

▶ READ ABOUT TALLAHASSEE OFFICE OPERATIONS DURING THE FEB 4TH VALDOSTA TOR- NADO.....1

○ ISSUE 44

○ Spring

○ 2024



▶ EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT—THE WOMEN OF NWS TALLAHAS- SEE.....3



▶ OFFICE OUTREACH EFFORTS.....4

Tallahassee topics

NEWS AND NOTES FROM YOUR LOCAL NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE.

The National Weather Service (NWS) office in Tallahassee, FL provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for Southeast Alabama, Southwest & South Central Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and Big Bend, and the adjacent Gulf of Mexico coastal waters. Our primary mission is the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the local economy.

Tallahassee Office Operations During the Feb 4th Valdosta Tornado

By Israel Gonzalez

On February 4th, an area of low pressure developed near the Gulf Coast and moved inland over the NWS Tallahassee forecast area. This system produced 3 confirmed tornadoes, one of which was an EF-2 in Lowndes County, GA that injured 2 people. What made this tornado unique and challenging to warn on was that it developed in a low-precipitation area with respect to the parent storm. This article gives an inside look at key moments during the crucial 5-minute warning-decision process. At 305pm ET, there were no radar indications of a tornado amidst ongoing storms, but the reality was that there was one unknowingly on the ground at that point. A 307pm ET, a crucial chat comes into our Slack Channel (NWSChat 2.0) from a HAM/ARES radio operator, with an attached image (bottom-right) of an apparent distant tornado from a water tank cam in SE Valdosta. At 308pm ET, the warning forecaster, Don Van Dyke (DVD) replied to the operator asking



what direction the camera was facing, then pivoted to the Valdosta area on radar to examine more closely where the potential tornado could be, and identifies a low-precipitation area separated from the main storm just to its NW. At this point, DVD drafted a warning for that suspicious area while anxiously awaiting the operator’s response, for which at 309pm ET, came back as “at the Valdosta Cinemas facing southeast”. A fellow Lead Forecaster on shift, Karleisa Rogacheski (KR) then quickly pinpointed the exact location and it aligned with the suspected area on radar. The Tornado Warning was subsequently issued at 310pm ET. Moments later, the next radar scan revealed a sudden spike in the reflectivity in the low-precipitation zone, coincident with debris being lofted in the air by the tornado, itself.

The operator’s chat saved at least 1-2 minutes on the tornado warning issuance time. Without his chat, the tornado may have not been recognizable on radar until 310pm ET. Residents said they got the warnings with enough lead time to seek shelter. For DVD, it was the most challenging tornado warning decision of his 15-year NWS career and commented that, “It is the single best chat I’ve ever gotten in my career so far”. As for KR, it was a career-defining moment for which she said, “These stories are a powerful reminder that our work matters. Had it not been from Randy sharing those images with us and DVD jumping into action to get the warning out, lives may have been lost.” Additional kudos must also be given to the following forecasters who made strong contributions during that shift: Lance Franck, Kristian Oliver, Joe Worster, and Jasmine Montgomery.



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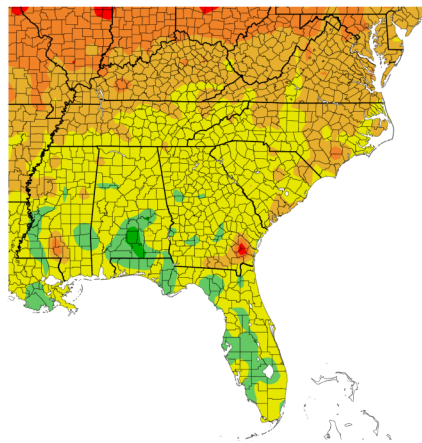
Winter Highlights *By Israel Gonzalez*

December was highlighted by anomalous wetness, a rare storm-force Gulf Low event, and a windy Christmas. The most widespread rains fell on 12/2. From the 15th to the 17th a very strong Gulf Low moved through the Suwannee Valley. The latter prompted the issuance of a rare Storm Warning over southern Apalachee Bay and High Wind Warning from coastal Taylor to coastal Dixie County. Locally heavy rain was observed around the Cross City area while multiple stations reported non-thunderstorm gusts in excess of 40 mph across the Big Bend. Frost and freeze conditions closed out the year.

The main weather event in January was a [significant tornado outbreak on the 9th](#). An unusually powerful low-pressure system and associated wind field brought an intense squall line and isolated supercells ahead of it to the Tri-State Area. A myriad of impacts were felt across the region, namely 14 survey-confirmed tornadoes. Six of the tornadoes were rated an EF-2 or higher with the strongest being an EF-3 (140 mph winds) at Lower Grand Lagoon in Bay County, FL. There were a total of 9 reported injuries (7 at an RV Park in Jackson County, FL) and 1 fatality (Cottonwood, AL). Secondary notable January highlights were two Arctic blasts, one of which prompted the rare issuance of a Winter Weather Advisory for parts of SE AL for light freezing rain. Our first Hard Freeze Warnings & Wind Chill Advisories were issued thereafter. The entire Tri-State area experienced sub-freezing temperatures with northern locations dropping to the upper teens and wind chills as low as the single digits. Similar conditions were felt on the weekend of the 20th-21st.

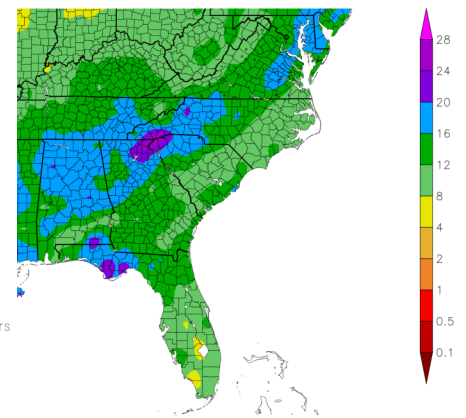
Two events defined February for the Tri-State area. The 1st occurred on the 4th when a non-tropical area of low pressure developed near the Gulf Coast, then moved inland to produce [3 confirmed tornadoes](#). The 2nd event was from the 11th-12th when a frontal system approached the region and produced an extensive training band of convection that led to considerable flash flooding across Houston County, AL into around Albany. A widespread swath of 3-5" was measured from SE AL through parts of SW GA with isolated amounts of 7+ inches! This heavy rain combined with additional rain falling north of the Wiregrass Region prompted multiple local river basins to reach minor flood stage through mid-month - mainly Chattahoochee, Flint, and Apalachicola River.

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
12/1/2023 - 2/29/2024



3/6/2024 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Precipitation (in)
12/1/2023 - 2/29/2024



NOAA Regional Climate Centers

Generated 3/6/2024 at HPRCC using provisional data.

NOAA Regional Climate Centers

Winter Climate Summary: Tallahassee was warmer than normal (*upper-left figure*) with a mean average temperature of 55.3°. The highest/lowest temperatures of the season were 80°/25°. There were a total of 14 freezing days (below normal), but no hard freeze of at least 23° was observed. In fact, the latter hasn't occurred since December 27, 2022, which is the 11th longest streak on record at over 400 days! The bigger story was how unseasonably wet this past winter was. The December-January-February accumulation of 18.5" (*upper-right figure*) was the highest winter rainfall total since 2018-2019. Over half of those amounts were measured in December alone! A strong El Niño was the main culprit behind the wet weather. Lastly, the strongest wind gust measured at KTLH was 55 mph on January 9th, the day of the anomalously strong severe weather event.

Spring Climate Normals: The normal mean temperature and seasonal rainfall accumulation is 67.9° and 12.13", respectively. On average, Spring is the 2nd coolest and driest season of the year. The normal high/low temperatures are 80.6°/55.3°. Most of the Spring climate is dictated by frontal systems and thunderstorms. As a reminder, severe weather season is prominent from March through May, in addition to a greater risk for wildfires as temperatures become warmer and conditions turn drier. The latter is discussed further on page 5.

Employee Spotlight - The Women of NWS Tallahassee

By Israel Gonzalez

IS THERE A TOPIC YOU'D LIKE US TO COVER? SEND US AN E-MAIL:

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NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Women's
HISTORY
MONTH
2024



To commemorate Women's History Month this March, we want to acknowledge all five women currently on the NWS Tallahassee team: Felecia Bowser - Meteorologist In Charge (*centered*), Jennifer Nichols - Administrative Assistant (*upper left*), Karleisa Rogacheski - Lead Forecaster (*upper right*), Molly Merrifield - Lead Forecaster (*lower left*), and Jasmine Montgomery - General Forecaster (*lower right*). Each individual plays an important role in what we do collectively as an office; between supervising, to timesheet management, to forecasting. Our office is fortunate to have diverse representation from different backgrounds that provides us much-needed versatility.





Winter Outreach Efforts

By Mark Wool

Management-Admin Team

Felecia Bowser, MIC
Mark Wool, WCM
Parks Camp, SOO
Doug Sherrick, ESA
Jennifer Nichols, ASA
Brian Coats, ITO
Kelly Godsey, Hydrologist
Ricardo Humphreys, OPL

Lead Forecasters

Don Van Dyke
Blair Scholl
Andy Haner
Karleisa Rogacheski
Molly Merrifield

Forecasters

Lance Franck
Wright Dobbs
Eric Bunker
Israel Gonzalez
Kristian Oliver
Jasmine Montgomery
Cameron Young
Joe Worster
David Reese

Pathways Interns

Sophie Bignault, Robert Szot,
Nico Porcelli

Electronic Technicians

Aaron Basti
Vacant

December began with the annual observance of SKYWARN Recognition Day from the evening of the 1st through the evening of the 2nd. On the 3rd, the NWS provided a monthly brief to FL and GA HAM/ARES networks. On the 8th, WCM Mark Wool and forecaster Jasmine Montgomery attended the FL Region 1 EM quarterly meeting in De Funiak Springs and provided our partners with a winter outlook. On the 19th, Mark discussed the same topic at the quarterly Apalachee Regional Planning Council Meeting.

In January, Mark provide an office tour for a couple of families. On the 8th, Senior Forecaster Blair Scholl and forecaster Kristian Oliver conducted SKYWARN Spotter training for Tyndall AFB staff. After the training, the two discussed our marine forecast and warning program at the on-base marina and left some safety brochures. On the 18th, Mark attended the GA Area 2 quarterly meeting in Blakely, GA to discuss the winter outlook and office initiatives for 2024. That same day, forecasters Eric Bunker and Cameron Young conducted an office tour for the Gadsden County 4-H Club. On the 19th and 22nd, our office conducted introductory/refresher partner training for NWS-Chat 2.0 powered by Slack, an upgraded version of our internal partner coordination chat room used by core partners in emergency management, broadcast media and other govt. agencies. Finally, on the 31st, Mark joined the NWS Jacksonville WCM Al Sandrik, WTXL Chief Meteorologist Casanova Nurse, and EMs from Dixie, Lowndes and Columbia Counties, on a panel discussion at the FL Emergency Professionals Association (FEPA) Annual Meeting in Sandestin, FL. The panel was moderated by MIC Felecia Bowser an discussed challenges association with Major Hurricane Idalia.

In February, ESA Doug Sherrick conducted a tour of the KTLH Doppler radar for an FSU Radar Meteorology class. On the 3rd, Mark tabled at The Tallahassee School of Math and Science's annual Math Stars competition. That same day, senior forecaster and fire weather program leader Andy Haner, and forecaster Wright Dobbs, manned a booth at the Red Hills Fire Festival. As part of Severe Weather Awareness/Preparedness Week, Mark and Andy spoke at the ATTA Library in Abbeville, AL at an event sponsored by the Matrons' Club. On the 7th, the office participated in statewide tornado drills in FL and GA. Mark also participated in STEAM Night at Leon County's Ft. Braden School. On the 9th, an office tour was conducted by forecaster Eric Bunker for Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) teams from three of our FL Panhandle counties. To wrap up the week, Mark spoke at the 2nd Saturday Sharing event at The Museum at Fred George Greenway. On the 12th, Andy provided fire weather instruction at the National Prescribed Fire Training Center located at Tall Timbers here in Tallahassee. On the 13th, Andy and forecaster Cameron Young provide advanced training on NWSChat 2.0, which included a severe weather scenario. On the 26th, our office partnered with NWS Mobile to kick off a week-long annual campaign to increase rip current awareness. There were plenty of social media posts and media interviews, highlighted by forecaster Lance Franck's live national interview with Fox Weather. On the 27th, senior service hydrologist, Kelly Godsey taught the basics of weather to four classes of 5th graders at Sabal Palm Elementary School. Finally, on the 29th Mark addressed a group of regional PIOs at the Leon County Public Safety Complex to discuss messaging for extreme weather events.

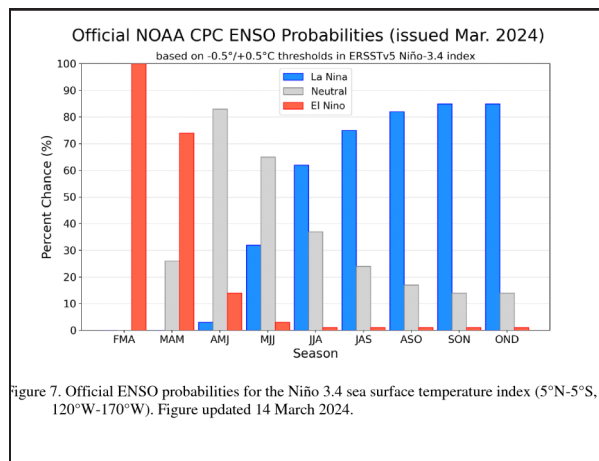
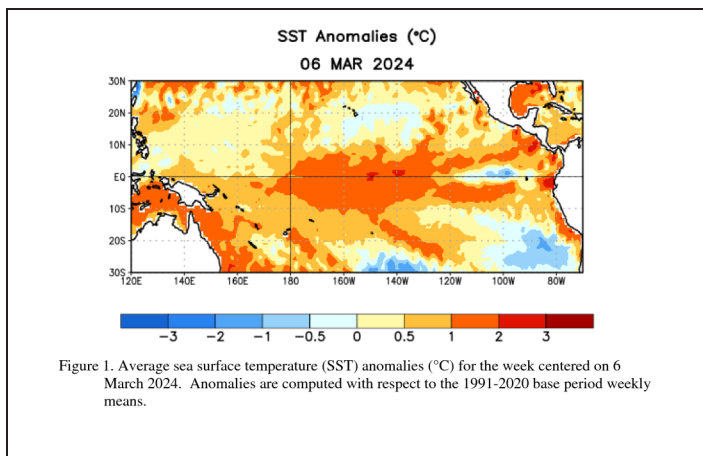


TALL TIMBERS

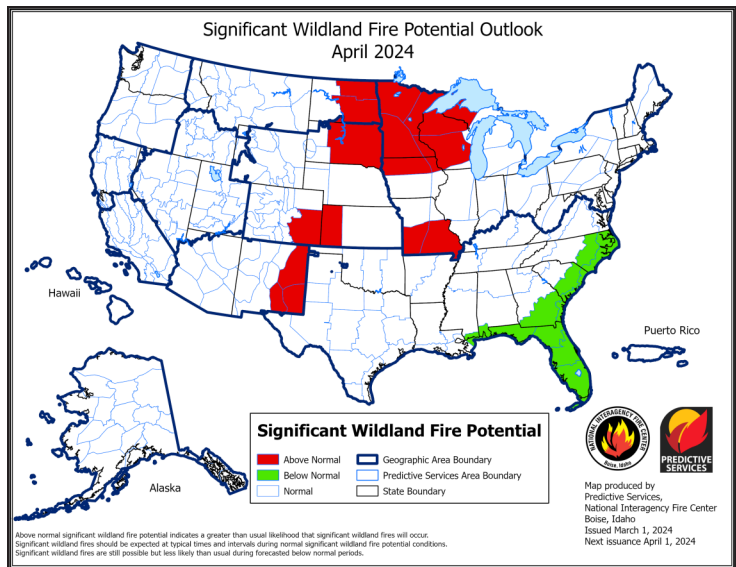
Gadsden



State of ENSO and Climate & Wildfire/River Flood Outlook for Spring 2024, by Israel Gonzalez



El Niño Advisory/La Niña Watch (March 14, 2024): A transition from [El Niño to ENSO-neutral](#) is likely by April-June 2024 (83% chance), with increasing odds of La Niña developing in June-August 2024 (62% chance). Below-average sea-surface temperatures (SSTs, *upper-left figure*) appeared in a small area of the Eastern Equatorial Pacific amidst a weakly positive signal while area-averaged subsurface SST anomalies were slightly negative. Climate models indicate that a transition to ENSO-neutral some time this spring is highly probable (*upper-right figure*). Historically, La Niña tends to follow strong El Niño events, which adds to the confidence of occurring by this summer despite the sometimes less reliable spring season forecasts. Impacts from El Niño (albeit weakened) persist through April 2024, as implied by the “**likely above**” probabilities of above-average precipitation from April through June across the Eastern US (*bottom-right figure*). Chances also favor warmer-than-normal conditions at 33-50%. One could assume a wetter-than-normal season prompts below-normal temperatures. The official [NOAA Spring Outlook was released on March 21st](#).



Spring Wildland Fire Outlook: Given the anomalously wet winter and signals favoring a continued wetter-than-normal pattern during the Spring months, [significant wildfire potential](#) is **below normal** across the Southeast US for March and April (*middle-left figure*). Drought is also not expected for the foreseeable future (*not shown*).

River Flood Risk: Multiple local rivers have a **≥50% chance of exceeding flood levels** through May. The Chipola River near Altha currently has the best potential to reach moderate flood stage, while minor flooding is possible in parts of the Choctawhatchee, Apalachicola, Ochlocknee, Flint, and Withlacoochee basins.

