

On Forecast Process and Format

The Week 3-4 temperature and precipitation outlooks are prepared once per week utilizing a consensus style process. The forecast team consists of 5 forecasters in which a lead is selected each week. In addition to forecast team members, representatives from key monitoring and forecast groups of CPC (ENSO, drought, stratosphere, Week-2 forecaster, etc.) attend this meeting to provide input and ensure consistency, as best as possible, across the product suite.

The Week 3-4 temperature outlook and the experimental precipitation outlook are in a two-class format and currently differ from other CPC extended range, monthly and seasonal outlooks. This was decided primarily based on two factors, (1) predictability considerations and (2) ease in communication.

The Week 3-4 forecast time frame resides in the weather-climate spectrum between Week-2 where atmospheric initial conditions continue to play a substantial role but before the seasonal time scale where more slowly evolving climate conditions from the land and ocean play the primary role. Consequently, predictability is low in this time range. This consideration suits a two-class system better than the current three class or tercile system used in other CPC outlooks and allowed the best opportunity to provide useful information to decision makers.

Second, CPC has had a longstanding problem with users misinterpreting our more complex tercile class system. For this new outlook, CPC wished to try a more simple system to potentially improve upon this situation and aid in communication of the forecast to users. Feedback on the class system chosen for this outlook is expected as part of the product evaluation process.