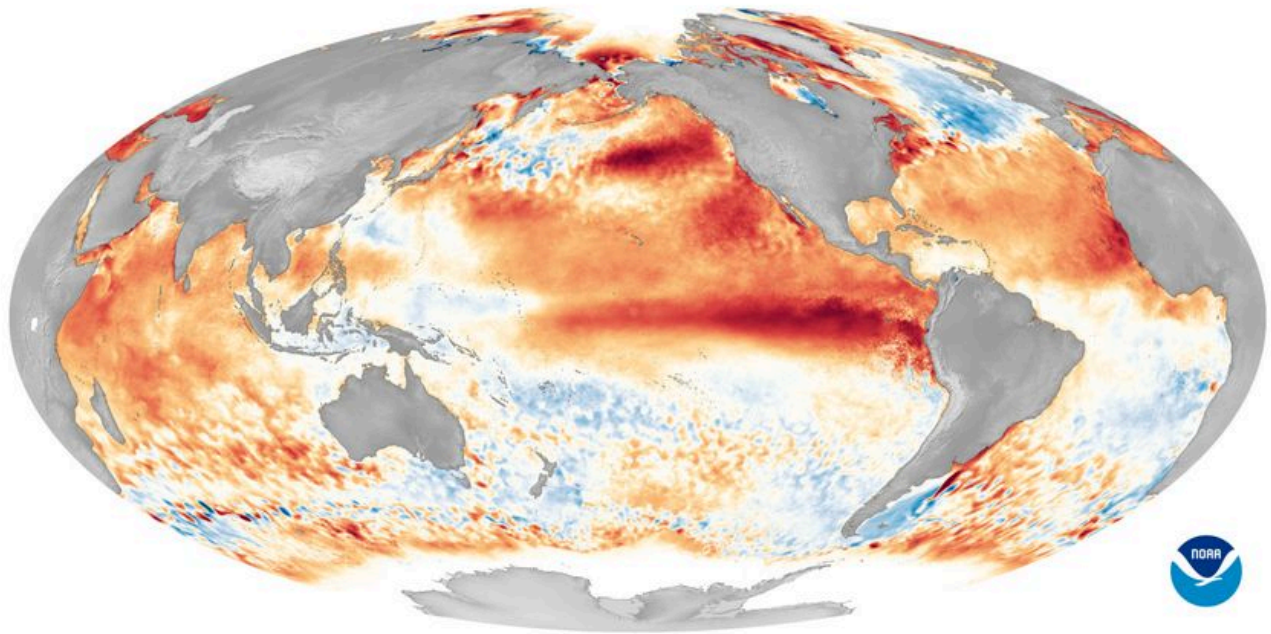


El Nino Watch: What NOAA is reporting

April 14, 2023



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center has issued an El Nino Watch.

A watch is issued when conditions are favorable for the development of El Nino within the next six months. While we are still in an ENSO-neutral phase – when no El Nino or La Nina is present – there is a 62% chance El Nino will develop sometime between May and July. This comes after nearly two continuous years of a La Nina.

El Nino: What it is and why it matters

The El Nino-Southern Oscillation (or ENSO) is a climate pattern defined by sea surface temperature and precipitation departures from normal across the equatorial Pacific Ocean that can influence weather and climate patterns across the U.S. and around the world.

El Nino is the warm phase of ENSO when ocean temperatures are warmer and precipitation is greater than normal in the area spanning the central to eastern Pacific Ocean.

NOAA scientists will continue to monitor the potential development of El Nino and will issue the next monthly update on May 11, 2023.

History

The origin of the name “El Niño” dates to the 1800’s, when fishermen on the Pacific coast of South America would notice that a warm ocean current would appear every few years. Fish catches would drop drastically, negatively affecting the food supply and livelihood of the communities of coastal Peru.

This warm water would arrive around Christmastime. Referring to the birth of Christ, they named the warm ocean waters, El Niño, which means “the boy” in Spanish. Fishing in this region is best during La Niña years when cold upwelling ocean water brings rich nutrients offshore from the deep ocean, resulting in an increase in the number of fish caught.