

El Nino may calm 2006 hurricane season

September 7 2006

Hurricane forecasters say a weather phenomenon called El Nino may make the rest of the 2006 Atlantic hurricane season quieter than predicted.

An El Nino is a major warming of the equatorial waters in the Pacific Ocean that usually occurs every 3 to 7 years, producing a shift in normal weather patterns. An El Nino can cause droughts in some places and floods in others, National Geographic News said, but it can also suppress hurricane formation in the Atlantic.

Colorado State University meteorologists Phil Klotzbach and William Gray say they see indications an El Nino might form this fall and that has again led them to reduce their estimate of tropical storms they believe will form in the Atlantic.

The meteorologists say they expect the total seasonal activity will be slightly below the long-term average. During October they say they expect below average activity, with two named storms -- one of which will become a hurricane. But they say they now expect no major hurricanes during October.

Six tropical storms -- one becoming a hurricane -- have formed since the season began June 1. The Atlantic hurricane season ends Nov. 30.

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