

'Godzilla El Niño' would not end drought

By Rong-Gong Lin II, Los Angeles Times

The strengthening El Niño in the Pacific Ocean has the potential to become one of the most powerful on record, as warming ocean waters surge toward the Americas, setting up a pattern that could bring once-in-a-generation storms this winter to drought-parched California.

The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center said Thursday that all computer models are predicting a strong El Niño to peak in the late fall or early winter. A host of observations have led scientists to conclude that "collectively, these atmospheric and oceanic features reflect a significant and strengthening El Niño."

"This definitely has the potential of being the Godzilla El Niño," said Bill Patzert, a climatologist with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in La Cañada Flintridge.

In California, officials have cautioned the public against imagining that El Niño will suddenly end the state's chronic water challenges.

In fact, it would take an astonishing 2.5 to three times the average annual precipitation to make up for the rain and snow lost in the central Sierra mountain range over the last four years of drought, said Kevin Werner, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's expert on climate in the western United States.

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