SUMMARY
October 19, 2015
Regional Environmental Conditions & Impacts Coordination

Roll Call:

Name	Affiliation
Alecia Van Atta	NMFS West Coast Regional Office
Amanda Sheffiled	California Nevada Applications Program (CNAP)
Bill Peterson	NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center
Chris Toole	NMFS West Coast Regional Office
Christina Fahy	NMFS West Coast Regional Office
Irma Lagomarsino	NMFS West Coast Regional Office
Jake Crouch	NESDIS National Centers for Environmental Information
Jennifer Steger	NMFS Restoration Center
Jim Milbury	NMFS WCRO
John Ewald	NOAA Communications
Josh Foster	Oregon State COAS
Joyce Ambrosius	NMFS West Coast Regional Office
Karin Bumbaco	JISAO/Assistant WA State Climatologist
Kathleen Bogan	OAR ESRL Physical Sciences Division
Kelly Redmond	Western Regional Climate Center
Kristen Koch	NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center
Lisa Crozier	NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center
Mary Tyree	California Nevada Applications Program (CNAP)
Michael Milstein	NMFS West Coast Regional Office
Michelle Stokes	NWS Colorado Basin River Forecast Center
Mike Anderson	CA State Climatologist
Nate Mantua	NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center
Patrick Rutten	NMFS Restoration Center
Paul Miller	NWS Colorado Basin River Forecast Center
Phil Mote	Oregon Climate Change Research Institute
Rachel Vander Giessen	Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observing Systems
Rebecca Smyth	NOS Office for Coastal Management
Roger Pierce	NWS Weather Forecast Office, San Diego
Timi Vann	NOAA Regional Coordinator
Valerie Were	PPI
Veva Deheza	NIDIS

Kevin Werner welcomed attendees to the meeting and conducted roll call

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Regional Environmental Conditions: Kevin briefed the group on the current status of regional climate conditions. Of note, three is a significant change in temperature across the region over the last month – from 6-8 deg. F warmer than average for the month. October is the first month of the new water year, so Kevin included slides on streamflow, reservoir levels, soil moisture, and California

groundwater. Many reservoirs throughout California are well below historic averages. This is in contrast to reservoirs in the Upper Colorado River Drainage Basin which, with the exception of Lake Powell, are close to full. Dry soil moisture anomalies are noted all along the West Coast with particularly acute anomalies noted in parts of western Oregon. The CA Department of Water Resources developed an interactive groundwater mapping application, and Kevin highlighted plot points that show decreases of greater than 10-feet over the last decade. Kevin also covered the current status of the strengthening El Niño and related blog discussions. Most model forecasts predict peak ENSO in November-December-January with the pattern remaining through March-April-May timeframe.

Kevin provided forecast information for temperature and precipitation. The November temperature forecast strongly predicts above normal temperature throughout much of the West. The seasonal precipitation forecast follows a typical El Niño signal.

There were questions about the level of confidence of the modeled forecast for precipitation in California. Kevin noted this (slide 22) is a fairly confident precipitation outlook, but that just because the forecast map is green does not preclude a dry winter.

Another question concerned physical oceanography – that is, increasing water levels and impacts on coastal resources. There are a growing number of questions about this, and it is unclear if NOAA or our regional partner networks are pulling this information together. Some noted the value of looking at the historic tide gauge network data for the west coast. It would be very useful to synthesize this historic information to better characterize what happened in the past, and how it matches current conditions. Temperature is only one factor. Whatever the water levels are now, they will be amplified as we move into winter.

Human System/NOAA Mission Impacts: There were no impacts reported by NWS. Michael Milstein reported impacts through NMFS channels, including an unusual mortality event for Guadalupe fur seals, which Ruth mentioned last meeting but which was officially declared since. He also noted that NMFS is preparing an announcement about over 40 marine mammals and seabirds that have detected domoic acid poisoning through the Wildlife Algal-toxin Research and Response Network (WARRN-West) coast wide surveillance network.

There were questions about the harmful algal bloom and toxicity – that is, whether it is increasing, decreasing or about the same. Michael reported that the bloom itself seems to be dissipating which is to be expected. The question now is whether or not it will emerge again next spring and summer.

The group also reported unusual tropical fish on the coast, and a doubling of large whale entanglements that may be due to changes in food availability and whales transiting closer to shore, or fishing practices.

Timi Vann provided an overview of conditions and impacts that were captured through the Environment and Energy Publishing newswire service. A total of 64 conditions and impacts are currently entered into the spreadsheet. The conditions of note over the last month include warm water, El Niño and drought. A number of marine ecosystem impacts were captured including the 3rd global coral bleaching event on record which may affect 95% of the corals in the U.S.; forestry die off in California (25 million trees) caused by drought and raising the risk of wildfire; key reservoirs in California that are well below historic averages; and policy battles on Capital Hill around drought remedies legislation.

Open Discussion: The group discussed the quarterly ENSO briefings underway across the NWS Weather Forecasts Offices and if/how some of the work we're doing with this group is being

coordinated with the WFOs. The WFOs are not currently included on the distribution list. Kevin is in Salt Lake City this week, and agreed it would be good to bring in the NWS Region Headquarters to make sure things are linked.

There was also discussion of the use of the 82/83 and 97/98 El Niño events as analog for this year's event versus some of the other ENSO events listed. The 82/83 and 97/98 events are comparable to what we're seeing this year, but the sample size of 2 is a limitation. This year, we also have the two other "warm blobs" along the coast – and those blobs weren't present in the earlier events. This is a unique situation, in that regard. Still, the group discussed that El Niño is the big driver and story - not the warm water off the Pacific coast.

The group also asked about the public webinar on Western Impacts of El Niño which was held this morning. Kevin noted that this had not been done before, and that the motivation came from Congressional inquiries in California and also Walmart when both asked about expected impacts on farming regions in California and the Southwest. The webinar was an attempt to do something more collaborative, and to make information more broadly available. Over 167 people joined the webinar. The feedback seemed to be good, and there are discussions about conducting more webinars in the future. Presentation slides are available on the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit website: https://toolkit.climate.gov/content/stakeholder-briefing-western-impacts-el-ni%C3%B1o

It was noted that Oct. 19-24 is the 2015 California Flood Preparedness Week. Governor Brown is very interested in getting the State as ready for this El Niño as possible. Communications are focusing on how catastrophic flooding can happen during drought, and how risks increase with El Niño events.