Drought Preparedness Stage 2: Water Shortage Warning

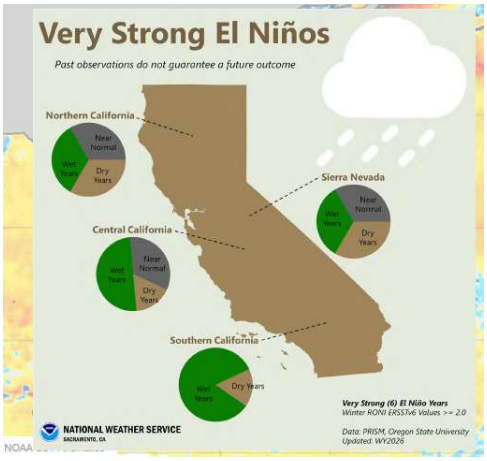
From Josie Slovut <slovutj@mendocinocounty.gov>
Date 2026-09-04 17:15

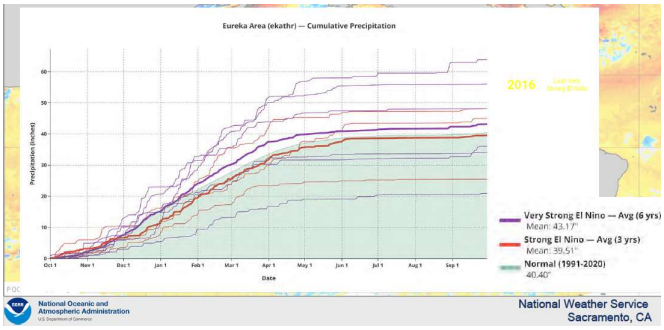
Dear Drought and Water Shortage Preparedness Partners,

As of this week, Mendocino County is in a Stage 2 Water Shortage Warning. This classification reflects low storage levels for Lake Mendocino (59.08% of target storage levels) combined with moderate drought conditions, as assessed by the US Drought Monitor, in and around Piercy. The USDM currently classifies the remainder of Mendocino County as either having abnormally dry (84% of the County by area) or normal conditions.

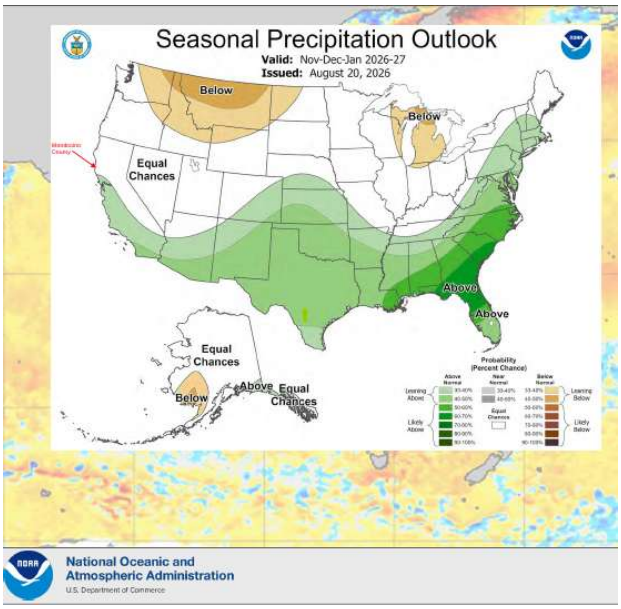
It is important to note that not all indicators point toward the possibility of drought. Two-year precipitation totals in the Big-Navarro-Garcia watershed are currently 102% of the historical average, and there have been no dry well reports from well owners in Mendocino County since January of this year.

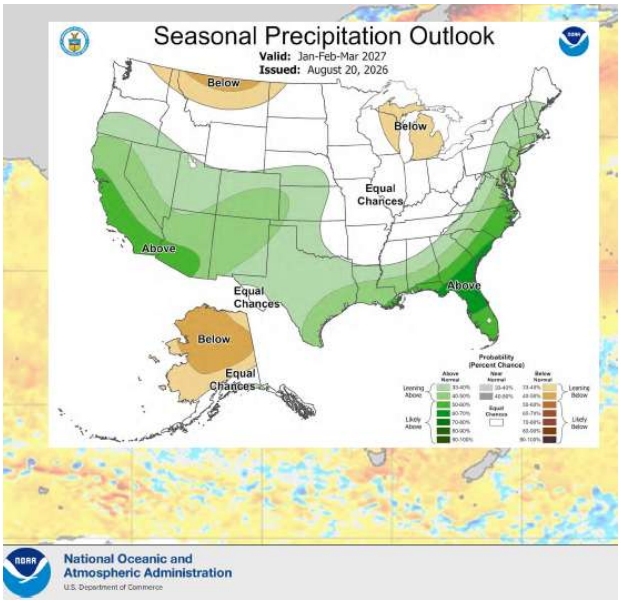
Although climatologists expect a very strong El Niño this year, historically El Niño has not consistently brought increased precipitation to Mendocino County. According to the National Weather Service, there have been 6 very strong El Niño years since 1950. In Northern California, 2 of those years have been wetter than normal, 2 have been normal, and 2 have been drier than normal. Particularly in the late fall to early winter, the National Weather Service expects an equal chance of wetter-than-normal or drier-than-normal conditions. Below are two graphics, courtesy of the National Weather Service, that illustrate the widely varying ways that historical El Niño years have affected Northern California.

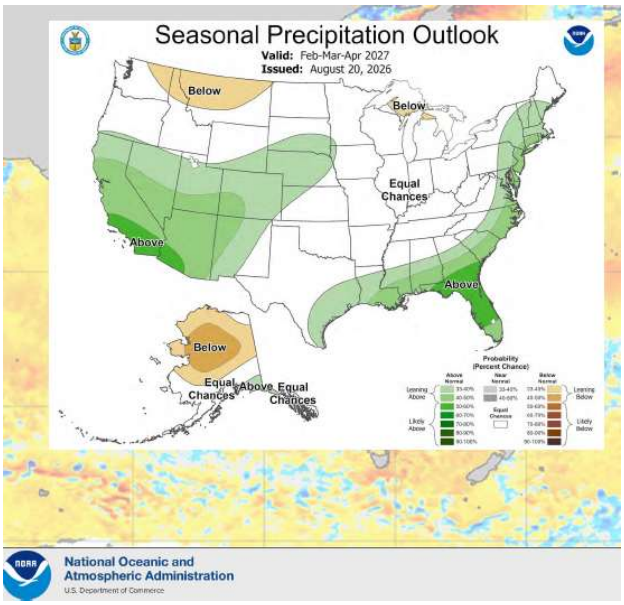




The maps below show National Weather Service predictions for the 2026-2027 El Niño:







While Stage 2 conditions persist, the County will be monitoring drought indicator metrics weekly, instead of monthly. County Drought Task Force meetings will be held quarterly while we are in Stage 2, rather than biannually. The County will also increase its community engagement and outreach around current conditions, water conservation, and available resources.

We encourage members of the community to conserve water to prepare for the possibility of a dry winter. Here are some general water conservation tips:

- Water plants during the coolest part of the day.
- Thaw food in the fridge instead of under running water.
- When you boil or steam vegetables, keep the drained water to turn into the base for a soup.
- Only run the washing machine and dishwasher with full loads.
- While you wait for the shower to heat up, collect the "warm up" water in a bucket to provide to your pets or water plants.
- Use left-over water from washing vegetables or making pasta to water your garden.
- Check out a DIY Water Savings Toolkit from your local branch of the Mendocino County Library to fix leaks and make your home more water efficient.

If your well has gone or is going dry, we strongly encourage you to submit a report to the California Department of Water Resources.

Thank you for your ongoing collaboration to strengthen our community's resilience to drought.

All the best,
Josie Slovut

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