

La Nina-caused woes down under

January 10 2011, By Alan Buis

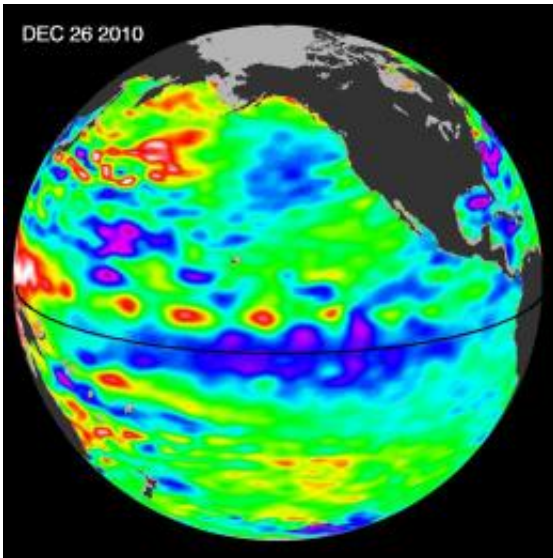


The Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER) instrument on NASA's Terra spacecraft captured this image of extensive flooding in Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia, on Jan. 7, 2011. Credit: NASA/GSFC/METI/ERSDAC/JAROS, and U.S./Japan ASTER Science Team

The current La Niña in the Pacific Ocean, one of the strongest in the past 50 years, continues to exert a powerful influence on weather around the world, affecting rainfall and temperatures in varying ways in different locations.

For Australia, La Niña typically means above-average rains, and the current La Niña is no exception. Heavy rains that began in late December led to the continent's worst flooding in nearly a half century, at its peak inundating an area the size of Germany and France combined.

The Associated Press reports about 1,200 homes in 40 communities are underwater and about 11,000 others are damaged, resulting in thousands of evacuations and 10 deaths to date.



The current state of this season's La Nina is shown in this Ocean Surface Topography Mission (OSTM)/Jason-2 satellite image of the Pacific Ocean, based on the average of 10 days of data centered on Dec. 26, 2010. The new image depicts places where the Pacific sea-surface height is higher (warmer) than normal as yellow and red, while places where the sea surface is lower (cooler) than normal are shown in blue and purple. Green indicates near-normal conditions. Sea-surface height is an indicator of how much of the sun's heat is stored in the upper ocean. The La Nina cool waters stretch from the eastern to the central Pacific Ocean. Credit: NASA JPL Ocean Surface Topography Team

On Jan. 7, 2011, the Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER) instrument on NASA's Terra spacecraft captured this image of the inundated city of Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia. With a population of 75,000, Rockhampton is the largest city affected by the current flooding. Torrential rains in

northeastern Australia caused the Fitzroy River to overflow its banks and flood much of the city and surrounding agricultural lands. Both the airport and major highways are underwater, isolating the city.

In this natural color rendition, muddy water is brown, and shallow, clearer water is gray. Vegetation is depicted in various shades of green, and buildings and streets are white. The image is located at 23.3 degrees south latitude, 150.5 degrees east longitude, and covers an area of 22 by 28.1 kilometers (13.6 by 17.4 miles).

More information: For more information, visit:
photojournal.jpl.nasa.gov/catalog/PIA13775 .

Provided by JPL/NASA

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