

THE AUTUMN FORECAST

FOR CENTRAL VICTORIA 2008

Predicted by Kevin Long as at 26/2/2008 ph. 03 5441 2394

The La Nina climate pattern peaked during December; it is now showing a steady decline. This is now the 4th La Nina cycle that has failed to deliver the normal amount of rain.

The intensity of the Chinese Effect has been growing steadily again since June last year, this is one of the major forces that has been reducing our autumn, winter and spring rains in recent decades.

The development of the Chinese Effect and other climate changing forces during the last 40 years has been reducing Bendigo's decadal rainfall averages as recorded below:

1970's averaged 627mm

1980's averaged 574mm

1990's averaged 536mm

2000 to 2008 averaged 427mm.

The most recent figures indicate that the trend is still declining.

During January the Chinese Effect further intensified and drew most of our late summer rain further north than usual, resulting in extreme flooding in Coastal Queensland.

The dominant high pressure cells are maintaining their passage running through Tasmania, further south than normal thus reducing the influence of the southern cold fronts and low pressure systems. This has now become an established pattern in recent years, and I believe this situation will continue into the future.

During summer the SOI has been steadily rising, (as at 26/2/2008 positive 20 was reached), but still the expected rain from the Pacific failed to reach us. Yes you guessed it, predominately due to the effects of the "Chinese Brown Cloud", resulting in warmer sea surface anomalies north of New Guinea which continues to draw most of our atmospheric moisture northward and beyond.

The Indian Ocean remains neutral at the present time, with no major warm anomalies to promote the jet stream moisture from the northwest during April and May.

Significant rain from the North West is conditional to the daily SOI dropping into some big negative figures for a week or so and the development of warm anomalies in the North East Indian Ocean.

I therefore forecast below average rain this autumn and a patchy start to the growing season.

Like last year, this growing season has a very high risk of running out of moisture during spring, due to the transition phase expected from the La Nina cycle towards the next El Nino cycle.

This El Nino phase is due to start developing after June this year; it would be wise to prepare ourselves for another below average winter/spring resulting in minimal reservoir inflows again.

As mentioned in my Summer Forecast, my estimate for total rainfall for this year is about 75% of the long term average, generally across central Victoria (Bendigo approximately 400mm).

Update 1-5-08 This year's low monthly rain totals for the Bendigo is the latest example of a strong Chinese Effect now running! January 34mm, February 8mm, March 12mm, April 14mm.

The Autumn break looks like it will be light and late, the growing season if it gets a start will be short. Look out for my updates as time goes by.