

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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W6d

Informational Briefing on 2026-2027 El Nino

September 9, 2026

CORRESPONDENCE

From: Vicki Yu <vickiyu101@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2026 8:04 PM

To: ExecutiveStaff@Coastal <ExecutiveStaff@coastal.ca.gov>

Subject: Public Comment on September 2026 Agenda Item Wednesday 6d - Informational Briefing on 2026-2027 El Niño

You don't often get email from vickiyu101@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To whom it may concern, I am writing to provide my commentary on the Informational Briefing on 2026-2027 El Niño. As a Marine Biology student, I am constantly reading the news about how temperature and weather deeply affect the ocean and marine animals. El Niño can influence ocean conditions, marine species, fisheries, and coastal ecosystems. Current observations indicate that El Niño is strengthening, with NOAA forecasting an over 90% chance of a very strong event during the fall and winter of 2026–27.

El Niño is a climate pattern that occurs when unusually warm ocean temperatures develop across the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean. These changes can affect ocean circulation, weather patterns, and marine ecosystems thousands of miles away. As of August 2026, NOAA reported that El Niño conditions were strengthening, with a greater than 90% chance of a very strong event during the Northern Hemisphere fall and winter. NOAA also reported a 69% chance that the October–December 2026 period could reach historically strong levels.

For marine biology, one of the most important consequences of El Niño is its damaging effect on the ocean. Along the West Coast, the California Current normally brings cold, nutrient-rich water toward the surface. These nutrients support phytoplankton, which form the foundation of the marine food web. During El Niño, upwelling can weaken, reducing the amount of nutrients available to phytoplankton and potentially affecting organisms at higher trophic levels, including zooplankton, fish, seabirds, and marine mammals. Most of these animals are the ones we are currently learning about in our class.

The 2026–27 El Niño could have significant effects on the California Current ecosystem. Warmer-than-normal ocean temperatures can cause marine species to shift their geographic ranges as they search for suitable environmental conditions. Warm-water species may move farther north, while cold-water species can move toward deeper or more northern waters. These changes can alter predator-prey relationships and affect the distribution and abundance of commercially and ecologically important species.

El Niño is particularly important to monitor because it is developing alongside existing marine heatwave conditions. NOAA reports that parts of the West Coast, especially Central and Southern California, are already experiencing unusually warm ocean temperatures. The combination of prolonged warming and El Niño could increase

environmental stress on marine organisms and compress suitable habitat for some species.

From a marine biology perspective, changes in ocean temperature and productivity can have consequences at every level of the marine food web. Phytoplankton respond to changes in nutrients and temperature, which can influence zooplankton communities. Changes in zooplankton availability can then affect juvenile fish, including salmon, and ultimately influence larger predators and fisheries.

Some suggestions to help marine animals would be to closely monitor the conditions and protect the habitats, do more research, and be able to prepare for future conditions like these.

In conclusion, the 2026–27 El Niño represents an important event for marine biologists to monitor because of its potential to significantly alter ocean conditions and marine ecosystems. The combination of warmer ocean temperatures, reduced upwelling, changes in nutrient availability, shifting species distributions, and possible harmful algal blooms could affect organisms throughout the California Current food web. Current NOAA forecasts indicate that this could be a particularly strong El Niño, making continued observation and research especially important. As we all know, this El Niño is very different from the other ones, so we have no idea what is to come.

Reference:

1. “El Niño Set to Become Very Strong, Raising Risks of Extreme Weather into 2027.” *World Meteorological Organization*, 1 Sept. 2026, wmo.int/news/media-centre/el-nino-set-become-very-strong-raising-risks-of-extreme-weather-2027.

2. *Climate Prediction Center: ENSO Diagnostic Discussion*, www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/ensodisc.shtml. Accessed 3 Sept. 2026.

From: Sebastian Ramos <ramos1902@icloud.com>

Sent: Friday, September 4, 2026 1:01 PM

To: ExecutiveStaff@Coastal <ExecutiveStaff@coastal.ca.gov>

Subject: Public Comment on September 2026 Agenda Item Wednesday 6d - Informational Briefing on 2026-2027 El Nino

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Introduction

I am writing to provide my commentary on 2026-2017 El Niño and its effects on the south coast of California. As a marine biology student I believe I can advocate for marine conservation, and a concerned citizen.

Background

What is El Niño , El Niño is arguably the most influential climate driver on the Earth. Its cycles of warm and cool waters in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific alter where ocean heat is released into the atmosphere circulation, temperatures, precipitation, and other weather events that affect farm lands, marine life, and wildlife. But with the rise of global temperatures and because of this year's El Niño pushing warm water in the tropical Pacific into Southern California this is creating conditions that bring warm-water species farther north.

Ecological Impact

Stingrays- commonly found in shallow waters now having sightings in seal beach to hunting beach causing a spike in stings

Humpback whales- breaching unusually close to beaches at Newport Beach and Polaris Verdes drawn by warm-water anchovies and krill

Hammerhead sharks- sighting near Malibu

Yellow bellied sea snake- a venomous tropical reptile been recorded in Newport Beach

This can impact beach safety and change the ecological balance (predator-prey relationship and the food web)

recommendations

Have a hotline number to call when you have seen marine life that is not commonly found in Southern California

Better education on what to do when you encounter one of these foreign species of marine life, like videos televised on the news or signs outside of the public beaches

Have research team go out on expeditions to find can collect information about these foreign species of marine life

Conclusion

In conclusion we know because of this El Niño and with the rising temperature of the oceans we have to be more careful about what we run into when we go out into the ocean in Southern California. Not only our ecological system suffers because of the foreign species of marine life but we will too not just now but in the future too!

References

[Understanding El Niño & ENSO | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#)

[What Makes This Year's Super El Niño the Strongest in 140 Years? Causes Explained](#)

[El Niño Brings Rare Marine Life to Southern California Shores](#)

From: Stevanski Romero <stevenski059@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, September 4, 2026 2:20 PM

To: ExecutiveStaff@Coastal <ExecutiveStaff@coastal.ca.gov>

Subject: Public Comment on September 2026 Agenda Item Wednesday 6d - Informational Briefing on 2026-2027 El Nino

You don't often get email from stevenski059@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear California Coastal Commission,

I am writing to provide my public comment on the Informational Briefing on the 2026–2027 El Niño. I believe this topic is very important because a strong El Niño can have a big effect on the California coast. It can cause stronger waves, coastal flooding, erosion, and also affect marine life.

According to NOAA, the 2026–2027 El Niño is expected to become very strong during fall and winter. This can increase the risk of coastal flooding, stronger storms, and erosion in California coastal areas. These problems can affect beaches, cliffs, roads, homes, and also marine habitats.

One of my biggest concerns is the environmental impact. Strong waves and erosion can damage beaches and coastal habitats. Warmer ocean water can also affect marine animals and the food they depend on. Beaches, wetlands, dunes, and other natural coastal areas are important because they can help protect the coast while also providing habitat for marine life.

There are also social and economic impacts. Coastal flooding and erosion can damage homes, roads, businesses, and public beaches. Local governments may need to spend more money for repairs and emergency response. Public access can also become a problem if beaches, trails, or roads are damaged. I think coastal protection should not only focus on private property, but also public access and the communities that use these areas.

I support the California Coastal Commission using this briefing to prepare early for the possible effects of El Niño. I think the Commission should work with local governments to monitor flooding, erosion, ocean conditions, and marine ecosystems. Areas with higher risk should receive more attention before stronger winter storms happen.

I also believe natural coastal protection should be used whenever possible. Protecting beaches, wetlands, and dunes can help reduce damage and also protect marine life. Emergency protection may sometimes be needed, but it should not create more environmental damage later.

The 2026–2027 El Niño may create serious problems for the California coast, but preparing early can help reduce the damage. I believe protecting people and protecting the coastal environment should be part of the same plan.

Thank you for considering my comment.

Sincerely,
Stevanski

References

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Climate Prediction Center. (2026). *El Niño/Southern Oscillation diagnostic discussion*.

Swain, D. L. (2026). *El Niño 2026–2027: A potentially historic global climate event*. University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources.