

WEATHER

Groundhog year?

Weather patterns conspire against Southern Colorado

By CHRIS WOODKA

THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

DENVER — Forget the groundhog.

The Earth's weather patterns could have it in for Colorado again this year.

Meteorologist Brian Bledsoe gave a pessimistic forecast for the year ahead to the Colorado Water Congress Friday.

Why believe a weatherman?

"In a lot of ways, it's easier to forecast five years than five hours," Bledsoe said.

He then launched into a detailed explanation of world weather patterns.

"In many years, El Nino (Pacific Ocean warming) and La Nina (cooling) are not the major factors for Colorado," Bledsoe said. "We're in between both right now."

During La Nina cycles, Eastern Colorado is frequently dry. Many climate models show the pattern could drift back into La Nina again, meaning more dry years.

But weather systems over the Indian Ocean, Atlantic Ocean and North Pole can affect weather in the Southern United States, Bledsoe said.

Long-term weather patterns show the state could experience weather similar to the 1950s in the coming years, and perhaps decades.

"I've been talking to a lot of farmers and ranchers, particularly younger ones, and I stress to them they have to have a plan," said Bledsoe, who grew up on a farm in Eastern Colorado and lamented that his parents sold off half their organic beef herd.

Another dry year would add to Colorado's woes.

The warm weather in 2012 increased evaporation, while precipitation decreased throughout Colorado, said Nolan Doesken, state climatologist.

Statewide, 2012 was the second-warmest year in recorded history, surpassed only by 1934.

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The advertisement features a woman in a green shirt kneeling by a car wheel. The text is set against a green and white background with geometric shapes.



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/FILE If one meteorologist's prediction for upcoming dry years comes true, scenes like this huge cloud of dust rising over Pueblo on Jan. 11 could become more frequent.

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