Madden-Julian Oscillation: Recent Evolution, Current Status and Predictions

Update prepared by
Climate Prediction Center / NCEP
September 21, 2009

Outline

- Overview
- Recent Evolution and Current Conditions
- MJO Index Information
- MJO Index Forecasts
- MJO Composites

Overview

- The MJO remained weak during the past week.
- The patterns of anomalous convection and winds are a result of a combination of several factors including considerable other subseasonal variability and ENSO.
- Based on the most recent observations and model MJO forecasts, the MJO is expected to remain not active during the next two weeks.
- The MJO is not expected to contribute substantially to the patterns of tropical rainfall over the period.

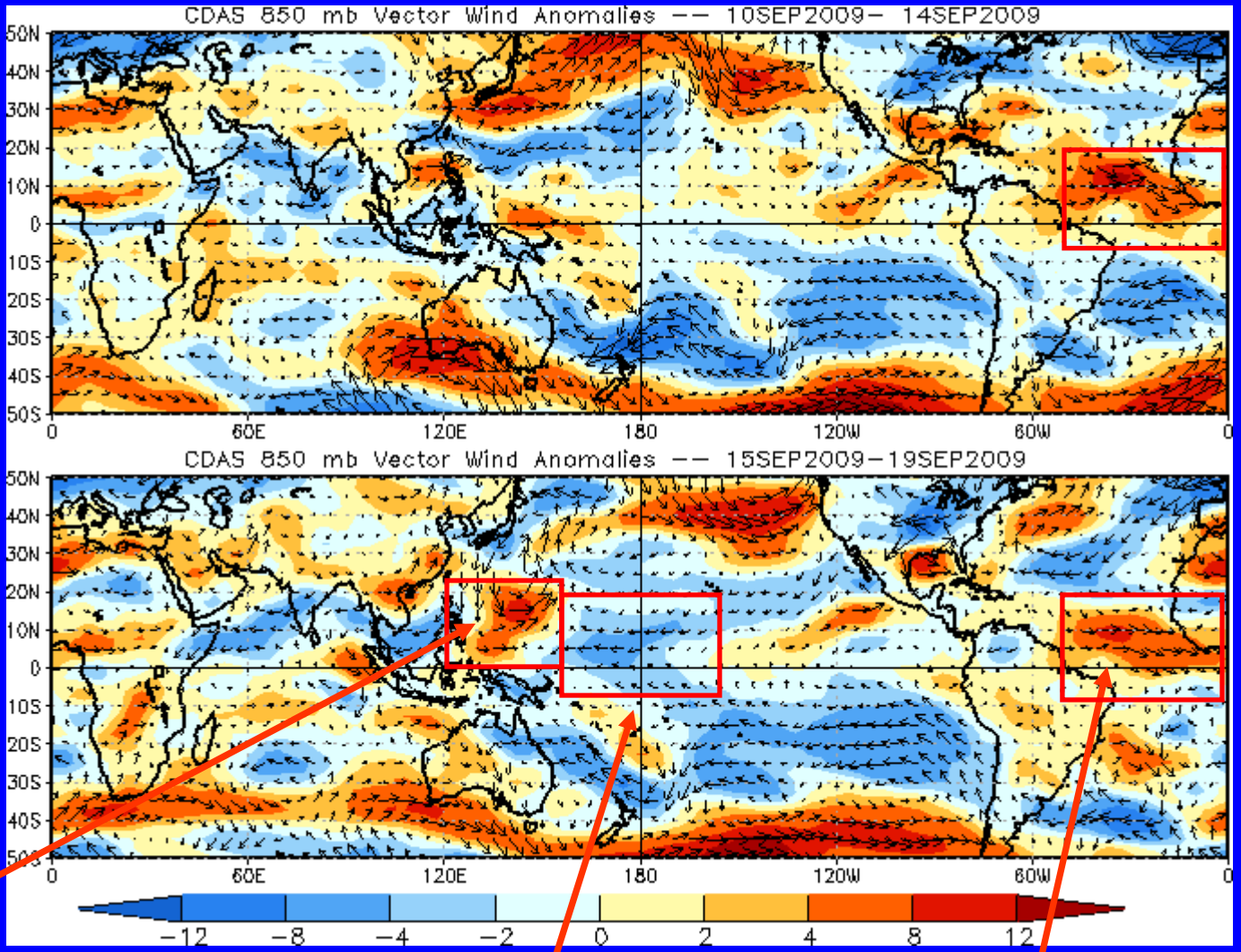
Additional potential impacts across the global tropics are available at:
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/precip/CWlink/ghazards/ghaz.shtml

850-hPa Vector Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})

Note that shading denotes the zonal wind anomaly

Blue shades: Easterly anomalies

Red shades: Westerly anomalies



Westerly anomalies have shifted north of the equator over the western Pacific.

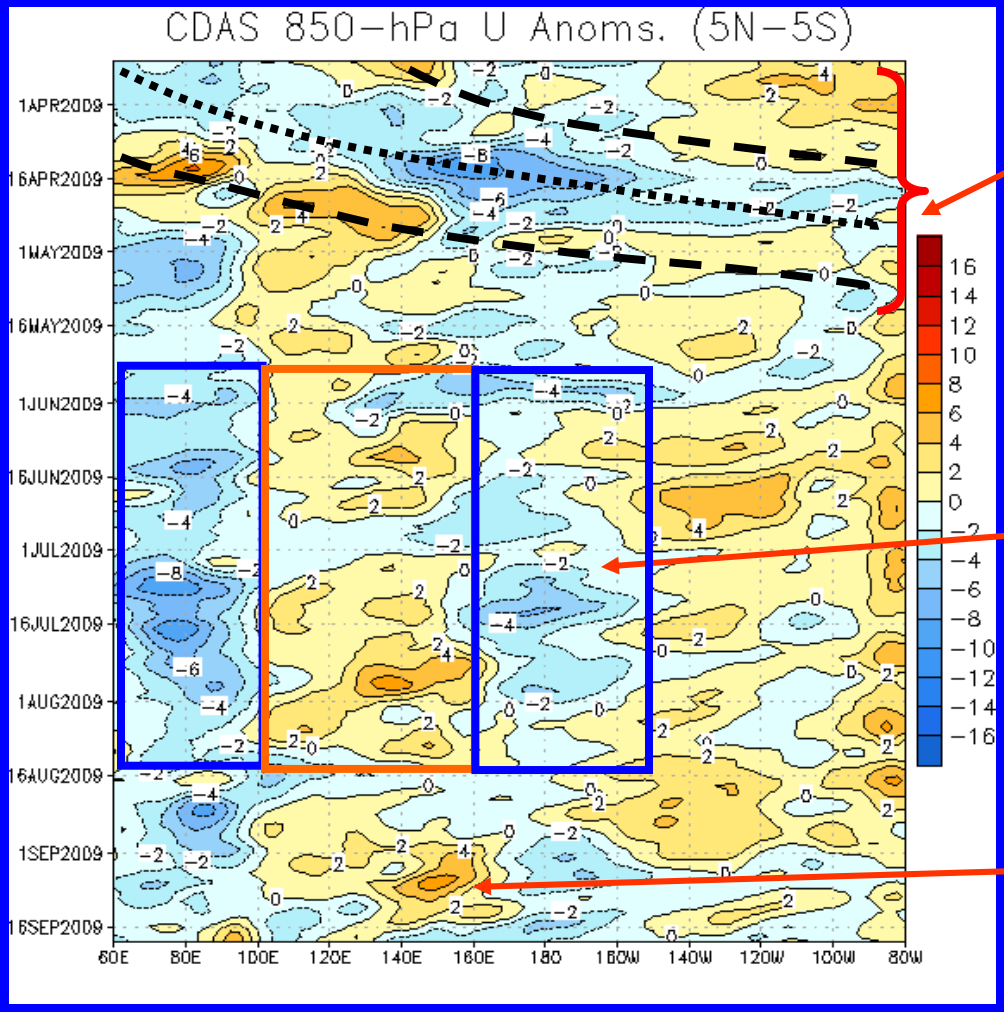
Easterly anomalies strengthened near the Date Line during the last five days.

Westerly anomalies continue across the Atlantic north of the equator during the last 5-10 days.

850-hPa Zonal Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})

Westerly anomalies (orange/red shading) represent anomalous west-to-east flow

Easterly anomalies (blue shading) represent anomalous east-to-west flow



Time

Longitude

From mid-March to early May, a pattern of alternating eastward-propagating low-level westerly, easterly and again westerly anomalies, associated with the MJO, was evident over the Indian Ocean and equatorial Pacific.

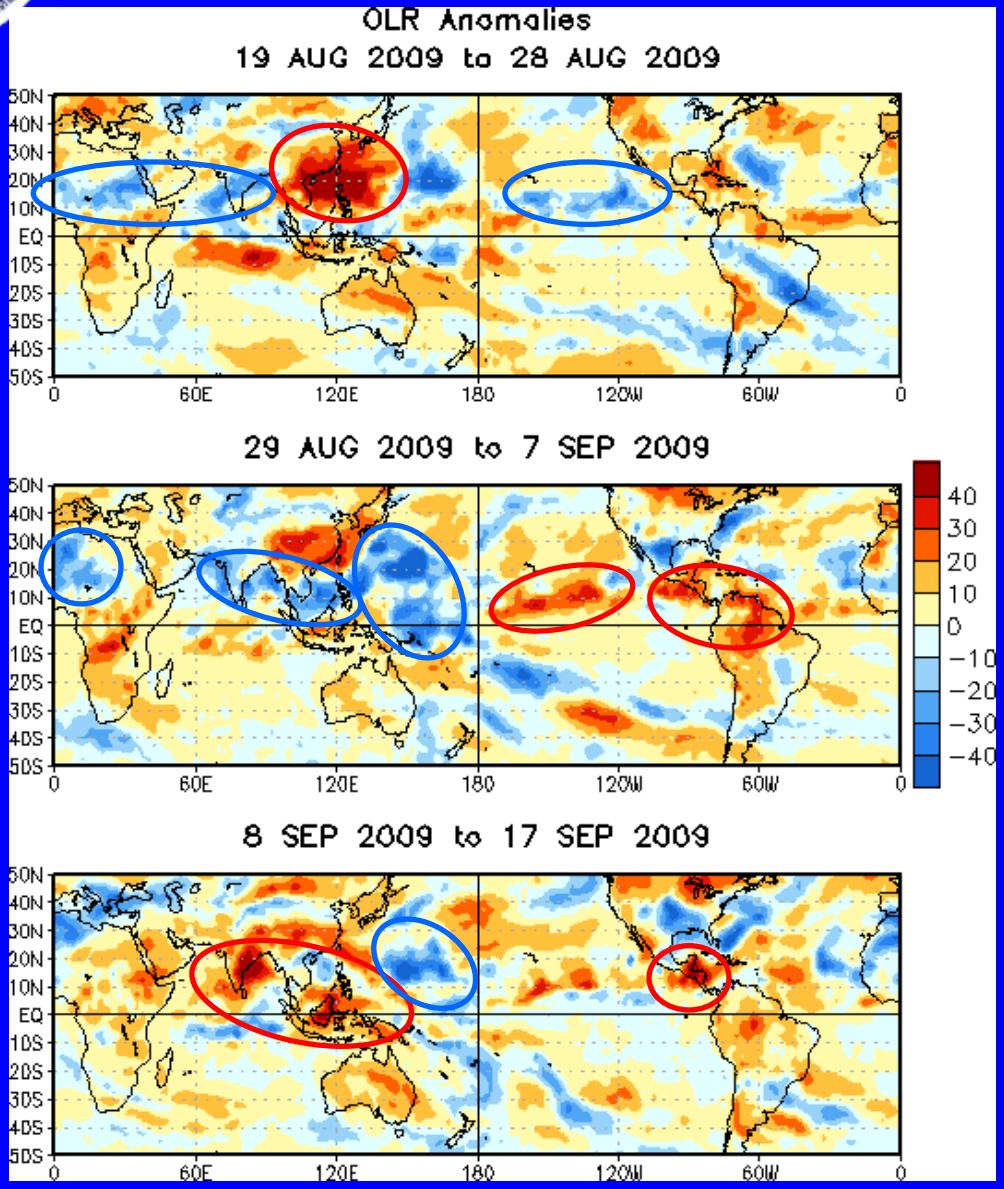
During much of the period from May-early August, a persistent pattern of easterly (westerly) anomalies was present across the Indian Ocean and central Pacific (Indonesia).

Recently, a westerly wind burst occurred over the western Pacific.

OLR Anomalies: Last 30 days

Drier-than-normal conditions, positive OLR anomalies (yellow/red shading)

Wetter-than-normal conditions, negative OLR anomalies (blue shading)

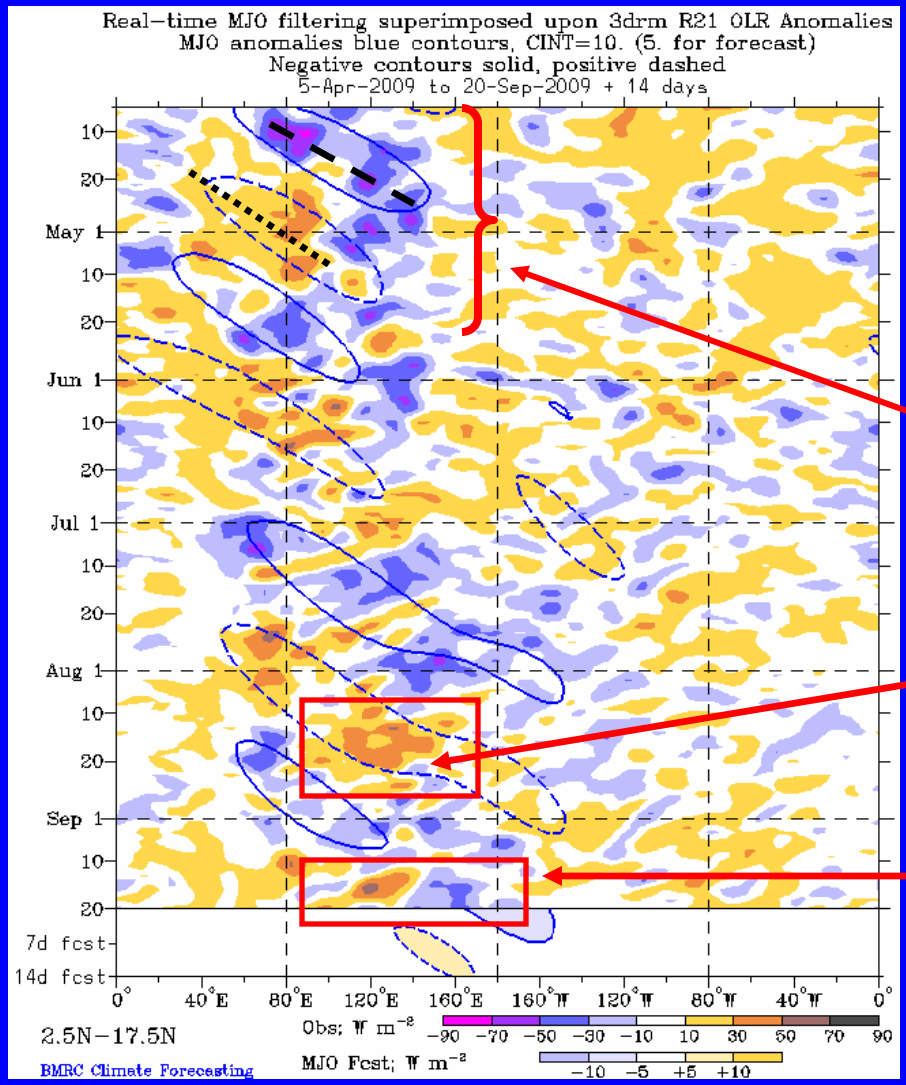


During mid-August, suppressed convection (red oval) was evident across southern China, Taiwan and the Philippines. Enhanced convection (blue ovals) was present across India, Africa and the eastern Pacific (north of the equator).

In late August to early September, suppressed convection was evident across the east-central Pacific, and parts of Central and South America. Enhanced convection stretched to the western Pacific and persisted over the African Sahel.

During mid September, suppressed convection developed across India and the Maritime Continent and persisted over Central America. Enhanced convection continued across the west-central Pacific.

Outgoing Longwave Radiation (OLR) Anomalies (2.5°N-17.5°N)



Time

Longitude

Drier-than-normal conditions, positive OLR anomalies (yellow/red shading)

Wetter-than-normal conditions, negative OLR anomalies (blue shading)

(Courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) - Australia)

From April into early May, areas of suppressed and enhanced convection shifted eastward in association with the MJO (also see equatorial version of this diagram at BOM as it is more suitable for the boreal Spring).

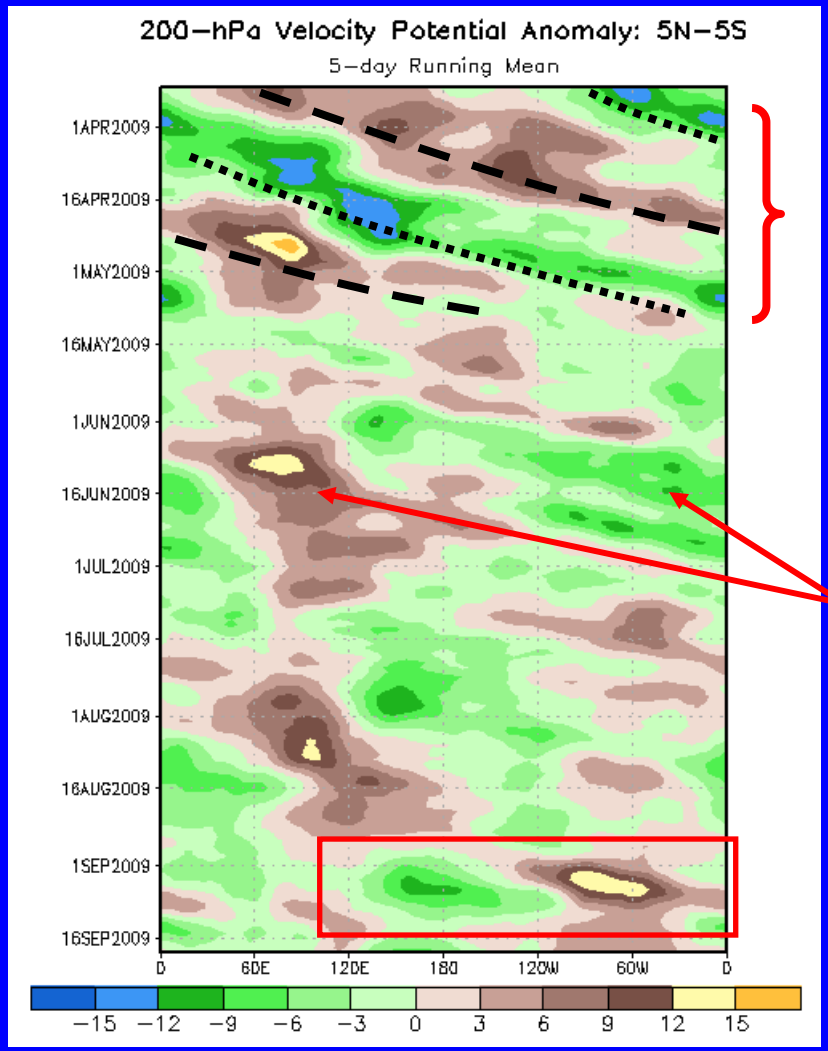
During mid-August, anomalous suppressed convection was evident across the Maritime continent and the western Pacific Ocean.

Enhanced convection has become prevalent over the western and central Pacific during the first half of September. Suppressed convection is now evident across the western Maritime continent in recent days.

200-hPa Velocity Potential Anomalies (5°S-5°N)

Positive anomalies (brown shading) indicate unfavorable conditions for precipitation

Negative anomalies (green shading) indicate favorable conditions for precipitation



Time

Longitude

From mid-March to early May, eastward propagating velocity potential anomalies indicated moderate-to-strong MJO activity.

The MJO weakened in May.

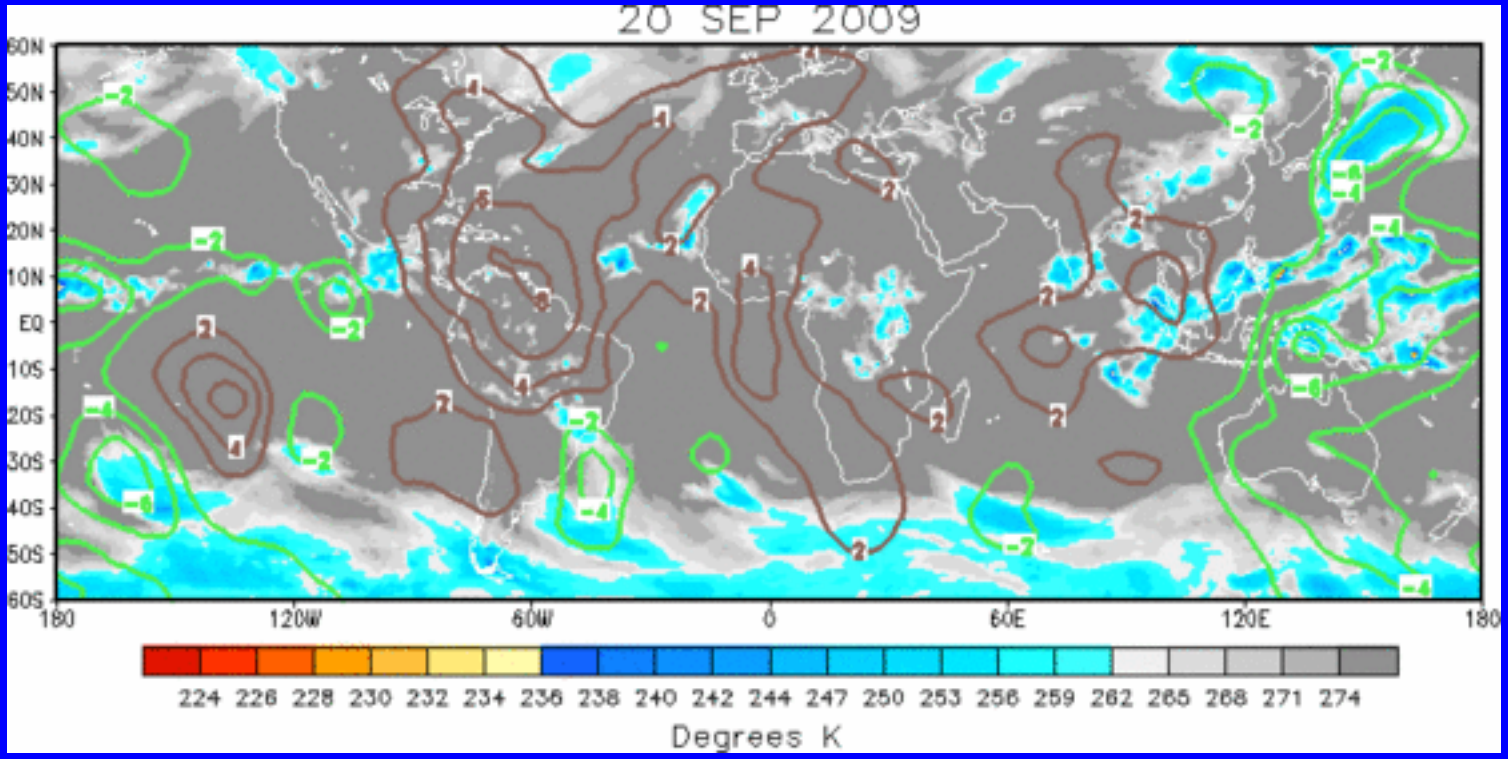
Velocity potential anomalies increased in early June with some eastward propagation evident due to considerable subseasonal variations.

Anomalies increased considerably during early to mid September with some eastward propagation evident (red box). Thereafter, anomalies have become weak.

IR Temperatures (K) / 200-hPa Velocity Potential Anomalies

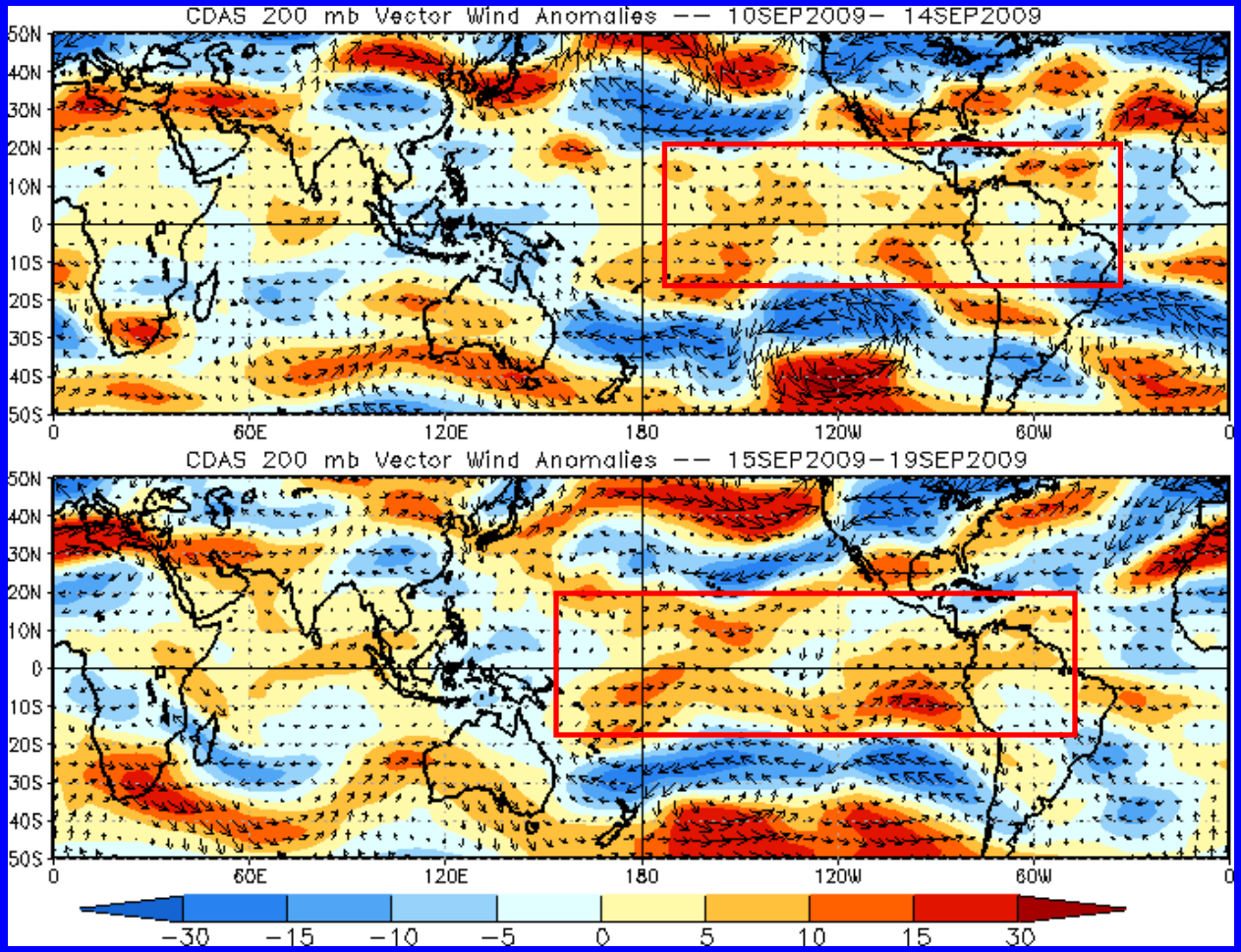
Positive anomalies (brown contours) indicate unfavorable conditions for precipitation

Negative anomalies (green contours) indicate favorable conditions for precipitation



Velocity potential anomalies indicate no coherent pattern and generally weak anomalies over much of the global Tropics. Some upper-level convergence is shown across the Atlantic Ocean and Africa.

200-hPa Vector Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})



Note that shading denotes the zonal wind anomaly

Blue shades: Easterly anomalies

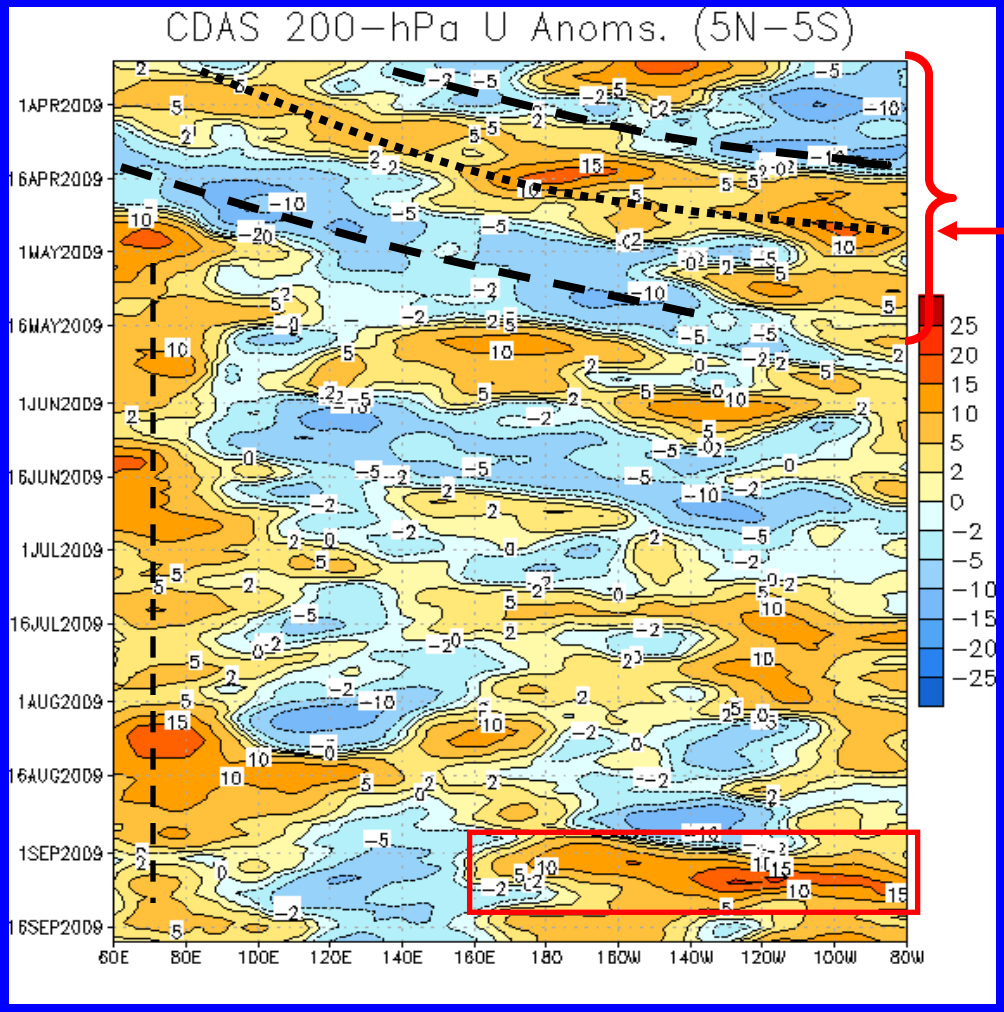
Red shades: Westerly anomalies

The westerly anomalies across the central and eastern Pacific continue (red boxes) with a slight shift westward during the last five days.

200-hPa Zonal Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})

Westerly anomalies (orange/red shading) represent anomalous west-to-east flow

Easterly anomalies (blue shading) represent anomalous east-to-west flow



Time

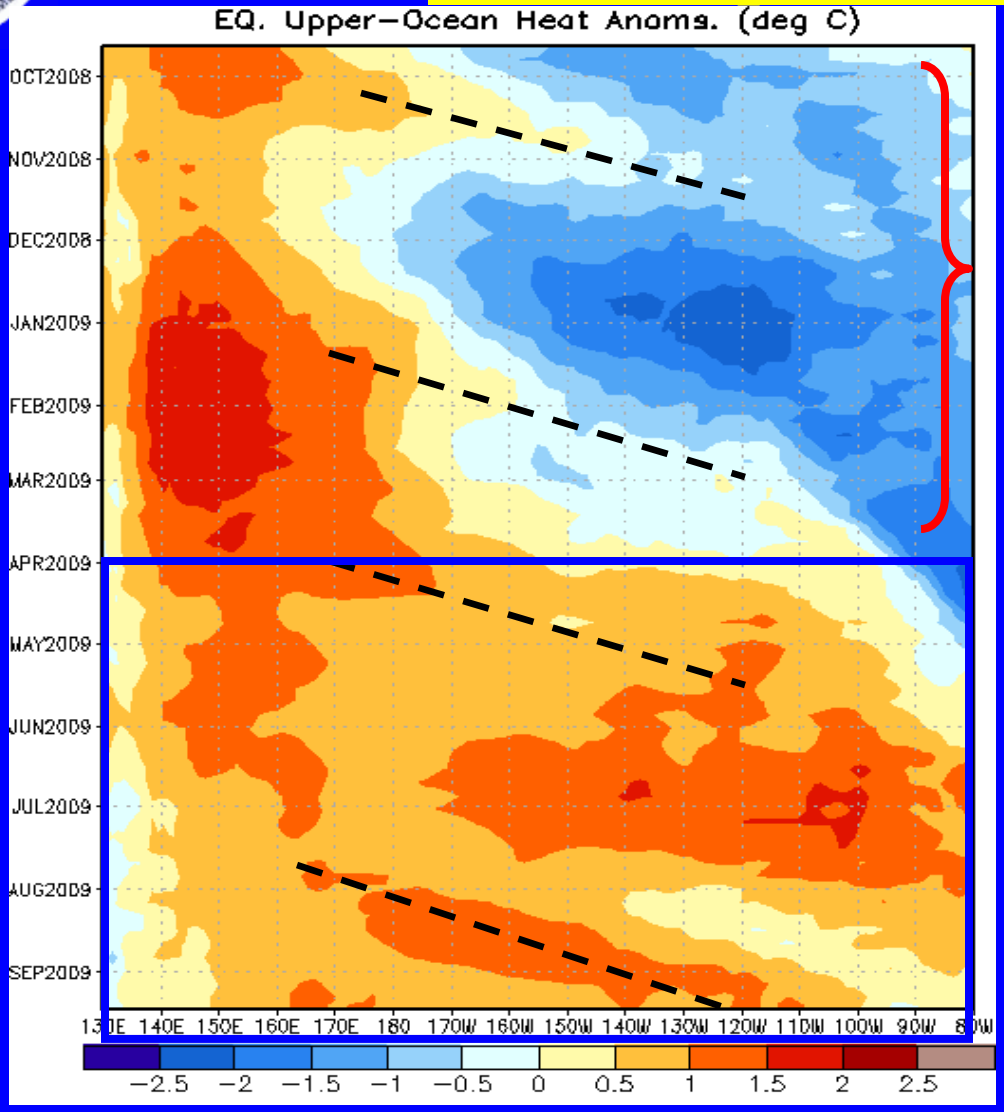
Longitude

Alternating eastward-propagating easterly and westerly anomalies, consistent with MJO activity, were evident from mid-March to mid-May.

Westerly anomalies across the Indian Ocean and Maritime continent have persisted since May 2009 (vertical dashed black line).

Strong westerly anomalies developed across much of the equatorial central and eastern Pacific during early September (red box). The anomalies weakened in this area during the last week.

Weekly Heat Content Evolution in the Equatorial Pacific



Time

Longitude

- During September 2008 – January 2009, negative heat content anomalies returned and then strengthened in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific as La Niña conditions redeveloped.
- The negative anomalies weakened during January-March 2009, with anomalies becoming positive since late March.
- In April 2009, the combined effects of an oceanic Kelvin wave and weaker easterly trade winds contributed to an increase in the upper-ocean heat content anomalies across the Pacific Ocean.
- Since April 2009, heat content anomalies have remained above-average (blue box).
- The downwelling phase of a Kelvin wave has shifted eastward during August and September (last dashed black line).

MJO Index -- Information

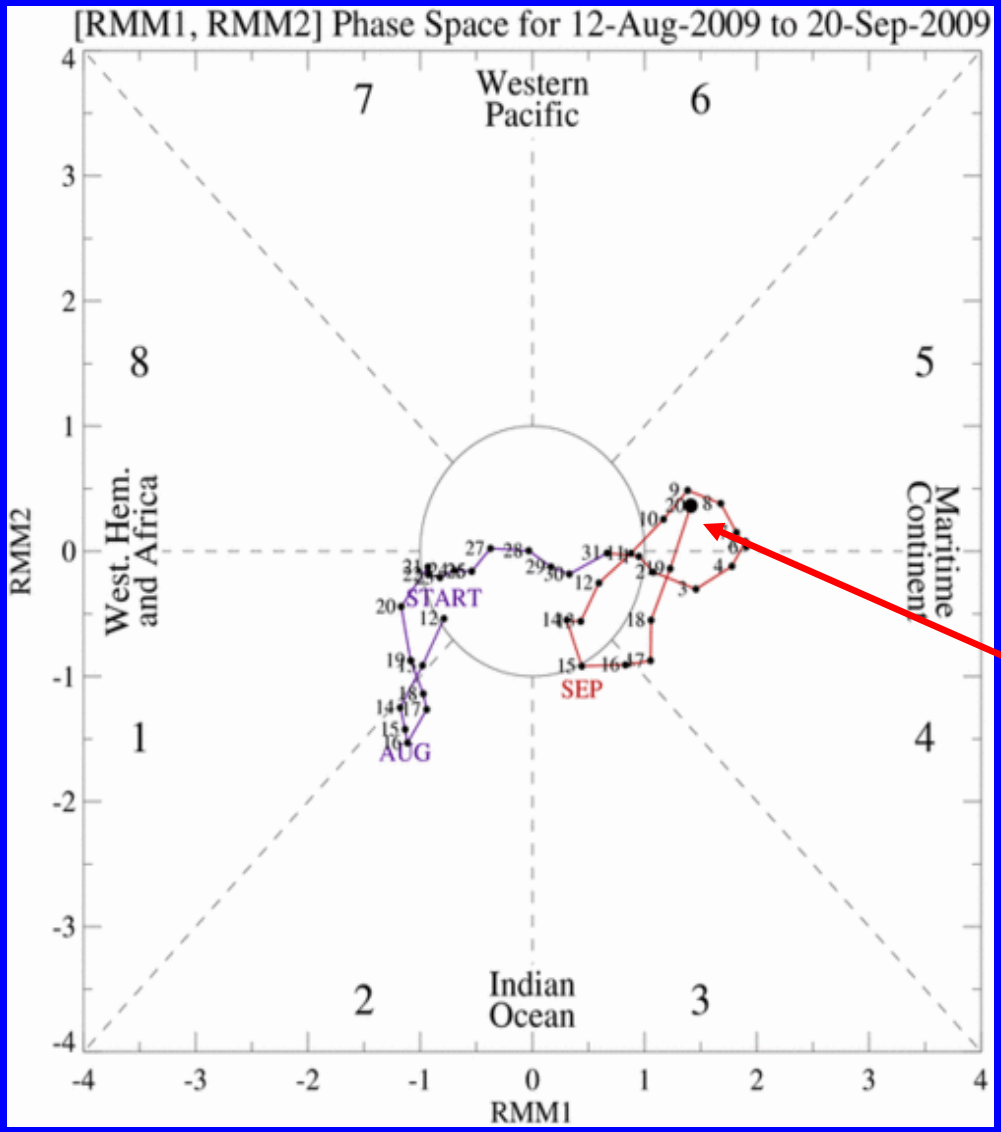
- **The MJO index illustrated on the next several slides is the CPC version of the Wheeler and Hendon index (2004, hereafter WH2004).**

Wheeler M. and H. Hendon, 2004: An All-Season Real-Time Multivariate MJO Index: Development of an Index for Monitoring and Prediction, *Monthly Weather Review*, 132, 1917-1932.

- **The methodology is nearly identical to that described in WH2004 but small deviations from the BMRC figure are possible at times due to differences in input data and methodology. These typically occur during weak MJO periods or when the ENSO signal is large.**

- **The index is based on a combined Empirical Orthogonal Function (EOF) analysis using fields of near-equatorially-averaged 850-hPa and 200-hPa zonal wind and outgoing longwave radiation (OLR).**

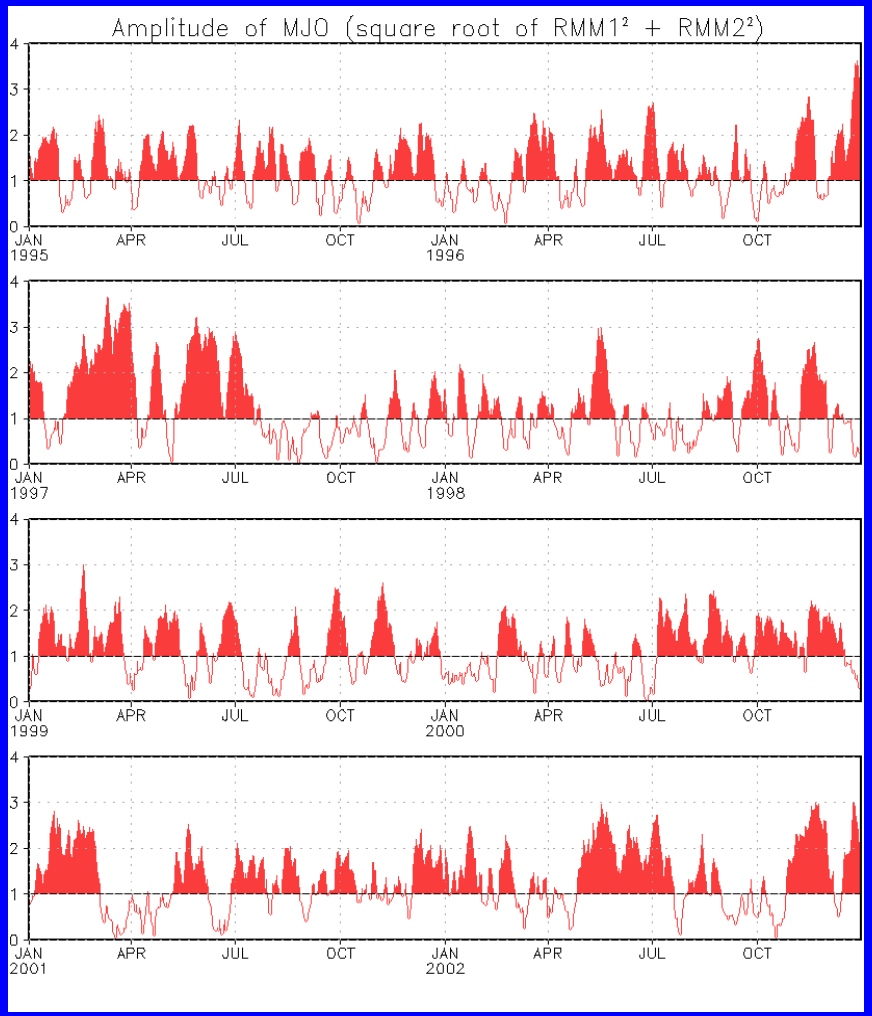
MJO Index -- Recent Evolution

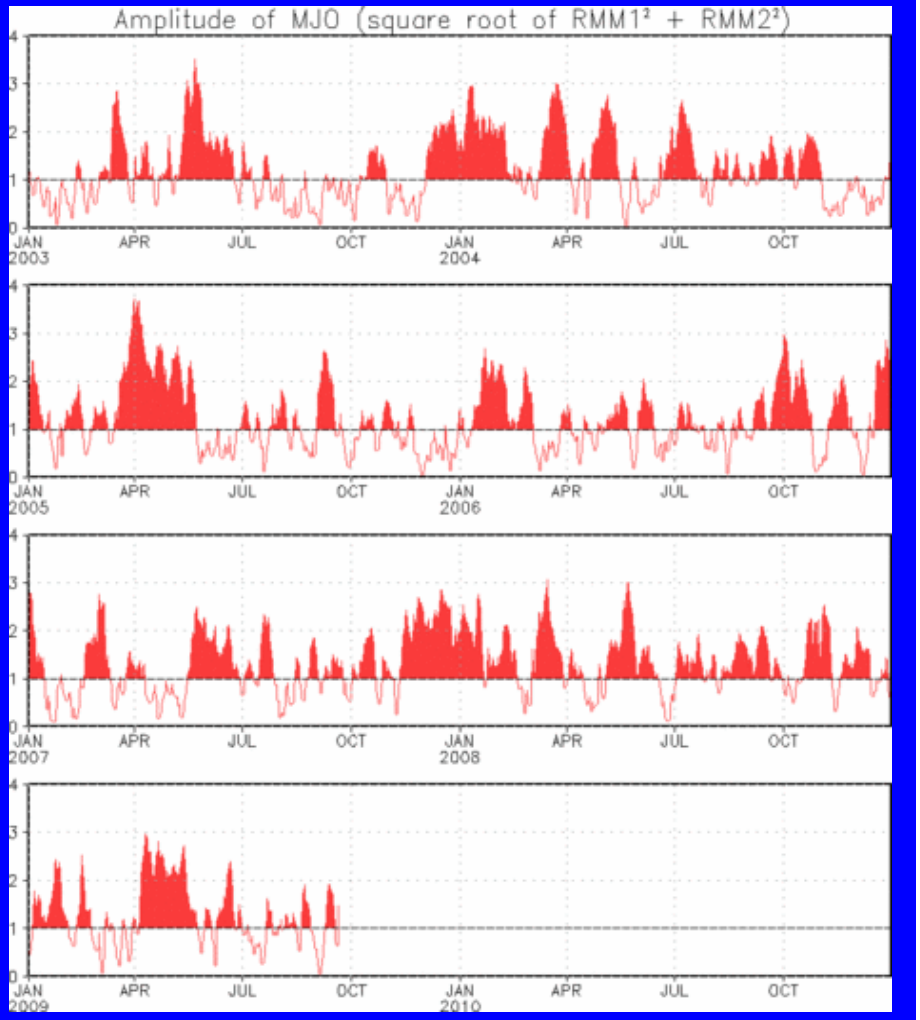


- **The axes (RMM1 and RMM2) represent daily values of the principal components from the two leading modes**
- **The triangular areas indicate the location of the enhanced phase of the MJO**
- **Counter-clockwise motion is indicative of eastward propagation. Large dot most recent observation.**
- **Distance from the origin is proportional to MJO strength**
- **Line colors distinguish different months**

The MJO index increased in amplitude during the past week with fast eastward movement in the last several days.

MJO Index – Historical Daily Time Series





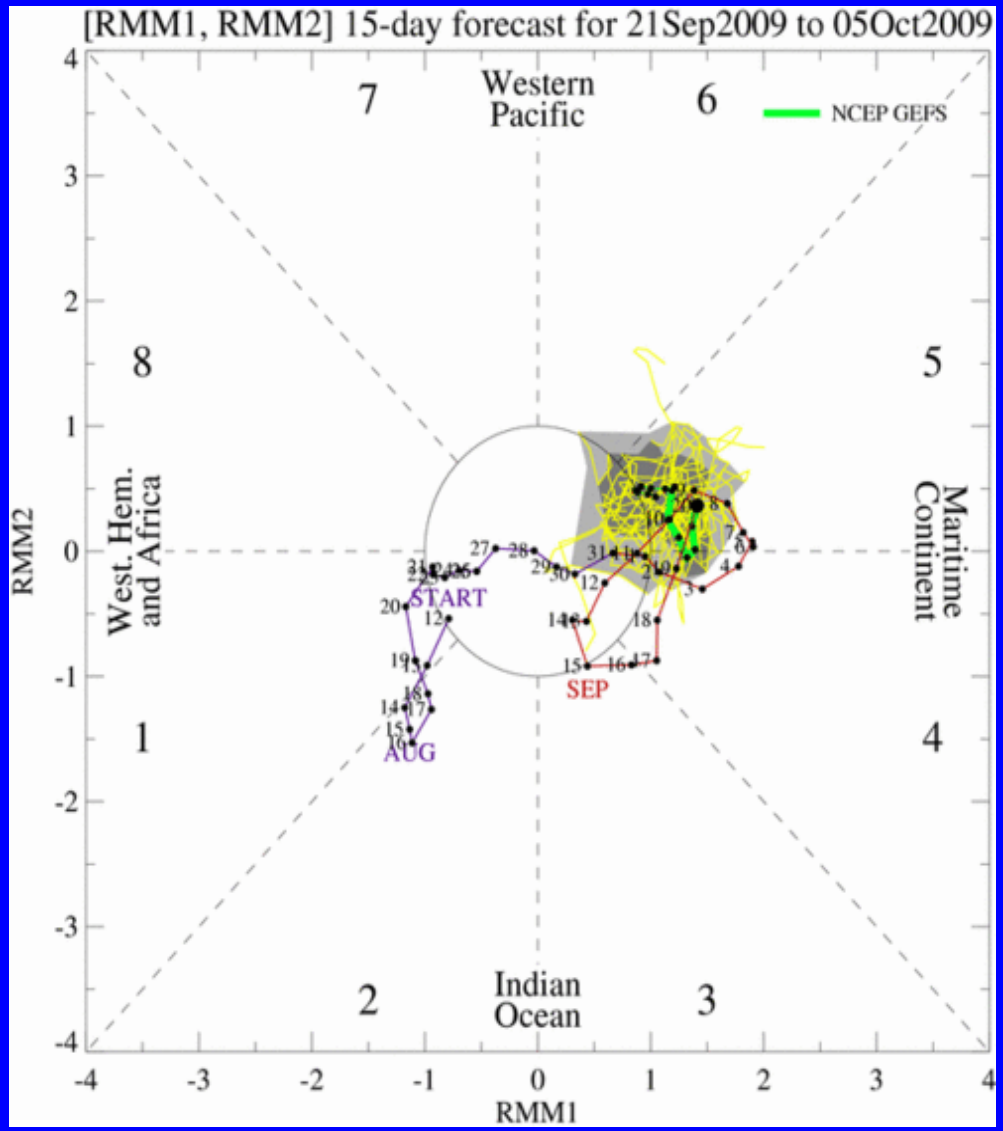
Time series of daily MJO index amplitude from 1995 to present. Plots put current MJO activity in historical context.

Ensemble GFS (GEFS) MJO Forecast

Yellow Lines – 20 Individual Members
Green Line – Ensemble Mean

RMM1 and RMM2 values for the most recent 40 days and forecasts from the ensemble Global Forecast System (GEFS) for the next 15 days

light gray shading: 90% of forecasts
dark gray shading: 50% of forecasts



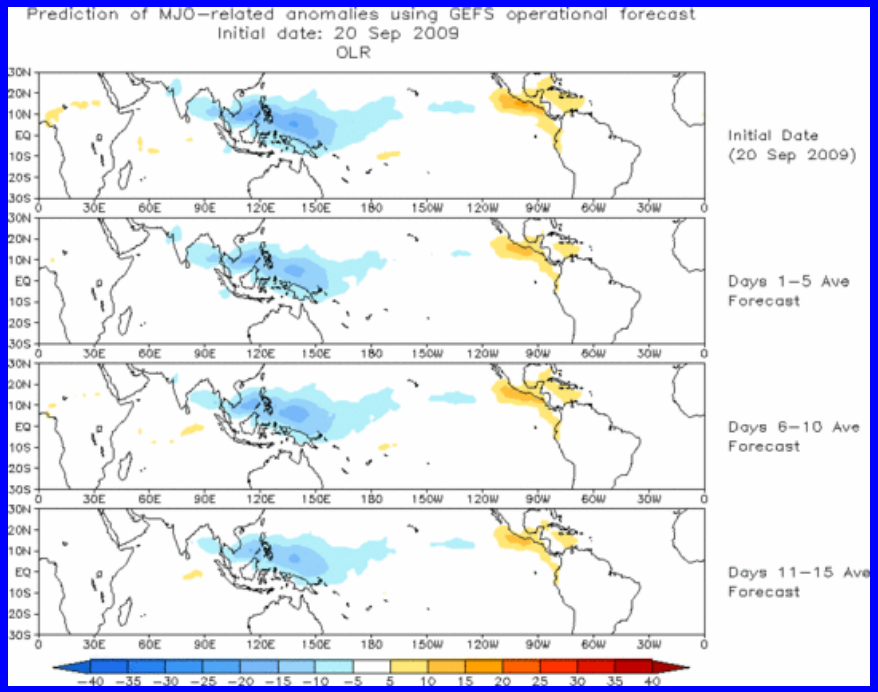
The GEFS forecasts of the MJO index indicate little eastward propagation during the next two weeks with the amplitude remaining generally constant.

Ensemble member spread is high so confidence is low.

Ensemble Mean GFS MJO Forecast

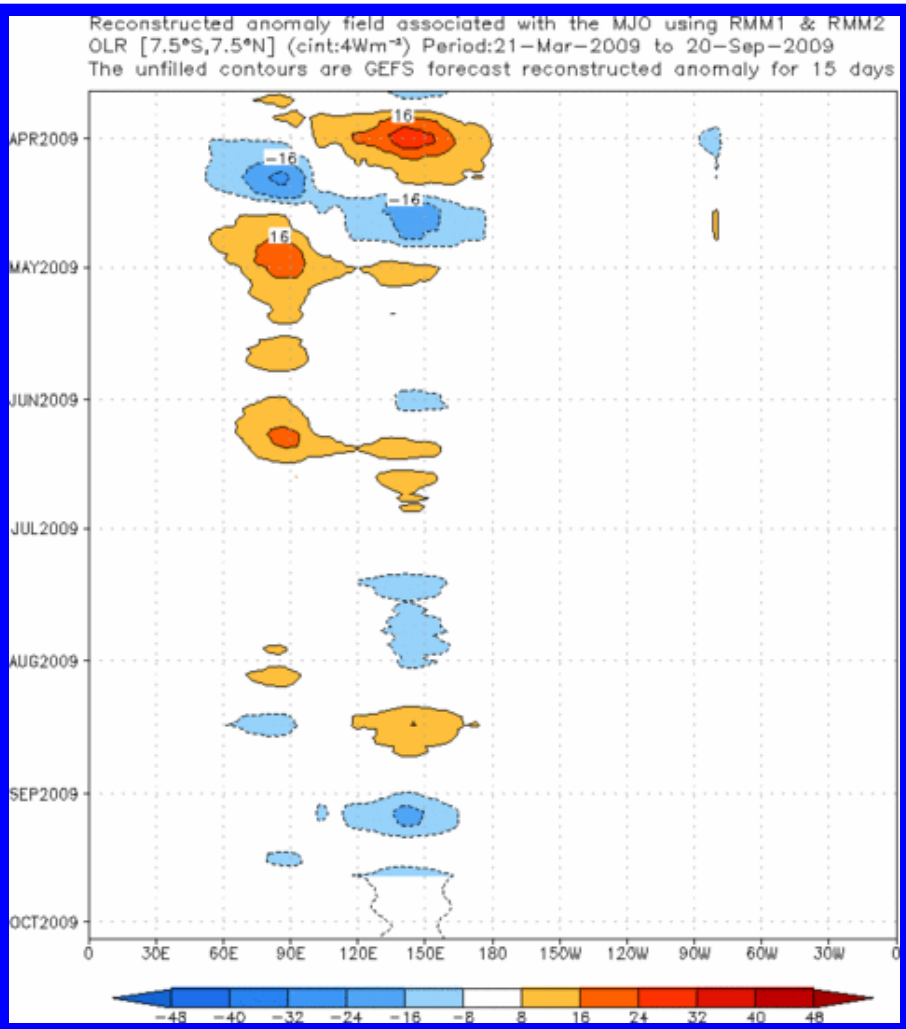
Figures below show MJO associated OLR anomalies only (reconstructed from RMM1 and RMM2) and do not include contributions from other modes (*i.e.*, ENSO, monsoons)

Spatial map of OLR anomalies for the next 15 days



The GEFS ensemble mean forecasts enhanced (suppressed) convection persisting across the Maritime continent and western Pacific (Central America) throughout much of the period.

Time-longitude section of (7.5°S-7.5°N) OLR anomalies for the last 180 days and for the next 15 days



Statistical MJO Forecast

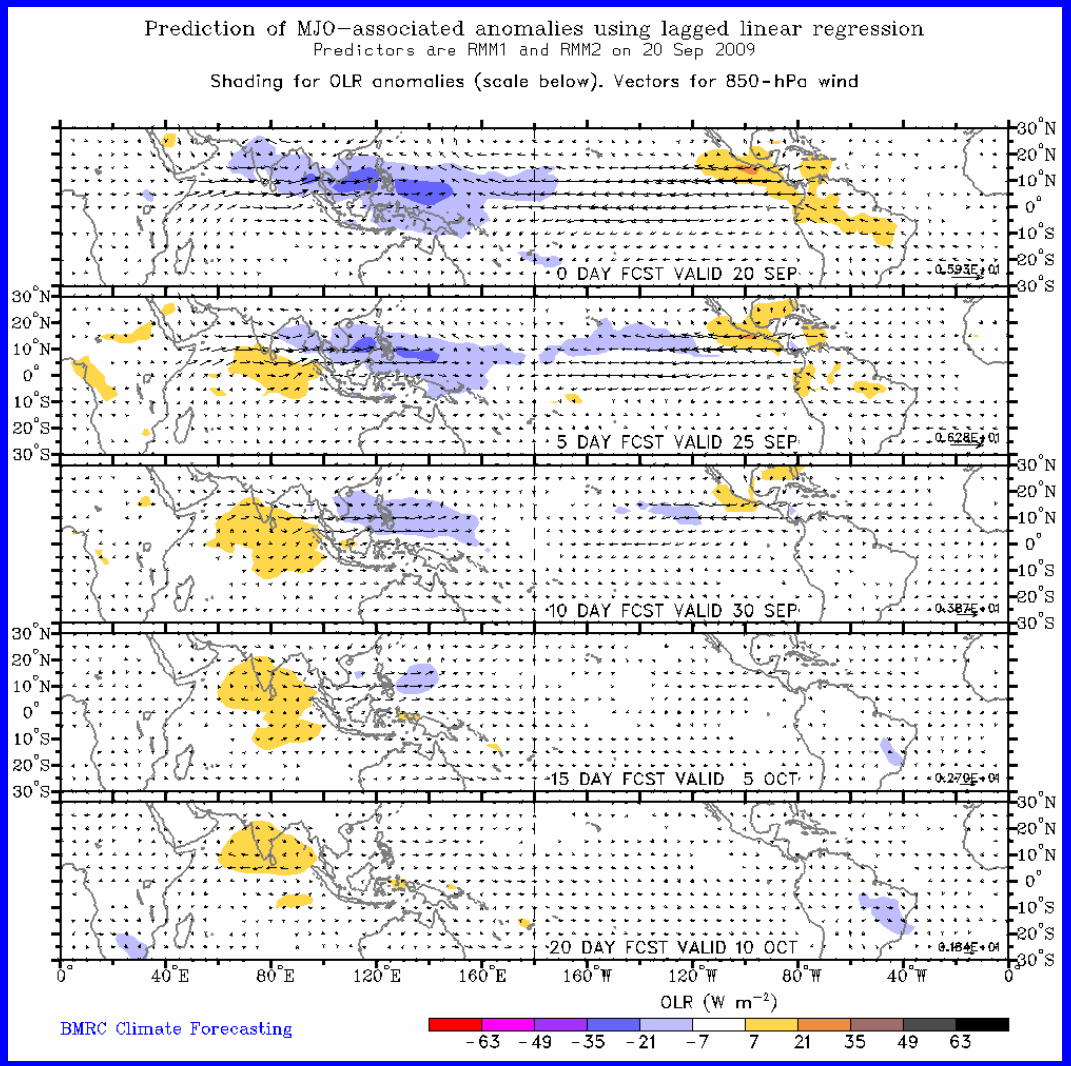
Figure below shows MJO associated OLR anomalies only (reconstructed from RMM1 and RMM2) and do not include contributions from other modes (*i.e.*, ENSO, monsoons)

Spatial map of OLR anomalies and 850-hPa vectors for the next 20 days

(Courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre - Australia)

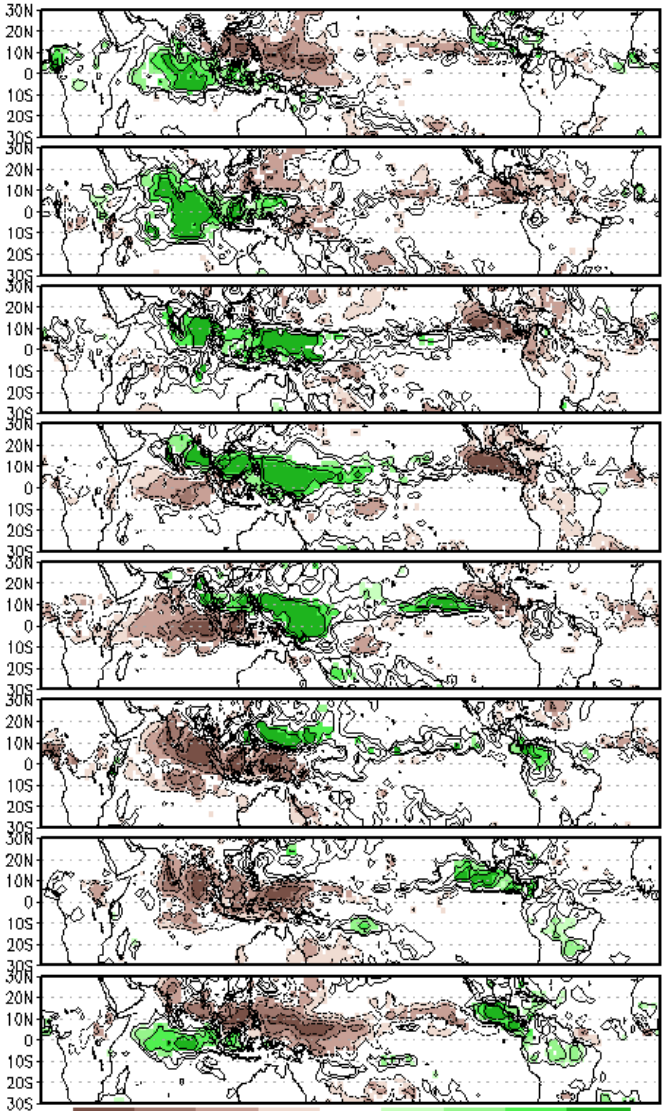
A statistical model forecasts weak-to-moderate MJO activity during the next 1-2 weeks.

The statistical model forecast is more progressive than the GEFS ensemble mean.



MJO Composites – Global Tropics

Precipitation Anomalies (May-Sep)



850-hPa Wind Anomalies (May-Sep)