

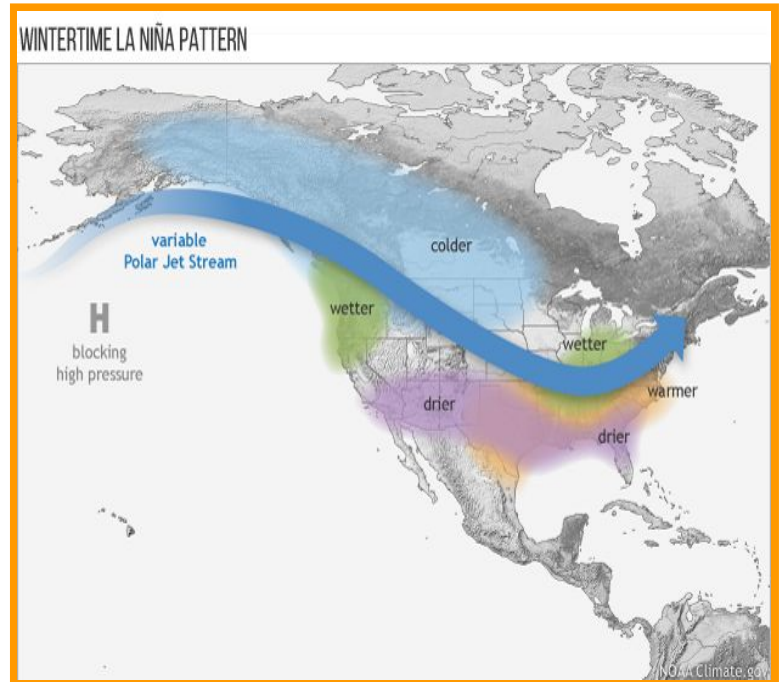
British Columbia Winter Outlook 2020-2021: La Nina Returns

As winter approaches let's take a look at the latest long range outlook for the season ahead. Keep in mind this is a **very general** outlook regarding the overall trends in the weather patterns through the winter and doesn't reflect the short term variations due to individual weather systems that we'll see. It should be treated as an average through the winter season.

The ENSO cycle and La Nina, what does it mean?

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation(ENSO) is a climatological pattern in the tropical Pacific that shifts irregularly between warmer(El Niño) and colder(La Niña) temperatures every two to seven years. These changes disrupt the large-scale air movements in the tropics, triggering seasonal changes to weather patterns world wide, including British Columbia.

For the 2020 to 2021 winter season we're expecting to see a La Niña temperature cycle this year, an estimated 75% chance according to the Climate Prediction Center. With a La Niña expected, the Pacific Jet Stream and storm track will be biased farther north than usual, placing itself around southern BC near the US border. This doesn't necessarily mean the storm track won't still fluctuate north and south at times through the season but on average that's where it will be focused. The Polar Jet Stream will be focused farther north over the Rockies over Yukon and BC.



La Niña's impacts:

For British Columbia a La Niña cycle typically correlates to above average amounts of precipitation in the winter, especially for the SW portion of the Province, and slightly below average to near average temperatures. With that said we'll likely end up with above average temperatures in the early winter months (Oct-Dec) followed by slightly below average temperatures through the rest of the winter (Jan-Mar).

As a result expect an active season for the southern portion of the Province with respect to winter precipitation (e.g. mountain snow) but Lower Mainland and the SE parts of Vancouver Island will still primarily see rain despite the cooler temperatures. However it is likely we'll still see at least 1 or 2 snow events for Lower Mainland with the cooler weather but that will be most likely to occur in the second half of the winter (Jan-Mar). It's still possible that a cold weather system could cause snow earlier than that though.

The southern interior sections of the Province and the Rockies are likely to see more frequent large snow events through the season due to the above average precipitation and below average temperatures and it's very possible we'll see some late season snow events there (Apr-May) so this has the potential to be a long season ahead for those sections. Meanwhile due to the Polar Jet Stream we're expecting the Cariboo and Peace Country to see prolonged periods of cold, dry Arctic air through the season and at times that may stretch into parts of the southern interior during the late winter months, particularly around Jan-Feb.