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Tallahassee topics

NEWS AND NOTES FROM YOUR LOCAL NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE.

The National Weather Service (NWS) office in Tallahassee, FL provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for Southeast Alabama, Southwest & South Central Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and Big Bend, and the adjacent Gulf of Mexico coastal waters. Our primary mission is the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the local economy.

A September to Remember By Israel Gonzalez

September 2019 is highlighted as the **driest and second hottest September for Tallahassee on record**. Only a **trace amount of precipitation** was measured for the entire month, shattering the previous record of 0.11" in 1972 (normal amount is 4.43")! In terms of heat, Tallahassee had an **average temperature of 83.4°**, only trailing 1925 for the record at 84° (normal value is 78.2°). With the exception of Sep 19th, **29/30 days** recorded high temperatures at or above 90°. Among those days, the 101° recorded on Sep 18th tied four other days as the **2nd highest high temperature ever recorded** in September and the **latest date to exceed 100°**. This month set the stage for a prolonged period of widespread, moderate to severe droughts that would spill over into the ensuing months.



Hottober to Octobrrrrr By Israel Gonzalez

October was the tale of two halves where it began on a hot note and ended with a strong cold front on Halloween. The first four days set consecutive new daily max temperature records at 95°, 96°, 97°, and 97°, respectively as strong surface high pressure dominated the eastern US. The latter were the **hottest max temperatures ever observed for October!** By mid-month, it started feeling like fall where the average max/min temperatures were 81°/62° from Oct 15-31. Overall though, the average temperature for the month was 75.4°, 6° warmer than normal (11 days recorded highs ≥ 90°). In terms of precipitation, October was above average, where Tallahassee received 4.35" (1.12" greater than normal). Three days saw 0.5" or more (two days ≥ 1"). This helped to provide some relief to many areas experiencing moderate-to-severe drought that began in September. On Halloween, the first strong cold front of the season arrived, bringing showers and strong thunderstorms, with high wind gusts along the boundary (**TLH recorded peak 47-mph gusts at the time of arrival**). The temperature change rate was sharp too, with **TLH dropping 39° in just a few hours after reaching a max temp of 89° earlier that day!** This would set the stage for an overall cooling trend in November.

Steinhatchee River Floods in August By Israel Gonzalez

On August 16th, a trough of low pressure associated with a frontal boundary to the north, stalled in the northeast Gulf coast for a few days. This system brought copious rainfall to the southeast Big Bend area, causing significant localized flooding. In Steinhatchee in Taylor County, a **whopping 28" of rain fell in 3 days (16" on August 17th)**, with some other measurements showing 31-39" (around half of the annual average accumulation!). The river remained above flood stage through August 25th, with an observed height of 22 ft on August 19th. Several flood watches and warnings were issued for other counties in our area during this event as well.

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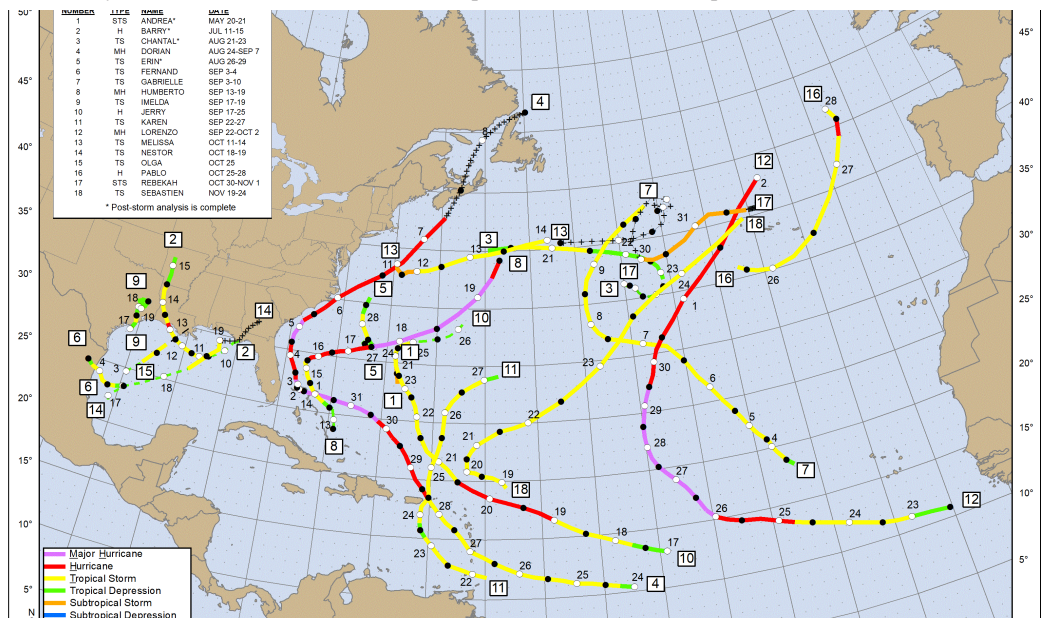
2019 Hurricane Season Recap

By Israel Gonzalez & Mark Wool

The Atlantic Hurricane Season this year was above average in terms of the number of storms with 18 named storms. Only six storms became hurricanes, with half of those becoming major hurricanes (Category 3 or higher). There were also two subtropical storms. The 2019 season is 1 of 7 seasons to feature multiple category-5 hurricanes (Dorian and Lorenzo) and the 4th consecutive to feature a category-5 hurricane. Records for this season include: most named storms lasting 1 day or less (7) and a 4-way tie with 1957, 1959, and 2003 for most named storms in the Gulf of Mexico (5). There were seven notable storms from this season:

- Hurricane Barry** – originated from the Midwest; developed over northern Gulf; made landfall in LA
- Hurricane Dorian** – strongest storm of season and among strongest on record (185mph winds); eye stayed offshore from FL east coast, but stalled over Grand Bahama Island for nearly 30 hours as a Cat 5
- Tropical Storm Imelda** – major flooding to TX coast; 5th wettest tropical cyclone on record for US
- Hurricane Lorenzo** – easternmost Category 5 on record
- Tropical Storm Nestor** – came ashore near Apalachicola as a Post-Tropical Storm; caused minor coastal flooding to portions of Panhandle
- Tropical Storm Olga** – came ashore LA coast as a Post-Tropical Storm; significant wind damage up to KY
- Hurricane Pablo** – easternmost-forming hurricane on record

It is important to note that there were likely more storms like Lorenzo and Pablo in the past but observations were sparser back then, making open-Atlantic systems undetectable outside of ship logs. Of the 7 notable storms, Barry, Dorian, and Nestor had the most impact on our area and/or operations.



Barry presented a unique challenge with how our office communicated information about the storm given its unusual origins, development, and track. Overall, our area felt minimal impacts from the system with only small-craft advisory conditions, gusty winds, and some rainfall, as Barry stayed mostly to the west.

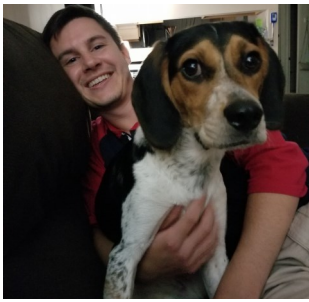
Dorian presented the greatest challenge to our office because it was a long and drawn out operational period for one of the strongest hurricanes in recorded history. The most stressful time came when Dorian stalled over the northern Bahamas for two days and there was still considerable uncertainty on the timing of when it would move again and recurve, and whether or not the center would remain offshore. Thankfully, the worst of Dorian stayed to the east of Florida. No impacts were felt in our area outside of some breezy winds.

Operationally, Nestor posed a unique challenge in that The National Hurricane Center began issuing advisories on the system as a Potential Tropical Cyclone and showed it tracking through Tallahassee. Once the system was named Nestor, it was forecast to lose its tropical status before landfall, so no watches or warnings were issued in spite of the track forecast. Nestor ironically produced the most tropical impacts to our area this season (albeit minor) as a post-tropical storm with coastal flooding via storm surge, rainfall, gusty winds, and high surf.



A road closed sign sits at the intersection of Port Leon Drive and Riverside Drive in St. Marks, Florida. The streets are flooded due to Tropical Storm Nestor on Saturday, Oct. 19, 2019.

ALICIA DEVINE/TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT



Employee Spotlight: Eric Bunker

Meteorologist Intern at NWS Tallahassee Since September 2018

By Israel Gonzalez and Eric Bunker

IS THERE A TOPIC YOU'D LIKE US
TO COVER? SEND US AN E-MAIL:

isreal.gonzales@noaa.gov

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How did you become interested in meteorology?

I became interested in meteorology at a very young age when I lived in New Hampshire, and had the opportunity to experience several impactful snow storms. In addition to the many snow storms I had the pleasure of experiencing growing up in New Hampshire and northern Virginia, I also got to experience hurricane Isabel in 2003 as it made landfall along the Outer banks and moved into Virginia causing significant damage along the way.

How did your career with NWS begin?

My career in the National Weather Service started off with a bang! Only one month into my career, and my office (NWS Tallahassee) is about to have its strongest hurricane on record make landfall. Hurricane Michael was not only a challenge for the office, but a challenge for myself as a brand-new employee. I had to quickly learn on the spot to assist my co-workers to the best of my ability. It was an exciting, terrifying, and groundbreaking moment for my career that I will never forget.

Aside from the typical duties of a forecaster, what areas in operations do you like to spend time on?

Outside of the day to day duties we typically perform, I like to work on coding side projects where I have the ability to make certain tasks the office has to perform more efficient. Some of these projects will in the future help install a better situational awareness for the office in terms of day to day weather events. My favorite part of operations I like to spend my time on when it does occur is storm interrogation during severe weather events!

How do you think your time in Albany (personally and professionally) helped you get to this point?

My time in Albany accelerated my knowledge coding and meteorology. The graduate program at the University at Albany was extremely challenging, but rewarding. Professors there have created a friendly environment that allows students to share and spread ideas, which helps them quickly grow personally and professionally if they put the effort in. I also had the pleasure to work under Lance Bosart who is well known for his work in synoptic scale meteorology. I not only learned from his meteorological knowledge while I worked with him, but I also had the ability to help him with the weekly map discussions that he gave to the whole department. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity I had to work as a graduate student at the University at Albany, as it helped me expand my knowledge of the field of meteorology, and grow professionally.

What's been the highlight for you in the year you've been working at this office?

That would have to be working the March 3rd tornado outbreak across our County Warning Area. Having the ability to interrogate supercell thunderstorms and a very strong QLCS with our local radars, and alert the public or impending dangers has been one of the more exciting parts of job in the last year.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I occasionally like to play golf, which I find both challenging and relaxing. I also enjoy running half marathons with my fiancé, and running through the many trails that Tallahassee has to offer. I typically also attend a CrossFit class 3-4 times a week. Outside of those activities you'll typically find me playing with my two dogs Charlie and Molly.

Staffing Changes

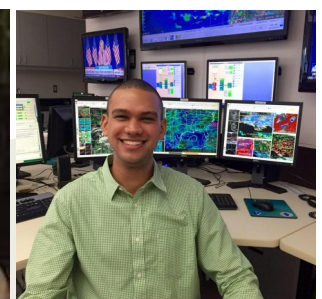
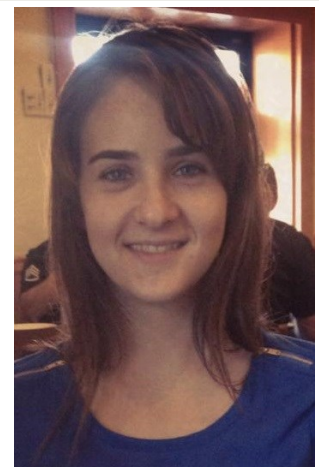
By Mark Wool

Departures

Since our last issues in March, we said goodbye to two of our meteorologist. **Katie Nguyen** (top right) left us for our sister office in Jacksonville in late August to join her husband, Brian, who works as a doctor in that city. Katie served as the chief editor of this newsletter since 2015. In addition, she analyzed our hazard verification statistics and served as our social media team lead. Katie was also our student volunteer coordinator, overseeing the competitive process for selecting FSU students that would undergo the challenging and immersive process of learning how to be operational NWS meteorologists. These student volunteers are very competitive when it comes time to bid on career positions within the NWS. Six of them work in our office right now! **Justin Pullin** (bottom right) had a much longer journey when he departed for NWS Seattle in November to become a lead forecaster. Justin was one of our original associate warning coordination meteorologists (AWCM), serving the our Florida Panhandle central time zone counties. The AWCMs assist the WCM (me) by providing focused support to our emergency management, media and other core partners in a smaller geographic area. This is a level of service that is not possible if one person is serving the 48 counties within our NWS Tallahassee area of responsibility. Justin was also our SKYWARN Storm Spotter coordinator and deployment team lead. Finally, Justin lead our after-action review team. Best of luck to both Katie and Justin as they take the next steps in their NWS careers!

New Arrival

Isreal Gonzales (bottom left) joined our office as a Pathways Student in June and transitioned to a full-time career position in early October. Israel is still heavily involved with on-the-job training. However, as can be seen in this issue, he has contributed many articles and possesses great writing skills. Do not be surprised if Israel become our next Chief Editor!





Winter Outlook

By Israel Gonzalez

Management-Admin Team

Tom Johnstone MIC
Mark Wool, WCM
Parks Camp, SOO
Doug Sherrick, ESA
Jennifer Nichols, ASA
Toan Tran, ITO
Kelly Godsey, Hydrologist
Ricardo Humphreys, OPL

Lead Forecasters

Don Van Dyke
Donal Harrigan
Jessica Fieux
Blair Scholl
Lauren Nash

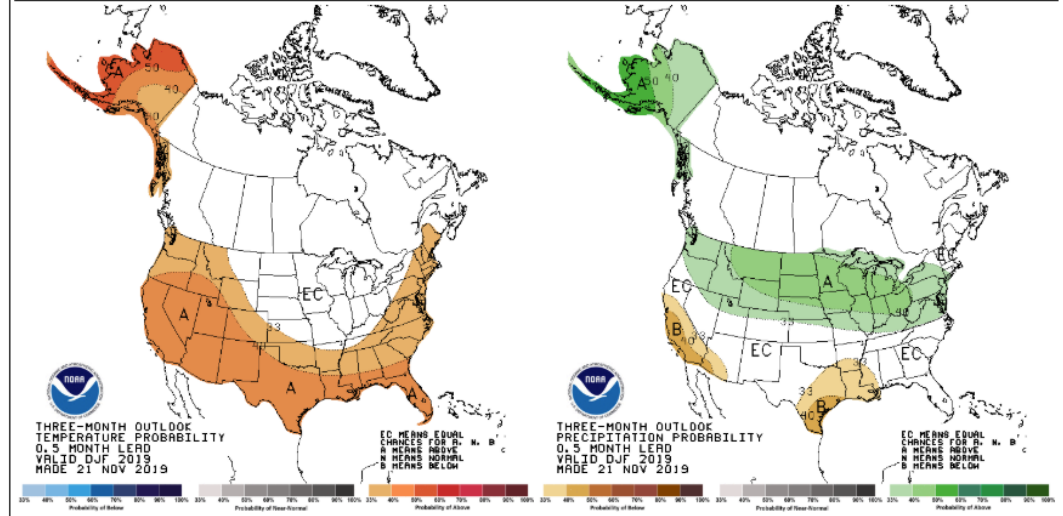
Forecasters

Tim Barry
Lance Franck
Claudia (Jeanie) McDermott
Wright Dobbs
Federico Di Catarina
Eric Bunker
Israel Gonzalez
Vacant
Vacant

Electronic Technicians

Craig Carpenter
Ron Eimiller

The current winter outlook from the Climate Prediction Center shows better chances for above-average temperatures from December through February. The averages for those months are 55.6°, 53.6°, and 54.7°, respectively. Therefore, this winter is expected to be mild, with some intermittent cold snaps from strong fronts passing through. In terms of precipitation, we are expecting equal chances of above, below or near normal rainfall from December through February. The averages for those months are 4.65", 4.34", and 4.85", respectively. As a reminder, our flood season begins to increase in January and peaks in March and April.



Outreach Efforts from Spring through Fall

By Mark Wool

NWS Tallahassee enjoys getting out into the community to spread the word about weather safety. Back in April, Science and Operations Officer, Parks Camp, did weather experiments for grade-schoolers at FSU School's Family STEAM Night. Forecaster, Jeanie McDermott, did the same at Earth Day at Maclay. In late April and Early May, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Mark Wool, spoke at two Neighborhood Hurricane Preparedness Workshops in Tallahassee. He was joined by Lead Forecaster, Jessica Fieux, at the Build Your Bucket Event at FAMU's Al Lawson Center in early June. In July, Forecaster, Eric Bunker, manned a booth at the Thomas County Health Dept. Preparedness Fair. In August, Observation Program Leader, Ricardo Humphreys, and Forecaster, Israel Gonzalez participated in the Be a Hero to Our Heroes event at the Wakulla County Community Center. In September, Lead Forecaster, Lauren Nash, staffed a booth at the Emergency Preparedness Fairs in Enterprise, AL and the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Albany, GA (MCLBA). In October, Mark participated in the DEP Health and Safety Fair. In November, Forecaster, Lance Franck, manned a booth at the Tallahassee Science Festival.

We also occasionally go out to speak to groups about hurricane season, spotter training and other topics. In May, Mark spoke about the upcoming hurricane season at the Tallahassee Amateur Radio Society, the Chattahoochee Rotary Club and Lowndes County emergency management officials. Senior Service Hydrologist, Kelly Godsey, briefed officials on the same topic at Tallahassee Int'l Airport and also Dixie County EMA. Hurricane season outreach didn't end in May. In June, Forecaster, Justin Pullin, briefed officials in Washington Co. In August, Mark talked hurricane preparedness with Tallahassee's Apple Group and the Emerald Coast Healthcare Coalition (HCC). In September, it was the Big Bend HCC's turn. The final hurricane season talk involved FSU's Leadership in late September. Jessica participated in the Jack and Jill of America activity in June. Climate change is becoming a bigger part of our community engagement. Mark presented at the Adaptation Planning Workshop in Eastpoint, FL in July. Parks addressed climate change at FAMU in October. In November, Mark spoke about the NWS in general at a Society of American Engineers meeting at Moody AFB. Participated in Maclay Career Day. Parks did a four-week lecture series in October and November for the Osher Lifetime Learning Institute.

Several of the staff deliver SKYWARN Spotter Training upon request. Lead Forecaster, Blair Scholl, conducted a training session at MCLBA in May. Jeanie delivered training to high school girls at the HERRICANE Florida Workshop in Walton Co. in June. Later in the month, Lauren provided the training for Houston Co., AL officials. Justin conducted an Advanced SKYWARN webinar in June as well. Justin also conducted training for the FSU AMS/NWA Chapter in Sept. and for folks in Bay County in October. In October, Mark delivered the training to FSU Faculty.



The office also routinely conducts tours of the office. A few of the evening tours were able to observe us launch the weather balloon. We've hosted many home-schooled students, prospective applicants to FSU, families, emergency management officials and even an international delegation from Costa Rica who toured our doppler radar.

Finally, many of our staff visited counties impacted by Hurricane Michael on the one-year anniversary of landfall. We visited Gulf County (pictured left), Bay County and Jackson County. From left in the photo, we have Israel Gonzalez, Jessica Fieux, Jessica Susich, Lance Franck, Federico DiCatarina, Justin Pullin, Marshall Nelson, Wright Dobbs, Rachel Jackson, Blair Scholl, Mark Wool and Tom Johnstone.