TRANSCRIPT

NOAA 2021 Hurricane Season Outlook Virtual Media Briefing
August 4, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. EDT via GoToMeeting
Hosted by NOAA National Weather Service Public Affairs

Media advisory about briefing
NOAA to update 2021 Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook
Hurricane Outlook news release
Atlantic hurricane season shows no signs of slowing

0:12

Good morning. This is Lauren Gaches with NOAA's Office of Public Affairs. Will give just another moment or two here for our media partners to join us before we start today's webinar.

1:49

Good morning, everyone.

1:51

And thank you for joining the update to NOAA's 2021 Hurricane Season Outlook.

1:56

This media briefing is being recorded, so if you do not wish to be recorded, please disconnect at this time.

2:02

My name is Lauren Gaches and I'm the media contact for today's Outlook update.

2:05

At the conclusion of this briefing you may reach me by e-mail at Lauren.Gaches@noaa.gov or by phone at 202-740-8314.

2:16

My contact information is also located on the media advisory for today's announcement.

2:22

I'm joined today by Matthew Rosencrans, NOAA's lead hurricane season forecaster, to provide you with the science information behind our updated outlook for the 2021 Atlantic hurricane season.

2:33

NOAA updates its outlook once every year as the peak months of the hurricane season, which are August through October, get underway.

2:40

We'll begin today's media briefing with remarks from our speaker. And then we'll take questions from reporters.

2:45

If you would like to ask a question during the question and answer portion of this briefing, please click the hand icon in the GoTo Webinar window next to your name.

2:54

I'll then call upon each reporter that virtually raises their hand and your line will be unmuted.

2:59

You may also use the questions tool in your go to webinar window, to type a question for our speaker about today's Hurricane Outlook.

3:06

Please be sure to state or type your full name and media affiliation when asking your question.

3:11

With that, I'd like to welcome Mr. Matthew Rosencranz for his remarks.

3:16

The Atlantic hurricane season officially extends from June through November, and we're now entering the peak months of the season.

3:24

So far this year, five named Storms have formed, one of which became a hurricane, and was the earliest fifth, named storm on record.

3:32

NOAA’s updated outlook for the 2021 Atlantic hurricane season.

3:37

Indicates amount above normal season is most likely, but with some minor changes from the may look.

3:43

The updated outlook reflects the number of expected named storms will likely be in the range of 15 to 21.

3:50

That range doesn't include 7 to 10 possible hurricanes.

3:54

Of those 3 to 5 could become major hurricanes, which are hurricanes that reach Category 3, 4, or five.

4:01

This updated outlook accounts for the five named storms, including one hurricane, that have already formed this season.

4:08

Given the increase in the predicted number of named storms and hurricanes, there is now a 65% chance for an above-normal season, maybe 25% chance for a near-normal season, with a 10% chance to be a below-normal season.

4:22

With the 2021 Atlantic hurricane season now well underway, there are several factors that we took into consideration when updating our analysis.

4:31

While overall, we analyzed conditions supportive of our prediction of the season will be considered above average for the overall season activity.

4:39

There are a mix of factors among the analyzed atmospheric and oceanic conditions.

4:45

Last month, NOAA declared a La Niña watch. Meaning there is a potential for La Niña conditions to develop during the 2021 hurricane season.

4:54

La Niña occurs when there are cooler than average sea surface temperatures in the equatorial region of the Pacific Ocean, and a corresponding atmospheric signal.

5:03

La Niña is linked to weakening Wind Shear over the Caribbean and Tropical Atlantic Ocean, which favors more and stronger Atlantic storms.

5:12

This summer, we are observing some of those areas that reduce vertical wind shear across the Atlantic Basin.

5:18

In addition to reduced wind shear measurements do indicate a favorable West African monsoon.

5:25

Both of those factors are signals for an above average seasonal activity.

5:29

Now, in contrast to last year, sea surface temperatures are closer to average across the Atlantic main development region, which contributes to our analysis that this season, while likely above average, is not likely to be as active as last year.

5:44

These conditions are all set against the backdrop of the ongoing warm phase of the Atlantic Multi-decadal Oscillation, which has been favoring more active hurricane season since 19 95.

5:56

August through October marks the peak months of the hurricane season while the tropics have been relatively slow over the past few weeks.

6:04

Though our forecasters do anticipate that a busy hurricane season remains ahead.

6:08

Now is the time to be vigilant about your preparedness plans and potential actions.

6:14

As we have seen in recent years, threats from hurricanes are not limited to damaging winds but also dangerous storm surge and torrential rain and wind flooding.

6:23

Residents in regions prone to inland flooding, join our coastal neighbors and stay tuned to National Hurricane Center for the latest Watches and Warnings all season long.

6:33

Also, visit FEMA's ready.gov for preparedness tips, and be sure to play close attention to your local emergency managers during a storm for evacuation and safety information.

6:44

Regardless of the predicted activity, it doesn't take one storm to have catastrophic impacts on lives and communities.

6:51

Everyone should know their hurricane risk, have a plan, and be prepared for the upcoming core of the season.

6:58

Thank you, and back to you, Lauren.

7:04

Thank you, Matt.

7:05

We'll now take questions.

7:07

Specific questions, about the outlook for our media partners that have joined us on the webinar.

7:11

I'd like to remind everyone of the instructions that we gave at the top of the call. If you'd like to ask a question, please click the hand icon in the goto Webinar window next to your name that appears to the right of your screen.

7:21

I'll then call upon those reporters with a virtually raised hand.

7:24

Once you are called on your line will be unmuted.

7:27

You may also use the questions tool in your GoTo Webinar window to type a question for our speaker about today's outlook.

7:33

Please be sure to state or type your full name and media affiliation when asking your question. I'd ask for your patience now as we moderate your questions as it may take a few moments for those questions to come in and to organize them in the queue.

8:00

Our first question comes from Seth Borenstein.

8:06

Set your line.

8:08

Yes, thank you so much Matthew just, I'm looking for a couple sort of quantification specifics. Can you tell us how warm the sea surface temperatures are in the development area compared to normal compared to last year?

8:24

And is there a way of quantifying the reduction in wind shear this year compared to normal compared to last year?

8:32

And finally, is this, are we looking at more of the, so he'll know those strong sahil storms are you forecasting, or are the ones that are sort of forum, that cut, aren't sahil storms and often less strong?

8:54

Sure, so the sea surface temperature.

8:58

Are very much near normal. When we did our analysis about a week ago, they were point one degrees Centigrade Celsius below normal. Which is very close to normal.

9:09

Last year, they were quite two above normal, for about this week. That change does change slightly on a week to week basis.

9:19

Um, as far as the storms that far out over the main development region. And as you refer to as the ... storm to the coast. They come from Africa easterly waves that, move off the coast of Africa across the Atlantic.

9:32

Um, some of the models have been forming a lot more storms out over the ocean. Some of them have been forming a bit further to the west that within the basin forecasting. That's still an unsettled part of the science. As far as how good that is. So we don't really don't have an outlook that talks about whether it's more of the open ocean, or closer to the Gulf of Mexico. And closer to the Caribbean.

9:53

And to quantify wind shear change, compared to previous years.

9:59

I'd have to look that up and get back to you with that information.

10:02

OK. If you can send it to Lauren and she can send it to me, that'd be great.

10:07

Thanks, Seth.

10:08

Our next question comes from Mark Schlep, steam. Mark, just a second, and we'll unmute your line.

10:24

Mark, it looks like your line is self muted.

10:30

Unmute And, there, we go. Got it, Sorry.

10:34

Um, can you all talk a little bit about the Saharan Desert Outbreaks this year?

10:40

And, whether or not they really had any significant effect on reducing the chance of development this year, so far, and, uh, idea of potential for obstruction development in.

11:03

So, yes, so, the Saharan Era outlet outbreaks, the, sorry, our layer. It did have a little bit of an impact earlier this year.

11:11

But, we really didn't have a quiet period during a lot of July, which is typically when you have your largest Sahara and earlier outbreaks.

11:19

Um, there was also a nice hello region there was an above normal amount of precipitation.

11:25

That can kind of reduce some of the cell outbreaks.

11:28

I was having an earlier outbreak, excuse me, so we're not actually, we're not forecasting that had a major impact on the rest of the season.

11:38

Thank you.

11:42

Thank you.

11:43

Our next question comes through and writing is from William Altaf, this question is apologies, but can you update me on how this Outlook compares to the earlier Outlook this season?

11:55

Sure, the current Outlook cost for 15 to 21 named storms, the May outlook called for 13 to 20 named storms.

12:03

As for hurricanes, the current outlook is 7, 10 hurricanes. And the prior outlook was 6 to 10 hurricanes.

12:09

They have the number of major hurricanes and stayed the same from the May I look to the August outlook.

12:18

Thank you. Just a reminder for our media partners, if you would like to ask a question, please use the hand raise icon next to your name, or you may type a question in the questions box.

12:46

I see the next question comes from Ken Miller, Palm Beach Post.

12:51

Hi! So, it seems like last year we were in the same situation with La Niña, with a watch being issued in July. And then, I think you quickly turned on in August. What are your thoughts about, you know, the chances it will do the same this year?

13:11

So, right now, the Outlook calls for 47% chance of La Niña development during the August September, October period, with the greater than 50% Chance during September, October, November.

13:24

So, given the current Outlook, it does seem like it'd be a little bit later this year than last year.

13:29

Yeah.

13:33

May I follow up?

13:37

So do you think that there's a chance, if it does come later. That we could see another extended hurricane season, you know, last year went into mid August, but that haven't would La Niña's delay have any impact on that?

13:51

That was the factor the team took into consideration and debated.

13:55

If La Niña does develop later in the season, could we see another active month in November? And that did play a role in kind of keeping our numbers up, maybe 1 or 2 storms higher.

14:07

Thank you.

14:08

Thank you.

14:10

Thank you Kim.

14:12

It looks like our next question here is one that is tight.

14:16

Comes from Elliott Welled, with the Florida Keys Free Press, Did the quiet period in the last few weeks have an impact on the updated number of projected storms for the remainder of the season?

14:29

The recent quiet period didn't actually have an impact, being that we had such a fast start to the season and made it to the earliest fifth named storm, the quiet period. So, normally, during June and July, we only have 2 named storms that five this year, so we're already ahead of the pace. So, the quiet period kind of just brought us a little bit closer to normal.

14:54

Great. Thank you.

14:57

Our next question comes from Derek Van Dam Derick. Your line should now be open.

15:04

You just need to undo your self mute.

15:11

There we go.

15:16

Derick, are you there?

15:22

Alright, Derek, let's see if we can address, perhaps we'll fix that, want to come back to you just since we can't hear you.

15:31

Our next question comes from Evan Brown.

15:35

Evan, your line should now be open.

15:37

Great. Thank you so much for doing this.

15:40

My question sir is I guess, you know, a lot of people you know, we love the meatier, all, the meteorology aspect of this.

15:48

But for a lot of people, hurricanes represent an emergency management situation more than a science situation. But I want one for you to talk about how, with all of these predicted storms.

16:01

Really, only one can ruin someone's day.

16:03

And, you know, we don't really know where that one will go, because the science behind, any kind of landfall predictions that are done is really well. It's not really science.

16:17

Sure the forecast for the actual track of a storm are best made about 5 to 7 days out and that really comes from the National Hurricane Center.

16:29

Um, so taking the time to prepare it now for any potential impacts can lessen your, can lessen the actualized impacts much later.

16:41

Right, well, I meant. Like, she's like there! Are there are other outfits that put out season wide predictions as to how many would make landfall and I, you know, obviously we can't really figure that out.

16:50

No, NOAA does not issue a landfall forecast. Is that something we're still looking into?

16:58

All right. I'm going to try to come back over to Derek. Hang on just a second.

17:06

Yeah.

17:08

Yeah, Yeah, I'm here.

17:09

Sorry about that.

17:11

Yeah, Matthew, I was just curious. Are you guys concerned about any kind of Near Coast kind of last minute development this particular season?

17:24

It's near coast and rapid intensification. And that's something the hurricane center is always worried about with that, with every storm.

17:33

But as far as full season wide forecasts, that will they foreclose the coast or further in the oceans.

17:40

That's not really forecast. this. There's not really scaling that up to new clients and then do you. Do you consider the the, the NGO and your your updated seasonal forecasts to phase one and two? We do take into account the more broadly tropical oscillations, one specifically the Madden Julian Oscillation. That kind of has led to this.

18:15

But as far as season wide, you tend to go through 1 or 2 full cycles of those season wide.

18:22

They only have an, but they don't have a great of an impact as kind of the 1 or 2 week periods.

18:36

Thank you, Derek.

18:38

Our next question is one that comes in writing.

18:42

From Jenny, can you please talk about the string of busy Atlantic hurricane seasons we're seeing and why that's occurring?

18:50

Sure.

18:51

If this season becomes an active season, forecast verifies, this will be the sixth consecutive active season, And that's really just in the background, we're in a high activity era.

19:01

We've been there since 1995, the Atlantic Multi-decadal Oscillation, as analyzed with the sea surface temperature over the North Atlantic has been in the water phase. So those temperatures have generally been above average since 1995.

19:16

So any month to month average of the sea surface temperature in the Atlantic, they've all been positive.

19:22

And that really just sets the stage for active seasons to happen much more frequently than inactive seasons.

19:32

Thank you. Next question comes from John Boyer with the Richmond Times Dispatch. Do we see any trends with sea surface temperatures near the US. Coastline Gulf, or East Coast that would contribute to storms that intensify right up to landfall.

19:49

There are some above-normal sea surface temperatures, up off the north-east coast, but a lot of the temperatures near the East, and south-east coast on the Gulf of Mexico have either been near-normal.

19:59

There have been some patches of below normal earlier in this in the summer. But that can change in a week to week basis. And you can get small periods of warm water and storm can move or that small area of warm water. It can rapidly intensify this especially prevalent in the Gulf of Mexico with some of the other loop current.

20:22

Thank you.

20:23

Our next question comes from Laura Martinez. Her question is does the Sahara Dust that is happening right now have to do with no storms forming right now? And is Saharan Dust keeping them away.

20:35

So, the Saharan Arab that's out there now, it's probably contributing to no lower amounts of storms right now.

20:46

And if anything to come off, it might have a harder time forming.

20:49

Um, we've also seen an impact from a question that was asked earlier, on the madden Julian Oscillation.

20:55

That's a tropical feature that moves through every two months or every 3 to 4 weeks.

20:59

That wasn't an unfavorable position for Atlantic development for a couple of weeks and it's forecasting to a more favorable position for development.

21:07

So there's kind of a number of factors that led to the recent, quiet period.

21:12

Great. Thank you.

21:14

I have one more written question here. Just a reminder for our media partners. If you'd like to ask a question, you may do so using the hand raise icon, or typing your question in the questions box.

21:23

Our next question comes from Carrie Duncan with WLOX in Mississippi, Is there an area which looks more prone to activity? Does it look like there's another rich over the Atlantic that will setup? also last year, the season, when in November, we went into November for the whole season on the Mississippi Gulf Coast we dealt with several near misses, and then zeta on october 28th, and we're still dealing with damage and cleanup. Does it look probable for more strong late season storms?

21:52

So, as far as forecasting, how many storms are close to the coast versus how many are out over the ocean. That's not really something that this outlook covers.

22:00

Because that's, would kind of be more of a landfall forecast when we don't issue a landfall forecast.

22:06

Um, the extending the season is a possibility especially if they get a La Niña that does develop and has the atmospheric response from the Pacific that translates that response to the Atlantic. We could end up with some more late season storms.

22:22

Um, so taking a time to prepare now and then having those supplies on hand for the duration of the season, it's a smart move.

22:31

Thank you, I see a follow up question here from Seth Bornstein.

22:38

Set that you unmute your line, you should now be able to ask your question.

22:48

Seth, you there?

22:53

All right, we'll come back around to that one.

22:55

I also have a follow up question from Kim Miller. Here with the Palm Beach Post. What analog years are you looking at this season?

23:04

I don't have them off the top of my head, but I can dig them up and get back to you.

23:09

OK, thanks.

23:13

Let's see here.

23:17

This one says, Colorado State said that Elsa might be a hard error since it formed the Atlantic tropics. So, early in the season, and they pointed out that the six other years, when such an early season hurricane formed in that region, including last year happened to be hyperactive, assuming that is true. Why would that be?

23:38

So when, yes, every time that we have had a hurricane form in the eastern Caribbean in June or July has resulted in an active season.

23:48

When you can get a storm to form that early season, it does show that there's generally favorable conditions for an overall active season.

23:55

It's just kind of here for one of the first tells for that year.

24:02

Great, thank you. Coming back to Seth, Seth, you should now be able to unmute your line.

24:11

Yes, I finally thank you. Sorry about that.

24:14

Matthew just Teached, what is the chance of exceeding the alphabet and going to the new backup, what that new backup names exceeding the letters, the names and going past Wanda.

24:30

And is there a percent chance that we, you know, 2%, 1%, whatever, that we match, the record last year, in terms of named storms?

24:39

Is there have you calculated that chance?

24:42

No, I haven't calculated the chance of actually getting to 30 named storms.

24:46

Um, the current list has 21 named storms and our forecast for 15 to 21 named storms and our outlooks are given with an a plus standard deviation, so about 70%.

25:02

So that would imply that there's a 15% chance of exceeding the 21 named stars.

25:08

Thank you.

25:13

All right, that looks like it might be our last question. Let me just take a look here to make sure that there aren't any other reporters who have a hand raised, and I do not see any additional questions in the questions box at this time.

25:32

Oh there comes a couple.

25:36

Anthony Carpino WRDW in Augusta, Georgia. Could you talk about the impacts that climate change has played in the hurricane season trends and overall trends?

25:47

Sure.

25:48

So some of the major impacts from climate change are the increase, the intensity of storms. More storms able to reach category 4 and 5 status, one of the large. So that's one impact.

26:00

Another impact is that when storms do form and then they make landfall, they are able to create more rainfall.

26:07

Um, and so they have about three to 3% more rainfall at any given storm.

26:14

So, that's a couple more inches and every storm will usually, The wind speeds are also, on average, about 10% higher, and that's really because we have more of those, Category 4 and 5, Um, so, and the other impact is that.

26:31

So, when you take a storm, and you have the climate change induced sea level rise, that does increase your threat for coastal flooding.

26:40

So, that's really prevalent and really important for let's take Savannah, Georgia.

26:48

Great. Thank you.

26:49

I see one quick follow up here from Ken Miller, for clarification.

26:52

She asks, are you saying that there's a 15% chance of exceeding the 21 named storms, or is that, know, ultimately a 15% chance of it being outside of the scope of the outlook itself?

27:03

So our forecasts are given with a 70% range. So there's a 30% chance of being outside of above or below, which means only a 15% chance of being above the 21 named storms.

27:15

Great, thank you.

27:19

All right, so here, if there are any additional questions that come in at this time, I do not see an additional hand raises.

27:34

All right.

27:38

So with that, I would like to thank Matt Rosencrans from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center for his expertise in delivering our updated seasonal outlook. And providing us with this briefing today.

27:49

Recording of today's remarks to be made available online, at the bottom of our press release, on NOAA.gov later this afternoon.

27:55

And, finally, if you have any follow-up questions, please don't hesitate to contact me, Lauren at 202-470-8314. Again, 202-740-8314.

28:08

That concludes today's webinar. We thank you so much for joining us.