

**No.2-2006 MONTHLY ENSO DISCUSSION FOR MICRONESIA
AND AMERICAN SAMOA**

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The Pacific ENSO Applications Center (PEAC) disseminated the first quarter 2006 newsletter (refer to <http://lumahai.soest.hawaii.edu/Enso/index.html>). Equatorial SST anomalies greater than +0.5°C were restricted to the western Pacific area between Indonesia and 160°E during January, while negative anomalies less than -0.5°C were observed at most locations between the date line and the South American coast during the same period. The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) stated the following in its February 9, 2006 *ENSO Diagnostic Discussion* (refer to <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov>): “The patterns of anomalous ocean temperatures, atmospheric circulation and precipitation are consistent in indicating La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific. Negative SST departures increased in magnitude in the Niño 4 and Niño 3.4 regions, as the oceanic cold tongue strengthened in the central equatorial Pacific” [further indicating La Niña conditions].

The latest climate forecast models range from ENSO-neutral conditions to weak La Niña conditions into mid-2006, indicating some uncertainty in the outlooks. However, the CPC observes that “current conditions (stronger-than-average easterly winds over the central equatorial Pacific) and recent cooling trends in observed oceanic conditions support continuation of La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific during the next 3-6 months.”

At this time, it appears that for Micronesia and American Samoa, tropical cyclone development and movement patterns will be displaced toward the west in response to La Niña, and sea levels will be higher than normal due to the strong trade winds. Only Palau has an increased chance for tropical cyclone activity. According to the PEAC, rainfall over most of the northern hemisphere Micronesian islands should be greater than normal. The exception is that rainfall for Kapingamarangi and the northern Marshall Islands will likely be less than normal. Despite the dryness at these locations, we do not see any extended periods of dry weather significant enough to cause drought conditions. Rainfall in American Samoa will remain above normal as long as the South Pacific Convergence Zone (SPCZ) and associated monsoon flow remain near the islands.

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