

# La Niña next winter could worsen drought

By Aaron Orłowski, Orange County Register

Last month, state water officials eased conservation mandates in response to slightly above-average winter rain and snow in much of California, leading many to speculate that the state's long-running drought has tapered off.

If only.

The El Niño winter that forecasters said could drench the state with rain and snow veered north instead, striking mostly the Pacific Northwest. The amount of rain and snow that hit Northern California was a tick above average and looked impressive mostly because it contrasted sharply with the extreme drought of the previous four years. Southern California was wetter than in previous years, but not by much.

Now, conditions are shifting, and El Niño's counterpart, La Niña – a seasonal period marked by lower Pacific temperatures that shrivel rainfall in California – is expected to arrive around early fall and could prolong the dry times in California.

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