



FLORIDA COCORAHHS

AUGUST 2009

NEWSLETTER

The Final Days of Summer

Even though summer doesn't officially end until September 22nd, a few of us are beginning to finalize our last trips of the season, as Labor Day approaches. July was a bit of a busy month for me as I spent part of it in Michigan, hanging out with some of the greatest people I know: the Association of American State Climatologists. Most of them are coordinators and supporters for the CoCoRaHS program, and it's a great opportunity to share stories and great moments in CoCoRaHS history.

With the end of August within our sights, we still haven't seen a hurricane in the Atlantic. The onset of El Niño (the warm phase of El Niño Southern Oscillation in the waters of the equatorial Pacific) has made forecasters revise the forecasts they made at the beginning of the season.

The latest NOAA forecast can be found at the following link:

http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2009/20090806_hurricaneupdate.html

Remember, even though it's been a slow start this season, we are not out of the woods yet. August 1st is the beginning of the peak of hurricane season, which will last until mid-October. If you need any help preparing for the rest of hurricane season, please review the May and June newsletters, or feel free to contact me.

A Quick Status Update

Since we last talked, Hawaii, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Maine have joined the CoCoRaHS program. September 1st will bring both Arizona and Delaware into the program. That will bring the grand total of CoCoRaHS states to 48. The recent months have brought an influx of new observers into the state – especially into areas where we were lacking observers before. We now have about 923 observers signed up for CoCoRaHS in Florida; though a little more than half of them are active. The total number of daily observations has dropped off during the last few weeks, mainly due to the lack of rain. Please remember that 0.00" is a valid and important value.

Current State Of The Drought

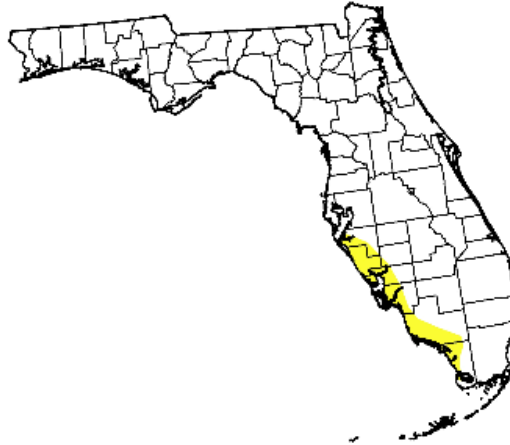
Since the last newsletter, the dry conditions in the south and central parts of the state have eased... and returned. By the end of June, the abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions that plagued the state south of a line from Fort Myers to Titusville were gone. But by July 7th, dry conditions began to appear in northern parts of Escambia, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties. With drier conditions throughout July, dry conditions returned to the coastal area of Southwest Florida. Recent rains have alleviated the dry conditions in Northwest Florida.

U.S. Drought Monitor

Florida

August 4, 2009
Valid 7 a.m. EST

| | Drought Conditions (Percent Area) | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | None | D0-D4 | D1-D4 | D2-D4 | D3-D4 | D4 |
| Current | 94.6 | 5.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Last Week (07/28/2009 map) | 92.0 | 8.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 3 Months Ago (05/12/2009 map) | 35.1 | 64.9 | 61.8 | 57.0 | 29.7 | 0.0 |
| Start of Calendar Year (01/06/2009 map) | 44.0 | 56.0 | 13.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Start of Water Year (10/07/2008 map) | 75.8 | 24.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| One Year Ago (08/05/2008 map) | 64.7 | 35.3 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |



Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements

<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>



Released Thursday, August 6, 2009

Author: Mark Svoboda, National Drought Mitigation Center

The NOAA forecast does call for some improvement in the hardest hit areas over the next few months. You can take a look at the latest NOAA Seasonal Drought Outlook at this link: http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/seasonal_drought.html.

July Rainfall Review

Rainfall this month was fairly ordinary, characterized by the frequent afternoon thundershowers that are a normal component of Florida's summer climate. Rainfall totals for the month ranged from 4 to 5 inches across north Florida and the panhandle (a little below normal), to 5 to 7 inches across the southern portion of the state and over 10 inches in the Tampa area. Coverage was fairly widely distributed, given the spotty nature of the usual afternoon showers. One precipitation event of note did bring very heavy rain to the Tampa area on July 1st. On that day, Tampa set a new record rainfall for that day of 4.72 inches. Tarpon Spring recorded 7.45 inches on that day.

| Station | Total Rainfall | Departure from Normal |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Pensacola * | 5.68 | -0.86 |
| Tallahassee | 4.45 | -3.59 |
| Jacksonville | 5.49 | -0.48 |
| Orlando | 5.19 | 0.02 |
| Tampa | 10.25 | 3.76 |
| Miami | 6.17 | 0.38 |
| Key West | 2.16 | -1.11 |

Table 2: July precipitation totals and departures from normal for selected cities (inches).

El Niño Gains Steam in the Pacific Ocean.

Ocean temperatures in the past months have warmed rapidly in the eastern and central tropical Pacific Ocean and are now above the 0.5°C threshold that commonly designates El Niño conditions. This warming completes the transition from a weak La Niña in March of 2009 through several months of neutral conditions in April, May, and June, to El Niño for the remainder of 2009. El Niño refers to a periodic episode (every 2-7 years) of warming in the tropical Pacific Ocean along the equator from the coast of South America to the central Pacific. Modeling centers around the world that predict El Niño/La Niña agree that waters will continue to warm and result in a weak to moderate El Niño over the next 3-6 months. Although El Niño impacts on Florida's climate are weak during the summer, we may have begun to see some influence. The activity of the hurricane season in the Atlantic Basin is known to be suppressed by El Niño, and this year has been no exception. So far, there have been no named storms through the month of July, and tropical activity has not affected the state. El Niño can also bring slightly drier and warmer weather to the state in July.

Have Questions?

If at any time you have questions about CoCoRaHS, reading your rain gauge, or finding a location to set-up your rain gauge, please feel to contact a CoCoRaHS Coordinator. We are lucky enough to have regional support from the National Weather Service offices across the state, as well as a few members who have offered to help out at the county/local level. You can find all of the contact information for the CoCoRaHS Coordinators at:

http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=coord_FL

Take care,
Melissa

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"Because Every Drop Counts!"