

Fire and Forest

Rainfall is Unpredictable; Fire Abatement is Constant

by Chris Kramer

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With the weekend rain a couple of weeks ago it was a nice change from our dry year thus far. Plants and trees always seem to perk up after a good soaking. As I write this, the forecast is a chance of thunderstorms and rain for the next week, always a welcome respite to an otherwise warm, dry summer. The lightning that may come with it is the downside to tropical weather in the forest this time of year.

While the topic of conversation over the past year has been the prolonged drought and the need to conserve water, more recently the idea that we may be in for a wetter than normal winter has surfaced. This El Niño effect is already showing up in record-high sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the Eastern Pacific ocean. These most recent findings and data collected by weather scientists and NOAA show patterns that are setting up much like the El Niño events that occurred in 1982-83 and 1997-98. Rainfall amounts during these winters were greatly above average but the rain from these events did not start until after the first of January and then only lasted for one winter. This abundance of rain will help to replenish lakes and reservoirs and put water in the soil to recharge the groundwater table and aquifers.

What positive impact this additional rainfall will have on our already stressed forest trees are yet to be seen. I would think it could only help. It has been this drought that has allowed the invasive insects to return and take advantage of weak and susceptible trees.

One wet winter is not our lifesaver. We can only hope it starts another cycle of average rainfall. This may then begin to build back what has been drawn down. They say the drought didn't happen in one year and it will take more than a good year to end it.

Like we stress every year, do your property fire abatement and be ready for the threat of fire. And with the winter forecast ahead be ready for days of steady and sometimes heavy rainfall that may be yet to come. Remember; be careful what you ask for.