El Niño/La Niña Watch

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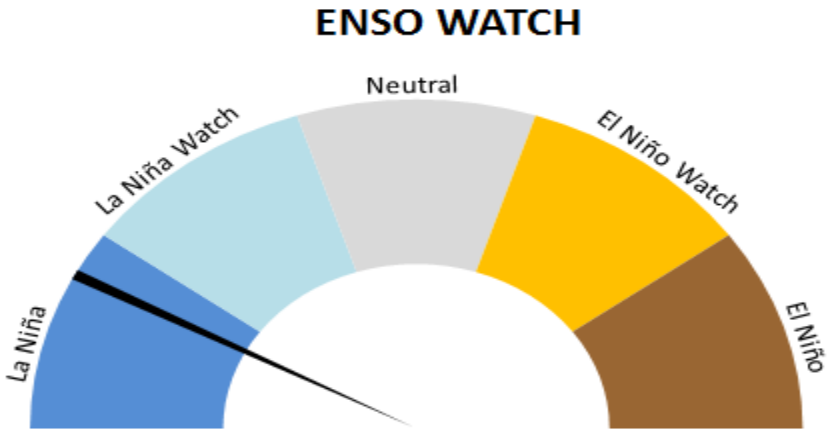
ENSO Watch Update (based on the NIÑO 3.4 index (120-170W, 5S-5N)) **Issued: November 09, 2017**

UPDATED
La Niña Declared



A La Niña is now in place, as both atmospheric and oceanic conditions in the eastern and central equatorial Pacific Ocean reflect La Niña conditions. The odds for these conditions to persist until the end of the year and into the start of the 2018 dry season are now 65-75%.

Why are La Niña conditions important for Trinidad and Tobago?

La Niña during the period November to February is usually at its strongest, and historically, the most commonly experienced impacts in Trinidad and Tobago during this same period when La Niña is present are wetter than usual conditions. This is because La Niña favours upward moving air in the Caribbean region and tends to be associated with reduced wind shear; thus making it easier for rain producing clouds to form. The local atmospheric readjustments most often triggered by La Niña are an increase in the frequency of visits to our region by migrating shear lines or zones of low level convergence. These are due to fragments of, or decaying elongated cold fronts reaching as far as the southern Caribbean region. This often results in cooler conditions, especially colder nights. Given that La Niña typically peaks during December to February, the current La Niña is likely to be a weak one and its impacts are likely to be less than during similar events.

In order for La Niña conditions to be declared, sea-surface temperatures (SSTs) across a region in the eastern and central tropical Pacific Ocean defined as Niño3.4 **(120-170W, 5S-5N)** must be at least 0.5°C below the seasonal average, with accompanying changes to the atmospheric conditions. To be deemed as a La Niña episode in the historical record, these conditions must be sustained for at least five overlapping three-month periods.