



INTERNET ARTICLE

El Nino declining, but tough times ahead

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The El Nino, which engendered the worst drought in the history of South Africa, is rapidly declining with climate models indicating a return to neutral (normal) during the May month 2016. There is a likelihood of the El Nino being succeeded by the La Nina phenomenon later this year, a report compiled by the World Meteorological Organisation this week said.

The La Nina is generally known as a wet phenomenon that normally brings with it heavy rains which often result in flash floods. This means that South Africa is likely to hop from one natural disaster (drought) to another (floods).

Dam levels are not improving despite some heavy rains in the past few days. The levels hover around 54,1%, an alarming figure compared to 77,7% in the same period last year.

“While the El Niño will still have some influence until mid-year there is an increasing likelihood of a La Niña in the 3rd quarter. A resurgence of the El Niño is highly unlikely in 2016,” the report said

The rain last week did not make any significant impact on dam levels slight increase in Free State, Gauteng and North West. The Cape Town dams system is at 29.7% compared with 31.2% last week, a fall off of 0.5%. The Voelvlei dam is at 17.1% compared with 21.9% last week, a decrease of 4.8%.

Umgeni Dam system in KwaZulu-Natal is at 54.7% compared with 55.1% last week, a drop of 0.4% Hazelmere is at 45.9% compared with 43.4% last week an, increase of 2.5% due to coastal rain and transfers from the uThongathi River that are still taking place. Nagel Dam stands at 76.1% compared with 78.5% last. The Klipfontein is at 18.5% Goedertrouw at 20.4% and Hluhluwe 16.6% all are dangerously low.

The Vaal River System is at 63.9% compared with 64.1% last week, a drop of 0.2%. Katse Dam levels are 62.7%, indicating a decrease of 0.4% from the previous week. The Vaal Dam is down to 41.9%. This is the fifth consecutive week we see a fall off in the Vaal Dam. The Sterkfontein Dam, which feeds the Vaal Dam, showed a decrease of 0.1% to 88.8% and The Grootdraai Dam decreased by 0.6% is now at 88.6%.

Orange River: The Gariep dam is at 53.9% an increase of 0.9% and Van Der Kloof Dam 63% increase of 1.2%.

Of the 211 dams being monitored on a weekly basis, 70 are below 40% of capacity while 19 of them are at 100%.

Water in storage remains a matter of serious concern for dams in the Free State, Western Cape, KZN and North West.

Conservation measures and enforcement of restrictions are important to ensure that we see through the winter and the early summer. South Africa should brace itself for a very tough winter ahead.

By Themba Khumalo