

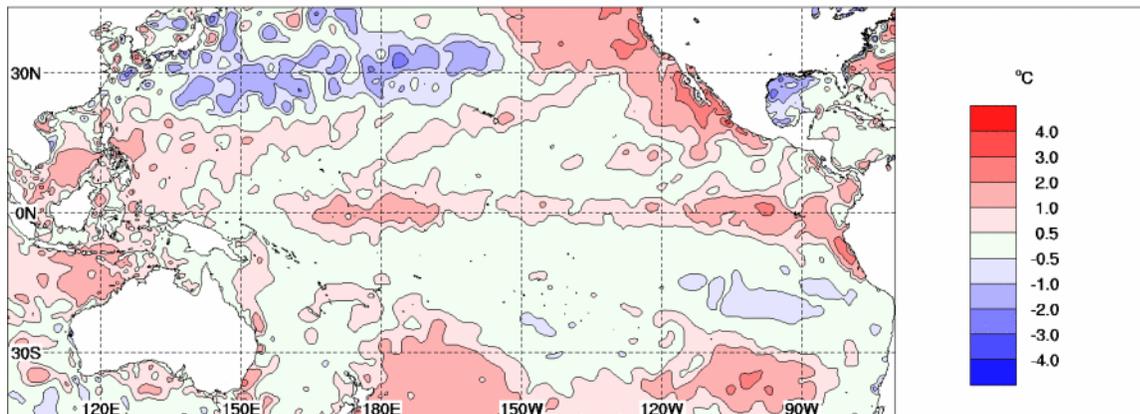


June 2, 2014

El Niño Still Likely, But How Strong

Starting in late December, westerly wind anomalies have been present on and off in the western Pacific along the equator. It is these changes in the trade winds that excite Kelvin waves, which travel eastward to the South American Coast and begin the warming process of surface waters. A very strong Kelvin wave has making its month long trek across the Pacific Ocean right now. In addition, most of the models that predict sea surface temperatures are now forecasting the development of El Niño over the summer. Because of the recent events in the Pacific and the prediction models, NOAA issued an El Niño watch in March, meaning there is a greater than 50% chance of El Niño developing this summer. Warmer than normal sea surface temperatures have now appeared near South America and in the central and eastern Pacific. Some indications are that this will be a strong event and develop fairly early in the summer months.

SSTA 1.0X1.0 NMOC OCEAN ANOMALIES (C) 20140512 20140518



Current East Pacific SST Anomaly Analysis (degrees C)

However, this is a notoriously difficult time of the year to predict the Pacific Ocean, and it takes more than one Kelvin wave to build a full-blown El Niño. We will have to wait and see how the next few months unfold before we know with any certainty that a strong El Niño is on the way. Also, there have not been any further westerly wind events in the western Pacific since early April. The last strong El Niño in 1997/1998 saw strong westerly winds in May and June that further reinforced the warming of the eastern Pacific. If more westerly winds do not kick in soon, this current El Niño will not come close to the strength of the 1997/1998 event.

