NOAA: Strong El Niño sets the stage for 2015-2016 winter weather

http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2015/101515-noaa-strong-el-nino-sets-the-stage-for-2015-2016-winter-weather.html

Forecasters at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center issued theU.S. Winter Outlook favoring cooler and wetter weather in Southern Tier states with above-average temperatures most likely in the West and across the Northern Tier. This year's El Niño, among the strongest on record, is expected to influence weather and climate patterns this winter by impacting the position of the Pacific jet stream.

"A strong El Niño is in place and should exert a strong influence over our weather this winter," said Mike Halpert, deputy director, NOAA's Climate Prediction Center. "While temperature and precipitation impacts associated with El Niño are favored, El Niño is not the only player. Cold-air outbreaks and snow storms will likely occur at times this winter. However, the frequency, number and intensity of these events cannot be predicted on a seasonal timescale."

Other factors that often play a role in the winter weather include the Arctic Oscillation, which influences the number of arctic air masses that penetrate into the South and nor'easters on the East Coast, and the Madden-Julian Oscillation, which can impact the number of heavy rain storms in the Pacific Northwest.

Precipitation Outlook:

- Wetter-than-average conditions most likely in the Southern Tier of the United States, from central and southern California, across Texas, to Florida, and up the East Coast to southern New England. Above-average precipitation is also favored in southeastern Alaska.
- Drier-than-average conditions most likely for Hawaii, central and western Alaska, parts of the Pacific Northwest and northern Rockies, and for areas near the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley.

Temperature Outlook:

- Above-average temperatures are favored across much of the West and the northern half of the contiguous United States. Temperatures are also favored to be above-average in Alaska and much of Hawaii. Below-average temperatures are most likely in the southern Plains and Southeast.

Drought Outlook:

- The U.S. Drought Outlook shows some improvement is likely in central and southern California by the end of January, but not drought removal. Additional statewide relief is possible during February and March. Drought removal is likely across large parts of the Southwest, while improvement or

removal is also likely in the southern Plains. However, drought is likely to persist in the Pacific Northwest and northern Rockies, with drought development likely in Hawaii, parts of the northern Plains and in the northern Great Lakes region.