19th Pacific Islands Climate & Ocean Forum
Regional Statement

This statement was produced by the WMO RA-V Pacific Regional Climate Centre Network following the 19th Pacific Islands Climate & Ocean Forum (PICOF-19) held on 20-21 October 2026, for use by National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) in the Pacific Islands. For more information, please see the background section and/or contact your local meteorological office.

Key messages

- El Niño is currently present. The event continues to strengthen, with a strong to very strong El Niño likely through January to March 2027. There is a high likelihood that the 2026 El Niño will exceed the strength of all previous El Niño events recorded since 1950. This event is expected to persist into March to May 2027.
- El Niño related impacts are evident and are very likely to persist well into 2027. Impacts are likely to continue after the event has ended in some countries.
- Seasonal rainfall outlooks for November 2026 to January 2027 indicate a pronounced El Niño-like pattern across the tropical Pacific. Below-normal rainfall is favoured across much of the northwest Pacific from Palau to the Marshall Islands and in the southwest Pacific from Papua New Guinea (PNG) southeast to southern French Polynesia. Above-normal rainfall is favoured in the central equatorial Pacific from Nauru to eastern Kiribati.
- Above-normal air temperatures are favoured across most of the western and central tropical Pacific and from PNG southeast to New Caledonia over November 2026 to January 2027. Below-normal air temperatures are favoured between Fiji and southern French Polynesia.
- Above-normal sea surface temperatures are forecast to persist in the Palau region, in parts of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Marshall Islands, across the tropical Pacific and southeast from PNG to the Coral Sea in November 2026 to January 2027. A band of below-normal sea surface temperatures is forecast from eastern Vanuatu to southern French Polynesia.
- Above-normal sea surface height (SSH) is forecast around eastern Kiribati during November 2026 to January 2027, while below-normal SSH is favoured from Palau to the Marshall Islands and from PNG to the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Samoa. The strongest positive SSH anomalies are anticipated around December 2026. Significant negative SSH anomalies are likely to persist through to March in the region spanning from Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tokelau, and northern Cook Islands. Exposure of shallow reefs during low tides is likely in areas experiencing the greatest reductions in SSH.
- Strong to extreme marine heatwaves are forecast around eastern Kiribati, while moderate marine heatwaves are expected around Nauru, Tuvalu and Tokelau. Moderate marine heatwave conditions are forecast to extend towards Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia by January 2027. Localised marine heatwaves may also develop elsewhere where conditions are favourable.

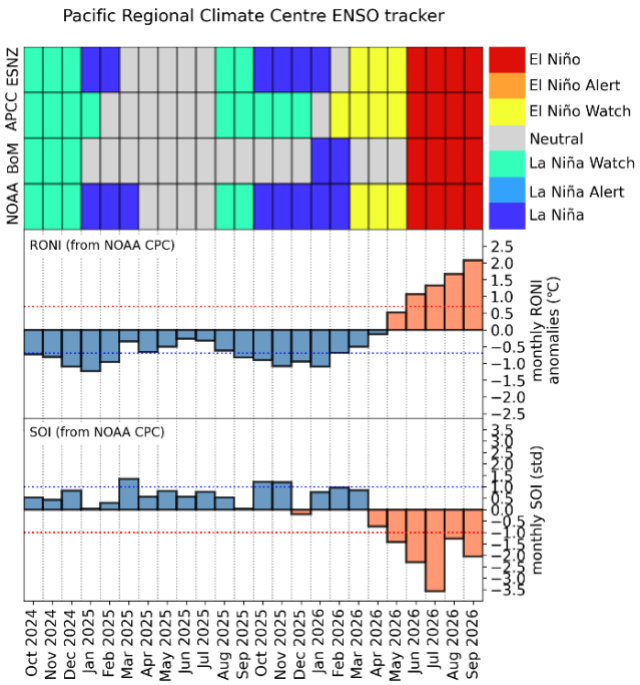
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- Coral bleaching conditions are forecast around central and eastern Kiribati through February 2027. Conditions conducive to coral bleaching are also forecast around southern Papua New Guinea southeast to New Caledonia during January 2027.
- The fisheries convergence zone has already shifted significantly eastward, well beyond its climatological position, and is forecast to persist in this eastward position and broaden during November 2026 to March 2027. Skipjack tuna are likely to follow the eastern edge of the warm pool along the equator.
- Normal to above-normal tropical cyclone (TC) activity is favoured across the southwest Pacific during the November 2026 to April 2027 season. Elevated TC activity is favoured near and east of the International Date Line, while normal or below-normal activity is expected across western parts of the basin. Some El Nino events have been associated with extended TC seasons with TCs in October, May and June. TC Wati the first TC in the 2026/27 season occurred in mid-October.

Climate in review – May to October 2026

- As of June 2026, the **Pacific Regional Climate Centre ENSO tracker** (click here) is at El Niño based on status reports from the RCC-N members.
- Rainfall, trade wind, and atmospheric pressure patterns over the last 3-6 months were typical of a developing El Niño. Overall, rainfall outlooks from PICOF-18 for May to November 2026 verified well when compared to observations over the same period, reflecting a typical El Niño with above average rainfall across the equatorial central and eastern Pacific, and below average rainfall in off-equatorial regions.



- Air temperatures were also broadly consistent with the forecasts, with generally above-normal air temperatures across much of the Pacific, except for parts of the off-equatorial South Pacific.
- Lower than normal sea level was present in the western Pacific by July 2026 and further south in August and September 2026. There was a region of higher-than-normal sea level in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific.

- Persistent warm ocean conditions across the eastern and central tropical Pacific led to widespread 'Alert 1' and 'Alert 2'–Warning coral bleaching levels and localised Coral Bleaching over eastern FSM, southern Marshall Islands, Nauru and Kiribati.
- Marine heatwaves were present in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific and in the subtropics north and south of the equator, with regions reaching 'strong' to 'extreme' categories.
- Tropical cyclone activity in the Western North Pacific (WNP) basin to date has been above normal, following the trends often observed during the onset year of a developing strong El Nino. Through mid-October, there have been 25 named TCs, with the lower Mariana Islands experiencing three severe (Category 3-5) intensity TCs.
- Weather and climate extreme event impacts were recorded by National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) for the May to October 2026 period. Impacts were noted in the water, agriculture, fisheries, marine and air transportation, infrastructure, health, education, and tourism sectors.
- Water shortages were recorded across PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, and Tonga associated with persistently lower than normal rainfall. Snow and hail were recorded in the PNG highlands region, and marine disasters occurred in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Fiji with more than 57 fatalities. There were also increases in whooping cough cases, diarrhoea, and influenza cases in Vanuatu, with dengue fever outbreaks in many western Pacific countries. Fire incidents were recorded across the Pacific. Notable damage was recorded to houses and infrastructure in the Micronesian region during the seven cyclone events that occurred in the northern Pacific region with nine deaths recorded in Chuuk State (FSM).
- Marine impacts were also observed with coastal erosion noted in the Cook Islands while in FSM, PNG and the Solomon Islands, there were incidents of fish deaths associated with lower sea levels.

Historical rainfall and air temperature, as a background for recent patterns

- Station data shows regional mean temperatures have increased by 0.16°C/decade since the 1950's. Compared to 1961-1990, hot days now occur approximately three times as often. Cold nights now occur approximately one third as often as they did during 1961-1990.
- There are no consistent trends in annual total rainfall, except for significant drying in the subtropics which happens mostly during winter. There are few significant trends in maximum daily rainfall, but all the trends that are significant are positive and there are more increasing than decreasing extreme rainfall trends. This is consistent with a warmer atmosphere holding more moisture.
- Long-term high-quality station data is in a rapid decline across most of the Pacific. We now have approximately the same amount of long-term high-quality station data as we did in the 1960's. The increasing availability of remote sensing and reanalysis datasets does not negate the need for long-term high-quality stations. In fact, these

gridded products rely on station data for assimilation and bias correction, therefore it is in the community's interest to maintain and share high-quality station records.

- The 2026 El Niño has developed in a substantially warmer world compared with the major El Niño events of 1982–83 and 1997–98. Long-term climate change has contributed to higher background air temperatures across the Pacific, meaning temperatures during the current El Niño are likely to be higher than during comparable events in the past. Climate change has also increased the likelihood of hot days and warm nights, potentially exacerbating heat-related impacts during El Niño. In parts of the Pacific where El Niño typically brings cooler-than-normal conditions, long-term warming may partly offset this cooling, resulting in temperatures that are warmer than those experienced during similar El Niño events in previous decades.
- Climate change is expected to intensify ENSO-related rainfall variability, potentially increasing rainfall during El Niño in parts of the central and eastern equatorial Pacific. However, changes in rainfall across the wider Pacific are less certain.
- In areas where El Niño typically brings below-average rainfall, higher temperatures may increase evaporation, potentially exacerbating drought conditions. While the rainfall patterns during May to September 1982, 1997 and 2026 show similarities and differences, these cannot be attributed to climate change without further analysis.

Climate outlook – November 2026 to April 2027

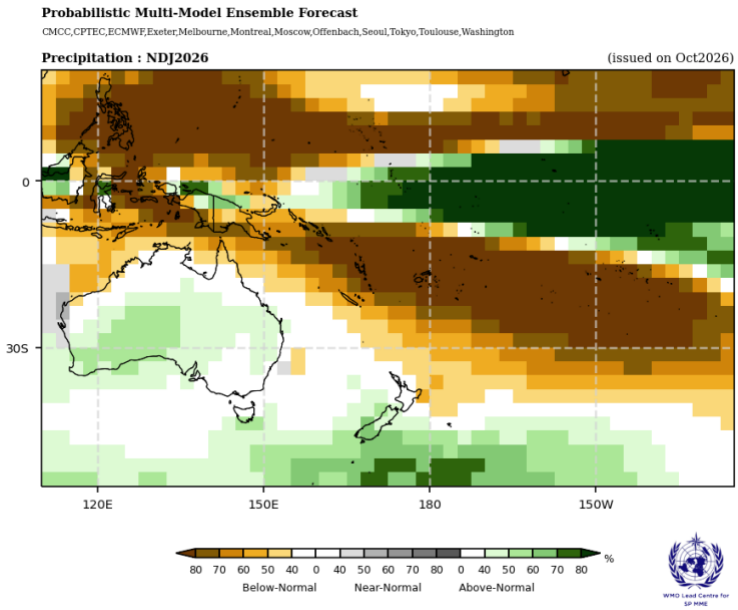
El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)

- El Niño is currently present. The event continues to strengthen, with a strong to very strong El Niño likely through January to March 2027. There is a high likelihood that the 2026 El Niño will exceed the strength of all previous El Niño events recorded since 1950.
- This event based is expected to persist into March to May 2027. There is a greater chance of neutral conditions in April to June and May to July 2027.

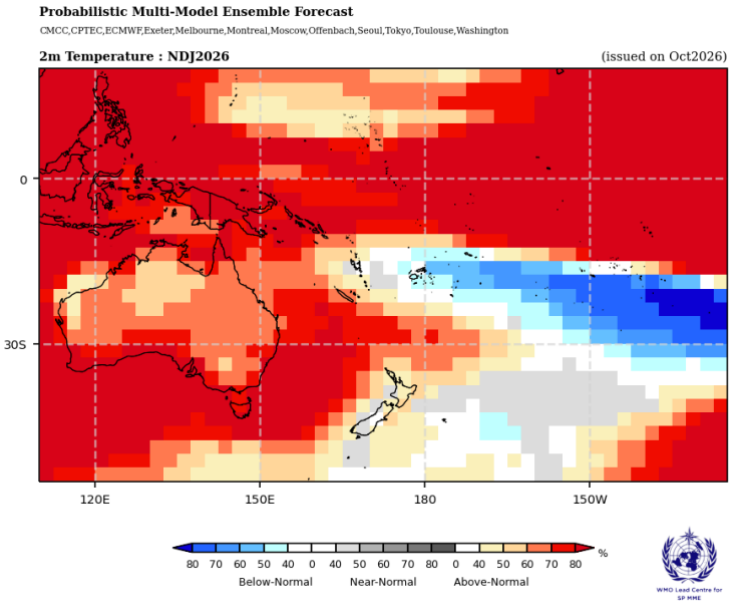
Rainfall and Air Temperature

- Seasonal rainfall forecasts for November 2026–January 2027 indicate strong El Niño-like patterns, characterized by enhanced rainfall across the central and eastern equatorial Pacific and suppressed rainfall over much of the northwest, west and southwest Pacific.

- Seasonal rainfall outlooks for November 2026–January 2027 indicate a pronounced El Niño-like pattern across the tropical Pacific. Below-normal rainfall is favoured across much of the northwest Pacific from Palau to the Marshall Islands and in the Southwest Pacific from central and southern PNG southeast to southern French Polynesia. Above-normal rainfall is favoured in the central equatorial Pacific from Nauru to eastern Kiribati.



- Above-normal air temperatures are favoured across most of the western and central tropical Pacific and from PNG southeast to New Caledonia over November 2026–January 2027. Below-normal air temperatures are favoured between Fiji and southern French Polynesia.
- There is broad agreement amongst major seasonal prediction systems, including the WMO Lead centre multi-model ensemble and forecasts from APCC, BoM, ESNZ, NOAA, and Meteo-France, on the overall El Niño-like rainfall pattern. Hindcast verification indicates generally good rainfall prediction skill across the equatorial Pacific, although forecast confidence varies by region.



- Forecasts of mean sea level pressure are consistent with an El Niño-like pattern, with above-normal pressure favoured across the western and central tropical Pacific and below-normal pressure over the eastern equatorial Pacific. This pattern supports suppressed convection and reduced rainfall in the western Pacific and enhanced convection and rainfall farther east.

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Ocean surface temperature, sea level & coral bleaching

- Above-normal sea surface temperatures are forecast to persist in the Palau region, in parts of the FSM and the Marshall Islands, across the tropical Pacific and southeast from PNG to the Coral Sea in November 2026–January 2027. A band of below-normal sea surface temperatures is forecast from eastern Vanuatu to southern French Polynesia.
- Above-normal sea surface height (SSH) is forecast around eastern Kiribati during December 2026–February 2027, while below-normal SSH expected from Palau to the Marshall Islands and from PNG to the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Samoa. The strongest positive SSH anomalies are expected around December 2026. Significant negative SSH anomalies are likely to persist through to March in the region spanning from Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tokelau, and northern Cook Islands. Exposure of shallow reefs during low tides is likely in areas experiencing the greatest reductions in SSH.
- Strong to extreme marine heatwaves are forecast around eastern Kiribati, while moderate marine heatwaves are expected around Nauru, Tuvalu and Tokelau. Moderate marine heatwave conditions are forecast to extend towards Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia by January 2027. Localised marine heatwaves may also develop elsewhere where conditions are favourable.
- The fisheries convergence zone has already shifted significantly eastward, well beyond its climatological position, and is forecast to persist in this eastward position and broaden during November 2026–March 2027. Skipjack tuna are likely to follow the eastern edge of the warm pool along the equator.
- Coral Bleaching at the Alert Level 2 category is forecast for Kiribati (Phoenix and Line Is) through February 2027; Alert Level 1–2 for PNG southeast to New Caledonia; Warning for Fiji, Samoa and Tonga in January, easing to Watch by February.

Tropical cyclones

- Normal to above-normal tropical cyclone (TC) activity is expected across the Southwest Pacific during November 2026 – April 2027.
- Elevated TC activity is favoured near and east of the International Date Line, particularly across the northern, central, and northeastern Southwest Pacific, while normal or reduced activity is expected in western parts of the basin.
- Strong El Niño conditions are a key driver of the outlook, with the analogue, dynamical, and statistical guidance broadly supporting increased activity in the central and eastern South Pacific.
- Severe TCs remain possible across the region, including areas where normal or reduced seasonal activity is expected.
- Continued monitoring of sub-seasonal guidance and official warnings is important. Even areas with normal or reduced seasonal risk can experience damaging cyclones.

- The long-term average number of named TCs per season between 1991-2020 is around nine, however there has been a long-term decline in the number of named storms in recent decades.

Projected rainfall and air temperature, as a background for the November to April Outlook

- Global air temperatures are at record levels and continue to trend upwards. While a long-term average anomaly which overshoots 1.5°C is becoming increasingly inevitable, the consequences of ongoing increasing air temperatures depend on what humanity does next.
- Greater emissions reduction now will have long-term benefits for many centuries to come. There's still a lot we don't know about increasing global air temperatures, but we know enough to say that limiting its peak and duration is critical. As increasing greenhouse gases trap more outgoing radiation, the climate system is responding accordingly e.g. broadly warmer, and higher sea levels, with changes to extreme rainfall.
- Climate projections indicate an elevated frequency of extreme El Niño events. However, despite the profound influence of ENSO events on the global climate system its response to greenhouse warming remains uncertain.

Background

The seasonal outlooks used in this statement were obtained from the WMO Lead Centre for Seasonal Prediction Multi-Model Ensemble. Where an outlook was not available (e.g., for tropical cyclones or coral bleaching), it was obtained from Pacific RCC Network Node on Seasonal Prediction member websites

This statement is a guidance document produced for use by National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) and Pacific Regional Organisations. This statement does not constitute an official outlook for any nation. For more information, please contact your local meteorological office.

The Pacific Islands Climate Services Panel and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Pacific Regional Climate Centre (RCC) Network Node for Seasonal Prediction have delivered PICOFs since October 2015. PICOF is a platform primarily used to discuss the sub-seasonal and seasonal outlooks (ENSO, TCs, precipitation, temperature, and oceanic conditions) for the upcoming six months, capacity build, and enable knowledge exchange between NMHSs and strengthen relationships between NMHSs and stakeholders.

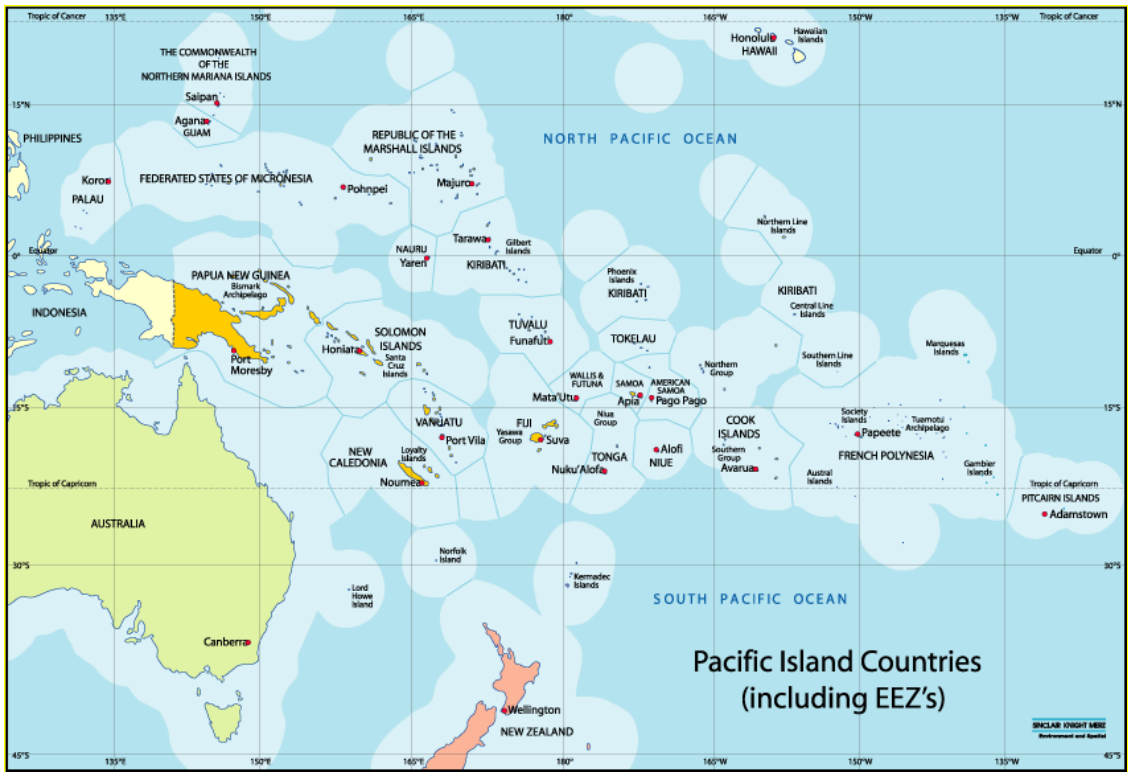
PICOF is an important mechanism for sharing climate and ocean information, best practices, and lessons learnt on climate and ocean prediction and its likely implications on sectors where productivity is heavily dependent on the state of climate. PICOF is held twice a year: an in-person session in October, focusing on November to April and a virtual session in April, focusing on May to October.

PICOF-19 had virtual and in-person attendees from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Micronesia (Pohnpei), New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, and Vanuatu. Representatives from the following organisations also participated: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Pacific Community (SPC), (Australian) Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), (United States) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Météo-France, Earth Sciences New Zealand (ESNZ), University of Hawaii, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Climate Centre (APCC), UNOCHA, UNDRR, World Food Programme, GloH2O, Food Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Live and Learn Organisation.

Close working relationships between Pacific rim and Pacific Island NMHSs, regional organisations, and WMO are critical to effective warning of climate hazards leading to early preparedness. Further enhancement of these relationships is essential, as well as relationships between NMHSs, their primary stakeholders, and the community. These can be frequent meetings such as one-on-one discussions, cluster group meetings, and national climate outlook forums.

In addition to the production of national seasonal and sub-seasonal climate outlooks, there is a need for simplified products and messaging especially for rural and remote communities. Sectoral impacts are most often related to prolonged drier or wetter than normal conditions. NMHSs should continue to develop climate products tailored for national sectors, relevant to their needs, and incorporating where possible traditional knowledge elements.

Figures & supporting information:



Map of the Pacific Islands region, showing countries and territories involved in PICOF. Source.

Important links

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