Our Story

Since 1988 I have been a weather watcher from my home in Galena Forest and now Montreux located in the Carson Range of the Sierra Nevada mountains near Reno, Nevada. Our current location is about 700 ft. lower in elevation but in the same general area. My interest in the weather dates back to my childhood when I am told I would pretend to be the TV weatherman. My years of flying as an instrument rated pilot increased my interest since many times correct weather interpretation kept my family and me alive. As an avid skier I am always interested in the storms that produce the heaven like powder snow we love to play in.

Over the years I found there are lots of folks interested in the same thing. Long range forecasting is my main interest, and it seems that local weather people are very hesitant to forecast very long range (more than five days). Hence, I decided to begin sending an e-mail to my friends who shared the common interest or just wanted to plan sick days off around big snow dumps. Updates are posted every few days as weather predictions change during the active weather months. From June through September updates are seldom. Daily updates are found on our weather station site noted below. - Randy York

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October 7, 2025

We have reached that time of the year when we all start to think about Winter. The trees in my yard have begun to change color, the squirrels are gathering nuts, the pine cones are finding their way to the ground, and the recent rains and cool temperatures are all a good indication that the season is changing.

It has been a mild Summer in Northern Nevada, we only exceeded 100° four times while the average is seven times. Most of this Summer we saw more wind than usual, but we certainly saw many beautiful days. The one thing that is most constant is we were very dry. There were a couple of days where we had thunderstorms and if you happened to be near one you probably got wet. It is not unusual for one area to see an inch of rain while another is completely dry only a few blocks away. This week's rain is more like the systems out of the northwest, like we see later on in the Fall and Winter.

I have been doing a lot of studying this past two weeks, and as usual I'm ready to make some predictions for our Fall/Winter weather. First let's get some background, I have prepared many graphics to help understand the way we get to our conclusions. ENSO (El Nino Southern Oscillation) has a profound effect on our Fall and Winter weather. So to start with let's look at the probabilities as shown below. By the way, if you're not interested in the WHY, just move down to the bottom of this page to find our prediction and skip all the data.

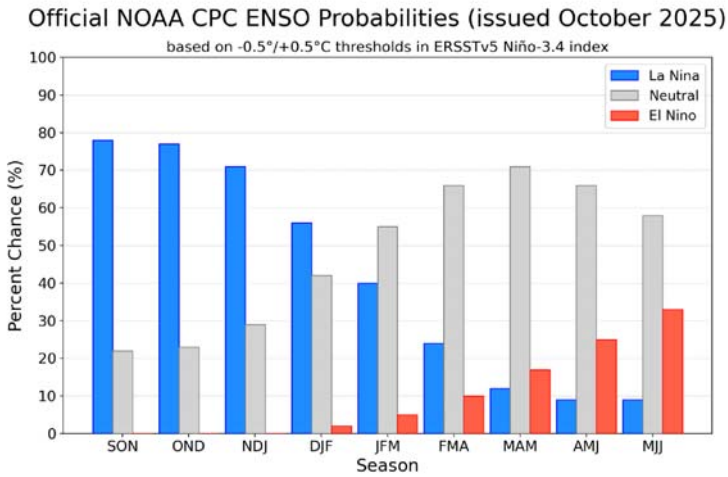
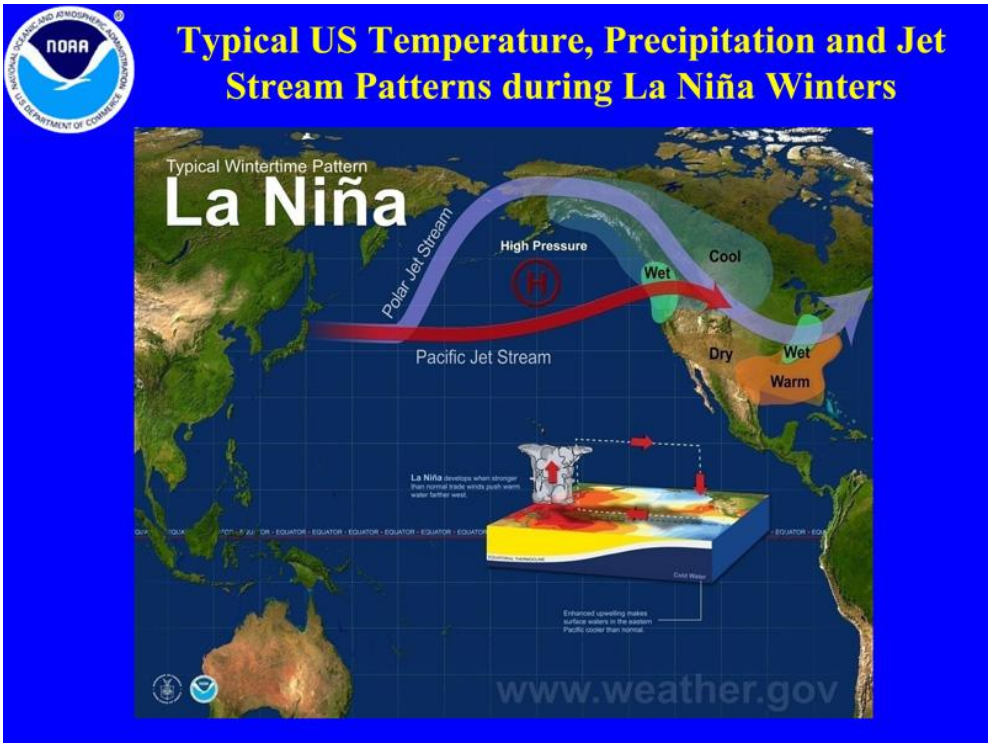
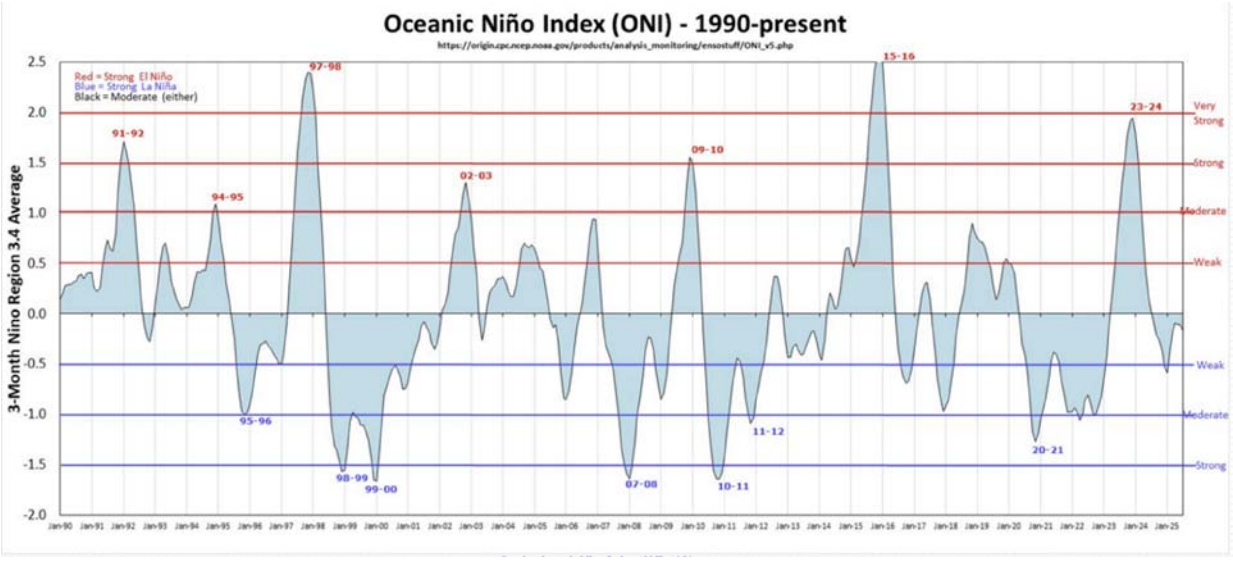


Figure 7. Official ENSO probabilities for the Niño 3.4 sea surface temperature index (5°N-5°S, 120°W-170°W). Figure updated 9 October 2025.

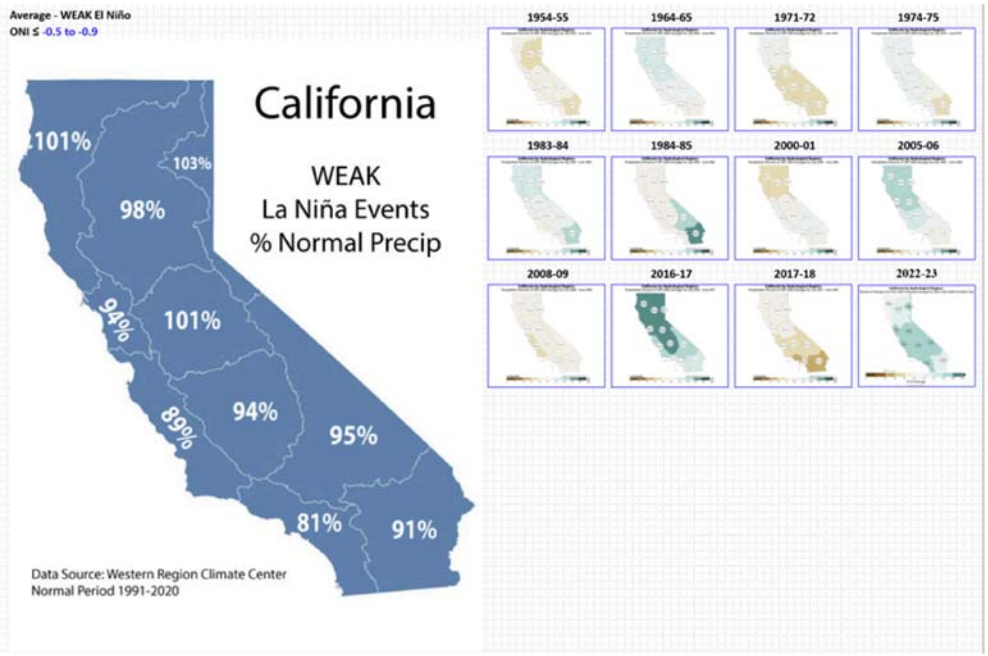
As you can see, a neutral ENSO has begun to wane as La Nina strengthens. Fall and early Winter a weak La Nina emerges then is forecasted to move back to neutral mid Winter. The first question is: How strong will La Nina get? The strength of La Nina is very important, the stronger the La Nina the less likely we are to get average or better precipitation. This next graphic is the typical La Nina pattern. Typical La Nina sees wet and cold in the Pacific Northwest, dry and average temperatures in the Southwest.



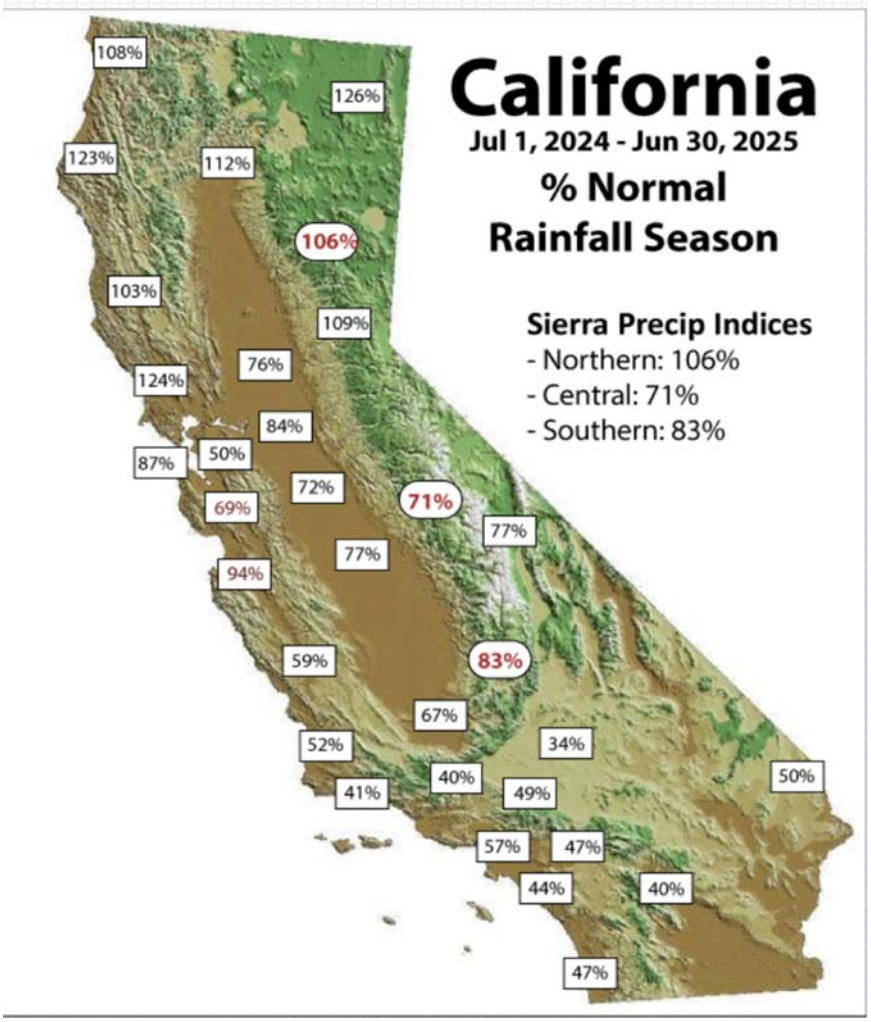
ENSO is measured by the ONI scale. Zero is the mean or neutral, the plus side is El Nino, minus La Nina. Below is a chart showing ENSO's since 1990 and whether they are El Nino, La Nina or neutral (neutral would be between -.5 and +.5 on the scale). We can see that in January 2025, last winter, we had a very weak La Nina and our winter being in the average range.



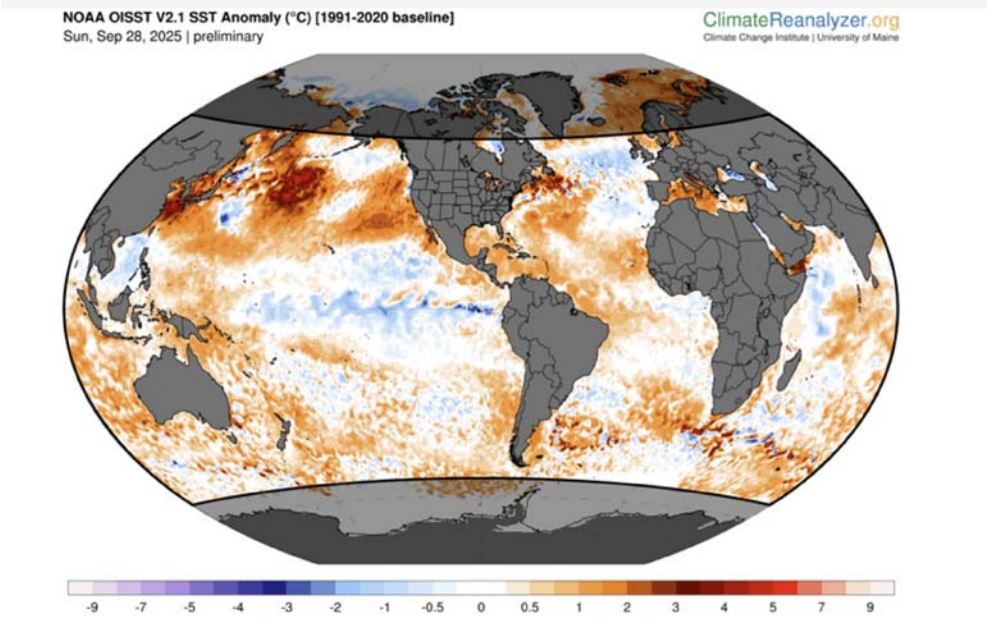
This graphic shows the precipitation in California during weak La Nina years. The smaller windows show 12 events and the relative precipitation for each. The darker the green, the more precipitation. Using this chart, you see about 50% are dryer than average, and 50% wetter than average. The overall outcome of weak La Nina's is about average precipitation.



Last year we had a weak La Nina and we were about average. Note the areas on the right side of the picture which represents the Sierra, the Northern Sierra was 106% and the Southern 71%. My observation over many seasons is that Interstae 80 is a good dividing line when thinking about the north versus the south and their relative precipitation.

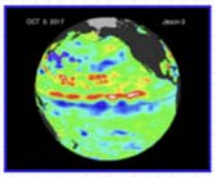
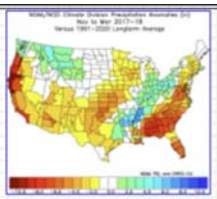
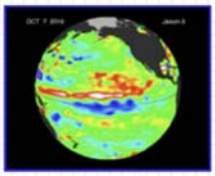
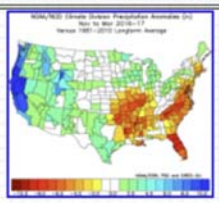


So we have established that weak La Nina's give us a very good chance for an average winter, and based on the prediction of a short and weak La Nina event, going back to neutral in the Spring or early summer of 2026, we can expect just that. Well, not quite that easy since the winter outcomes are quite different. So let's see if we can narrow this down within the dozen or so weak La Nina events. Let's take a look at ocean temperatures, after all, ENSO is about ocean temperatures.

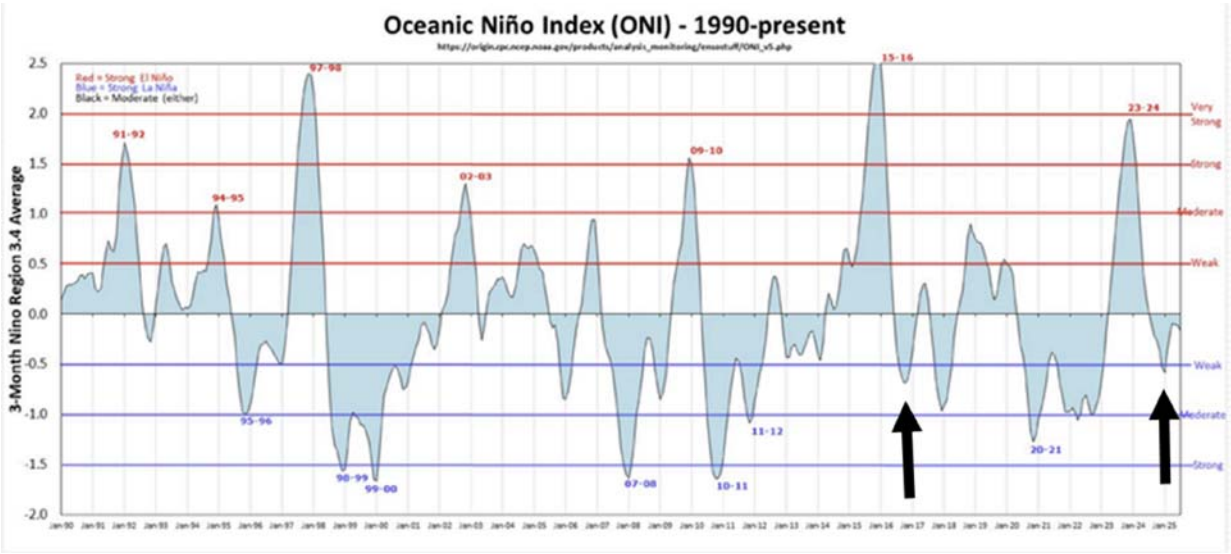


Above is a recent measurement of ocean temperatures. You see the blue, or colder water, off the coast of Central and South America, which indicates La Nina. If this were red, that would indicate El Nino. Also note, there is a very warm area of warm water, forecaster's refer to it as a "BLOB" off the West

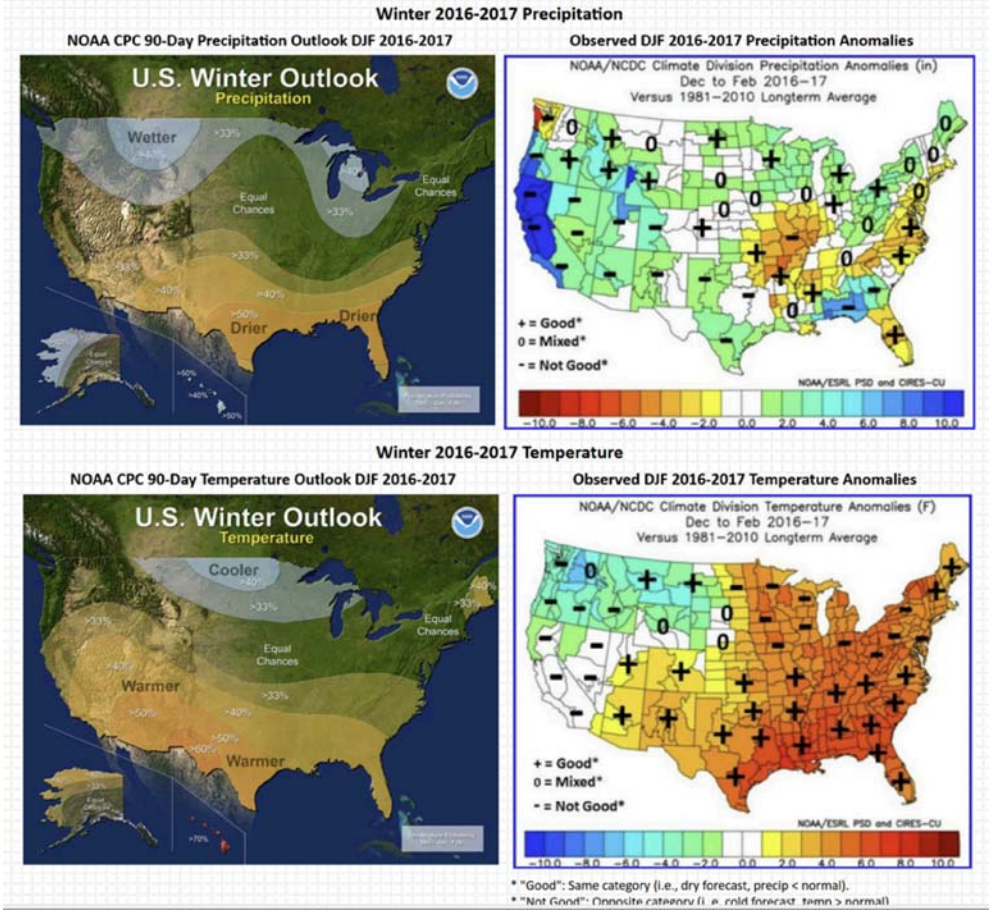
Coast of the US and in the Gulf of Alaska. Might that help us narrow the possibilities for our Winter? We also have an expanded ice cap this year, how will all this play out in determining our winter forecast? Let's look.

2017-18	Weak La Niña	-0.1	-1.0		
2016-17	Weak La Niña	-0.7	-0.7		

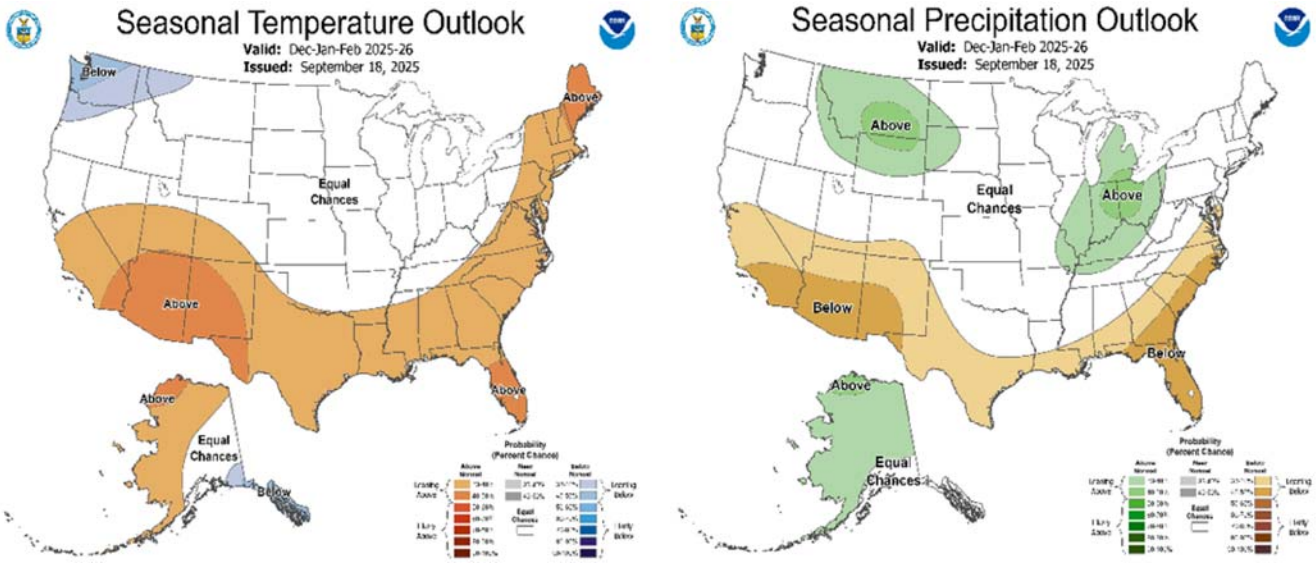
Here we have two back to back weak La Nina years, the lower one shows more warm water off the West Coast and the precipitation south of Interstate 80 was very good. Again, were just looking for clues as to what we might expect this winter. Below is the graph we saw earlier. Here we have pointers to the 2016-17 and last winter in the above graph. Last winter was average, could the additional warm waters like 2016-17 bring similar precipitation this coming winter?



A few of the forecaster's I like to follow have made predictions as well as the Farmer's Almanac and the Old Farmers Almanac. The Climate prediction Center (CPC) also publishes look ahead graphics for several months ahead. Let's take a further look at the winter of 2016-17 since I have a feeling it may repeat this year.



In this graphic, the left is what the CPC forecasted in September 2016 for the period December through February 2017. On the right is the actual precipitation and temperatures recorded for that period. As you can see they missed their forecast by quite a bit. Below is the current CPC forecast for the same period as above only for this year.



You can see similarities for both temperature and precipitation, although not exactly the same, it is a good opportunity to further draw comparisons. It all comes down to gathering as much information as possible and then applying your best guess as to the outcome.

CONCLUSION AND FORECAST:

In my quest to discern a prediction for this Winter, my investigations pointed me toward the similarities to the 2016-17 winter, which turned out to be a very good year for snow and overall precipitation in the Sierra and Northern Nevada. My final review took me to my own records for this area which I have saved since 1988. When I started to look for similar Summers to this year, I came across a printed version of my winter prediction to the 2016-17 season. The first thing that struck me was how similar my description of Summer was, dry, windy and moderate temperatures. In 2016 we had only five

days that exceeded 100°, in 2025 four days exceeded 100° along with the other similarities. Here is what I said in my 2016-17 annual forecast about Summer.

"*As it turns out, the ENSO has moved to a more neutral condition currently and is forecasted to stay that way through next March. So, as I like to say, we will have a "tweener" year. This makes forecasting more difficult, but isn't it always anyway? During these event, or lack thereof we see the MJO and Kelvin Wave activity having less of an impact, and typically not much of a factor in our weather. We will turn more to the AO and PNA (Arctic Oscillation and Pacific - North American Pattern), as well as the NAO, for hints of pattern changes. Since we have seen dramatic cooling off the Equatorial Eastern Pacific and a very warm blob of waters in the Gulf of Alaska, we looked back to see if we could draw some conclusions or hints of what lies ahead. We also are looking at the dry Summer here in Northern Nevada and the Sierra as well as more wind than what is typical for our Summer months. Usually by mid July we see winds calm down, but this year they have regularly blown all Summer. I am looking at the Summer and Fall of 1959 and Winter of 1959 - 60 as a hint to this season.*"

Although we are forecasting a weak La Nina, and in the above comments a "Tweener" or neutral ENSO, you can see in the graph showing the ONI above, we ended up with a weak La Nina that year. This year we are currently ENSO neutral, and likely to have a weak La Nina for a few months, similar to 2016-17. Here is the rest of my forecast for that year.

"*So here we go with my prediction. Late September and October will remain mostly dry and warm. Like today, we will experience several troughs that will move mostly through to the north of us, bringing only wind and cooler temperatures. The first good storm should arrive the last week of October or early November. This won't drop enough snow to open the ski areas, but everyone will get excited. Unfortunately, it will warm up and dry out a few more weeks before the next system arrives just after Thanksgiving. Not sure about the temperatures, but I am thinking that snow making may be difficult through this period. December will be cold!! Likely colder that we have seen for awhile, and we should see at least two or three good systems, possibly one with a Pineapple Connection, which will dump a good amount of snow and moderate temperatures a bit. A white Christmas is in play this year. One of the storms will arrive right around Christmas or between Christmas and New Years. The stormy conditions will continue into the beginning of the New Year, with one or possibly two systems before the 15th of January, then dry and warmer the balance of the month. Skiing will be terrific through the early January period. February, typically our best month for building snow pack along with March, will begin dry and cold, but we should see another period of storms, with another shot at a Pineapple connection around mid month. I am not going to predict March since it is too far away and this year I think a new scenario will likely show up regarding ENSO by then. Overall I am going to rate it a better than average Winter with a very cold period in December. The other factor that gives me confidence is the inordinate amount of pine nuts falling in the forest this year.*"

That last sentence really got to me about the pine cones and pine nuts. I can't tell you how many friends have remarked about the amount of pine cones falling this year. As it turned out, we had a huge winter and water year. We recorded 53.60 inches of precipitation that water year, more than double the average. October was wet, 8.60" of mostly rain with snow at 8000 ft. and above. November was fairly dry, it had one four day period with 1.34" of precipitation in the form of snow above 5500 ft. (our station was in Galena at 6200 ft. that year). December saw 8.06" in three systems. In January we had 15.59", and we were buried in snow, and It snowed almost every day all month. February there was 11.49", all snow above 6000 ft. in two big systems, and March 3.23", snow above 7000 ft. and rain below in three systems. Needless to say it was one heck of a year.

So, the question is, will history repeat itself? If we look at the chart that is fourth from the top, we will see a weak La Nina gives us a 50/50 chance of above or below average precipitation. Not much help. As usual I will stick my neck out and predict we have at least a 75% chance for well above average precipitation between now and the end of March 2026.

Here is what I see month by month. October is off to a good start with .60" of rain so far. We may see a little more rain this coming weekend, but a better chance the end of the month. Not a big storm, but similar to what we just saw. Temperatures will be mostly a little below average. November will start dry and possibly a little above average temperatures. The first winter storm will arrive around Thanksgiving or more likely just after. This could be the first "Atmospheric River" (AR) event of the season. December will be cold with two or three good weather events, likely not AR's but steady precipitation. Snow levels will be 5000 ft and above. January will be another good month for precipitation after a dry period early in the month, which is our annual January thaw. Later in January, and rolling into February a couple of AR events with big snows above 6000 or 7000 ft. Temperatures will warm for these events due to the tropical nature of the storms. They formerly called them Pineapple Expresses, now Atmospheric Rivers. March could be dry as we transition back to ENSO neutral. We will have to wait and see how the seasonal changes line up.

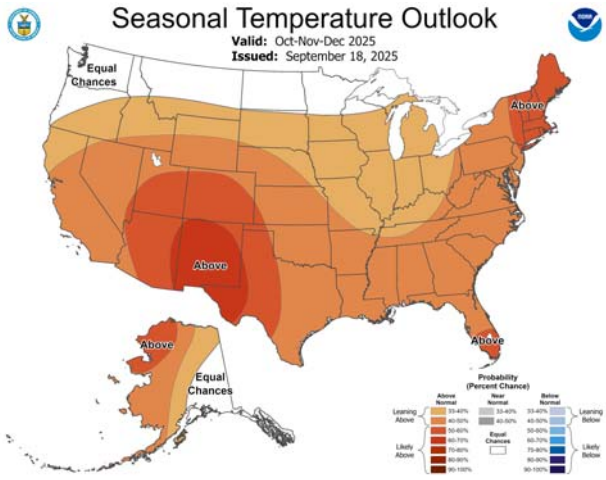
It will be essential to get your snow blowers in good condition if you live above 5000 ft. this year. Skiers should be delighted from early December through February. That is my best guess for now, as always we will be updating as we move through the season.. Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed. HAPPY WINTER !!

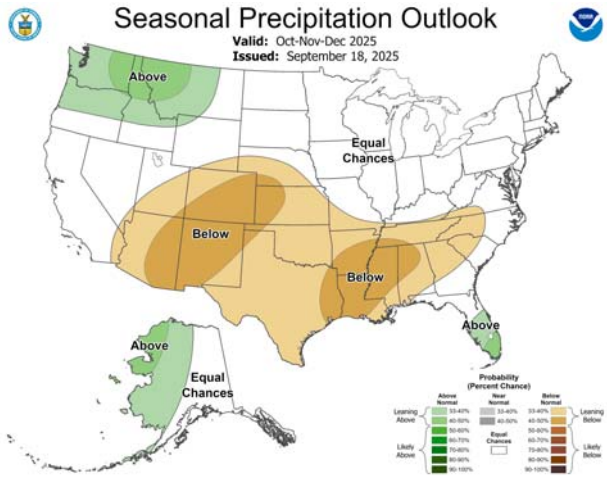
If you want a hard copy of this forecast you can open a .PDF copy HERE.

Check our daily report and the National Weather Service for updates. Our daily report on our weather station site, looks 3 to 5 days ahead.

Please comment, if you like, on our forecasts, your own observations, or anything else. Our email link is posted below.

Three month look ahead for October, November and December 2025.





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