

ENSO: Recent Evolution, Current Status and Predictions



Update prepared by:
Climate Prediction Center / NCEP
20 May 2024

Outline

Summary

Recent Evolution and Current Conditions

Oceanic Niño Index (ONI)

Pacific SST Outlook

U.S. Seasonal Precipitation and Temperature Outlooks

Summary

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ENSO Alert System Status: **El Niño Advisory** / **La Niña Watch**

El Niño is transitioning toward ENSO-neutral.*

Equatorial sea surface temperatures (SSTs) are above average in the western and central Pacific Ocean, and below-average SSTs are emerging in the east-central and eastern Pacific Ocean.

A transition from El Niño to ENSO-neutral is likely in in the next month. La Niña may develop in June-August 2024 (49% chance) or July-September (69% chance).*

* 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](#).

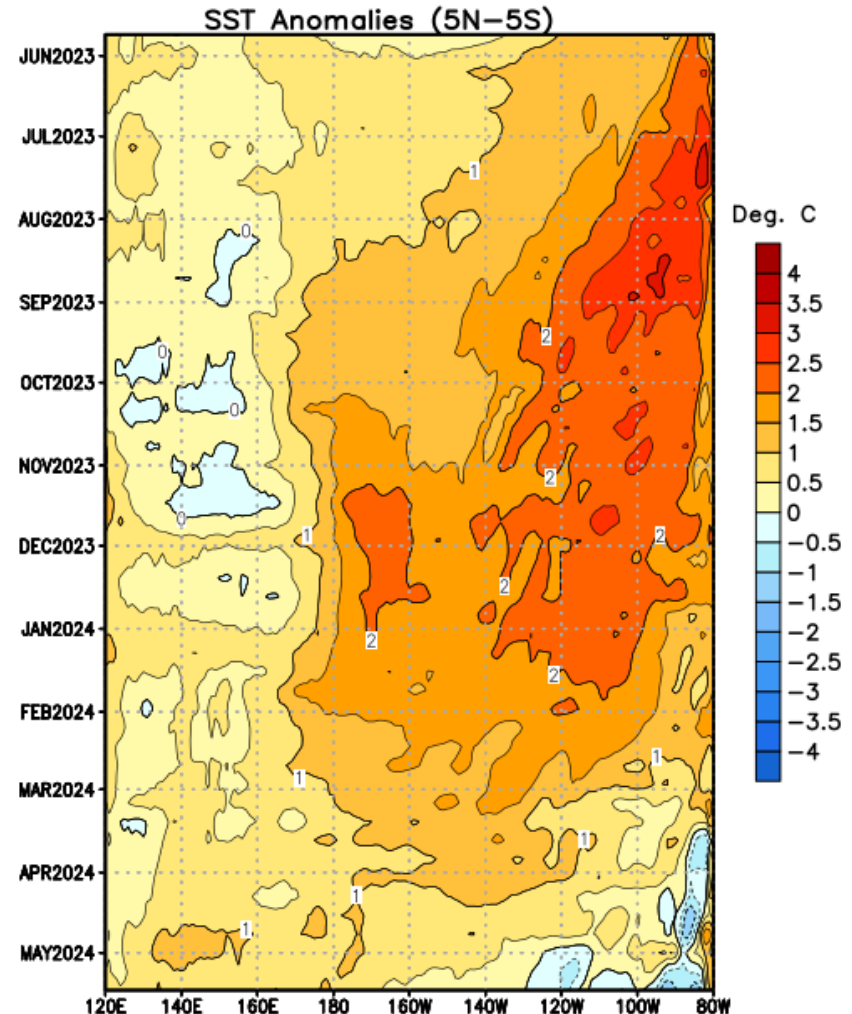
Recent Evolution of Equatorial Pacific SST Departures (°C)

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.

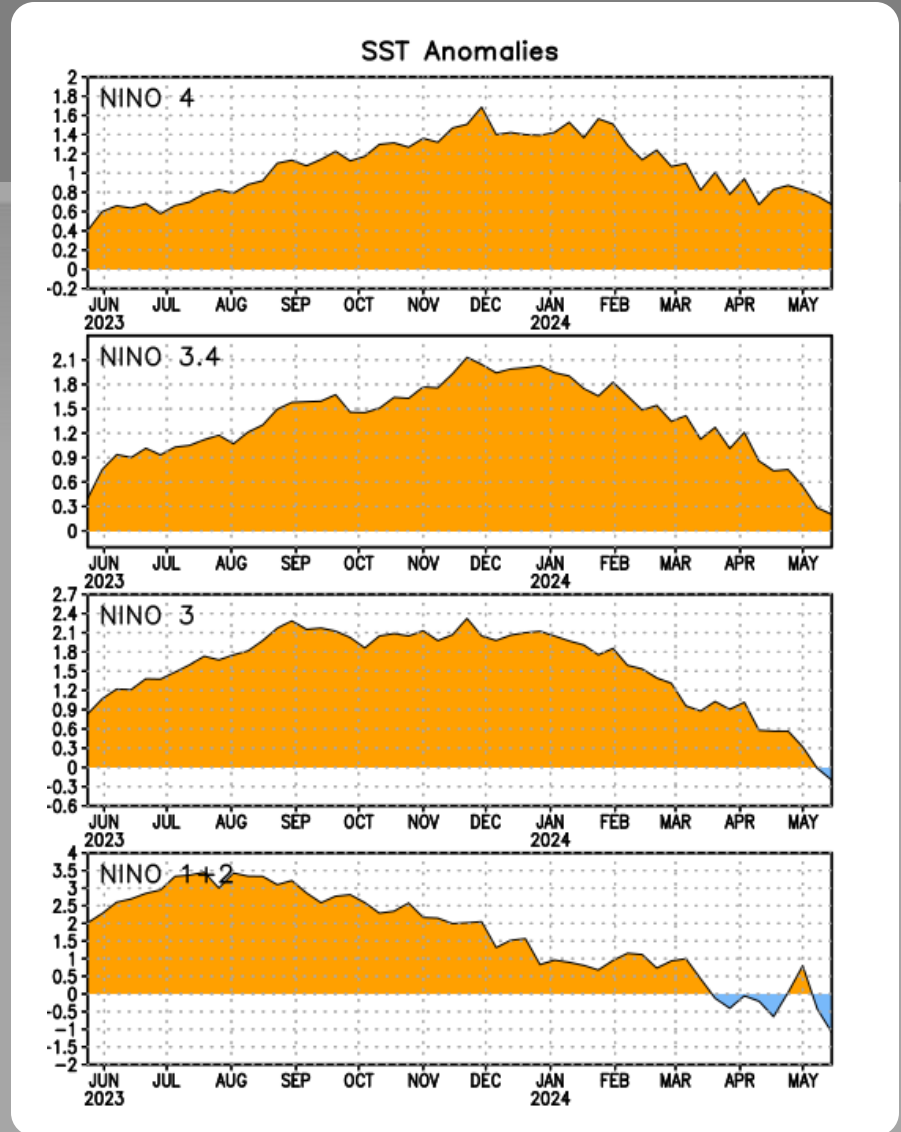
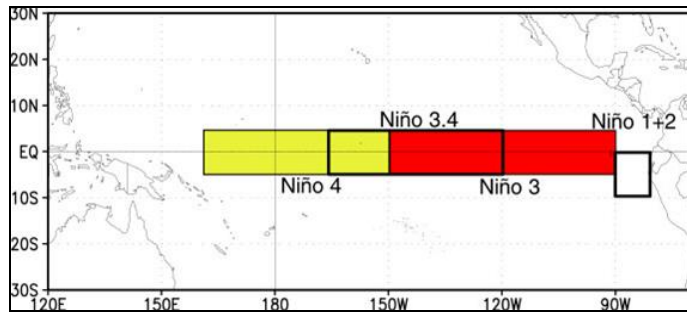
Since mid March 2024, below-average SSTs have emerged in the eastern Pacific and have expanded slightly westward.



Niño Region SST Departures (°C) Recent Evolution

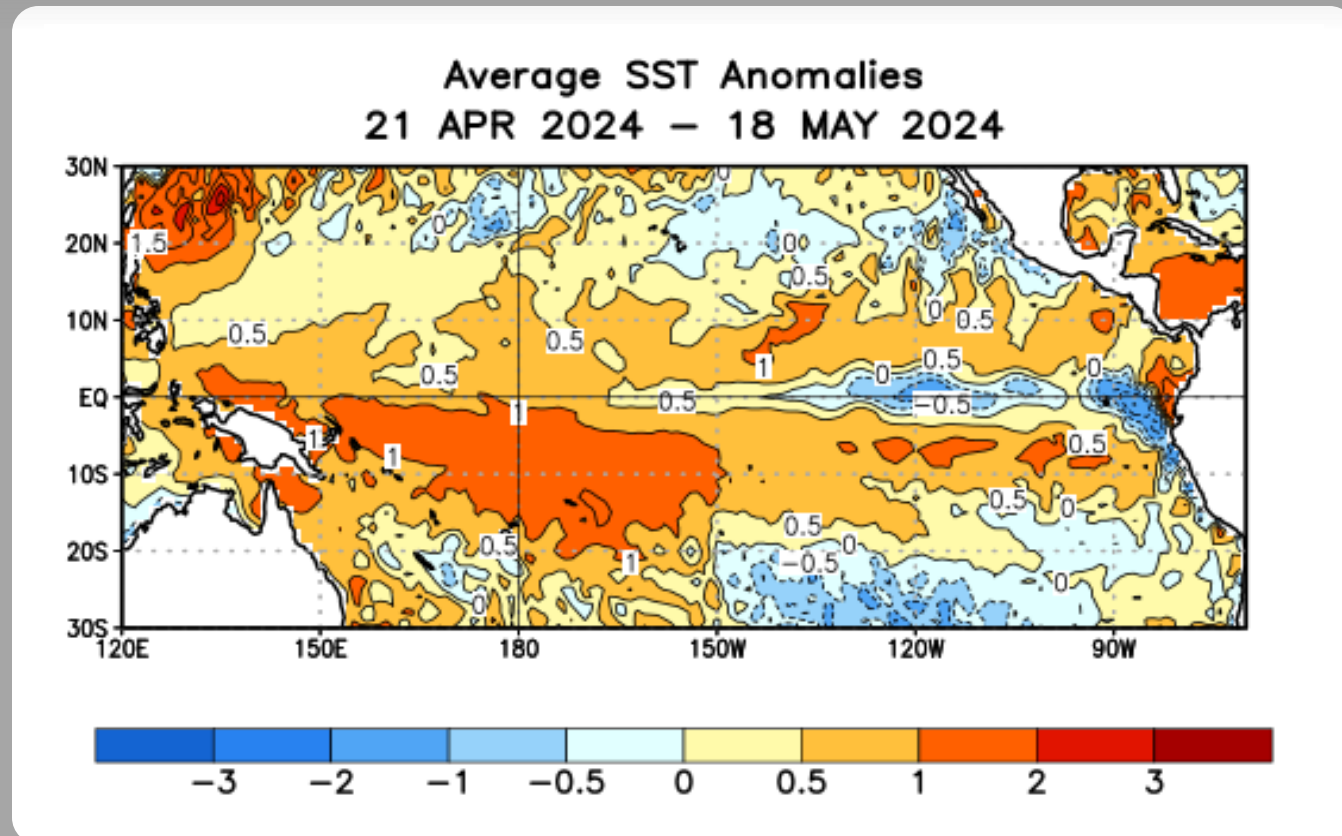
The latest weekly SST departures are:

Niño 4	0.7°C
Niño 3.4	0.2°C
Niño 3	-0.2°C
Niño 1+2	-1.1°C



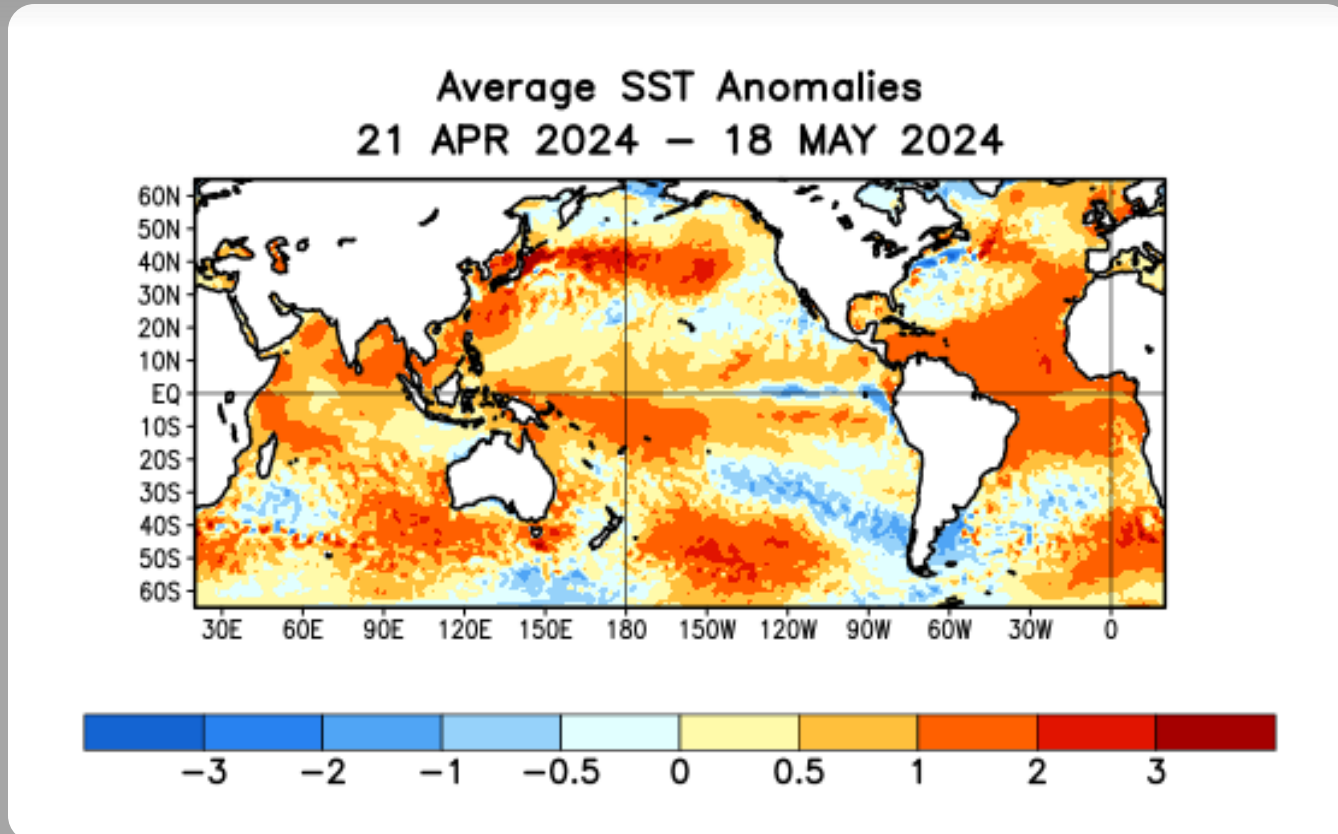
SST Departures (°C) in the Tropical Pacific During the Last Four Weeks

In the last four weeks, equatorial SSTs were above average in the central and western Pacific Ocean. Near-to-below-average SSTs were evident in the east-central and eastern Pacific Ocean.



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

During the last four weeks, equatorial SSTs were above average across the western and central Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean. Near-to-below-average SSTs were evident in the east-central and eastern Pacific Ocean.

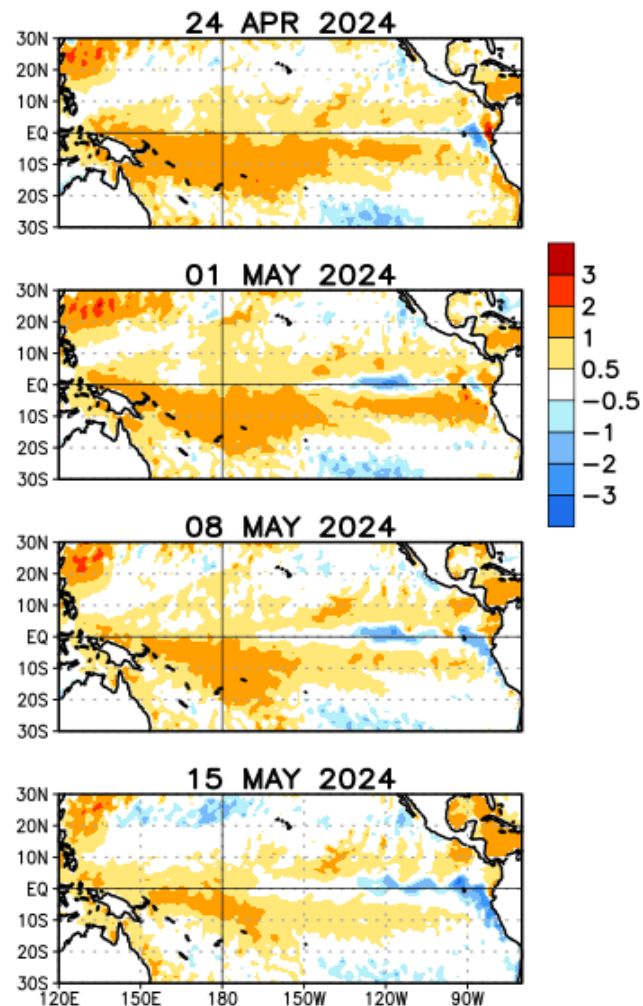


Weekly SST Departures during the Last Four Weeks

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

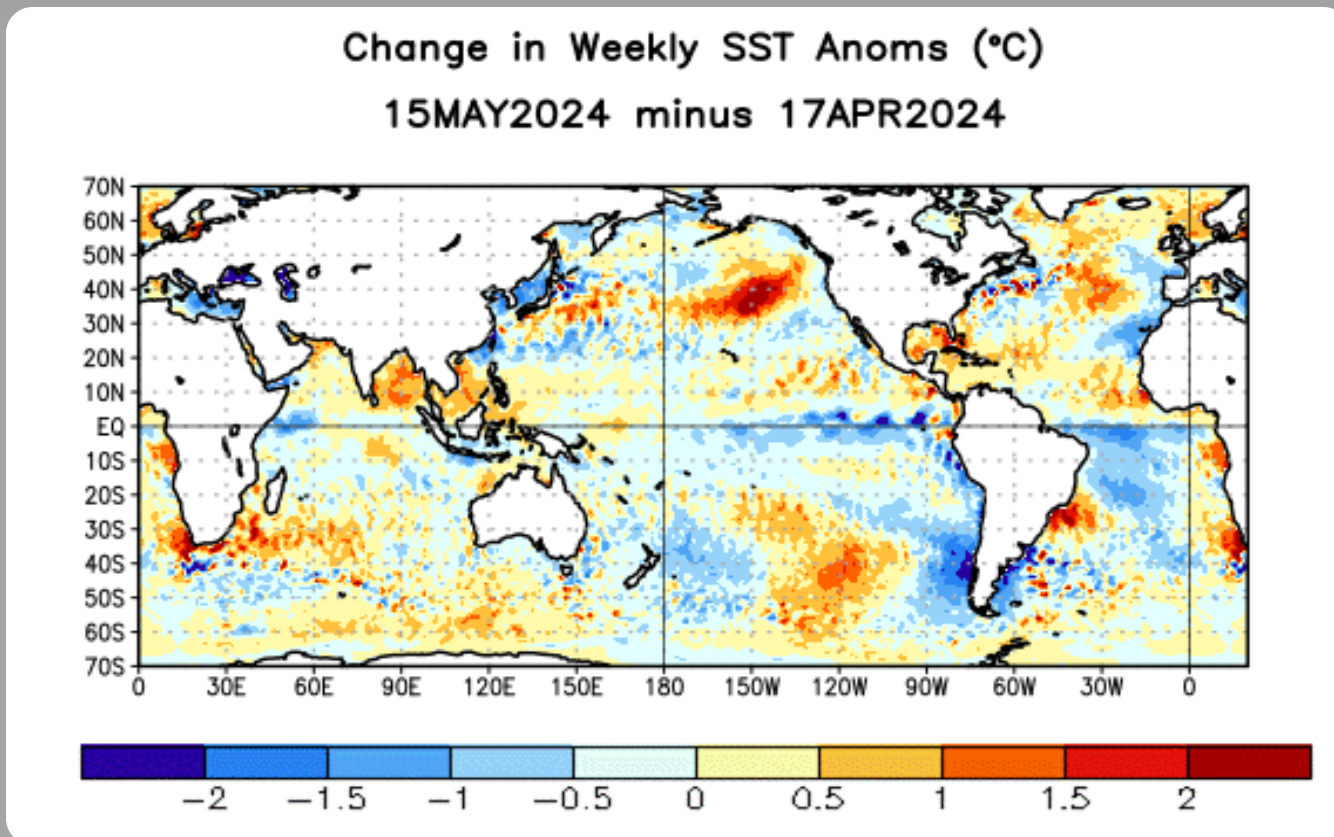
Below-average SSTs have strengthened in parts of the east-central and eastern Pacific Ocean.

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 in the east-central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.



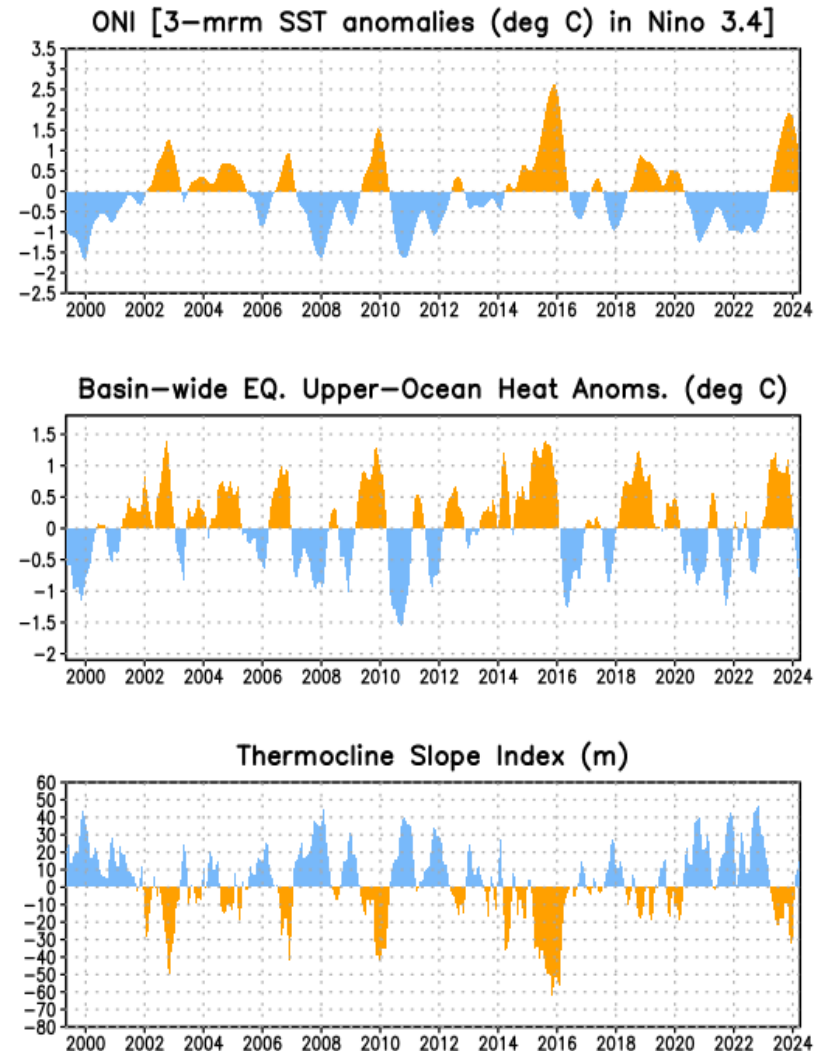
Upper-Ocean Conditions in the Equatorial Pacific

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.

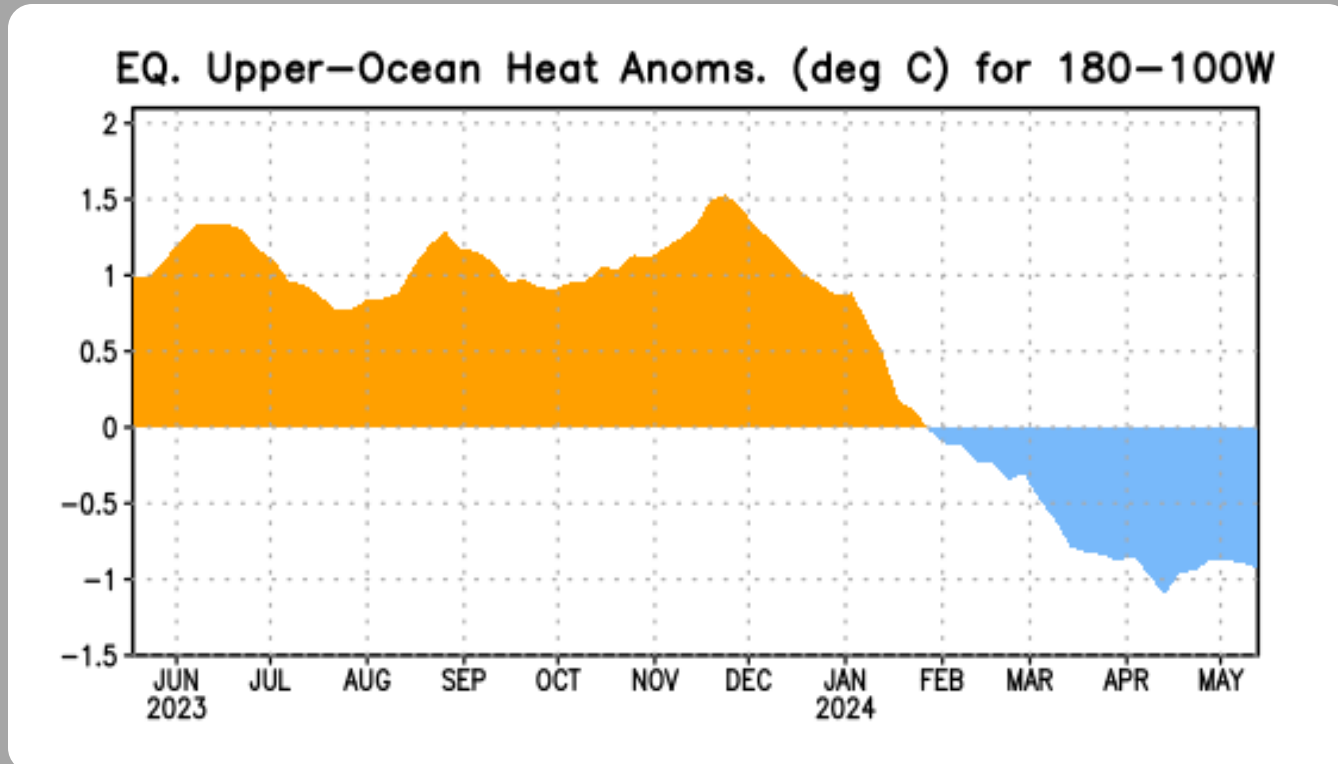
Recent values of the upper-ocean heat anomalies (below average) and thermocline slope index (slightly above average) reflect a transition toward ENSO-neutral.

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).



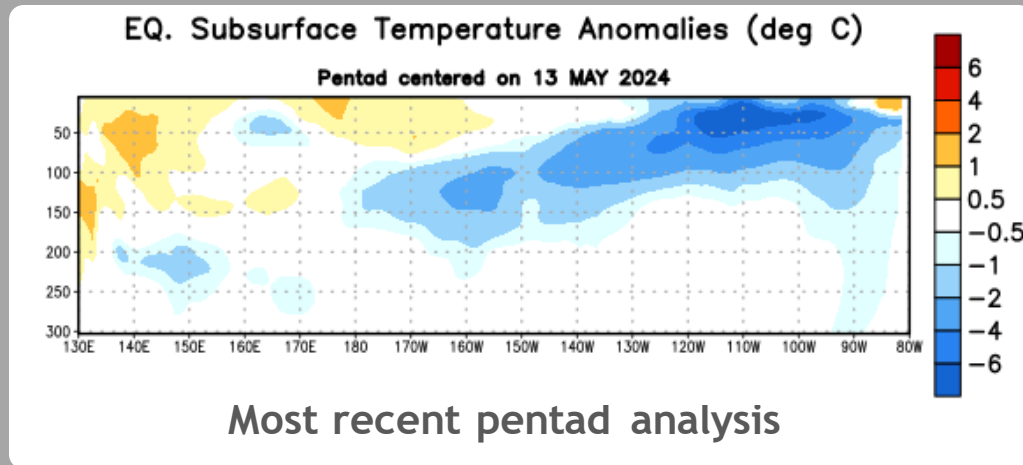
Central and Eastern Pacific Upper-Ocean (0-300 m) Weekly Average Temperature Anomalies

Positive subsurface temperature anomalies persisted through mid-January 2024. Variability in the positive anomalies was associated with several oceanic Kelvin waves. Starting in November 2023, positive subsurface temperature anomalies weakened to near zero. From late January to mid-April 2024, negative temperature anomalies emerged and strengthened. For the last month or so, negative anomalies have persisted.

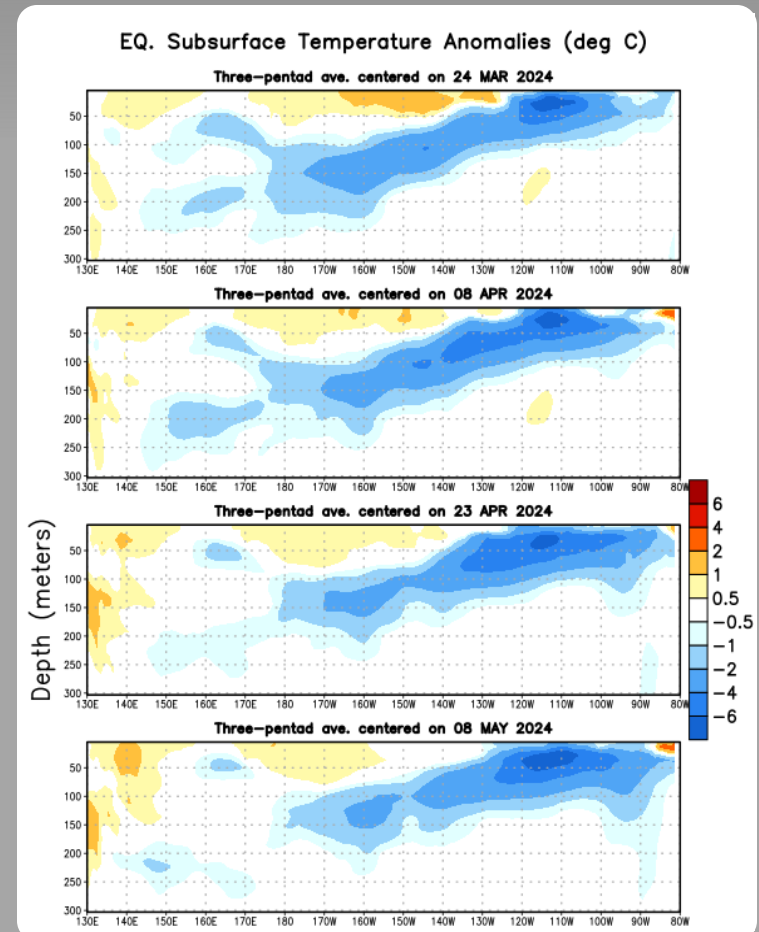


Sub-Surface Temperature Departures in the Equatorial Pacific

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



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

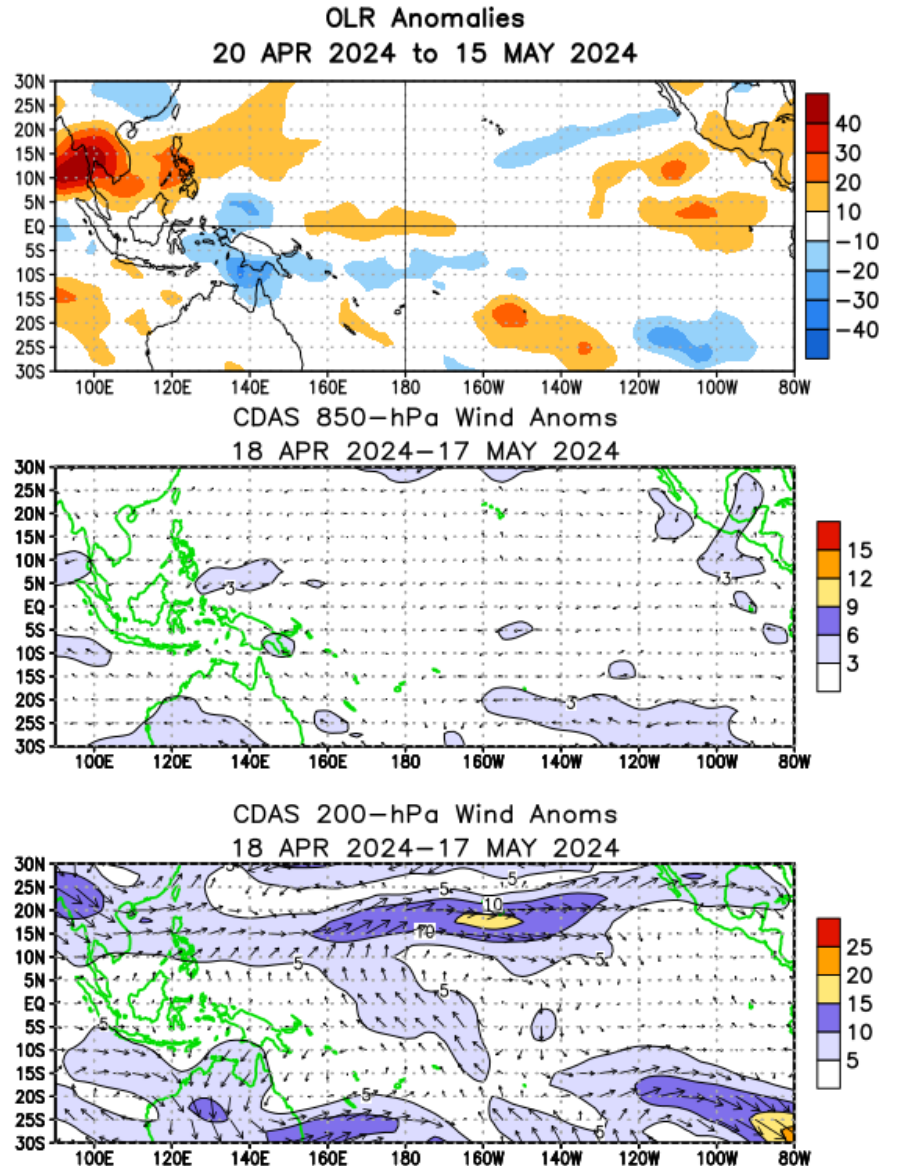


Tropical OLR and Wind Anomalies During the Last 30 Days

Above-average OLR (suppressed convection and precipitation) persisted around the Philippines and Southeast Asia. Below-average OLR (enhanced convection and precipitation) was observed north of Australia.

Low-level (850-hPa) winds were near average over most of the tropical Pacific Ocean.

Upper-level (200-hPa) wind anomalies were cross equatorial near the Date Line and east-central 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

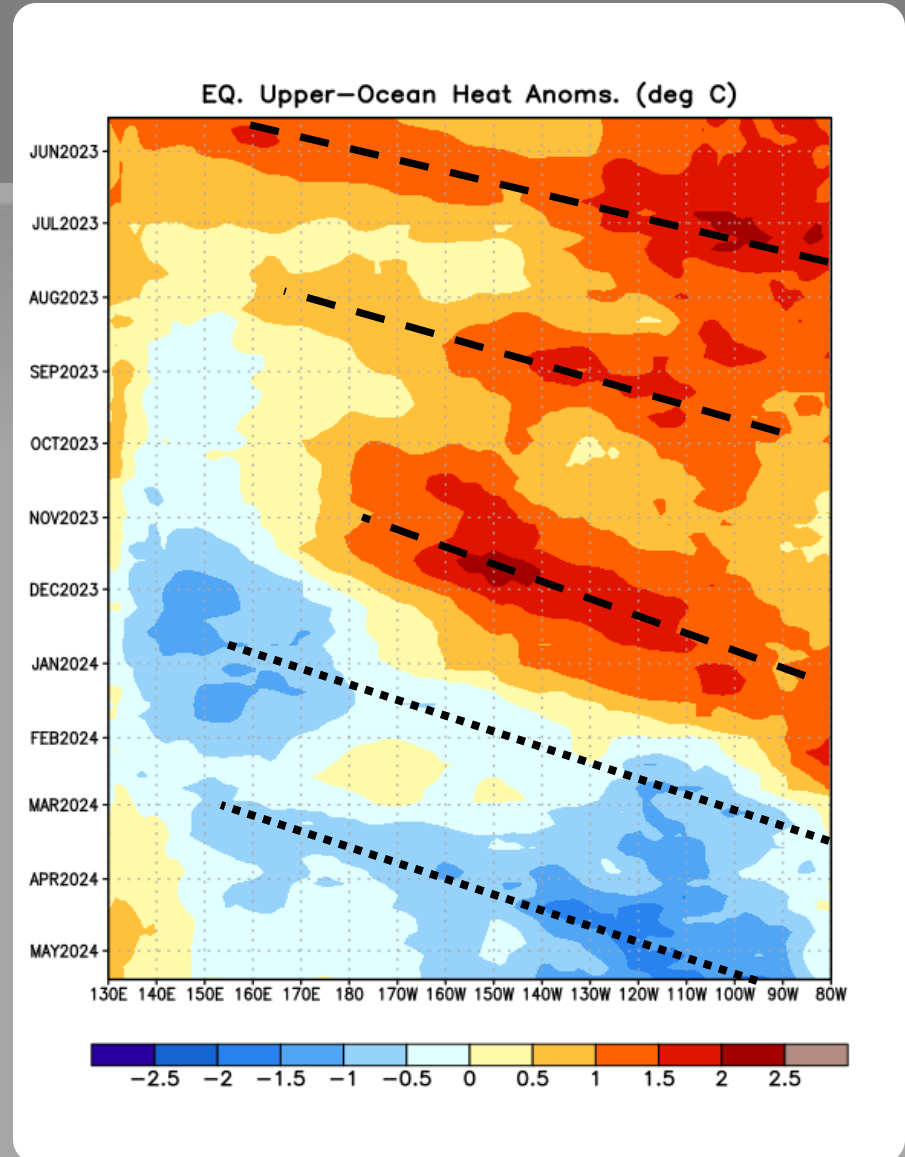
Significant equatorial oceanic Kelvin wave activity (dashed and dotted lines) has been present throughout the period shown.

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.

In late February-May 2024, another upwelling Kelvin wave shifted eastward. Below-average subsurface temperatures have persisted.

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.



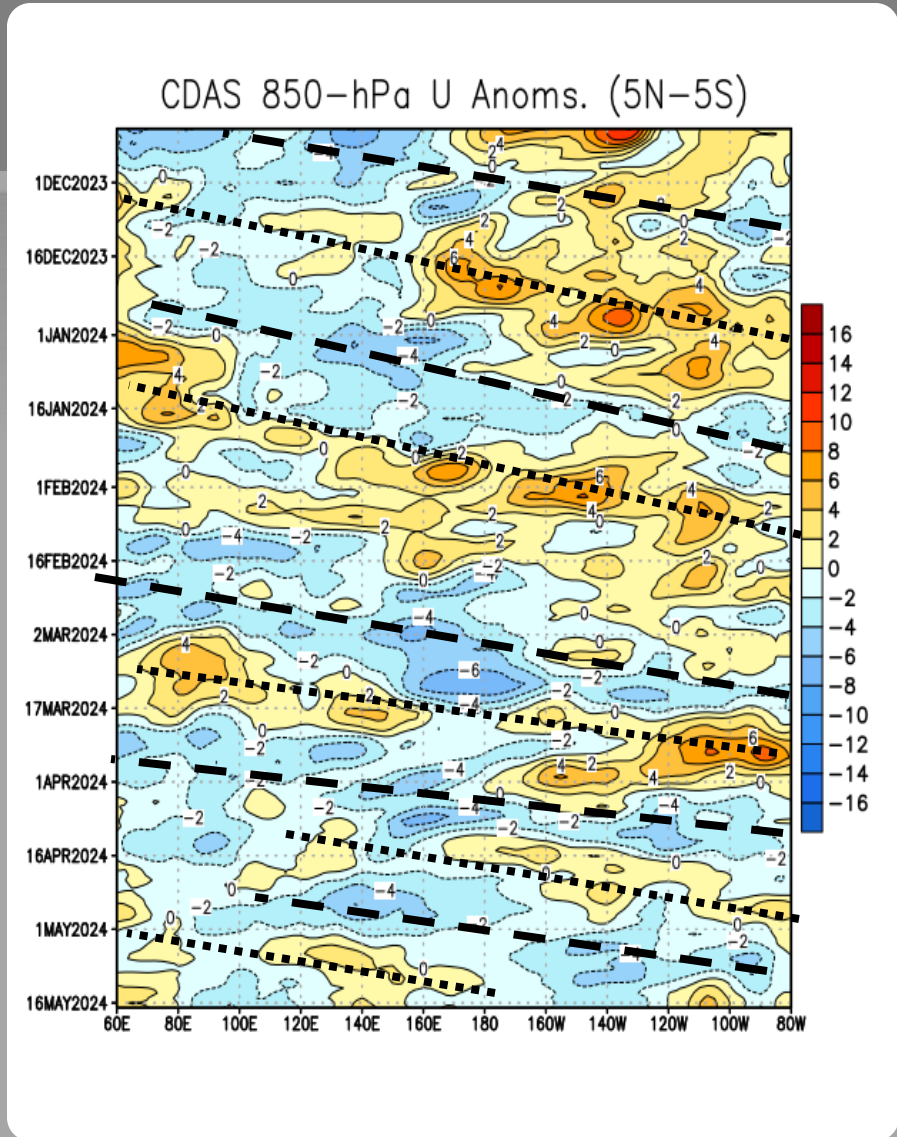
Low-level (850-hPa) Zonal (east-west) Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})

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

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)

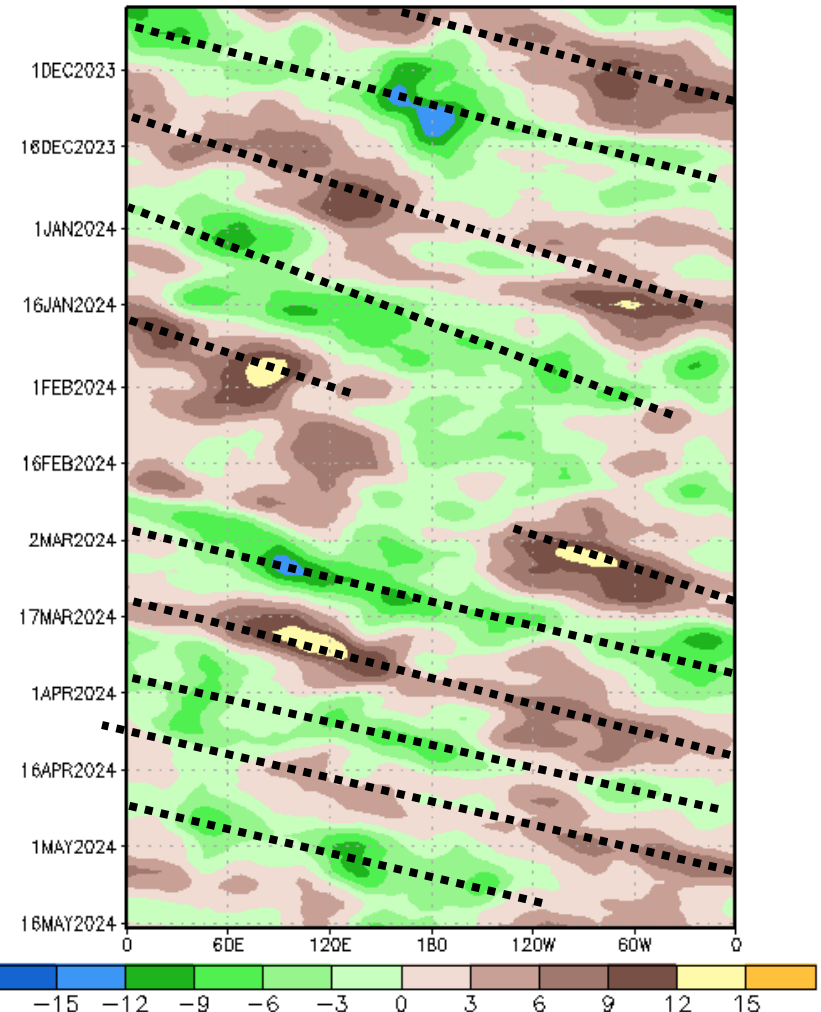


Upper-level (200-hPa) Velocity Potential Anomalies

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.

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



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

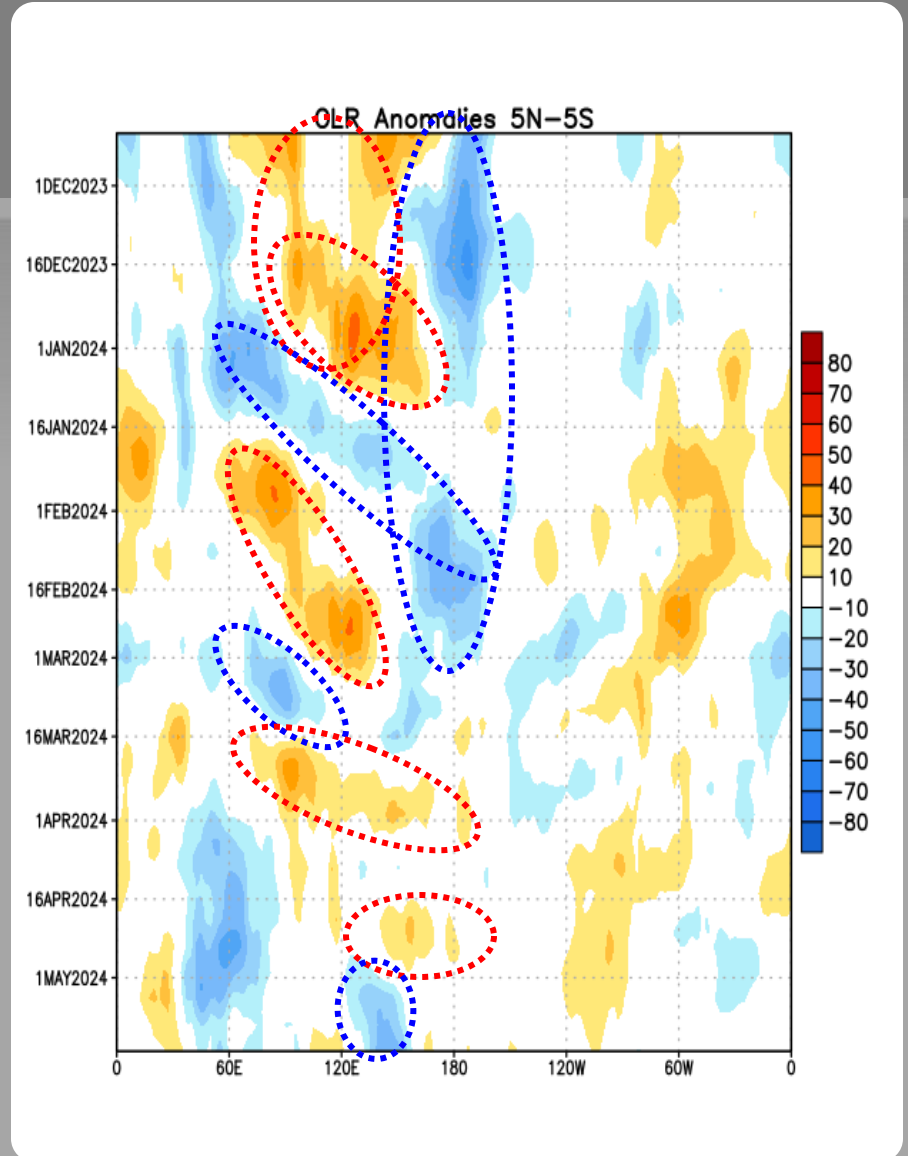
Through December 2023, positive OLR anomalies persisted around Indonesia.

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

Since early May 2024, OLR was below-average in the western 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°C .

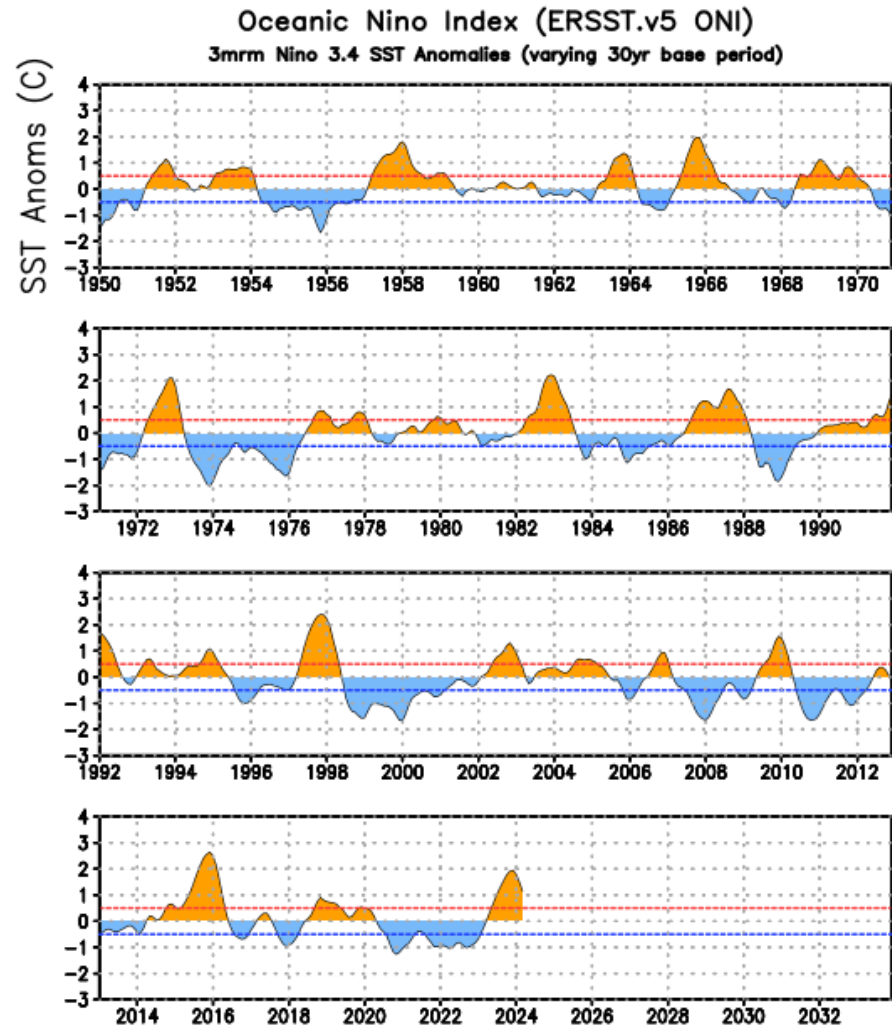
By historical standards, to be classified as a full-fledged El Niño or La Niña episode, these thresholds must be exceeded for a period of at least 5 consecutive overlapping 3-month seasons.

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 (February - April 2024) is 1.1°C.

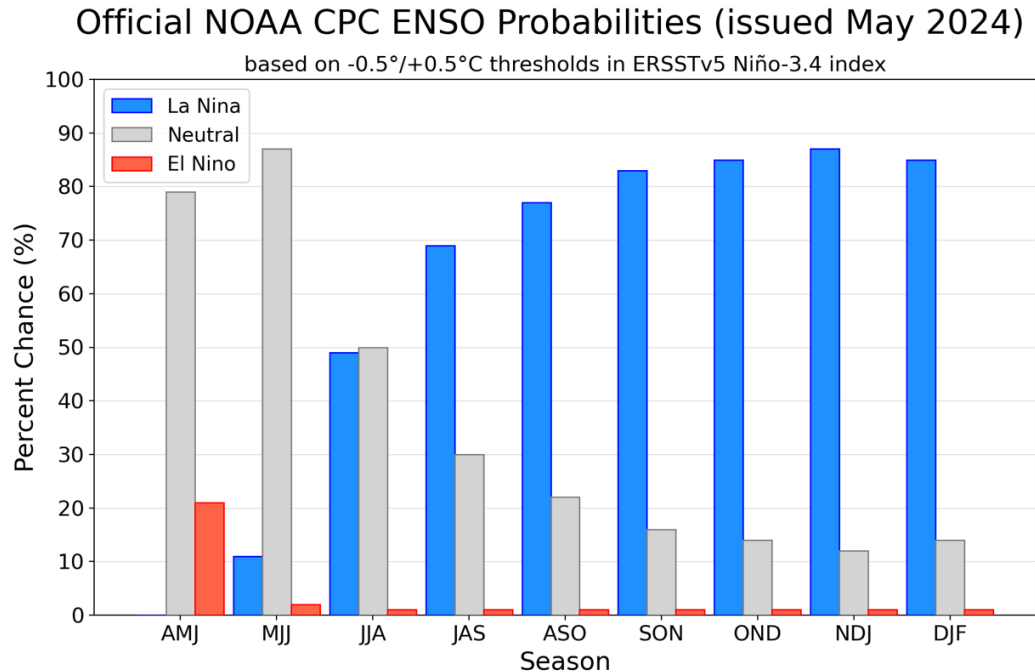
El Niño ↑
Neutral
La Niña ↓



CPC Probabilistic ENSO Outlook

Updated: 9 May 2024

A transition from El Niño to ENSO-neutral is imminent, with ENSO-neutral favored in April-June and May-July 2024. La Niña may develop in June-August 2024 (49% chance) or July-September (69% 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.

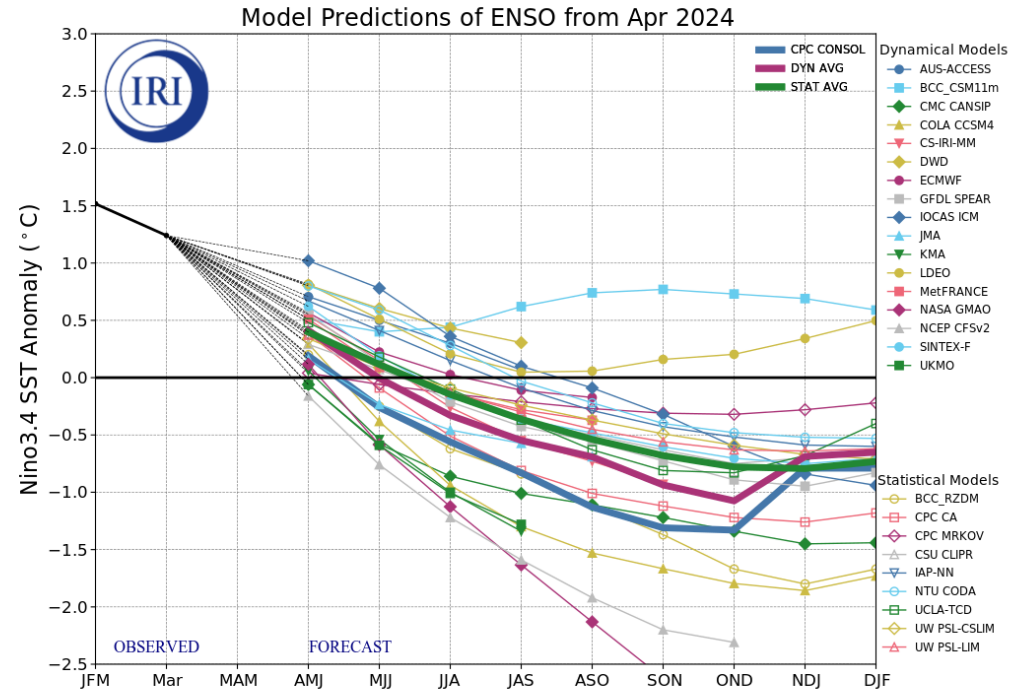


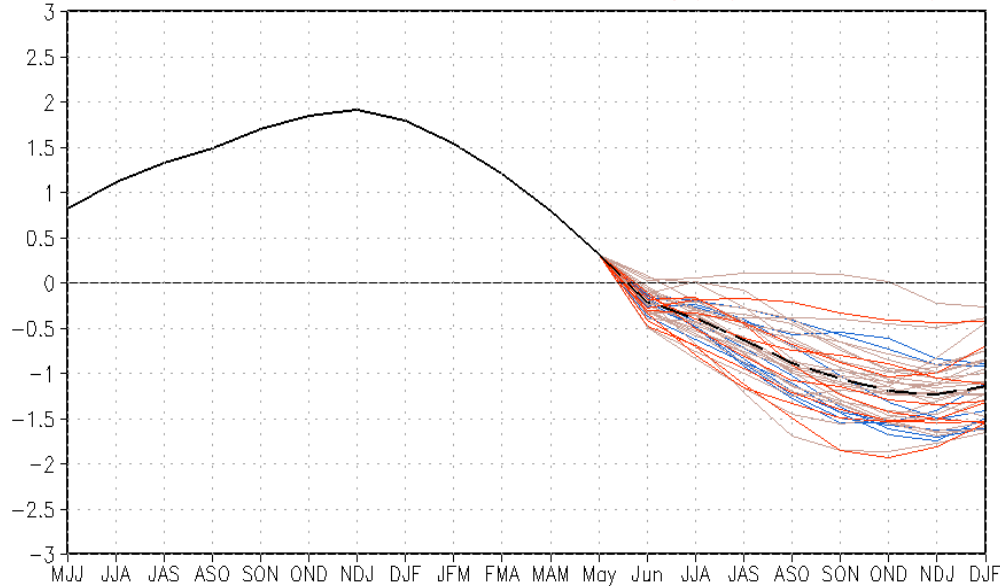
Figure provided by the International Research Institute (IRI) for Climate and Society (updated 19 April 2024).

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

Issued: 20 May 2024

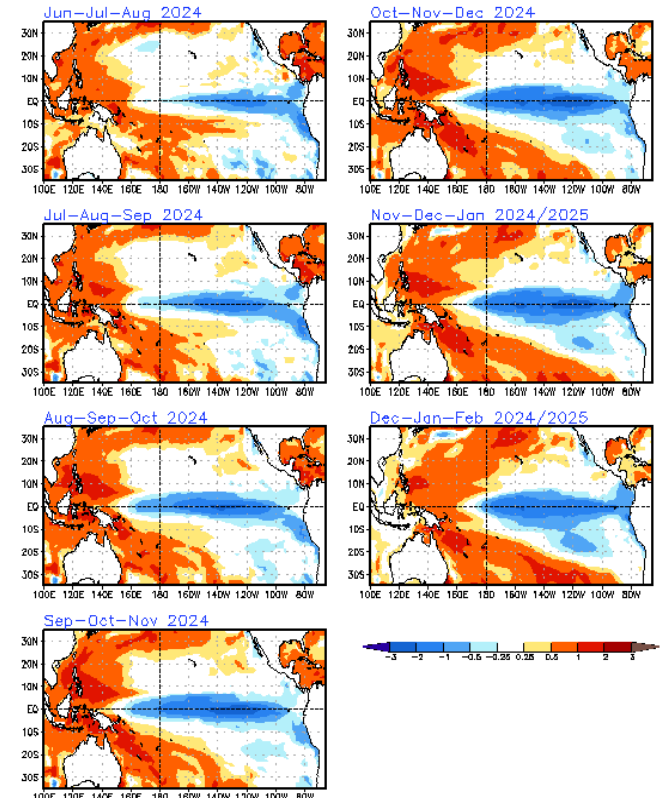
The CFS.v2 ensemble mean (black dashed line) indicates El Niño may transition to ENSO-neutral in May, followed by a transition to La Niña around July-September 2024.

CFSv2 forecast Nino3.4 SST anomalies (K) (PDF corrected)



— Latest 8 forecast members
— Earliest 8 forecast members
— Other forecast members
(Climatology base period: 1991–2020)

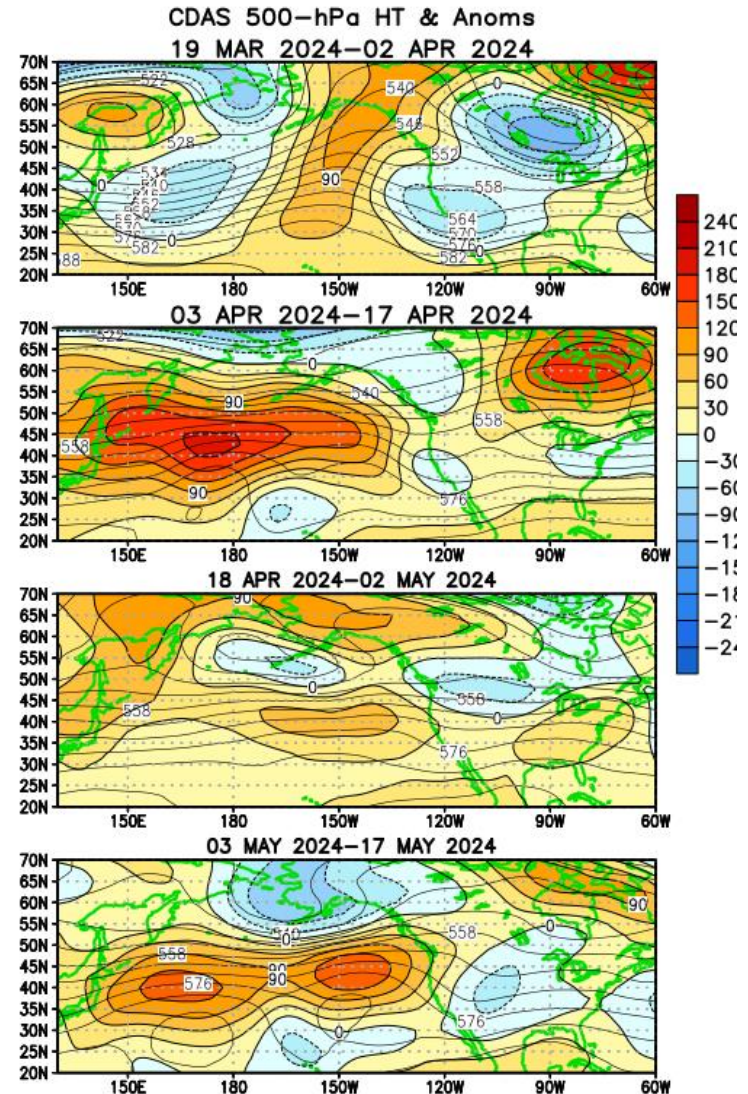
— Forecast ensemble mean
— NCEP Olv2.1 daily analysis



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

From late March through mid-May, below-average heights and temperatures generally persisted in parts of the western contiguous U.S.

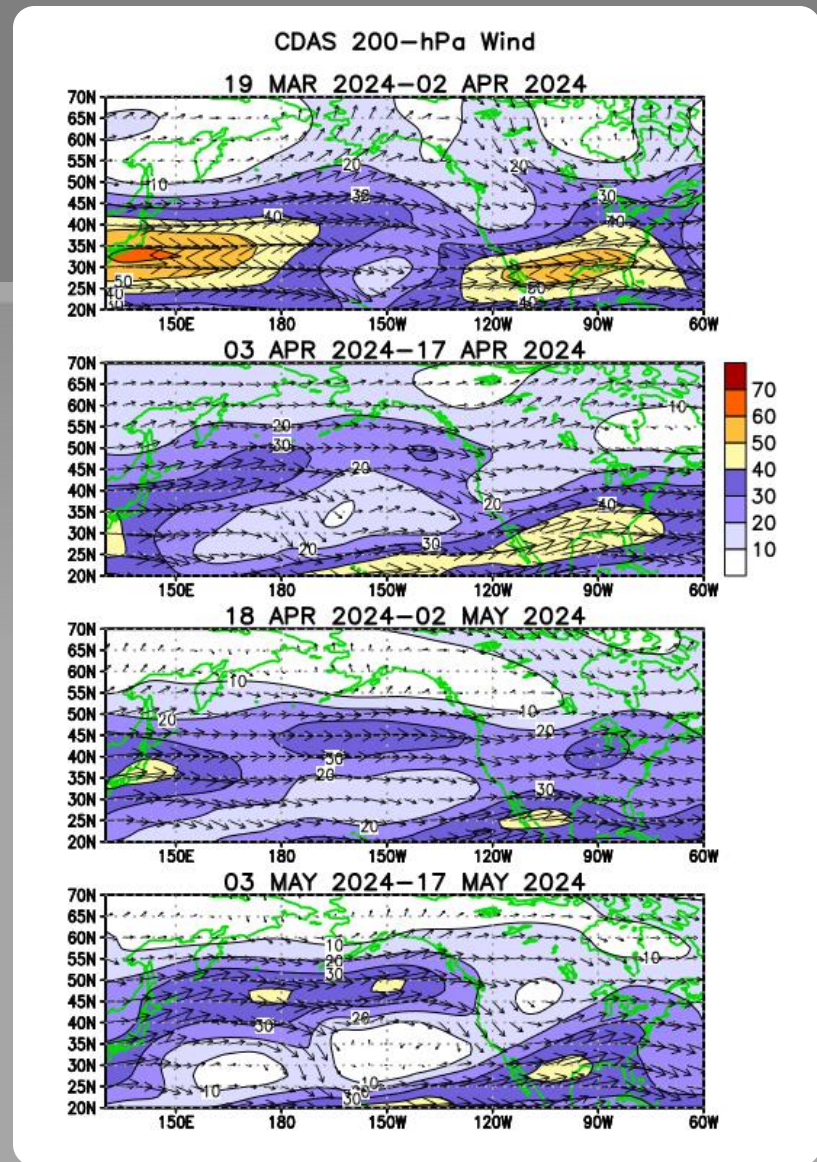
Also, during this period, above-average heights and temperatures have mostly persisted over the central and/or eastern U.S.



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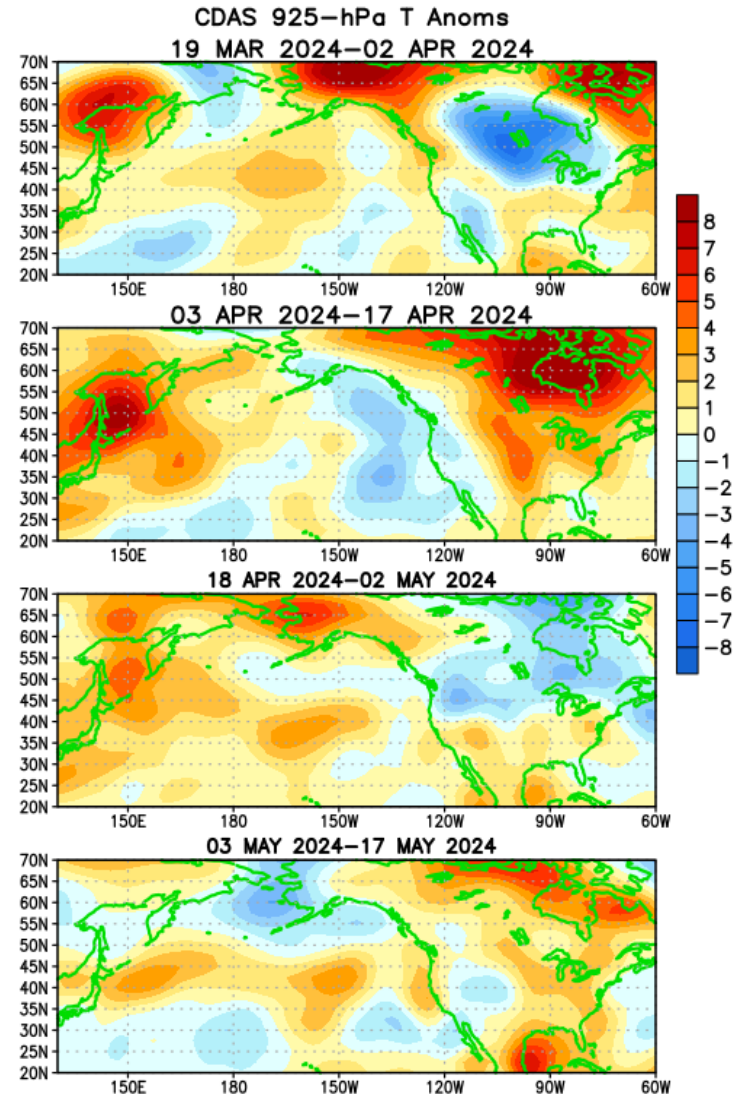
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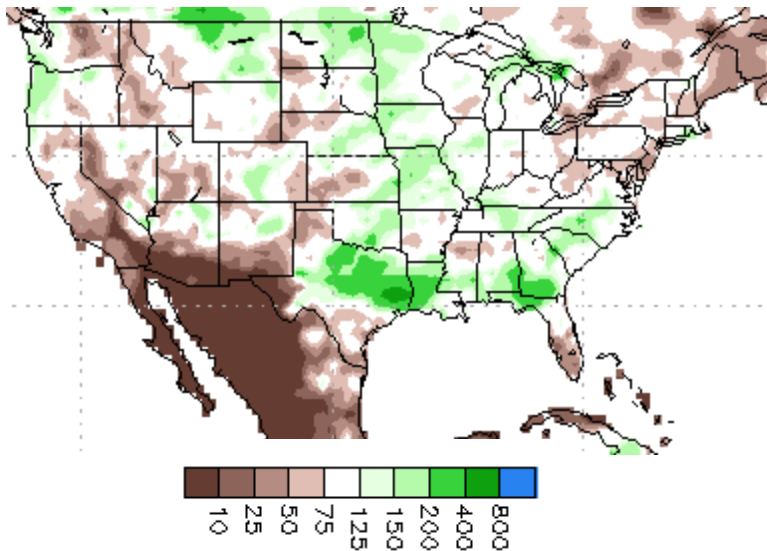
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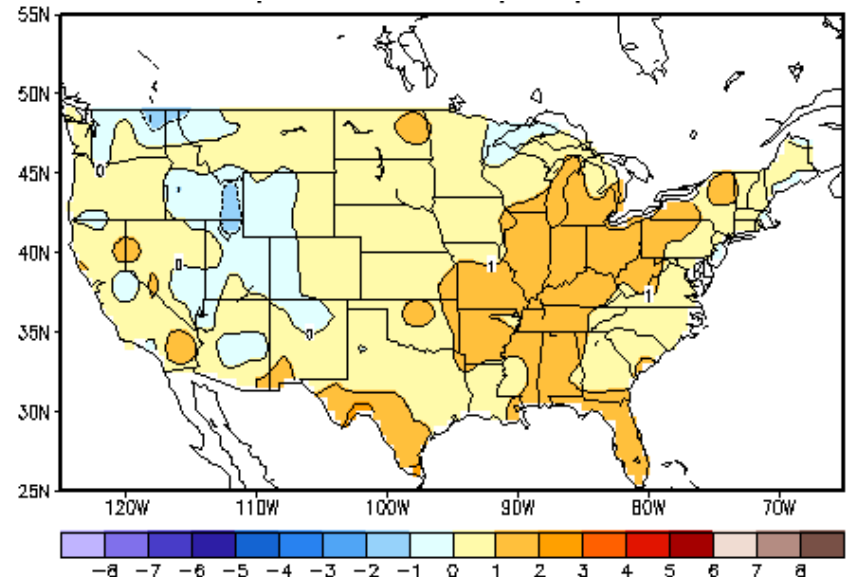
U.S. Temperature and Precipitation Departures During the Last 30 Days

End Date: 18 May 2024

Percent of Average Precipitation



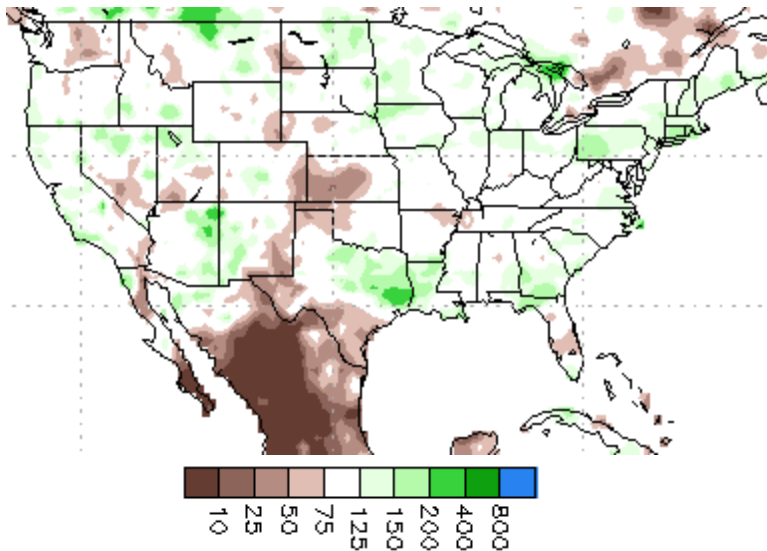
Temperature Departures (degree C)



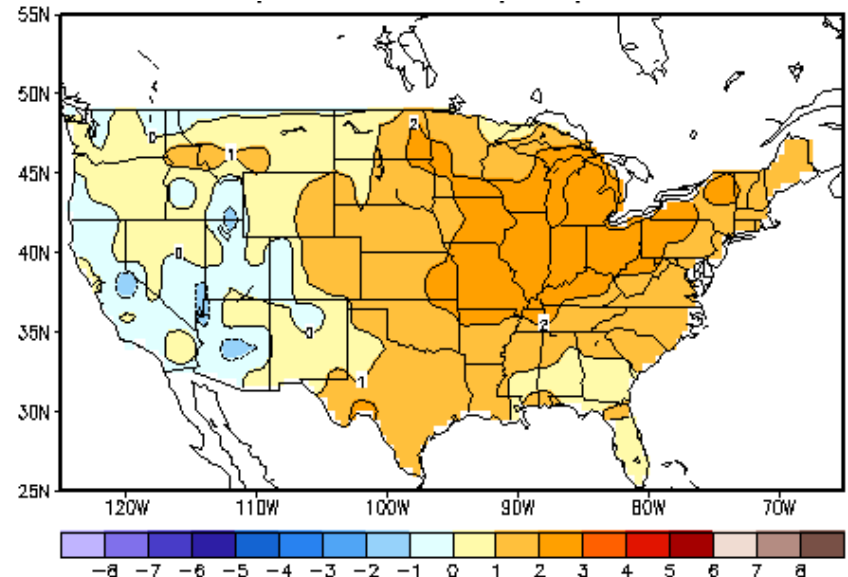
U.S. Temperature and Precipitation Departures During the Last 90 Days

End Date: 18 May 2024

Percent of Average Precipitation



Temperature Departures (degree C)



U. S. Seasonal Outlooks

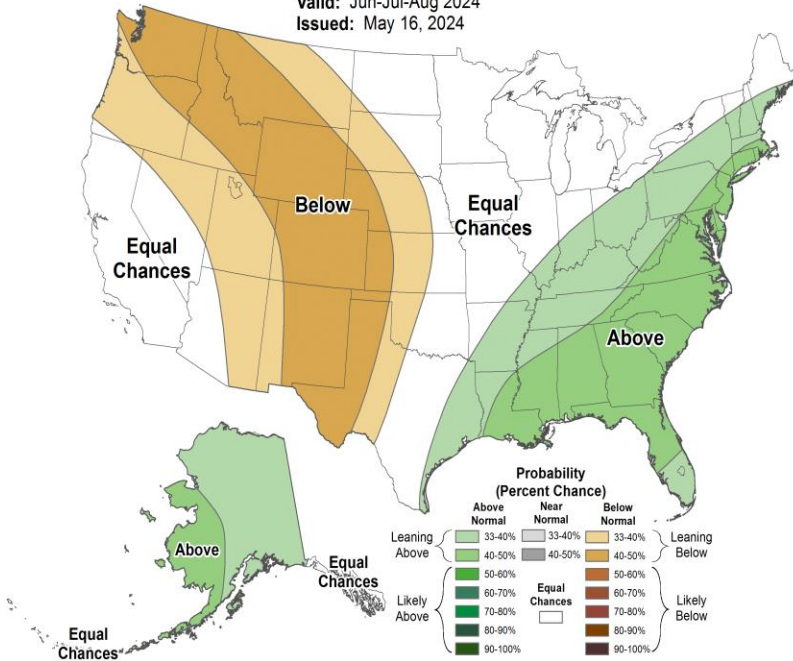
June - August 2024

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

Precipitation

Seasonal Precipitation Outlook

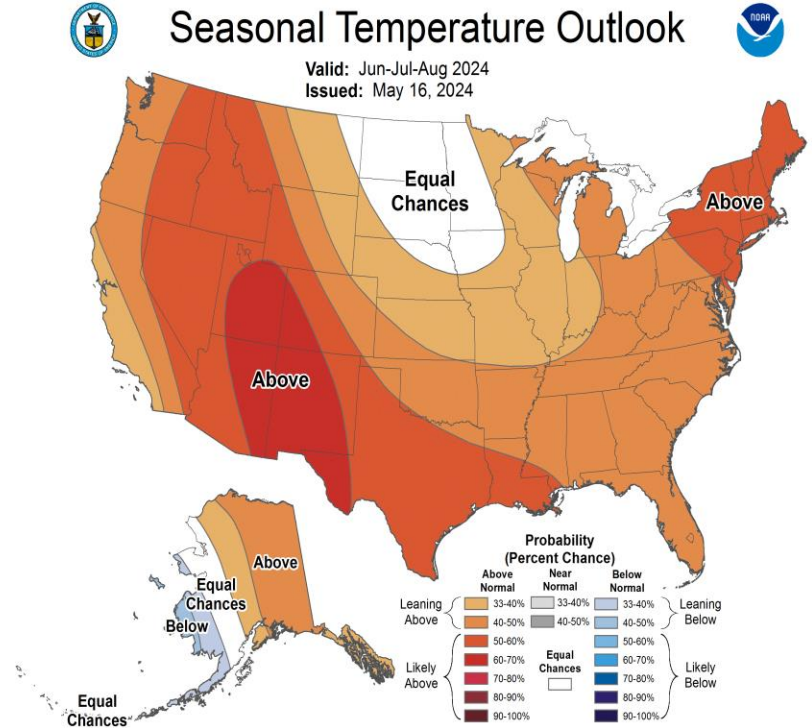
Valid: Jun-Jul-Aug 2024
Issued: May 16, 2024



Temperature

Seasonal Temperature Outlook

Valid: Jun-Jul-Aug 2024
Issued: May 16, 2024



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