Mermaid Hannah Fraser joined Greenpeace’s protest at Chicken of the Sea’s headquarters in SD and spoke with residents and activists in Pacific Beach on Oct. 28.

How much severe weather will El Niño bring?

By DAVE SCHWAB

Though not a certainty, the “smart” money is on the building El Niño in the Pacific Ocean leading to a wetter-than-normal winter this year. It now seems more of a question of how much — and how long — the precipitation will last, not whether it will happen. “It’s like it (El Niño) is almost too big to fail,” said San Diego Lifeguard Lt. John Sandmeyer following a recent briefing he and other city officials had from the National Weather Service about the El Niño/La Niña cycle. “The atmosphere is loaded with moisture, and it will come, though it’s uncertain whether the ocean track will go over Central California, Southern California or the Gulf.”

‘We’re gearing up for evacuations and closures of blocked areas and (residential) complexes.’

JOHN SANDMEYER
SAN DIEGO LIFEGUARD LT.

SeaWorld sees sinking revenues

City numbers reveal the extent of the theme park’s sagging attendance figures

By LISA HALVERSTADT
Voice of San Diego

Attendance and revenues at SeaWorld San Diego are tanking as the marine park battles efforts to force it to stop housing killer whales.

The company’s struggles are hitting its San Diego park hard, according to reports required as part of SeaWorld’s lease with the city for its Mission Bay property.

Lease payments, which are based on a host of the park’s revenues, fell 16 percent from 2013 to 2014, according to the city’s data. Attendance dropped a similar amount during that period.

The plunges came as SeaWorld faced continued backlash from the movie “Blackfish,” which panned SeaWorld and its decision to hold orcas in captivity.

Time to get hoppy! It's San Diego Beer Week

Several San Diego coastal breweries and restaurants will be among more than 100 vendors countywide participating in San Diego Beer Week Friday through Sunday, Nov. 6 to 15, in the region’s seventh annual celebration of all things brewed.

The 10-day event consists of more than 500 beer-centric events held at locations around the county plus two bookend events hosted by the San Diego Brewers Guild showcasing its festival (often referred to as Guild Fest), beer week’s official opening two-day event held at downtown’s Port Pavilion on Broadway Pier and The Beer Garden, the week’s closing event held at the Lodge at Torrey Pines.

By DAVE SCHWAB

‘We’re gearing up for evacuations and closures of blocked areas and (residential) complexes.’

JOHN SANDMEYER
SAN DIEGO LIFEGUARD LT.
**Newsom to challenge Faulconer for mayor**

By DAVE SCHWAB

The president of Ocean Beach Town Council wants to be San Diego’s next mayor.

Gretchen Newsom announced plans to run for mayor of San Diego in 2016 against Republican incumbent Kevin Faulconer.

Link doubled the bail from $50,000 for a Pacific Beach man. Man accused of felony animal cruelty has bail doubled

Deputy District Attorney Karra Dyer asked for the bail increase.

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Large land opportunity for sale in Pacific Beach

The Franco Realty Group has been retained to exclusively list for sale the 12,500 square feet of residential land on the corner of Gran- sham and Reed streets. The prop- erty currently is the site of Pacific Beach Christian Church and Missionary Alliance. A buyer may purchase the property and con- tinue to operate the church and daycare center or build residen- tial units on the property.

There are four 25- by 125-foot square lots on the property.

“Based off the number of develop- ments and the strong economy that we are currently in, I predict that a buyer will redevelop this property into multiple high-end homes,” said Tony Franco, presi- dent of The Franco Realty Group. For more information regard- ing this purchase, call The Franco Realty Group at (858) 717-1697.

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City Beach Boutique opens in Crown Point

By DAVE SCHWAB
Summer Abu Zahrah, who start- ed her entrepreneurial career as a student employee in Crown Point Coffee, which she now owns, just added a family boutique across the street to her portfolio.
Six years after taking over Crown Point Coffee at 3510 Ingraham St., Abu Zahrah has united both cor- ners via creation of City Beach Bou- tique at 3460 Ingraham St.
A Michigan expatriate, Abu Zahrah was working at the coffee shop while going through school and “dove in head-first” when offered an ownership opportunity by the previous proprietor.
“I was ready to branch out and open up my own business,” she said, noting she made a couple of changes to the business, adding breakfast sandwiches and eggs as well as lunch and salads to the mix. Then the women’s clothing bou- tique directly across the street became available. And Abu Zahrah, who’d been going to school for fash- ion, once again seized the opportu- nity.
“I took this (boutique) over and made it a little bit more family- friendly,” she said, adding she took the boutique over in June and remodeled and reopened it in July.
City Beach Boutique has some- thing for everyone in the whole fam- ily — even kids — as well as gifts for everyone. The boutique has a beach section with a great selection of board shorts, tanks, graphic T’s, Hawaiian shirts (from Hawaii) and hoodies for men.
Women will find unique acces- sories, everything from beachwear to evening attire, even something for work and athletic wear.
Popular brands available include Burnside, Bali Queen, Naked Zebra, Lila Clothing, Nikibiki, Kinetix and more. There are also hard-to-find items like soaps and lotions handmade in Hawaii plus sarongs, scarves, ladies’ hats and beach bags.
The boutique’s staff offers exem- plary customer service, and a team of personal stylists is waiting to assist customers.
“I want everyone to feel welcome and comfortable at City Beach Bou- tique,” said Abu Zahrah, who curates the store with locals in mind. “I have unique, high-quality merchandise at reasonable price points, combined with superior cus- tomer service: That’s our mission.”
Abu Zahrah does lots of cross-promotion between her two busi- nesses.
“We get a lot of tourists who come in from Paradise Point and during events that happen on the (Mission) bay regularly,” she said.
The product mix at the boutique includes lots of local crafters as well as handmade items imported for sale from the island of Bali.
Price points at City Beach Bou- tique range from $18 to $85.
“I want to keep it as affordable as possible,” said Abu Zahrah, noting her business hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays so that “people can come after work.”
Saturday hours are 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. “Saturdays are busy days,” said

Paradise Point partners with San Diego Airport on sustainable travel program

The Good Traveler program, pilot- ed by San Diego International Air- port, seeks to offset environmental impacts of travel by encouraging guests to purchase carbon offsets in the form of merchandise or add-ons to hotel reservations.
For $1, a traveler can effectively offset 500 miles of air travel or 200 miles of driving. All program funds will go toward conservation projects counteracting the greenhouse gas emis- sions.
Paradise Point in Mission Bay is the first hotel to participate in The Good Traveler program, encouraging and inspiring sustainable travel by resort guests. Seeking to make conservation approachable and inclusive for all travelers, The Good Traveler provides participants with a collectible sticker that can be proudly displayed. Par- adise Point offers guests the option to participate by purchasing carbon off- sets when booking a room reserva- tion online. Purchases are available in one-dollar increments to allow guests to offset the amount of carbon emis- sions generated by their individual mode of transportation and distance traveled.
Current projects benefiting from The Good Traveler proceeds include a forest restoration project in California, a wind farm project in Idaho and a water restoration project in the Colorado Delta. Following evaluation of the pilot program’s success at the end of this year, San Diego International Airport will consider plans to expand the pro- gram to additional cities and airports.
Paradise Point is an eco-friendly, green hotel nestled on a lush 44-acre private island in San Diego’s Mission Bay. The resort is committed to conservation and environmental preservation, having implemented a variety of acclaimed efforts in 2015. Notable initiatives include the conversion of 10,000 sprinkler heads to low-flow systems and replacement of more than 50,000 square feet of grass turf with drought-tolerant plants.
Several of the resort’s established recycling practices have also earned the property multiple “Recycler of the Year” awards from the City of San Diego for outstanding efforts in recycling and sustainable practices. Those initiatives include the use of refillable soap dispensers for guest amenities, LED lighting, water irri- gation systems and “Green Seal Cer- tified” cleaning products.
Bay City brewery ‘hops’ into the beer scene

By FRANK SABATINI Jr.

What used to be a boat repair shop for 30 years in an inoffensive warehouse on Hancock Street is now a place where steel tanks and homegrown bacteria rule the day.

Since its grand opening less than two months ago, Bay City Brewing Co. has grabbed the attention of beer aficionados with its concise rollout of four beers. It is the second brewery and tasting room to emerge along this industri-al loop, which also marks the birthplace of Modern Times Beer on nearby Greenwood Street.

Chris West is Bay City’s head brewer. He hails from Monkey Paw Brewing in the East Village, where he worked as assistant brewer for a year and a half.

“It was an amazing learning experience, and were we able to be creative,” he says.

With the support of three other business partners, West decided it was time to launch his own operation. In doing so, he left behind a bartending job as well as Sessions Public in Point Loma.

When a Realtor informed one of his partners the 4,200-square-foot facility was available, including an additional 1,200 square feet of patio space that came with it, the team jumped at the opportunity.

“We wanted a central location close to the beach because that’s where we all live. It was an alignment of the stars,” he says.

Befriending chemical engineer Aaron Williams, 34, was also advantageous. West met Williams while hanging out at Coronado Brewing Co., when Williams was establishing that company’s quality control lab.

As a co-owner of Bay City, the UCSD grad sees the growing number of breweries that use the beers, sparing him the time and cost of purchasing it from yeast companies.

“For our Sour Wheat, we used a strong, selective bacteria, which gives the beer its unique lemon and pineapple flavors,” says West. “We’re very pleased with the outcome.”

Leading the pack in sales, however, is Bay City’s Session IPA, crafted with Chinook and Equinox hops and lauded for its citrus, grassy notes. West plans on creating a cucumber-basil version of it for an upcoming second production.

The menu also includes a sturdy American Stout, an orange-hued Vienna lager boasting a bread-and-honey finish, a sour brown and the semi-fruity experimental pale ale, made with Nelson hops from New Zealand.

“The Pale Ale was the first beer to be made on our system,” says West, adding that he’s yet to come up with imaginative names for his beers.

In its short life, the brewery has already distributed kegs to a few local establishments, such as Sessions Public, the 3rd Corner in Ocean Beach and San Diego Beerworks in Solana Beach.

“The biggest challenge is that we’re in a city with more than 100 breweries. So getting our product on tap handles at more places will take time because we’re the new kids on the block,” he adds.

With a capacity to produce 2,300 barrels annually, West hopes to start packaging the beers next year for store retailers. To date, he has produced 220 barrels while sourcing the majority of his hops from Washington State.

The tasting room, open seven days a week, greets patrons with looming tanks and a spacious L-shaped bar mantled in bleached Douglas fir. West assures that more interior design work is on the drawing board.

Beers are sold in pints, flights and growlers, and food is available on the patio on Fridays and Saturdays from trucks and catering companies.

When you decide to sell your home, setting your asking price is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Depending on how a buyer is made aware of your home, price is often the first thing he or she sees, and many homes are discarded by prospective buyers as not being in the appropriate price range.

Your asking price is often your home’s “first impression,” and if you want to realize the most money you can for your home, it’s imperative that you make a good first impression.

“This is not as easy as it sounds, and pricing strategy should not be taken lightly. Pricing too high can be as costly to a homeowner as pricing too low. A recent study, which compiles 10 years of industry research, has resulted in a new special report entitled “Home-sellers: How to Get the Price You Want (and Need).” This report will help you understand pricing strategy from three different angles. Whem taken together, this information will help you price your home to not only sell, but sell at the price you want.

To bear a brief recorded message about how to order your FREE copy of this report, call toll-free 1-800-276-0763 and enter 1017. You can call any time. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Get your free special report NOW to learn how to price your home to your maximum financial advantage.

Bay City Brewing owners Aaron Williams (left) and Chris West tend to the tanks at Bay City Brewing Co.

PHOTO BY FRANK SABATINI Jr.
Mission Beach Real Estate Association Gives back to Pacific Beach Elementary Schools

This year Mission Beach Real Estate Association raised $2,090 per school, for each of the 4 elementary schools in PB, Pacific Beach Elementary School, Crown Point Elementary School, Barnard Elementary School and Kate Sessions Elementary School at their annual Links for Learning Golf Tournament which puts their total to over $150,000 raised over the last 15 years.

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$10,000 donation

The MBHS Alumni Association announced that $10,000 was donated to MBHS from proceeds of Phase 1 of the Engraved Brick Fundraiser. The PB community is invited to become a part of MBHS history! Phase 2 of the popular engraved brick fundraiser is open for new orders. Order online at brickorder.com or follow the link on missionbayhighalumni.com. (Above) Alumni Steve Dorris, Cori Smith Meara, Pam Palmer Deita, Ellen Brotman Sawyer and MBHS athletic director Jorge Palacios pose with the novelty check before the football game.

Mission Bay Cluster
Mission Bay Cluster meeting, Thursday, Nov. 5, 6 to 8 p.m., at Kate Sessions Elementary School.

La Jolla’s SD French-American School
La Jolla’s San Diego French-American School will hold an open house on Wednesday, Nov. 11, between 8:30 and 10 a.m. for families with children entering preschool (ages 2 to 4), kindergarten and first grade.

Parents and guardians are invited to learn more about the school's dual-language program. No prior knowledge of French is necessary. The school is located at 6550 Soledad Mountain Road.

For more information or to respond, contact admissionss@sdfrenchschool.org or call (858) 456-2807, ext. 306. The school’s website is sdfrenchschool.org.
World Beach Games coming to MB in 2017

The Association of National Olympic Committees’ general assembly recently unanimously approved the ANOC executive council’s recommendation to select San Diego as the host city of the inaugural 2017 World Beach Games.

The Olympic-style, multi-sport event, which is expected to have a budget of $1.50 million, will be held at Mission Beach and could feature more than 20 sports, including beach tennis, soccer, volleyball, surfing, Jet Skiing, triathlon, track and field and basketball, according to Yahoo Sports. Athletes from all 206 member countries are invited to participate.

“We are truly excited at the opportunity to welcome the world to San Diego,” said Vincent Muadd, chairman of the San Diego Exploratory Foundation, the entity that oversaw the bid process. “Our city and region is the epicenter of beach and active lifestyle, and ANOC World Beach Games will be a seamless fit within our community.”

The USOC played a key role by selecting the city of San Diego to represent the United States during this bid process.

“We’re thrilled that San Diego was selected to host the first-ever ANOC World Beach Games,” said USOC CEO Scott Blackmun. “San Diego has the natural capacity for hosting this exciting new event, and has a fantastic beach and sport culture.”

The ANOC World Beach Games is envisioned to create a global multi-sport platform that organically connects with youth in sports that they are passionate about.

“We were very impressed by the plan that San Diego put forward,” said ANOC president Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah. “As part of the process that selected San Diego, a report from Dow Jones Sport Intelligence was commissioned. This enabled us to independently research and verify important event-related criteria for the ANOC World Beach Games.

“We have worked closely with industry experts to devise an innovative concept which will blend sport, culture and entertainment, and we believe that San Diego is the perfect city to deliver our vision. The ANOC World Beach Games is completely aligned with Olympic Agenda 2020 and will be something new and exciting that people have not seen before. It will help NOCs to reconnect with a whole generation of young people and deliver a positive and lasting legacy for the Olympic movement.”

ANOC has received interest from many cities around the world to host the first ANOC World Beach Games. The ANOC executive council studied the Dow Jones Sport Intelligence comprehensive report before selecting San Diego during its meeting in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 28.

The general assembly unanimously approved San Diego as the host city of the ANOC World Beach Games. Following the approval, the San Diego exploratory committee was invited to present its concept to the 204 NOCs in attendance.

The ANOC president wanted to create an event which will add real value and allow NOCs to engage with millions of young people around the world. To fulfill this vision, the ANOC World Beach Games will move beyond a traditional multi-sport event and incorporate many different cultural and entertainment events into its program.

For more information visit adrenalinamastore.com.
The ghouls and goblins showed up an evening early at Mission Bay High as the previously unbeaten Buccaneers had a frightful time against Point Loma (6-3, 2-1), losing 41-0 in a nightmare on Grand Avenue.

Two first-quarter penalties, two turnovers and missed tackles by the Bucs created a horrific sequence of events that ended with the Pointers in charge 20-0 with four minutes left in the first quarter.

“We had the penalties and a fumbled snap and then everything kind of spiraled down from there,” Mission Bay coach Willie Matson said. “Point Loma outplayed us. They played great.”

To start the game, Mission Bay returned the opening kickoff for a touchdown, but that long run was nullified by a penalty. The Bucs then went three-and-out.

On the Pointers’ first possession, running back Jaylen Griffin sliced and diced the Bucs defense for a 61-yard touchdown run. But the Bucs came back with a 35-yard pass from Jaiden Correa to Michael Sanders to get to the Point Loma 8-yard-line. A penalty forced the Bucs back to the 22, and on third down Correa’s pass was intercepted at the goal line.

Two plays later, Griffin swept right and cut up the sideline for a 71-yard touchdown run.

On the Bucs’ next possession, the snap was fumbled and Point Loma scooped the loose ball and scored 40 yards later to make it 20-0. In the second quarter, Griffin added a 42-yard touchdown run on another sweep right. On the Pointers’ first possession of the second half, Griffin burst up the middle untouched for 26-yard touchdown run, and the game was essentially over.

“We really got smacked pretty good. We just didn’t have it tonight,” Matson said. “From here on out, it’s how we deal with this and how we bounce back.”

Madison (7-2, 3-0) visits Mission Bay (8-1, 2-1) at 6 p.m. Friday, Nov. 6 for a conference game.
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(between the library and Sammy’s)
Sandbar looks to defend title at Taco TKO contest

On Tuesday, Nov. 17, the San Diego Bay Wine + Food Festival gives foodies something to "taco 'bout" with the fourth annual Taco TKO, featuring fish taco and beer presented by Diningout Magazine at Quartyard San Diego.

All San Diegans have a go-to taco joint, and this rough-and-tumble showdown pits San Diego’s top fish taco makers in a head-to-head battle to be crowned San Diego’s finest.

The heat really rises as competitors look to unseat two-time Taco TKO champions Sandbar Sports Grill. Will Sandbar bring home their third consecutive win, or will a new champion be crowned? The power is in the hands of the people, as guests vote for their favorite tacos during the walk-around tasting.

“No visit to San Diego or a Taco Tuesday celebration is complete without beer and fish tacos, and Taco TKO provides an authentic taste of San Diego at an affordable price that all foodies can appreciate,” said Michelle Metter, co-producer of the San Diego Bay Wine + Food Festival.

The citywide fish taco competition welcomes returning champ Sandbar Sports Grill as well as The Blind Burro, PB Fish Shop, Don Chido, The Promiscuous Fork, City Taco, Ironside Fish & Oyster and more to participate in this year’s competition.

The festival moves to a new location this year and is held at Quartyard San Diego. San Diego's first "pop-up" urban park, from 6 to 9 p.m. Tickets to Taco TKO, featuring fish tacos and beer, are on sale for $45 a person. For a complete schedule of events or to purchase tickets for the San Diego Bay Wine + Food Festival, visit sandiegowineclassic.com.

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Guests will be able to sip on unique craft beers on draft while weighing in on the chef's taco creations specially paired together with beers from various breweries.
Greenpeace brought a mermaid to a fish fight

Hannah Fraser, mermaid performance artist and ocean activist, joined Greenpeace at Chicken of the Sea’s San Diego headquarters in Sorrento Valley and spoke with residents and activists in Pacific Beach on Oct. 28 to demand that the company stop greenwashing its record on ocean sustainability.

“Chicken of the Sea has worked hard to greenwash its image with a majestic mermaid mascot that appeals to children and families across the country,” said Fraser, who is based in Los Angeles.

“I came to San Diego to inform people who buy tuna about this company’s record of ocean destruction. The families I have talked with are outraged to learn that Chicken of the Sea uses fishing methods that needlessly kill sharks, turtles, seabirds and other marine life.”

Outside Chicken of the Sea headquarters, Fraser wore her mermaid tail and used a megaphone to demand a response from the company’s CEO. The activist held a sign urging Chicken of the Sea to “stop rippin’ up the sea” and helped deliver 80,000 petition signatures and photos from concerned customers demanding the company stop greenwashing and pose for photos with Fraser at the company’s U.S. headquarters in Sorrento Valley.

According to Greenpeace, despite its sustainability claims, the tuna company uses fishing methods that unnecessarily kill marine life, and Thai Union Group has been implicated in significant human rights abuses and forced labor at sea.

Greenpeace recently crowdsourced three billboards with a parody logo that were set to go up in locations throughout San Diego on Nov. 2, including one directly across from the Chicken of the Sea headquarters. On Oct. 15, labor unions representing nearly 5 million urged Thai Union and Chicken of the Sea to reform their social and environmental practices.

Greenpeace plans to continue to put pressure on the tuna companies.

Clubs in the movie – which the company denies – inspired a recent state Coastal Commission decision to force the company to slowly phase out its killer whale program as a condition for obtaining permits for larger orca enclosures.

In 2013, SeaWorld paid the city about $1.4 million, money that was funneled toward day-to-day operating needs and improvements at city parks.

Lease records show the company forked over only $11.7 million last year and that its rent payments in the first eight months of this year were down another 9 percent from the same period in 2014. Attendance slid downward last year, too.

A city spokesman said SeaWorld San Diego reported about 3.8 million visitors in 2014, about a 17 percent drop from the previous two years.

That decrease is steeper than the one estimated in an annual report released earlier this year by the nonprofit Themed Entertainment Association and AECOM, an economic consulting firm. The report found SeaWorld San Diego saw a 12 percent drop in attendance from 2013 to 2014, while its sister park in Orlando saw an 8 percent drop. By comparison, the groups found the nation’s other top 20 amusement parks saw an average 2 percent spike in visitors.

The company’s taken an even harder hit in the stock market. SeaWorld, which owns three namesake parks and another nine regional and water parks, has seen its stock prices halved since “Blackfish” was released in July of 2013.

SeaWorld CEO Joel Manby, who took the helm in April, has been upfront about the challenges the company’s facing.

“We realize we have much work ahead of us to recover more of our attendance base, increase revenue and improve our performance, as returning to historical performance levels will take time and investment,” Manby said in August, when the company released its second-quarter results. Manby is set to detail SeaWorld’s third-quarter performance and its long-term plan for the company early next month.

In another financial call in May, Manby declined to offer specifics on that plan but hinted SeaWorld may try to focus on the range of experiences its parks offer rather than single draws like the killer whale shows.

“If you look at Busch Tampa, which is really one of our highest market-share parks and does incredibly well, it has a very strong mix of great animal experiences as well as great ride experiences, and that combination is incredibly unique in our industry,” Manby said. “It really is a good model that we’re looking at for all of our parks.”

But city and coastal mandates could hinder the company if it tries to pivot dramatically from its current model.

The city lease and master plan for the park require that at least 7.5 percent of SeaWorld’s attractions include significant animal education or conservation-related elements, which could complicate a shift toward more rides or fewer animals. The master plan also dictates that no more than 25 percent of the theme park can be utilized for “movie presentation, animal attractions need to be under 61 feet.”

It’s not clear if Manby or SeaWorld are interested in drastically changing the SeaWorld parks anytime soon. Last year, the company repeatedly told me it was proud of its care of its marine mammals and had no interest in programming work on educational or animal attractions.

SeaWorld’s since announced plans to commit $10 million to research killer whales in the wild and $100 million to double the size of its killer whale habitat. Now that project may be in limbo given the Coastal Commission’s condition that SeaWorld stop breeding orcas if it chooses to build the project. The company plans to fight that ruling in court.

Lisa Halvorsen is a reporter at Voice of San Diego. Know of something she should check out? You can contact her directly at lisa@vosd.org or (619) 325-0528.
El Niño, the "cool" phase of high air pressure in the western Pacific. El Niño is accompanied by central and east-central equatorial ocean water that develops in the Southern Oscillation (ENSO). It is the "warm" phase of the El Niño ing Christmas in South America, is and hundreds of feet deep out in the degrees (much) warmer than usual a "significant bank of water 2.23 described the building El Niño, "El Niño," "The Christ Child" in Spanish, referring to its impact during Christmas in South America, is the "warm" phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO). It is associated with a band of warm ocean water that develops in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific. El Niño is accompanied by high air pressure in the western Pacific and low air pressure in the eastern Pacific. The "cool" phase of ENSO is called La Niña, translating as "The Girl."

The ENSO cycle, both El Niño and La Niña, causes global changes of both temperatures and rainfall. Because El Niño's warm pool feeds thunderstorms above, it creates increased rainfall across the east-central and eastern Pacific Ocean. This anomaly happens at irregular intervals of two to seven years lasting nine months to two years, with the average period lasting five years. On the West Coast of the United States, El Niños typically cause significantly wetter winters. David Pierce, climate researcher at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, verified that an El Niño could be enhanced by a concurrent ocean anomaly known as "The Blob." "The Blob" is a patch of unusually warm water off the Gulf Coast of Alaska, said Pierce, adding, "The Blob has moved down and has been hanging out over the West Coast, including California, for more than a year. It's hard to tell how much effect El Niño and The Blob will have," said Pierce, pointing out that "every indication is both will continue through this winter."

Pierce offered a gambling analogy to describe the likely impact of an El Niño/"The Blob on California's winter climate. "It's like having dice that are loaded," he said. "You don't know what (precipitation) number is going to come up until you roll the dice. But the odds are we're more likely to have a wet winter, though it's not actually guaranteed."

Pierce said other factors, like tides, can have a huge impact when coupled with El Niños in the amount of disruption such an event can cause. In the 1982-83 El Niño, he said, "a lot of the storms happened during high tides, which caused a lot of coastal damage. There was less coastal damage during the 1997-98 El Niño because storms weren't associated with high tides." Pierce described El Niños/La Niñas as "a very natural phenomenon known from paleoclimatological records to have been going on for thousands of years. He added El Niños/La Niñas have been happening intermittently for the past century with varying results. "In 1997-98, California got 180 percent of normal precipitation," Pierce said, pointing out that that's extreme and noting El Niños typically average about 30 percent higher precipitation than usual. "You can't really make a prediction for how much it will depart from normal," he said.

Noting that El Niños "cause more moisture to go up into the atmosphere in the form of clouds and precipitation," Sandmeyer pointed out this temperature-moisture oscillation serves as an "engine" driving weather. "It's the unequal warmth of the Earth's surface that causes weather," the lifeguard said, adding that El Niños create a "bigger engine" that translates into greater-than-normal rainfall.

Above-average rainfall is going to be more impactful throughout San Diego County, including along the coast. Nearly 54,600 San Diego County residents, about 1.7 percent of the total, live in 100-year flood zones, mostly known flood plains that could be subject to flooding during El Niño-fueled rainstorms over the next several months, according to a report released by the National University System Institute for Policy Research.

Sandmeyer, team leader for the San Diego River Rescue Team, which is charged with safeguarding people along waterways during heavy rains and flooding, said El Niño's impact along the coast could be pronounced. "It would create pollution and add to the erosion of the beach in some areas," he said.

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