

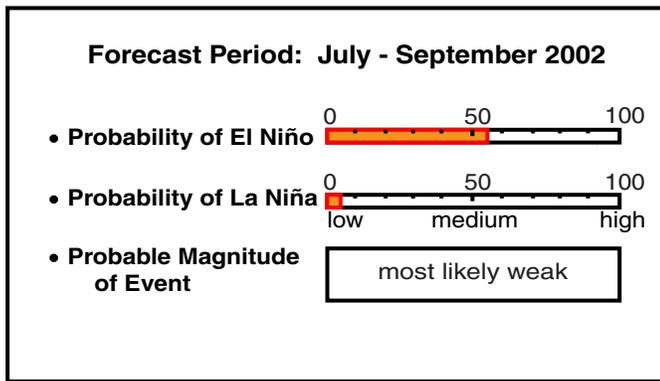
ENSO QUICK LOOK May 16 2002

A monthly summary of the status of El Niño, La Niña and the Southern Oscillation , or "ENSO"

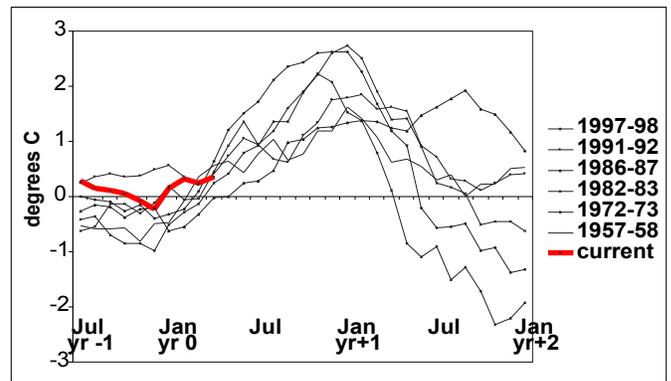
From the ENSO Update...

From mid-April to mid-May, sea surface temperatures in the eastern tropical Pacific have cooled slightly to become just weakly above average. The atmosphere has continued to lack the large-scale behavior characteristic of developing El Niño events. While generally above average sea surface temperatures still stretch from the coast of South America westward to beyond the dateline, there are now large portions in the eastern half of the basin having only weak departures from the average. Ocean temperatures have cooled considerably from their abnormally warm levels near the immediate coasts of Peru and Ecuador. There continues to be an enhanced likelihood of an El Niño in 2002 relative to an average year. The IRI's assessment is that there is an estimated 55% probability of an El Niño by middle to late 2002, lasting into early 2003. This assessment is based on the collective forecasts of many computer models of various types, as well as on the experience of several oceanographers and atmospheric scientists familiar with the El Niño phenomenon. Compared with the statement from one month ago, this probability has decreased to a moderate level, since movement toward El Niño conditions has not continued and the window of opportunity (February to May) is beginning to close. Compared to one month ago, the range of likely scenarios for tropical Pacific sea surface temperatures has narrowed somewhat. It now appears that the most likely outcome will be either a weak El Niño or a near-neutral condition during the remainder of 2002. If an El Niño develops this northern summer, it would likely be weak, and past events suggest it would continue for at least the remainder of the year and likely through March of 2003.

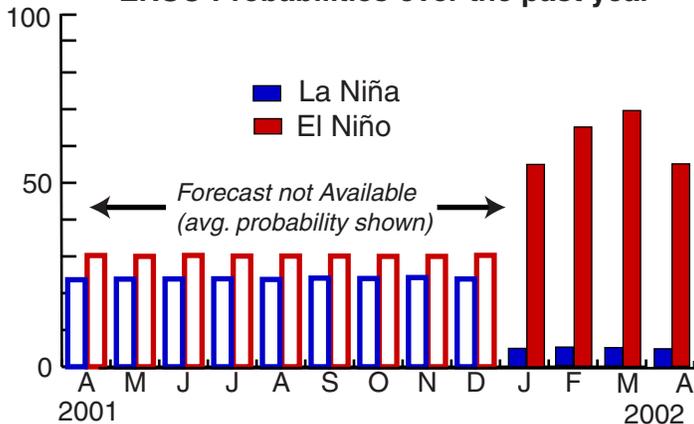
Current ENSO Forecast Summary *



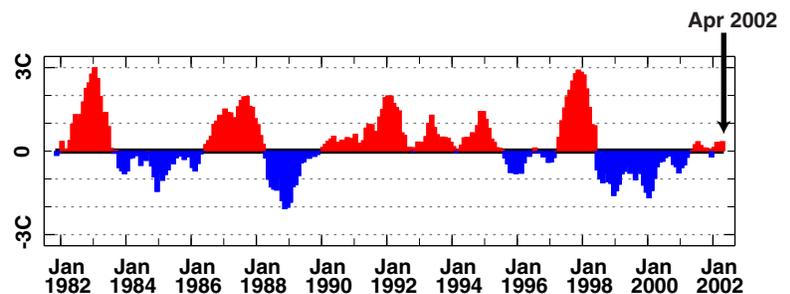
Current Conditions vs. Past El Niño**



ENSO Probabilities over the past year



Historical Sea Surface Temperature Index**



Historically Speaking

El Niño and La Niña events tend to develop during the period Apr-Jun and they:

- Tend to reach their maximum strength during Dec-Feb
- Typically persist for 9-12 months, though occasionally persisting for up to 2 years
- Typically recur every 2 to 7 years

* Probability of an El Niño refers to the likelihood of a sustained (that is, over several seasons) warming across a broad region of the eastern and central tropical Pacific, not just along coastal South America.

** Based on sea surface temperature departures from the long-term average over the "NINO 3.4" region (120-170W, 5S-5N).