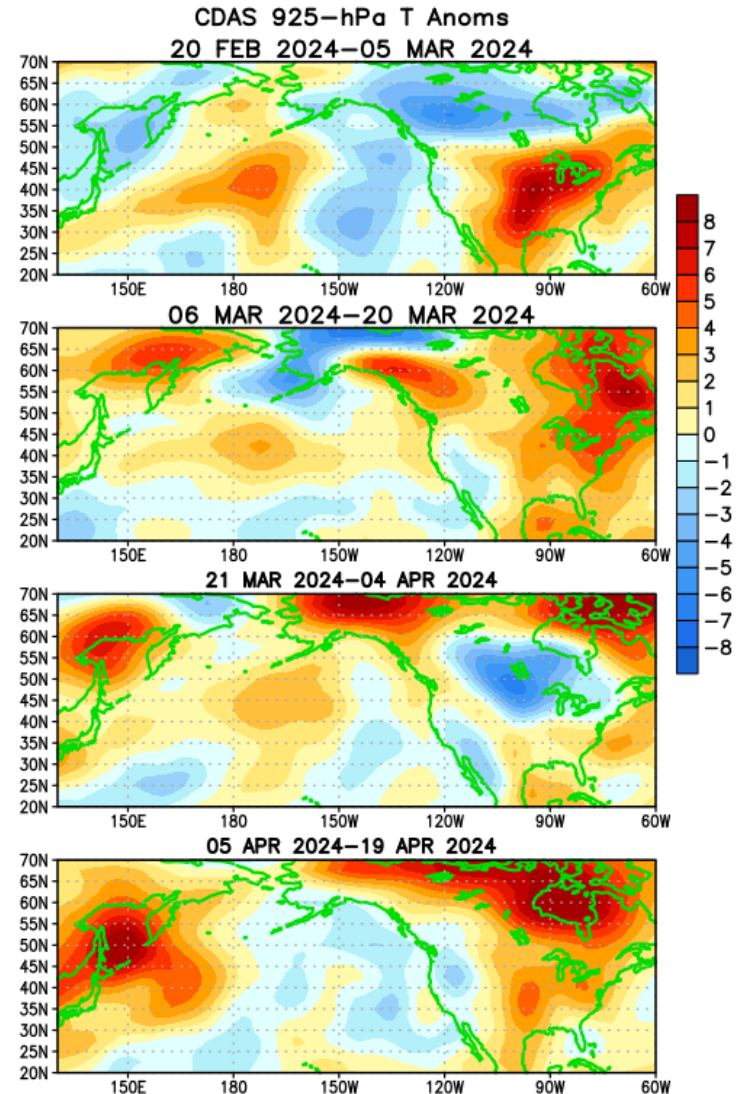
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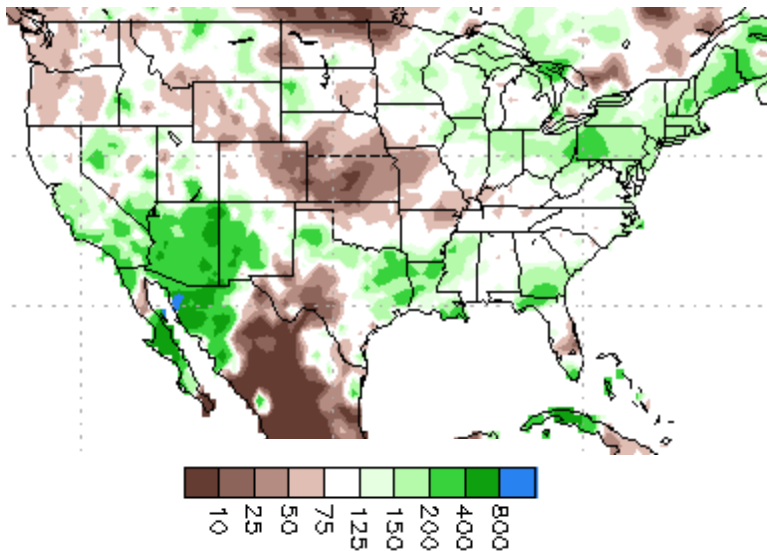
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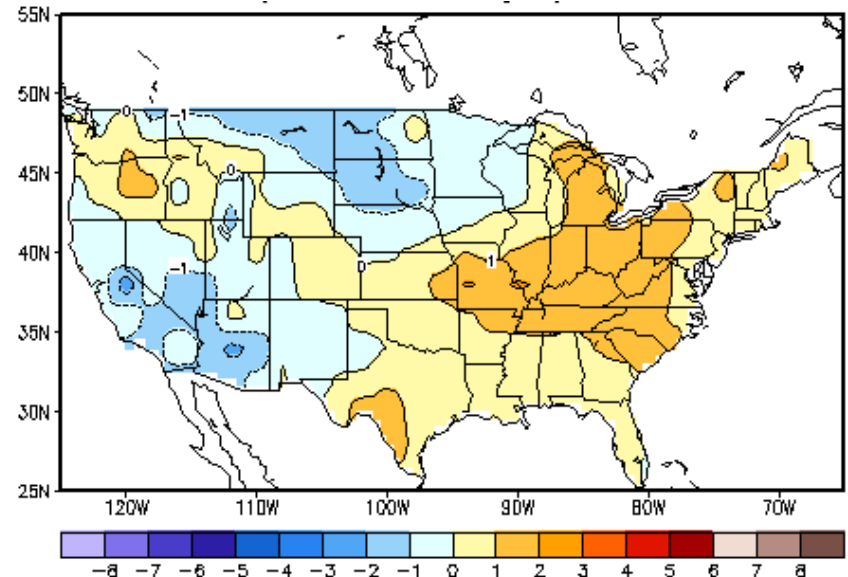
# U.S. Temperature and Precipitation Departures During the Last 30 Days

End Date: 14 April 2024

### Percent of Average Precipitation



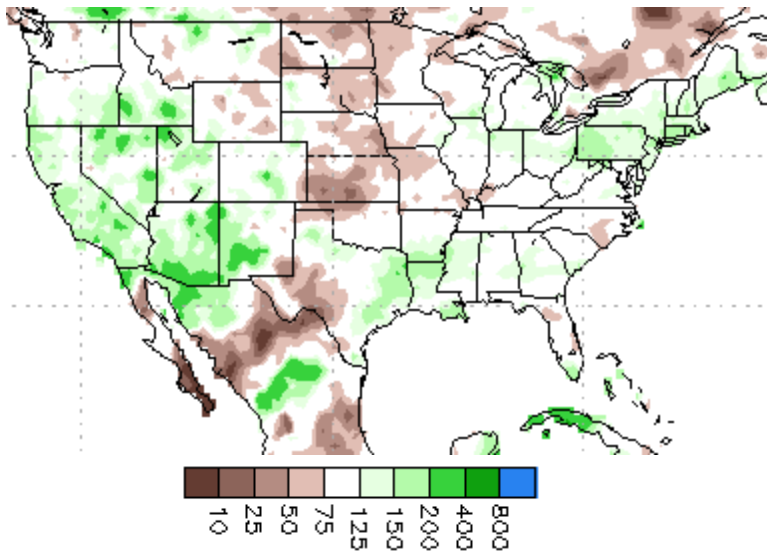
### Temperature Departures (degree C)



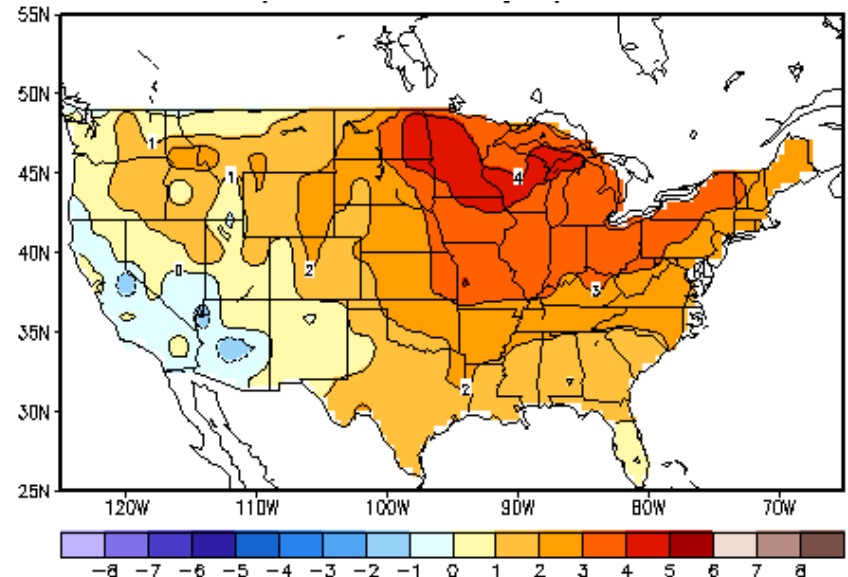
# U.S. Temperature and Precipitation Departures During the Last 90 Days

End Date: 14 April 2024

### Percent of Average Precipitation



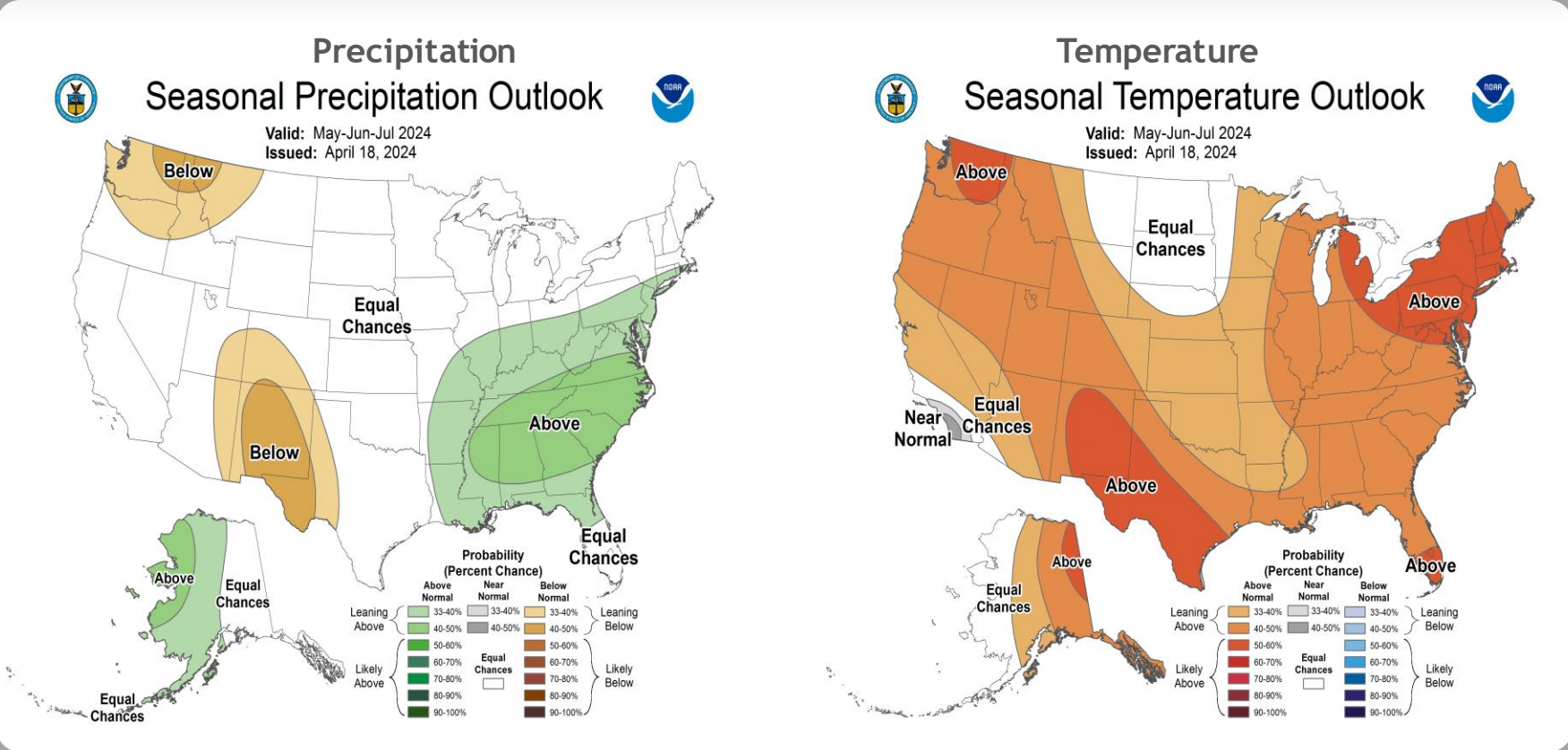
### Temperature Departures (degree C)



# U. S. Seasonal Outlooks

May - July 2024

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



# Summary

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El Niño conditions are observed.\*

Equatorial sea surface temperatures (SSTs) are above average across the central and east-central Pacific Ocean.

The tropical Pacific atmospheric anomalies are weakening.

A transition from El Niño to ENSO-neutral is likely by April-June 2024 (85% chance), with the odds of La Niña developing by June-August 2024 (60% chance).\*

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