

Dry La Niña might follow soggy El Niño

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

Beyond all the hype over a possible drought-busting El Niño this winter is a much grimmer prospect for California: a dry La Niña come fall.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration joined international forecasters recently in predicting the potential rise of El Niño's sister phenomenon, La Niña – a similar shift in Pacific Ocean temperatures, but in the opposite direction with far different repercussions for global weather.

While no one can be certain what a La Niña might mean for California, especially this early, the pattern has generally correlated with drier conditions, particularly in the southern part of the state. How much this will even matter is also unknown as El Niño is expected to soon ease the state's water crisis with a blast of wet weather.

"It's still too far out to reach any conclusions about La Niña," said Dave Rizzardo, who helps track the state's water supplies as chief of snow surveys for the California Department of Water Resources. "But it would be unfortunate to know that, hey, we had a great year, we bailed ourselves out of the drought, and then we fall right back in."

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