RINCON CONSULTANTS

Preparing for El Niño

As California prepares for a fall and winter shaped by wildfire and El Niño-related storm risks, proactive planning can help communities reduce risk, protect critical infrastructure, and recover more effectively.

This fall and winter, resilience means preparing for both wildfire and storms, not one or the other.

What Is Expected This El Niño?

NOAA forecasts El Niño to strengthen through the winter of 2026–2027, increasing the potential for a more active storm season across California. While every El Niño is different, agencies should prepare for the possibility of heavier rainfall, localized flooding, erosion, debris flows, coastal impacts, and damage to critical infrastructure.

Preparing for a Multi-Hazard Season

El Niño is only one part of the seasonal risk picture. Before winter storms arrive, many California communities will still be navigating fall wildfire conditions. Agencies should be prepared to respond to both hazards and understand how they can compound one another.

Wildfires can leave landscapes more vulnerable to erosion, runoff, and debris flows when winter rains arrive. Abundant grass and shrub growth following winter rains can increase ignition potential and wildfire spread rates when dried out the following fire season. Planning now can help communities address immediate wildfire needs while preparing infrastructure, watersheds, and recently burned areas for winter storms and identifying fuel management priorities for the year ahead.

How Rincon Can Help

Rincon helps agencies prepare for, respond to, and recover from California's evolving natural hazards. Our multidisciplinary teams provide integrated support across flood preparedness, emergency response, wildfire resilience, environmental permitting/compliance, and long-term community planning. This connected approach helps clients address today's emergencies while building resilience for tomorrow.

Our Services Include:

- Flood and storm readiness assessments
- Emergency response planning and regulatory coordination
- Debris cleanup and soil sampling
- Damage assessments and GIS mapping
- Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs)
- General Plan Safety Elements
- Wildfire hazard and risk analyses
- Fuel management project identification and prioritization
- Climate adaptation and resilience planning

Questions About Preparing for El Niño?

Whether you're preparing for wildfires and storms or planning for the seasons that follow, Rincon can help your organization anticipate risks, navigate complex environmental requirements, and build stronger, more resilient communities.

Get in Touch

Steven Hongola
Vice President
Natural Resources
shongola@RinconConsultants.com

Scott Eckardt
Principal
Wildfire Planning and Forestry
seckardt@RinconConsultants.com

Dustin Swenson
Director
Environmental Compliance
dswenson@RinconConsultants.com