

Tropical Cyclone Rainfall

Marc Chenard

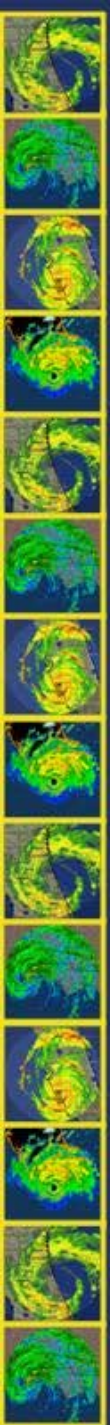
Jose Galvez

Weather Prediction Center



Outline

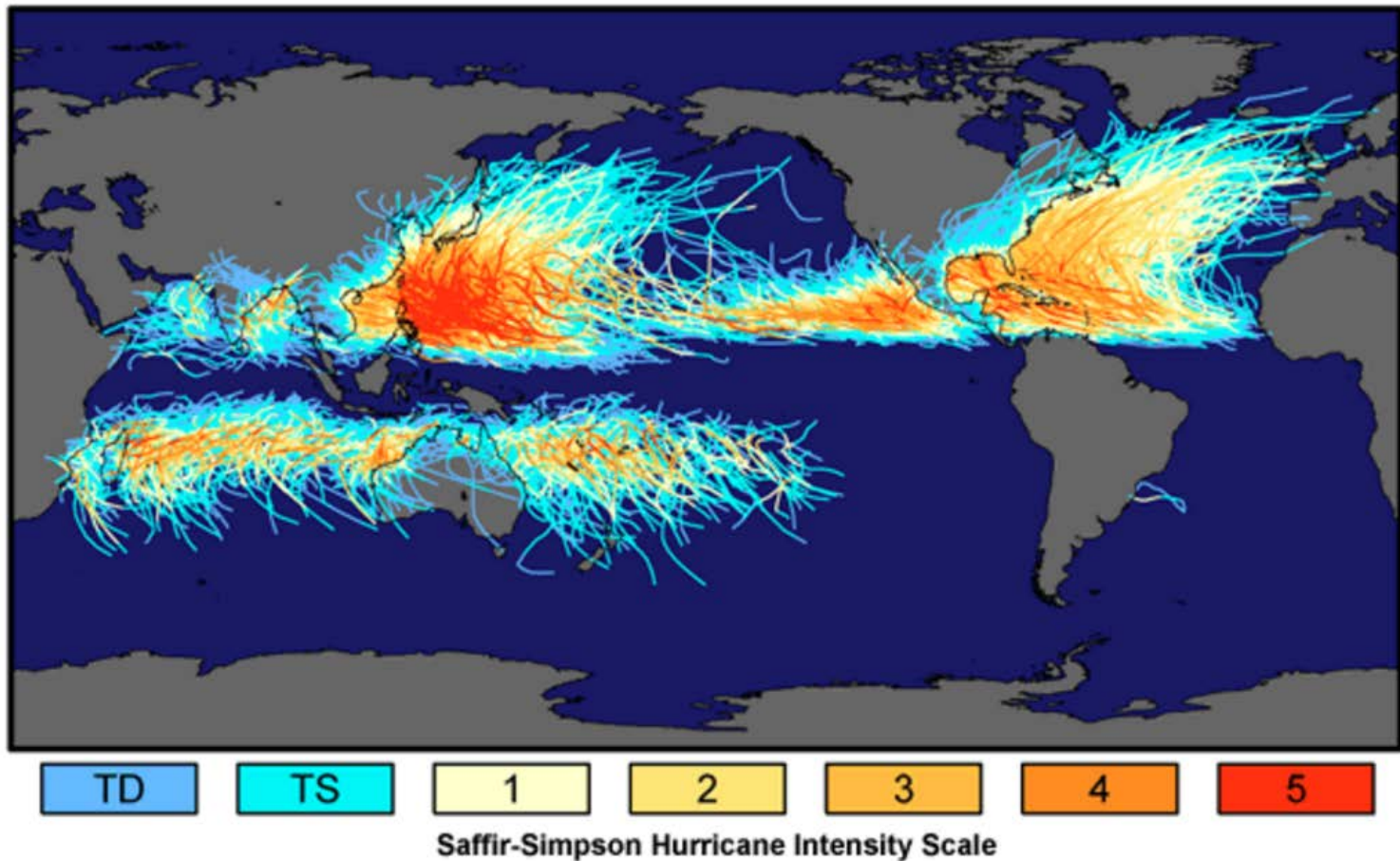
- Tropical Cyclone (TC) rainfall climatology
- Factors influencing TC rainfall
- TC rainfall forecasting tools
- TC rainfall forecasting process
- Weather Prediction Center (WPC) role in TC rainfall forecasting



Tropical Cyclone Rainfall Climatology

Tropical Cyclone Tracks

Tracks and Intensity of Tropical Cyclones, 1851-2006

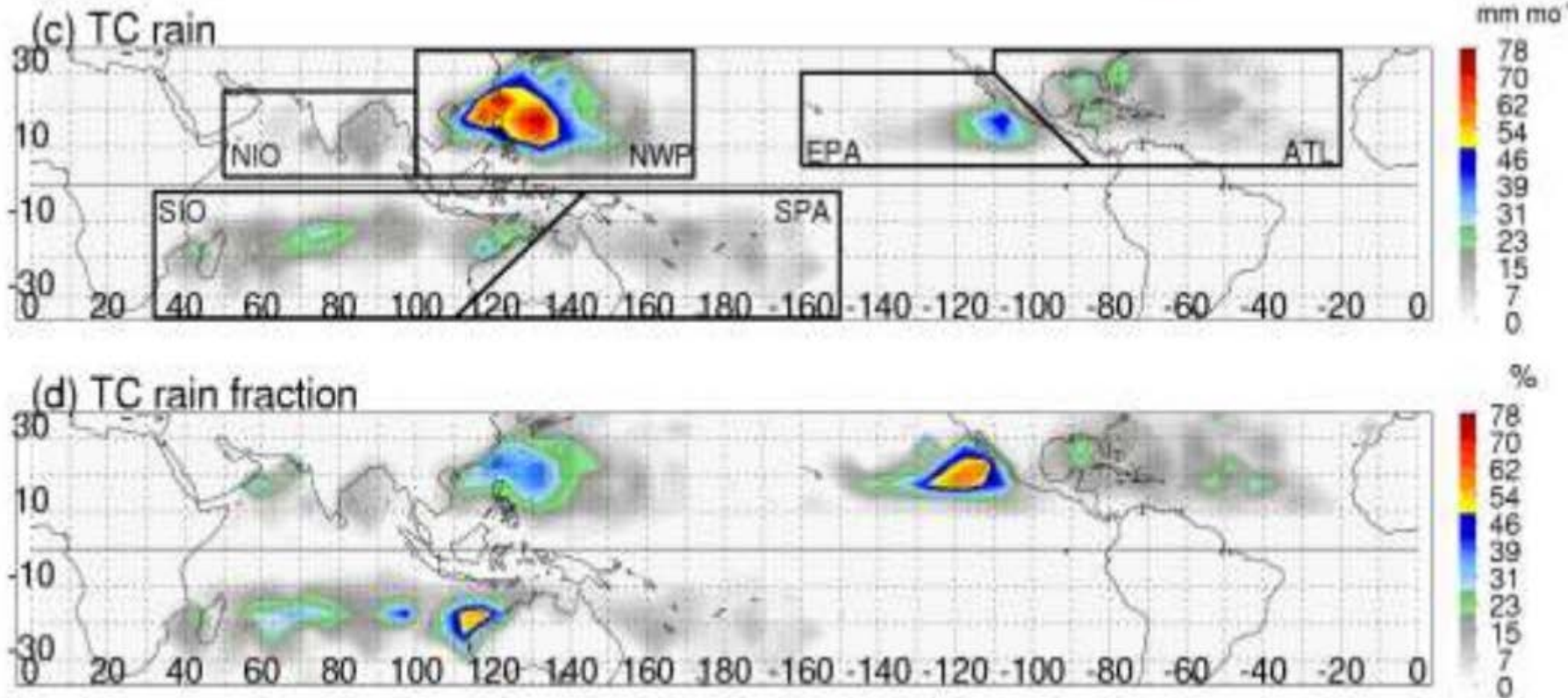


NASA

COMET (2011)

Global Mean Monthly TC Rainfall During the TC Season and Percent of Total Annual Rainfall

Data from TRMM 2A25 Precipitation Radar from 1998-2006



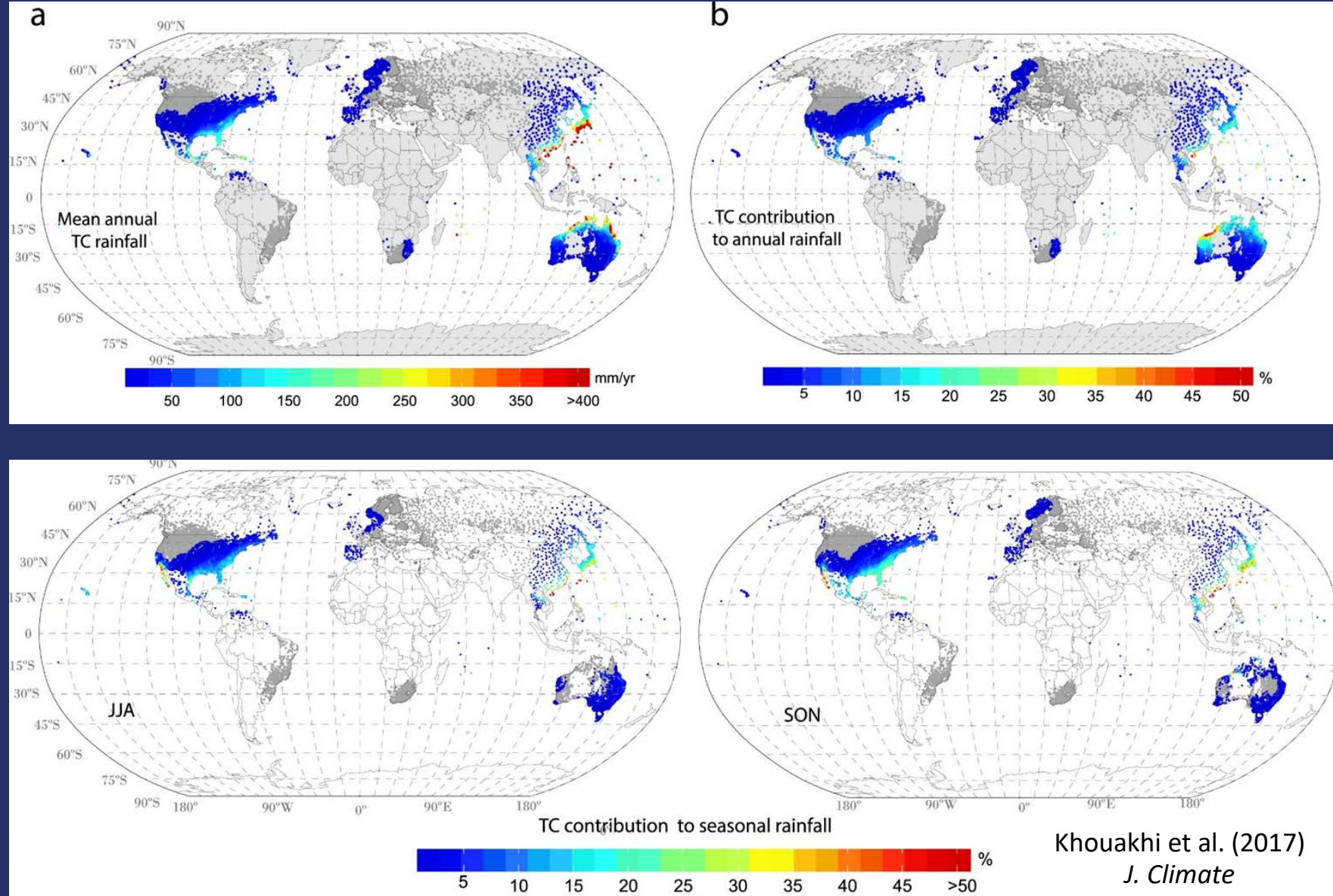


Contribution to Global Rainfall from TCs (1970-2014 rain gauge study)

- Globally, highest TC rainfall totals are in eastern Asia, northwestern Australia, and the southeastern United States
- Percentage of annual rainfall contributed by TCs:
 - 35-50%: NW Australia, SE China, northern Philippines, Baja California
 - 40-50%: Western coast of Australia, south Indian Ocean islands, East Asia, Mexico

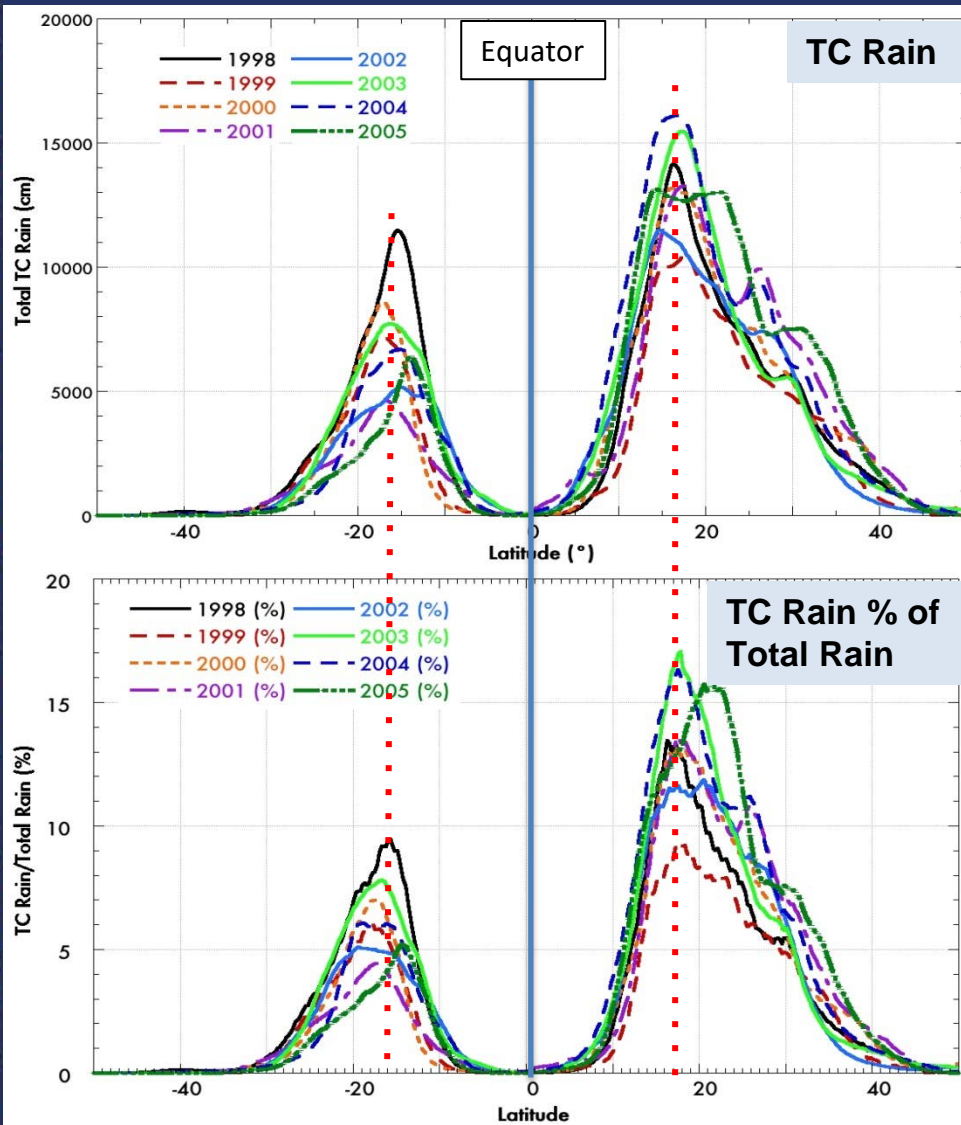
Khouakhi et al. (2017)
J. Climate

Contribution to Global Rainfall from TCs (1970-2014 rain gauge study)



Khouakhi et al. (2017)
J. Climate

Annual TC Rainfall



Frank Marks (HRD)

- TC rainfall makes up a larger percentage of total rainfall during years when global rainfall is low
- Asymmetric - generally more TC rainfall in the Northern Hemisphere
- TCs produce 10-17% of global rain from 15-25°N
- TCs produce 5-10% of global rain from 15-25°S

Biggest TC Rain Producers By Country/Island

Belize	829.8 mm	32.67"	Keith (2000)
Bermuda	186.7 mm	7.35"	October 1939 Hurricane
Canada	302.0 mm	11.89"	Harvey (1999)
Cayman Islands	764.8 mm	31.29"	Sanibel Island Hurricane (1944)
Costa Rica	920.0 mm	36.22"	Cesar (1996)
Cuba	2550.0 mm	100.39"	Flora (1963)
Dominica	825 mm	32"	Erica (2015)
Dominican Rep.	1001.5 mm	39.43"	Flora (1963)
El Salvador	1513 mm	59.57"	Twelve E (2011)
Guadeloupe	582.0 mm	22.91"	Luis (1995)
Guatemala	600.0 mm	23.62"	Mitch (1998)
Haiti	1447.8 mm	57.00"	Flora (1963)
Honduras	912.0 mm	35.89"	Mitch (1998)
Jamaica	3429.0 mm	135.00"	November 1909 Hurricane
Martinique	680.7 mm	26.80"	Dorothy (1970)
Mexico	1576.0 mm	62.05"	Wilma (2005)
Nicaragua	1597.0 mm	62.87"	Mitch (1998)
Panama	695.0 mm	27.36"	Mitch (1998)
Puerto Rico	1058.7 mm	41.68"	T.D. #15 (1970)
St. Lucia	668.0 mm	26.30"	Tomas (2010)
St. Martin/Maarten	866.6 mm	34.12"	Lenny (1999)
Venezuela	339.0 mm	13.30"	Brett (1993)

Original Source: David Roth WPC (2006)

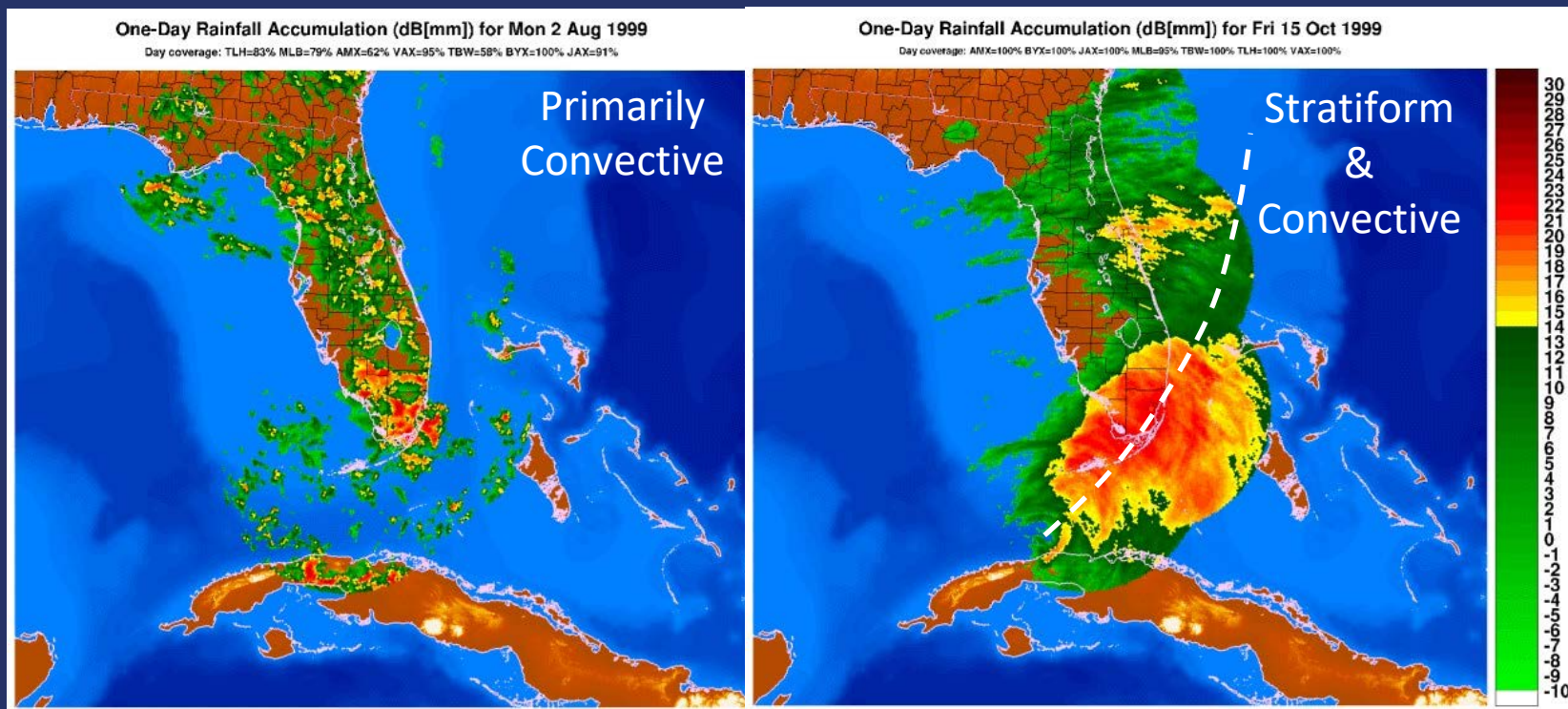
Characteristics of TC Precipitation

Stratiform and Convective Mechanisms
Stratiform Rain ~50% of Total Rain from TC

NOAA/HRD - Daily Radar Rainfall Estimate Study

Typical warm season 1-day total

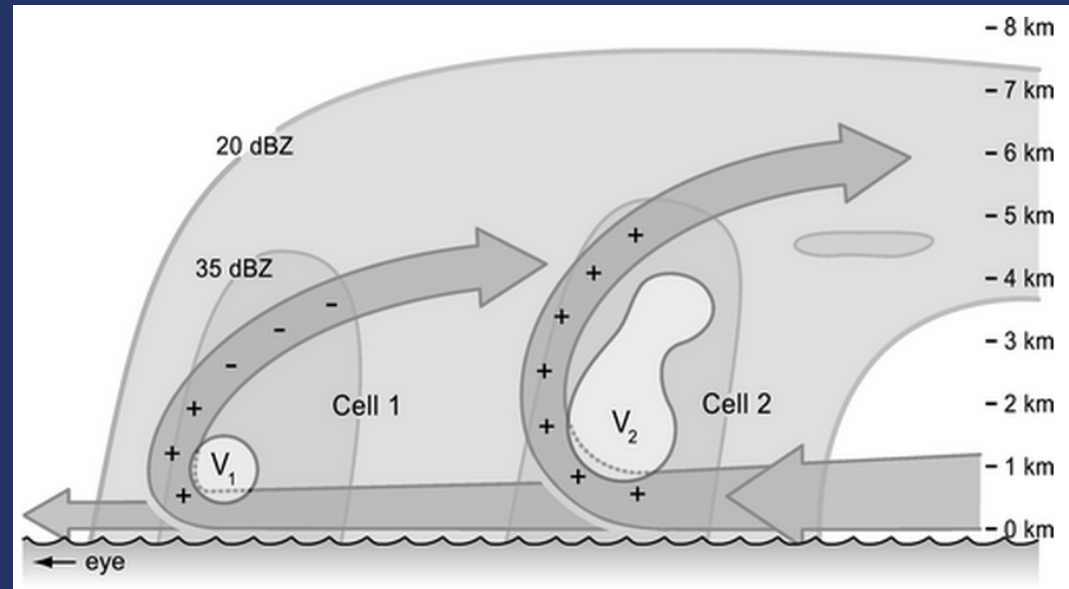
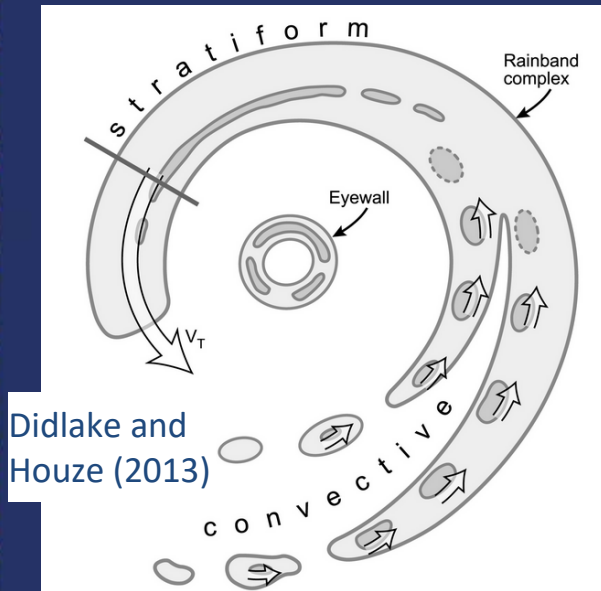
Hurricane Irene (1999) 1-day total



Hurricane Irene (15 October 1999)

Frank Marks (HRD)

TC Rainband Complexes



Convective Cells

Cell 1 (inner rainband)

- Weaker, shallower reflectivity core
- Weaker updraft

Cell 2 (outer rainband)

- More intense reflectivity, heavier rain
- Increased CAPE, more buoyant updraft

Stratiform

- Convection travels downwind and becomes increasingly stratiform in nature
- Primarily focuses in left-of-shear half of the storm

Factors Influencing Tropical Cyclone Rainfall

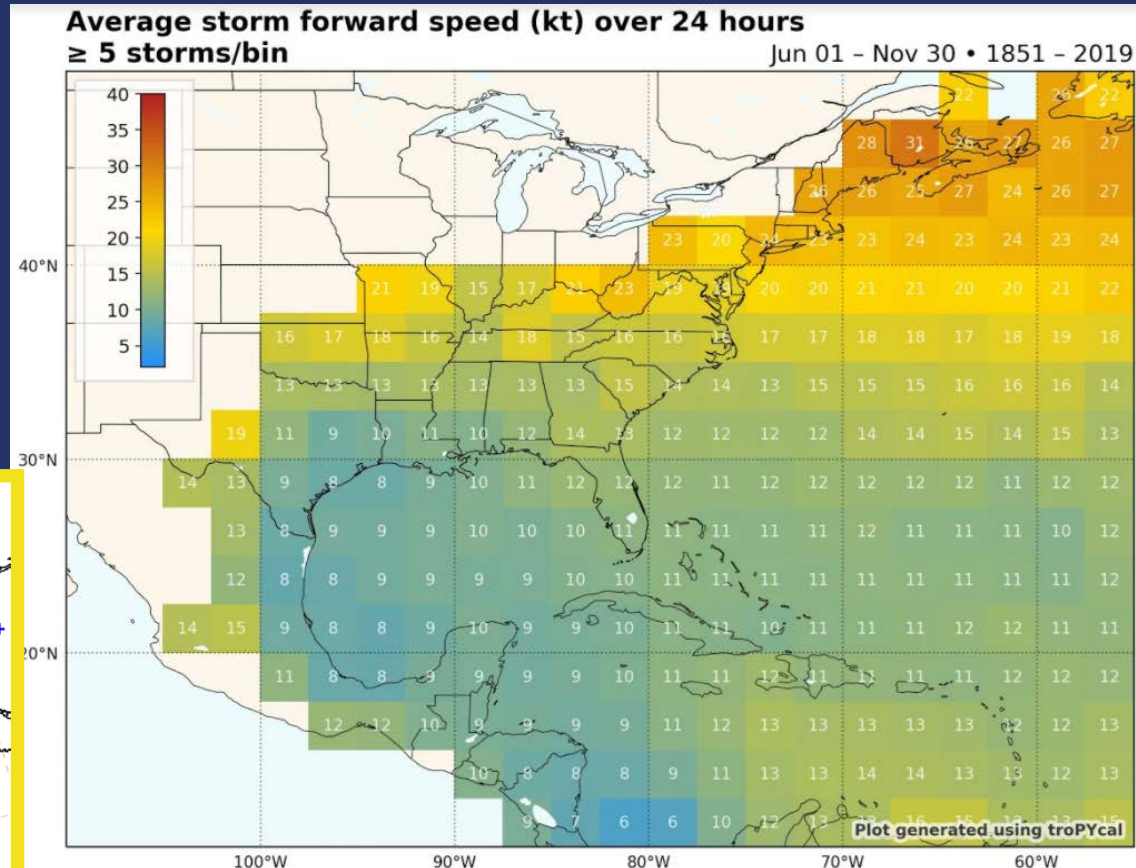
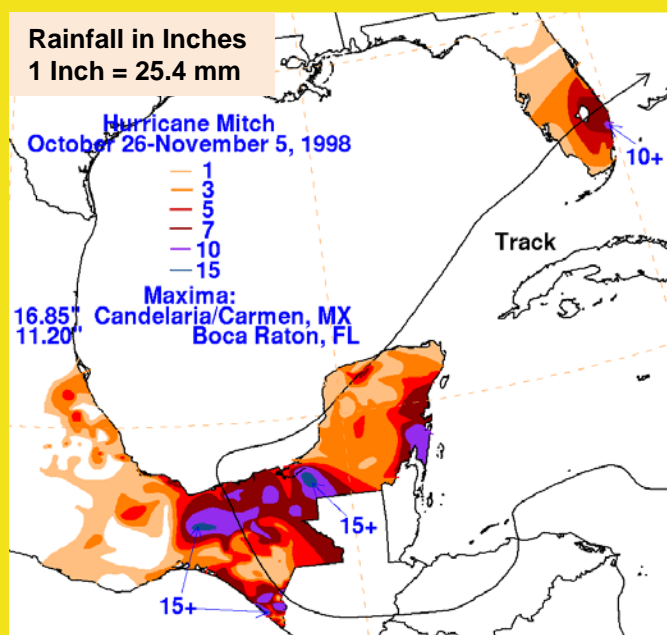
What Factors Influence Rainfall from Tropical Cyclones?

- Movement – slow forward motion can produce more rain
- Storm size – the larger the storm, the greater the area typically receiving rain
- Storm track – determines the location of the rain
- Diurnal cycle – heaviest rainfall generally near the storm center overnight, outer band rainfall during the day
- Topography – enhances rainfall in upslope areas, but decreases rainfall past the spine of the mountains
- Moisture – entrainment of dry air can redistribute and/or reduce the amount of precipitation; increased moisture can increase rainfall
- Interaction with other meteorological features (troughs, fronts, jets) and extratropical transition can greatly modify rainfall distribution

Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

Storm Motion

- Slow vs. fast moving TCs
- TCs with a turning or looping track vs. straight mover



Hurricane Mitch fatalities:

Honduras: 5,677
Nicaragua: 2,863
Guatemala: 258
El Salvador: 239

Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

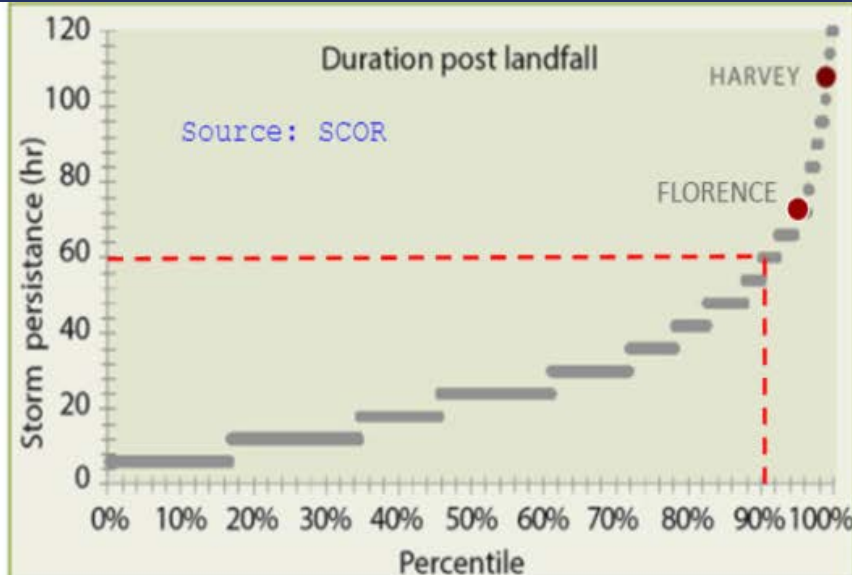
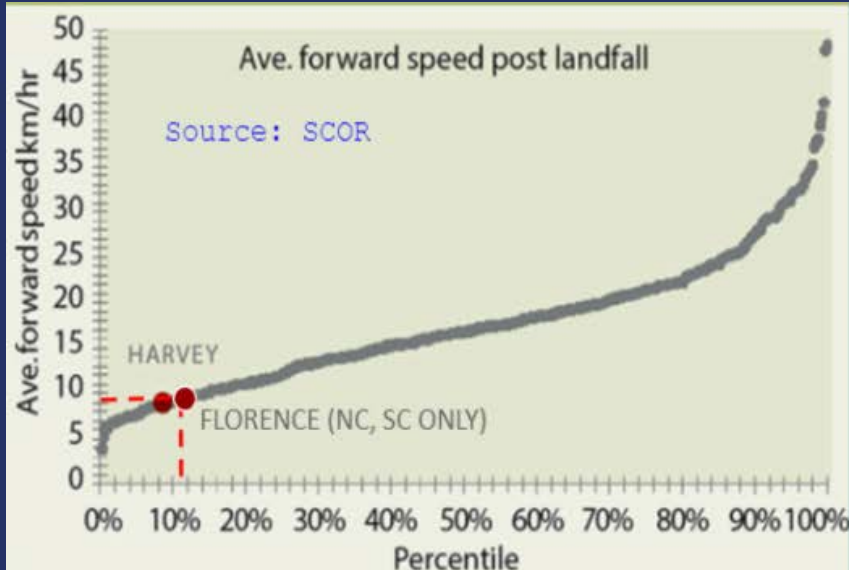
Situations that Favor the “Big Ones”

Slow-Moving Storms that Create Multi-Day Opportunity for Repetitive, High-Intensity Rainfall

Storm speed being equal: larger, higher-intensity storms that approach areas with terrain or urban development are factors

Few with widespread, catastrophic rain

*People want us to get these right
Need to minimize false alarms*



When storms are unusually slow-moving (~5 knots or less) and also unusually persistent in their tropical characteristics post-landfall, watch out for extreme rainfall and potentially catastrophic flooding.

Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

Storm Size

Determined by distance from center to outermost closed isobar

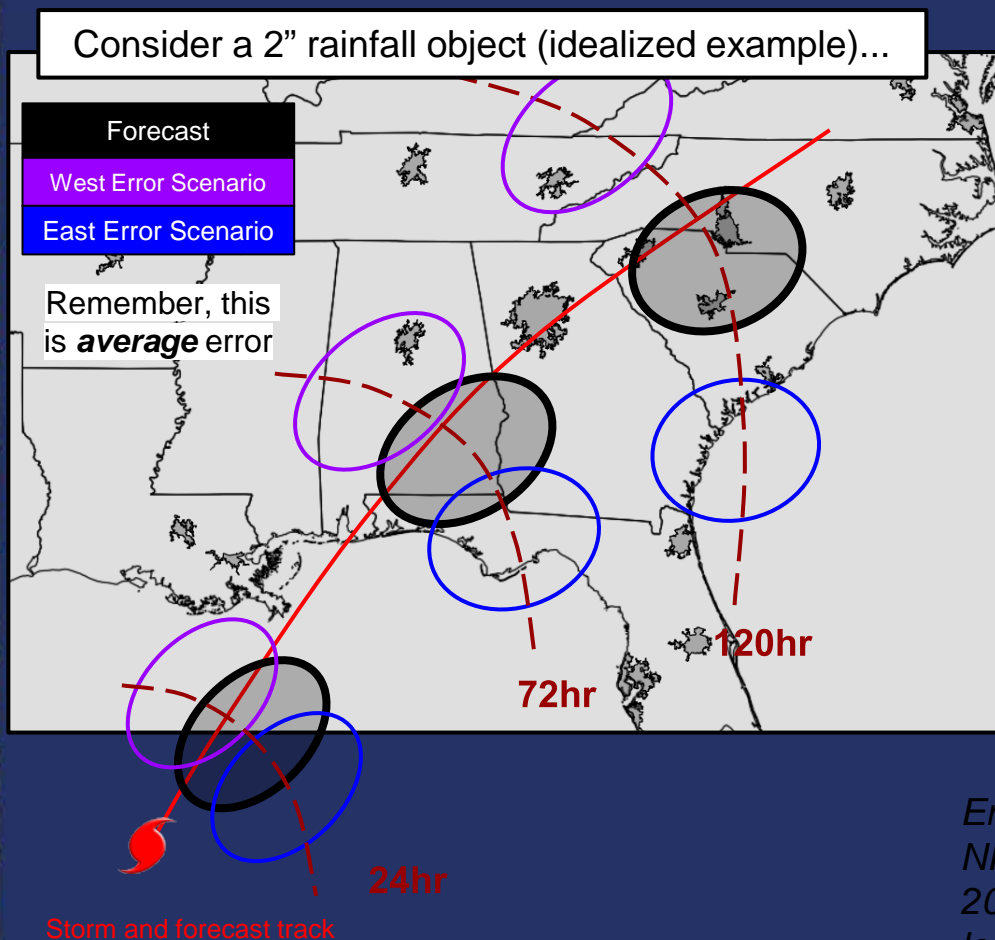
<2 degrees	"Very small"	Marco (2008)	
2-3 degrees	"Small"	Ida (2009)	
3-6 degrees	"Average"	Frances (2008)	
6-8 degrees	"Large"	Wilma (2008)	
>8 degrees	"Very large"	Sandy (2012)	

Original Source: Joint Typhoon Warning Center

Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

Storm Track

How far off are we with placement of higher amounts?



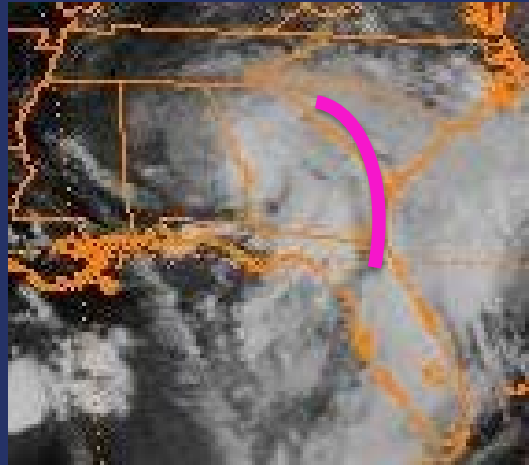
Fcst Hour	Avg QPF Error	NHC Track Error
24	56 mi.	42 mi.
48	65 mi.	58 mi.
72	86 mi.	90 mi.
96	126 mi.	121 mi.
120	157 mi.	178 mi.

Error statistics for both QPF and NHC from a specific subset of 2016-2020 storms. May not match longer averages.

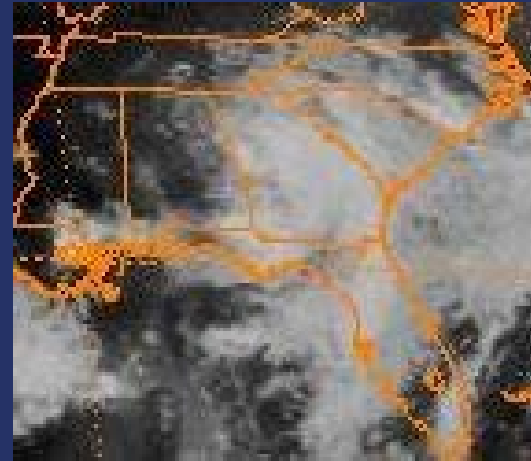
Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

Time of Day
Alberto, July 4-5, 1994

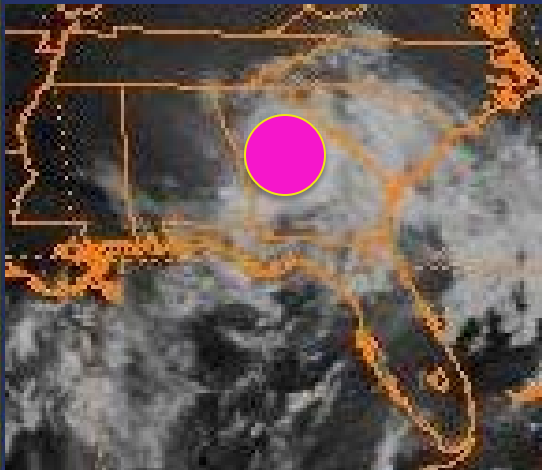
04/18z



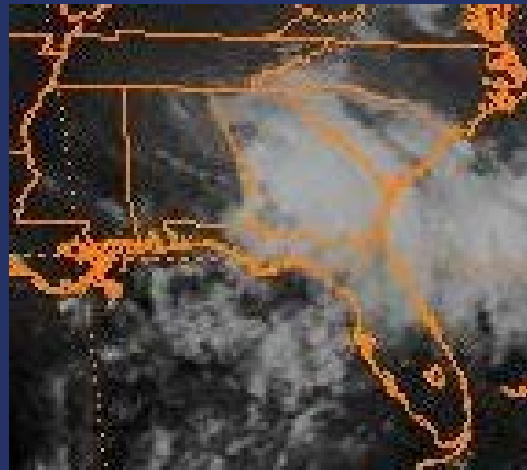
00z



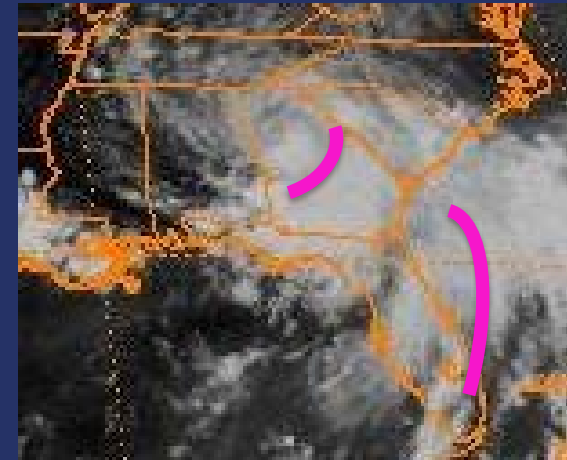
05/06z



12z



18z



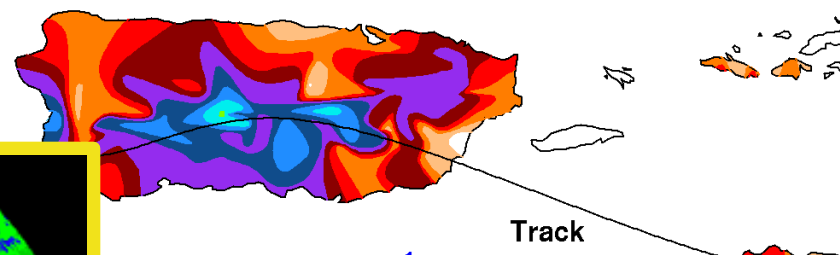
Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

Terrain Impacts

Heaviest rainfall favors mountains perpendicular to the wind

Rainfall in Inches
1 Inch = 25.4 mm

Hurricane Georges
September 19-23, 1998
148 sites




Storm Total 30.51" Jayuya, PR
24 Hour 23.30" Cacaos/Orocovis, PR

David Roth WPC

Hurricane Georges in Puerto Rico
\$1.75 billion in damage
28,005 homes destroyed

Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

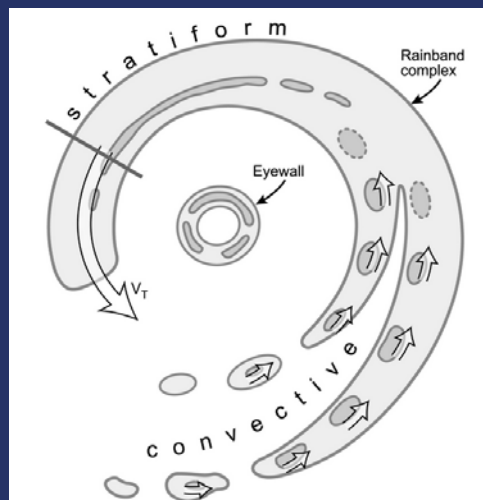
Vertical Wind Shear – Northern Hemisphere

<u>Inner</u>		Downshear		<u>Outer</u>	
Total				Total	
52	39			46	83
7	8			9	16

More than 90% of lightning flashes occurred downshear

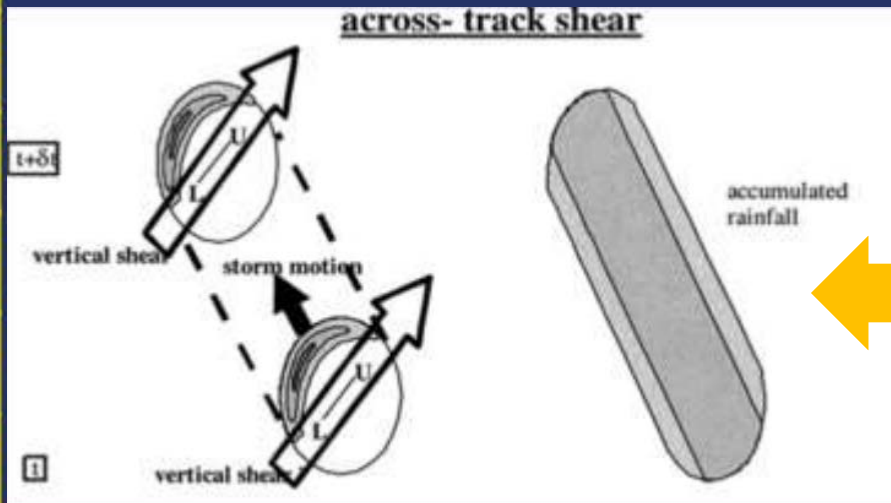
Downshear left slightly favored within inner rainbands

Downshear right favored within outer rainbands

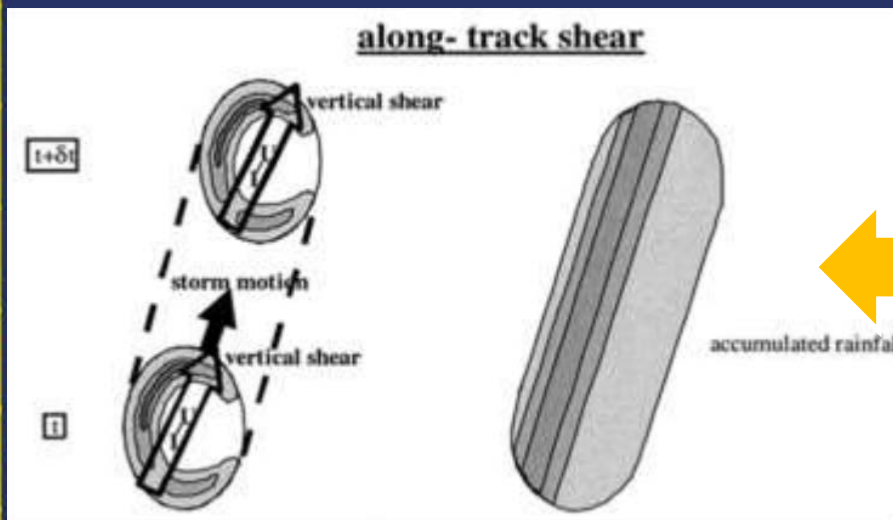


Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

Vertical Wind Shear – Northern Hemisphere



Shear directed **across** the storm track leads to more uniform distribution of the rainfall

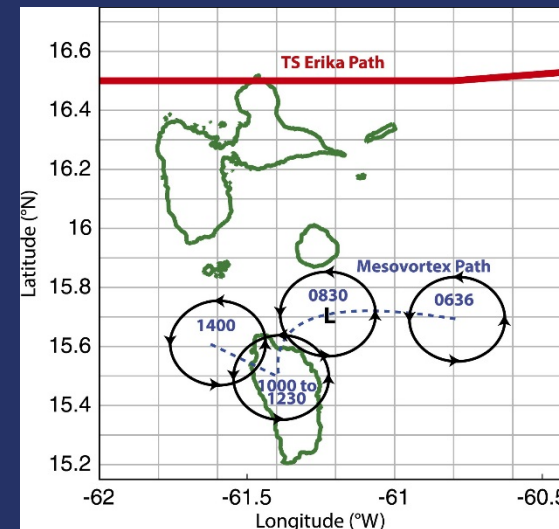
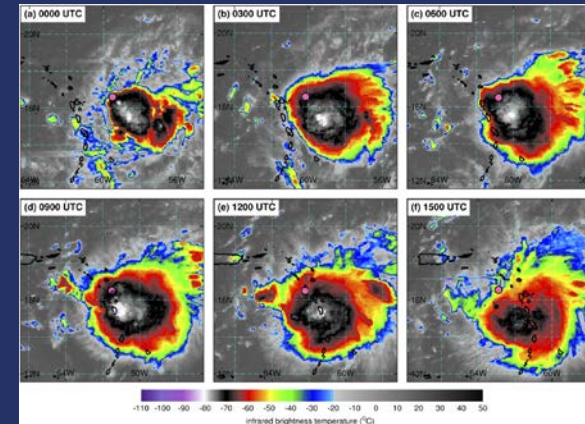


Shear directed **parallel** to the storm track leads to a distribution of the rainfall asymmetry on the left side of the track

Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

Shear, Mesovortices, and Topography

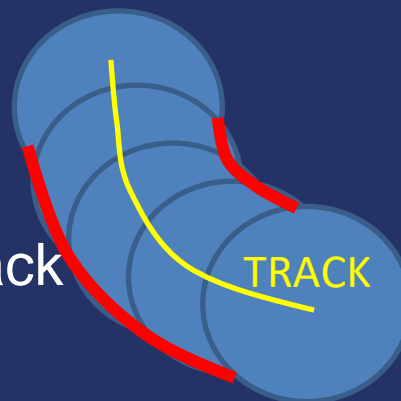
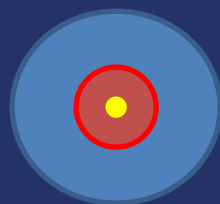
- Downshear region of strong convection associated with Erika (2015) passed directly over Dominica, producing over 500 mm of rainfall
 - Driven by 500-850 mb shear rather than deep layer shear
- Mesovortex on the scale of ~ 100 km developed within Erika's circulation and persisted over Dominica for 3 hours, likely due to topographic effects, enhancing heavy rainfall



Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

Environmental Steering in Northern Hemisphere

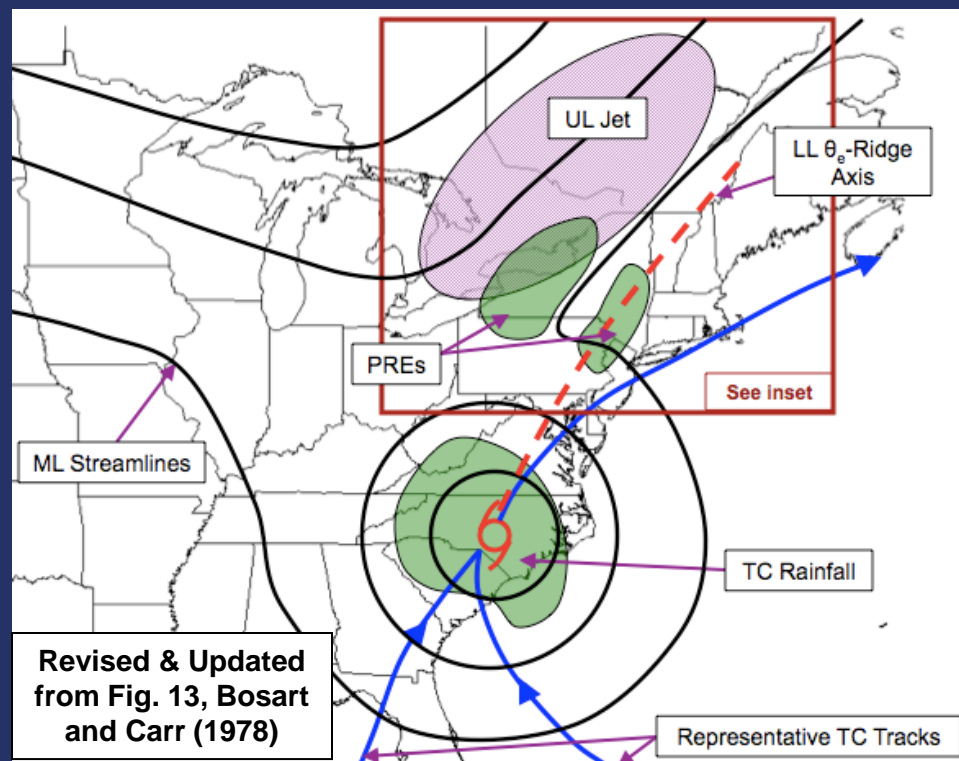
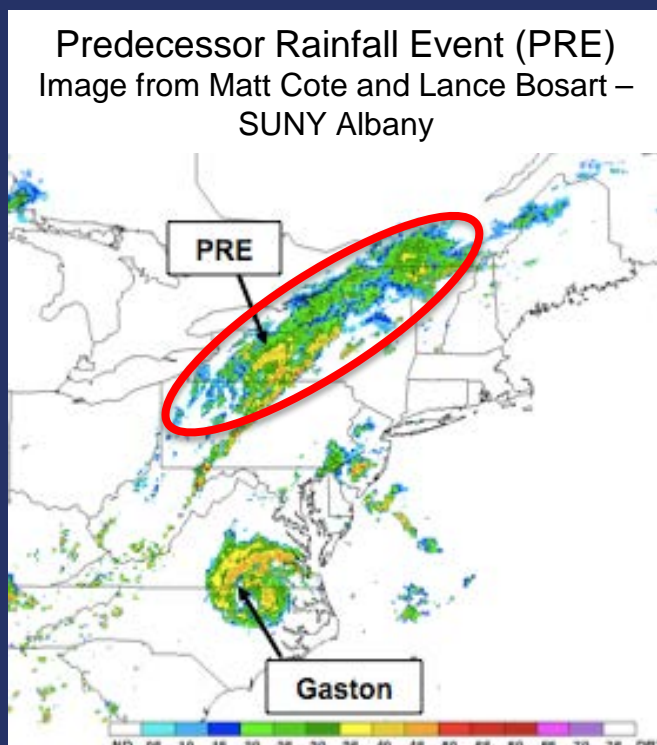
- Very slow moving TCs and symmetrical TCs produce the most rainfall *near the center*
 - Maximum rainfall at night (especially when over land)
 - Weak steering flow
- TCs that move into a break in the subtropical ridge often produce most of the rain *right* of their track
- TCs that recurve due to significant upper troughs in the westerlies often produce most of their rain *left* of their track
 - Rainfall may spread well in advance of the TC due to interaction with the upper jet on the leading edge of the trough



Even rainfall distribution =
Rain over smaller area
on right side =
Higher totals

Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

Predecessor Rainfall Events



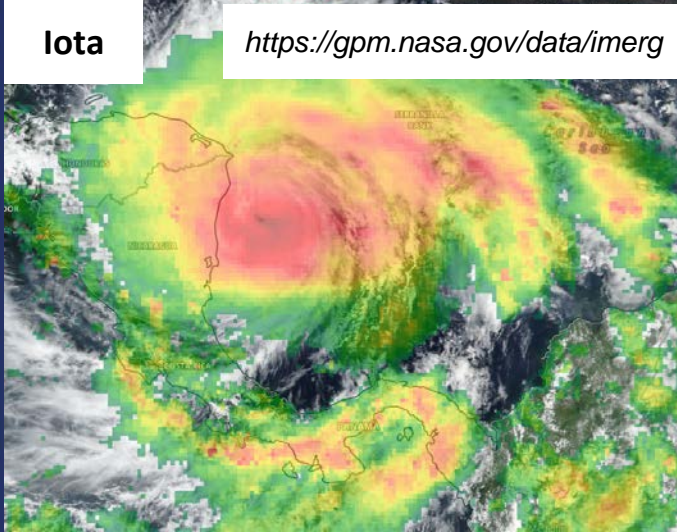
- Moisture transport well ahead of TC itself
- Coherent area of rain displaced north of the TC (near a front or over terrain)
- Maximum rainfall rates can exceed 200 mm in 24 hr
- Occurs for approximately 1 of 3 landfalling TCs in U.S.

Factors Influencing TC Rainfall

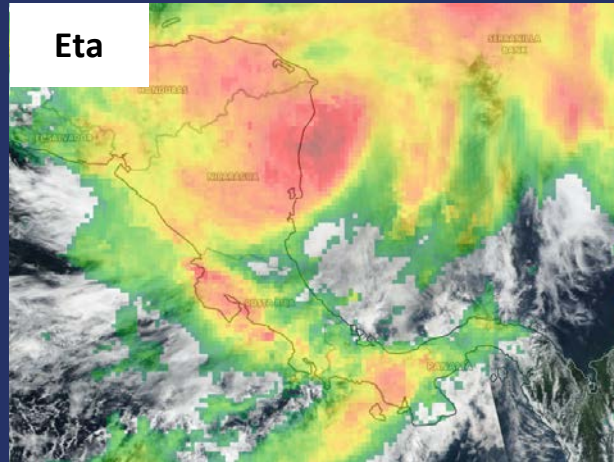
Other Secondary Features and/or CAGs

Iota

<https://gpm.nasa.gov/data/imerg>

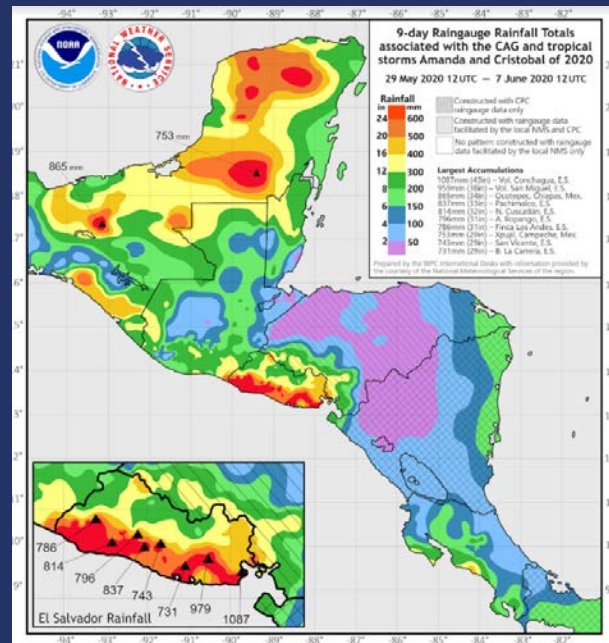
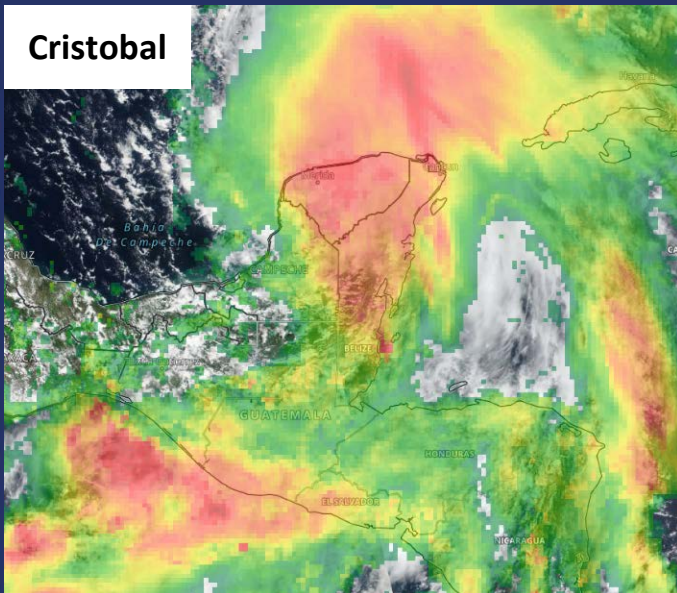


Eta



Secondary features and CAGs (Central American Gyre) can result in heavy rainfall well away from the center of the TC. Especially when orographic enhancement comes into play

Cristobal

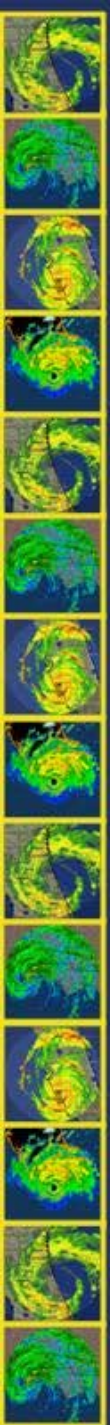


CAGs are most common early and late in the hurricane season

Where is Flooding from Tropical Cyclones More Likely to Occur?

- Areas where the ground is already saturated (low flash flood guidance values)
- Valleys/watersheds
- Areas of orographic enhancement
- Areas with poor drainage or prone to runoff
- Areas with directed drainage that can be overwhelmed

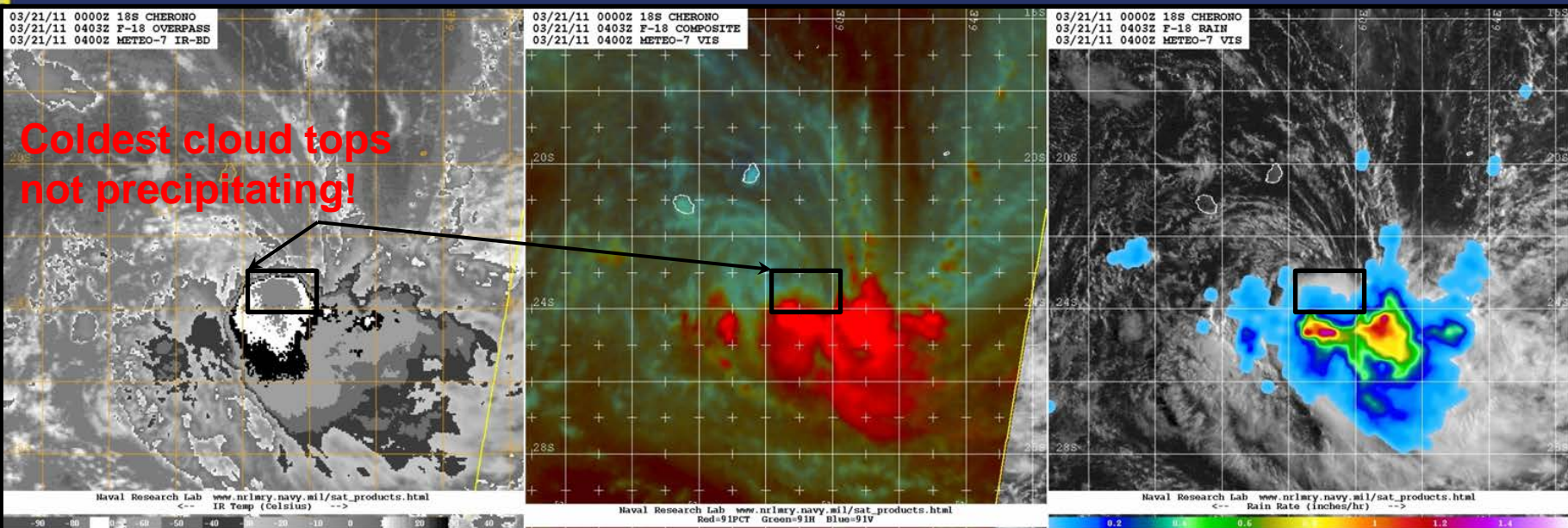




TC Rainfall Forecasting Tools

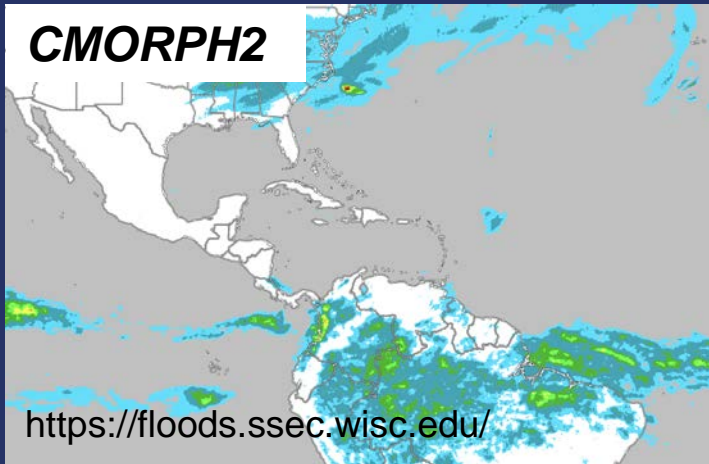
Advantages of Microwave Products

- Geostationary IR data provides excellent spatiotemporal resolution, but is not optimal for rain estimation
- Microwave provides improved rainfall accuracy but at low temporal resolution
- Quantitative precipitation estimate (QPE) products leverage each method's strength...

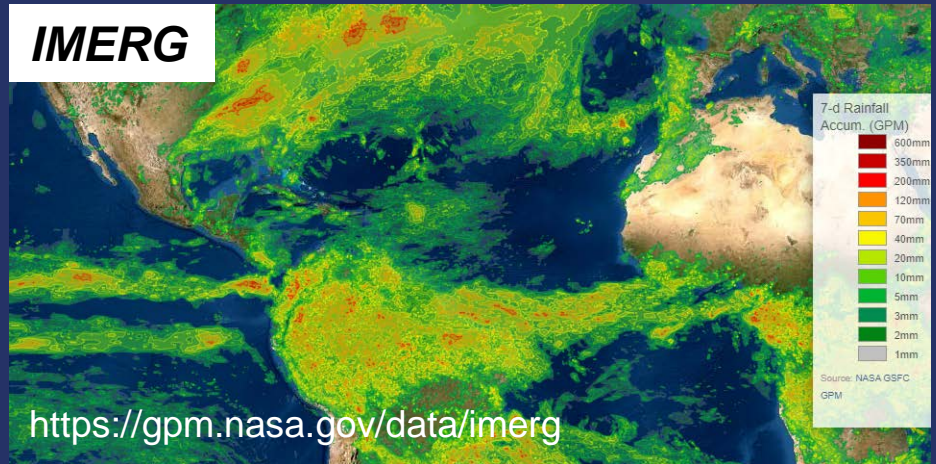


Satellite Rainfall Estimates

CMORPH2



IMERG



JAX



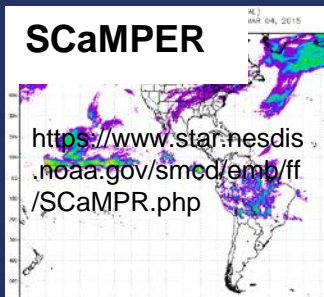
CMORPH2, IMERG and JAX: Most sophisticated of the estimates. All use a combination of microwave and geostationary satellite data to derive estimated rainfall.

QMORPH: advection of microwave rainfall estimates

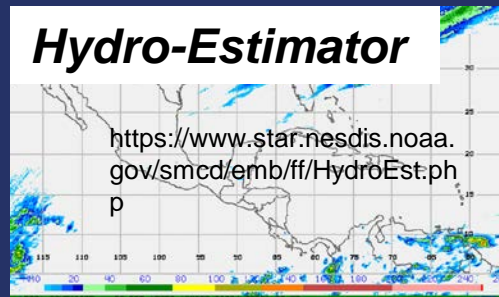
Hydro-Estimator: Only uses GOES IR imagery

SCaMPER: IR imagery calibrated with Microwave data

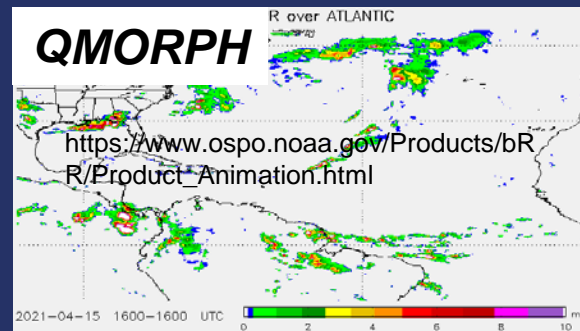
SCaMPER



Hydro-Estimator

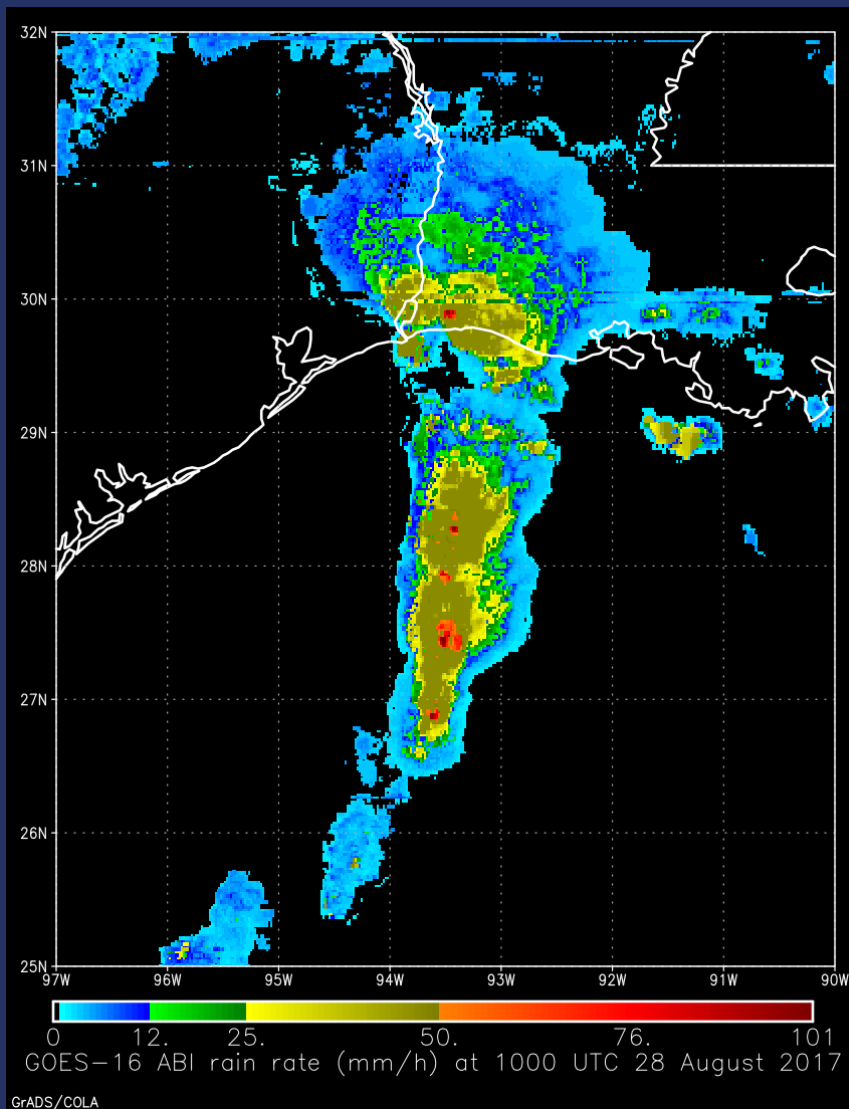


QMORPH



GOES-16/17 Products

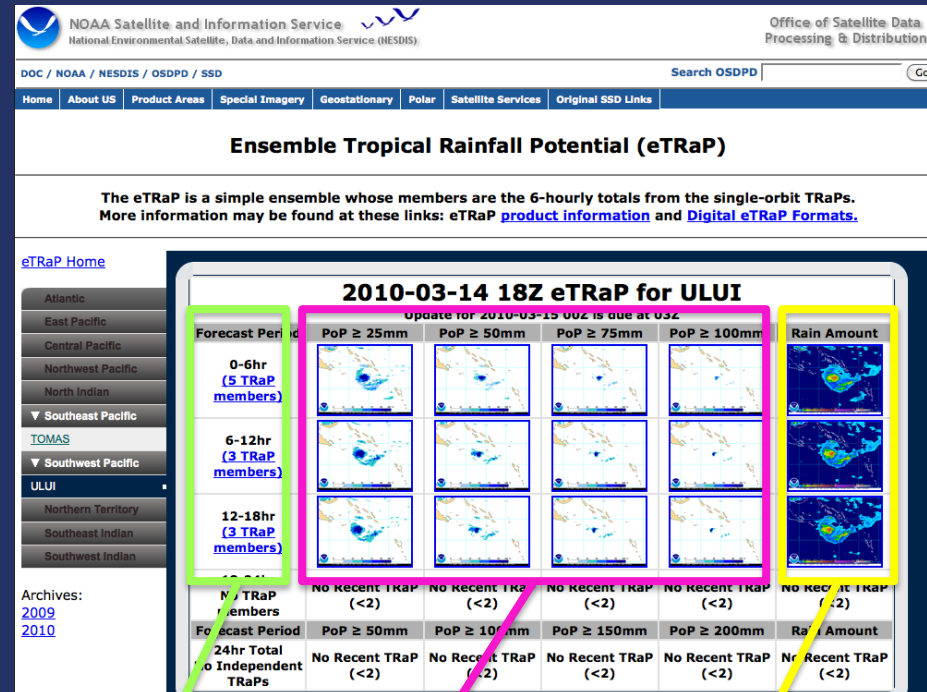
Rainfall Rate



- Algorithm generates estimates of instantaneous rainfall rate at each IR pixel
- Uses IR brightness temperatures and calibrated in real time against microwave-derived rain rates to enhance accuracy
- The higher spatial and temporal resolution available from GOES-16 will be able to automatically resolve rainfall rates on a finer scale

Ensemble Tropical Rainfall Potential Product (eTRaP)

- 6-hourly Day 1 forecasts:
Extrapolates polar orbiting satellite rain rate along TC forecast tracks
(AMSU, SSMI, AMSRE, TRMM)
- A satellite “member” is included when its path passes over the TC
- “Members” are weighted according to age of pass and past performance of sensor
- Official forecast of TC track & at least 2 members needed to create a forecast
- Updated daily at 0315, 0915, 1515, and 2115 UTC

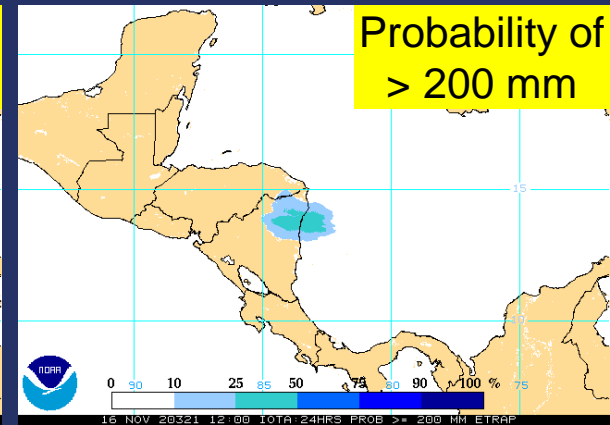
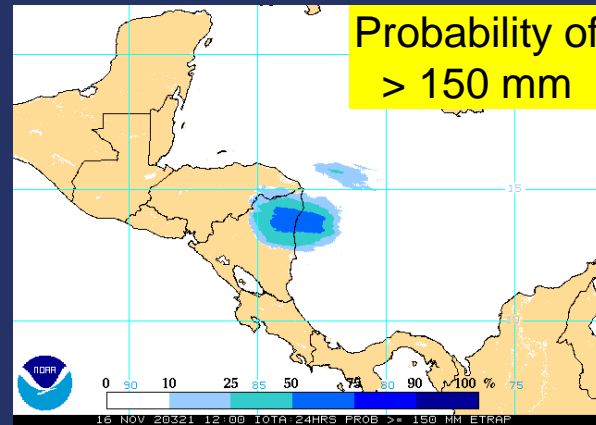
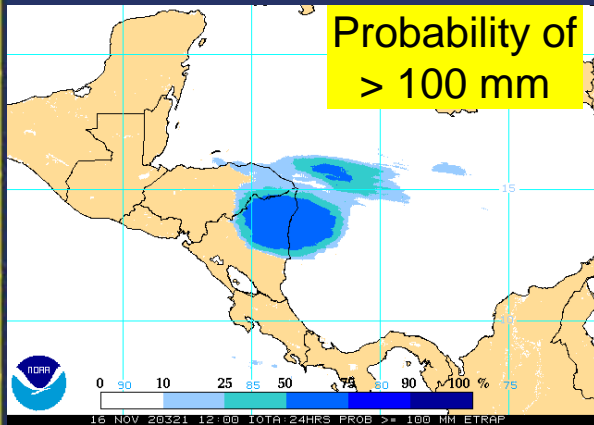


Forecast Period

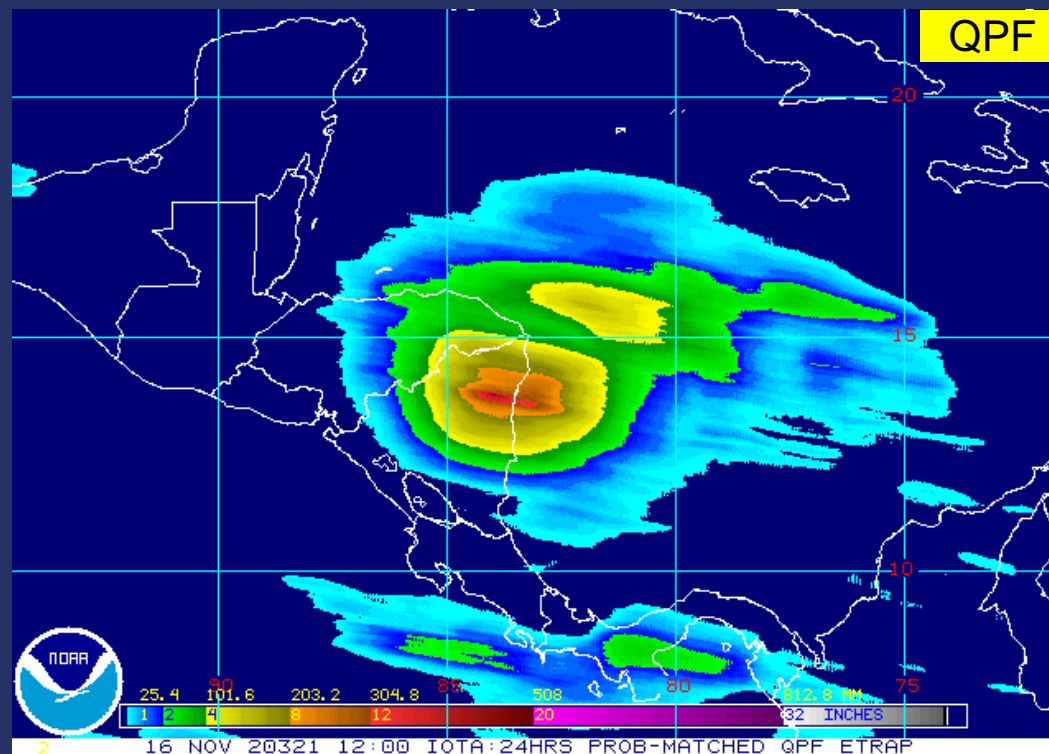
Probability of exceedance

Quantitative Precipitation Forecast

<http://www.ssd.noaa.gov/PS/TROP/etrap.html>



Hurricane Iota 24 hr eTRaP forecast





CLIQR: Picking an Analog for a TC Rainfall Event

www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/tropical/rain/web/cliqr.html

Looks at:

- The current rain shield size and compare it to TCs from the past
- How fast is the TC moving?
- Vertical wind shear in current/past events?
- Look for storms with similar or parallel tracks
- Is topography a consideration?
- Look for nearby fronts and examines the depth of nearby upper troughs for current event and possible analogs

Not all TC events will have a useful analog

Tropical Cyclone Rainfall Data

<http://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/tropical/rain/tcrainfall.html>

CLIQR Matching TC List (Rainfall Matches Accessible via Hyperlink)

INVEST_AL96

Results ranked from best match to worst match, with ties being won by the earlier storm.

BETA 2005: No graphic available.

[GERT 1993](#)

HATTIE 1961: No graphic available.

[JOAN 1988](#)

MARCO 1996: No graphic available.

NOT NAMED 1964: No graphic available.

[GORDON 1994](#)

[KATRINA 1999](#)

MARTHA 1969: No graphic available.

THIRTEEN 1985: No graphic available.

BRET 1993: No graphic available.

[ALMA 1970](#)

IRENE 1971: No graphic available.

UNNAMED 1981: No graphic available.

FOURTEEN 2002: No graphic available.

SIX 1969: No graphic available.

LAURA 1971: No graphic available.

SEVENTEEN 1973: No graphic available.

CESAR 1996: No graphic available.

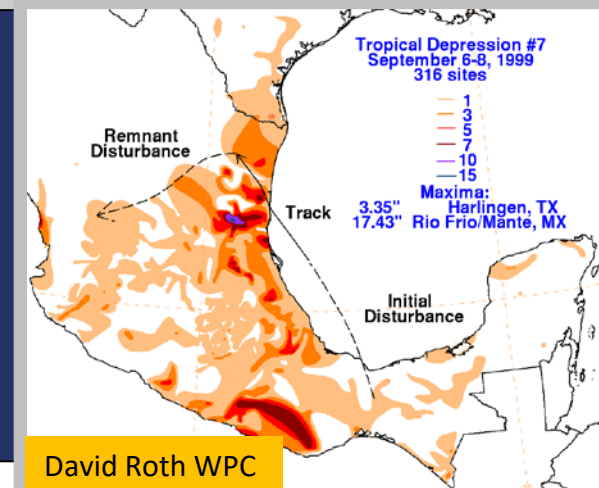
Tropical Cyclone Rainfall Data



This page is under construction...so new information will be added as time allows. Data is available for tropical and subtropical cyclones that impacted the U.S. from 1963 onward to the present, and Mexico between 1995 and 2003, as well as some older historic storms. The image of Hurricane Floyd shown to the left was provided by the Operational Satellite Events Imagery web page of NOAA. Please select the page of your choice from the following list.

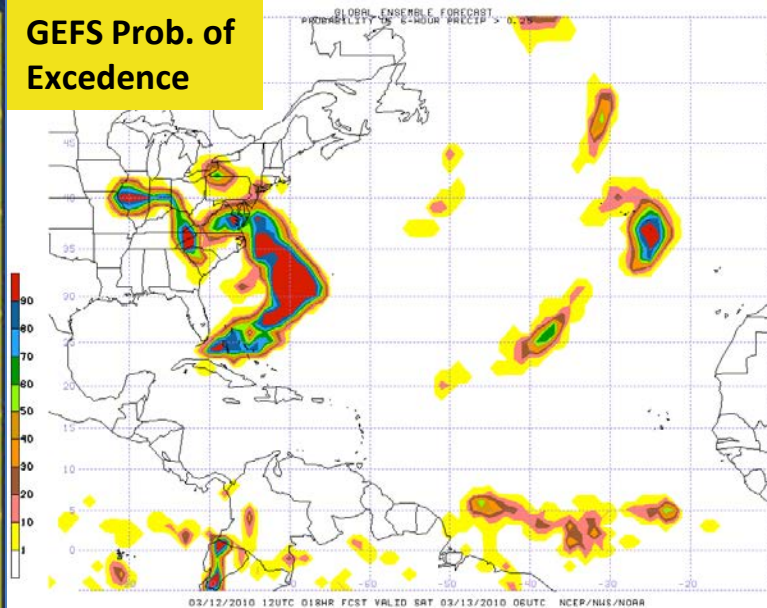
Select Storm By Name	Rainfall analogs to current tropical cyclones	Select Storm By Year
Select Storm By Region Of Impact	Select Storm By Point Of Entry	Tropical Cyclone Maxima Per U. S. State
Tropical Cyclone Maxima Per Mexican State	Point Maxima for Tropical Cyclones	Tropical Cyclone Averages and Maxima per Duration
Tropical Cyclone Rainfall Forecasting	Tropical Cyclone Rainfall Slideshow (in Powerpoint format)	Methodology for climatology
Acknowledgments	Milestones	

For any questions, comments, suggestions, e-mail David.Roth@noaa.gov
Last updated May 26, 2009



Available for active TCs at:
www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/tropical/rain/web/cliqr.html

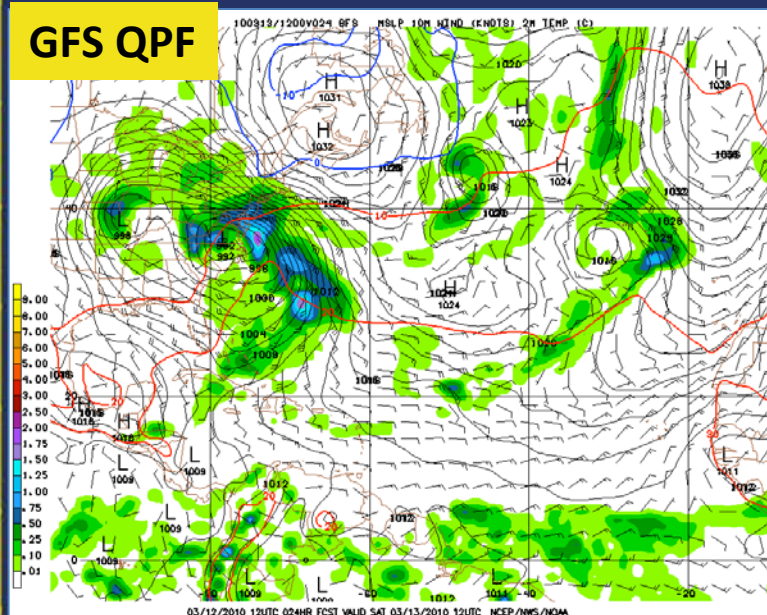
GEFS Prob. of Excedence



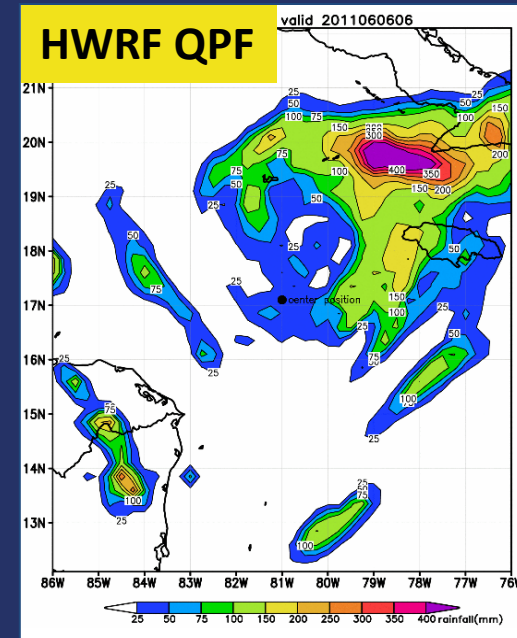
Global deterministic models, global ensemble means and probabilities, hurricane models, high resolution models

- GFS, NAM, GEFS
- ECMWF, ECMWF ensemble
- HWRF/HMON
- UKMET
- GEM

GFS QPF

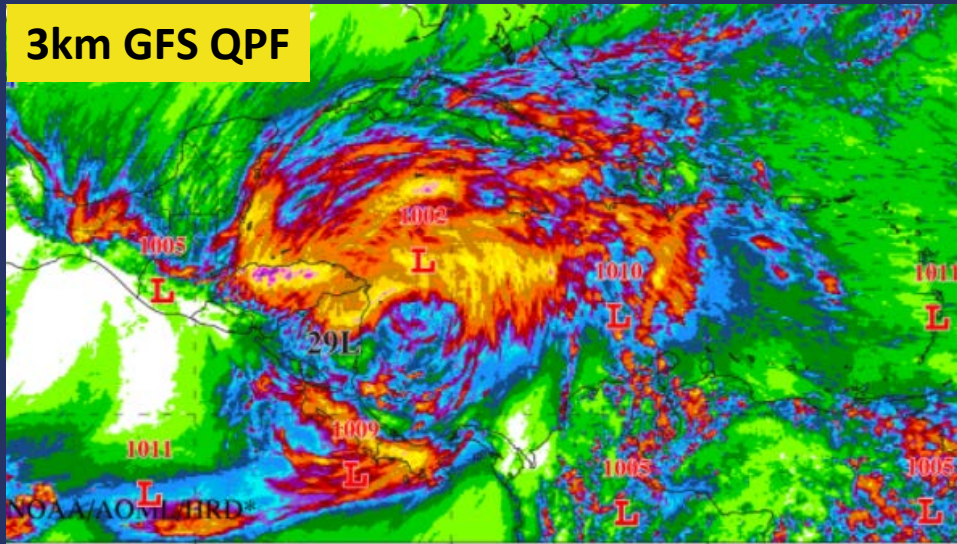


HWRF QPF

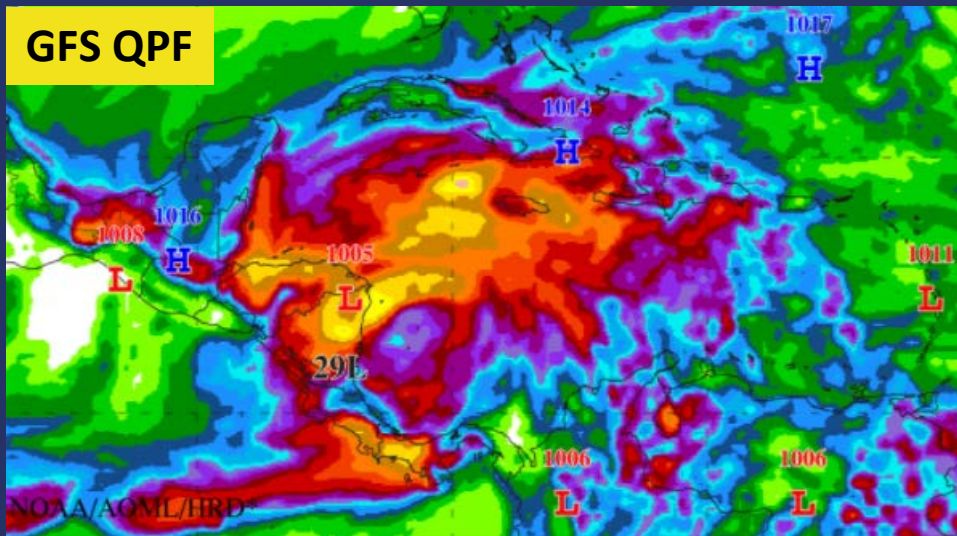


Model Forecasts

3km GFS QPF



GFS QPF



- High resolution convective allowing models (CAMs) have many advantages
- Resolve convective rain bands better than global models
- Better depiction of orographic enhancement and rain shadowing
- Better signal of potential upper bound of rainfall magnitudes
- Coverage and availability of CAMs should continue to increase over the coming years

Model Forecasts



Where to Find Model QPFs

- **NCEP models (GFS, NAM, GEFS, NAEFS) including tropical guidance (HWRF and HMON)**

<http://mag.ncep.noaa.gov>

- **NAVGENM**

<http://www.nrlmry.navy.mil/metoc/nogaps/>

- **ECMWF**

<https://www.ecmwf.int/en/forecasts/charts>

- **Penn State Tropical Atlantic E-Wall**

<http://mp1.met.psu.edu/~fxg1/ewalltropatl.html>

- **Tropical Tidbits**

<https://www.tropicaltidbits.com/analysis/models/>

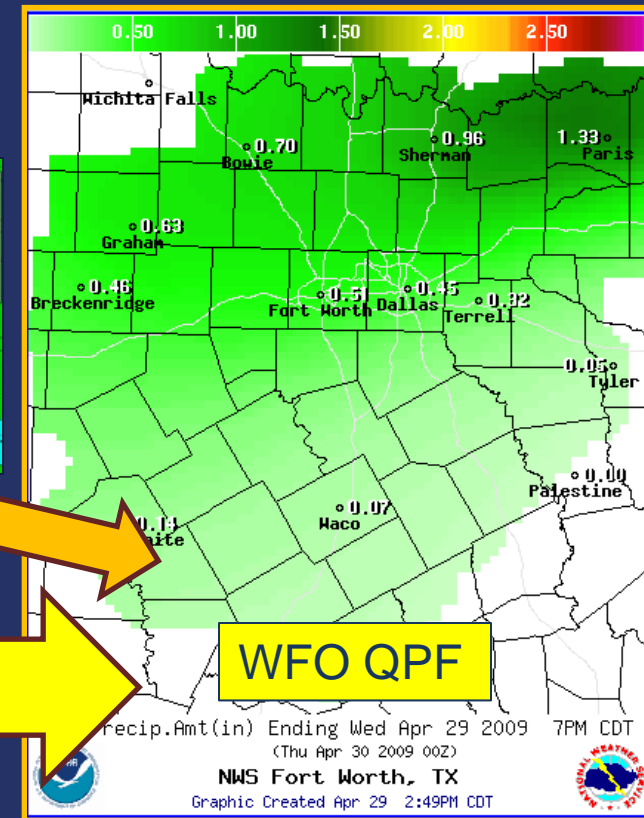
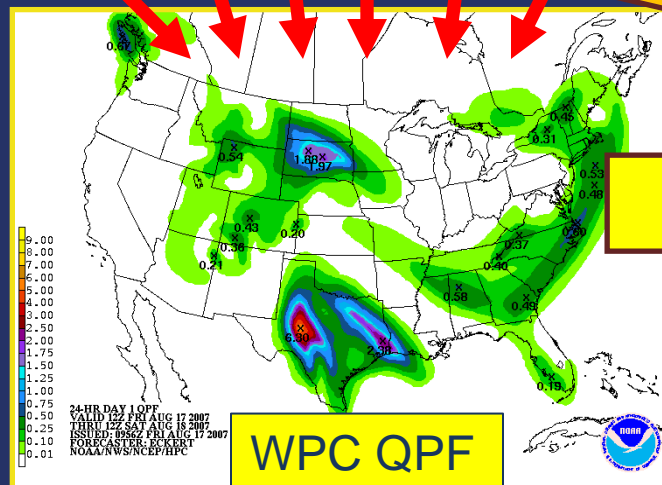
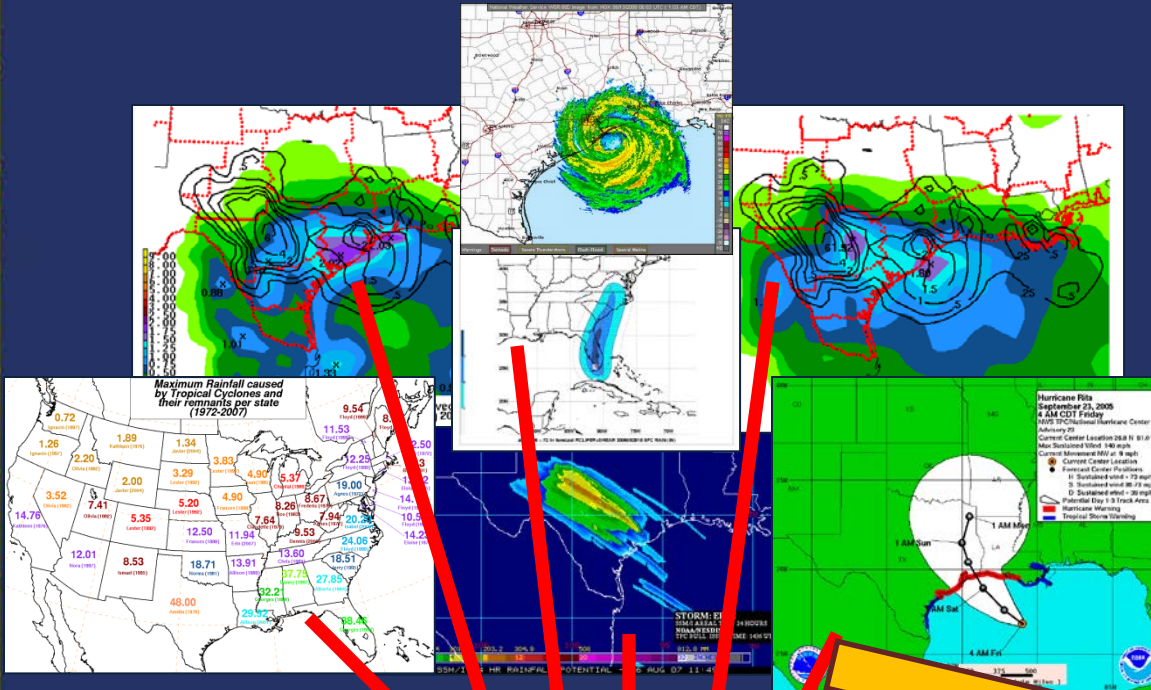
- **HWRF/HMON/ experimental guidance**

https://www.emc.ncep.noaa.gov/gc_wmb/vxt/HWRF/index.php

<https://storm.aoml.noaa.gov/viewer/>

TC QPF Forecast Process

NWS Tropical Cyclone Quantitative Precipitation Forecasts (QPF)



Production of Tropical Cyclone Quantitative Precipitation Forecasts

A good place to start is the model closest to the NHC track forecast

Day 1 QPF
24-h ending 12Z 21 Aug 2008 –
T.S. Fay

NHC Track
Forecast Issued
at 09Z 20 Aug

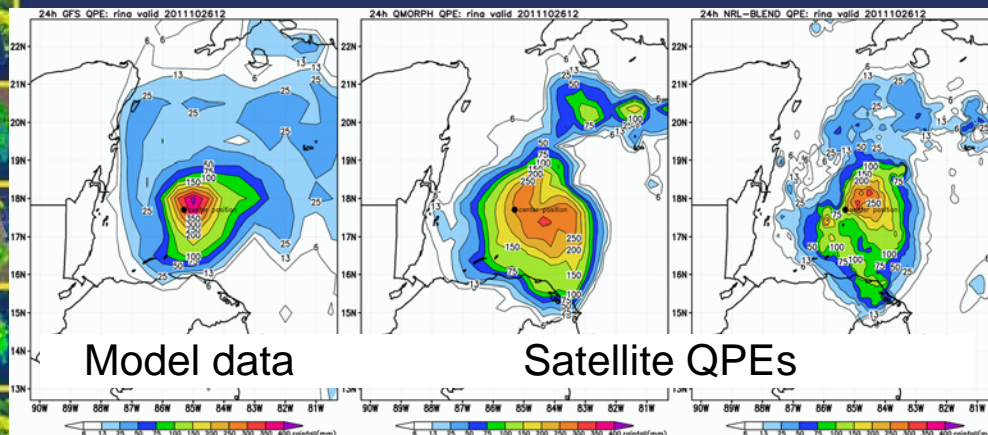
Model trends are important. Look at last several runs of a particular model to see if a persistent trend is seen.

Run to run consistency and model to model consistency can increase confidence

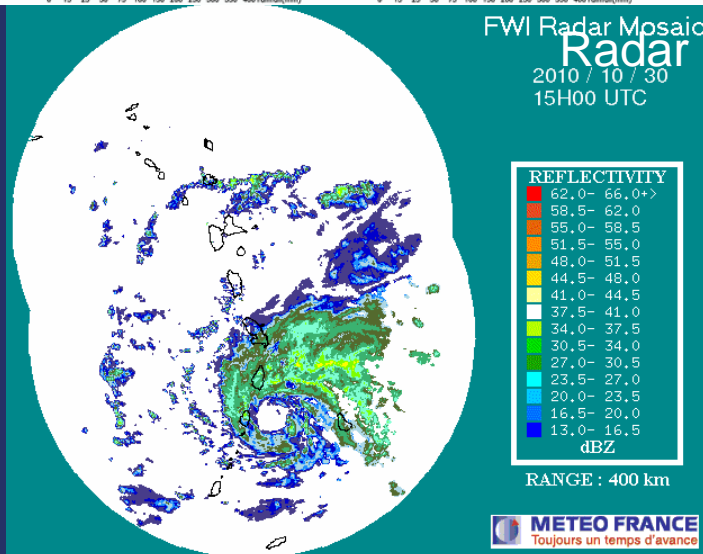
“a primary determinant of tropical cyclone QPF errors is track forecast error”
– Marchok et al 2007

Production of Tropical Cyclone Quantitative Precipitation Forecasts

Use observations and recent model data to determine the current structure/rainfall rates

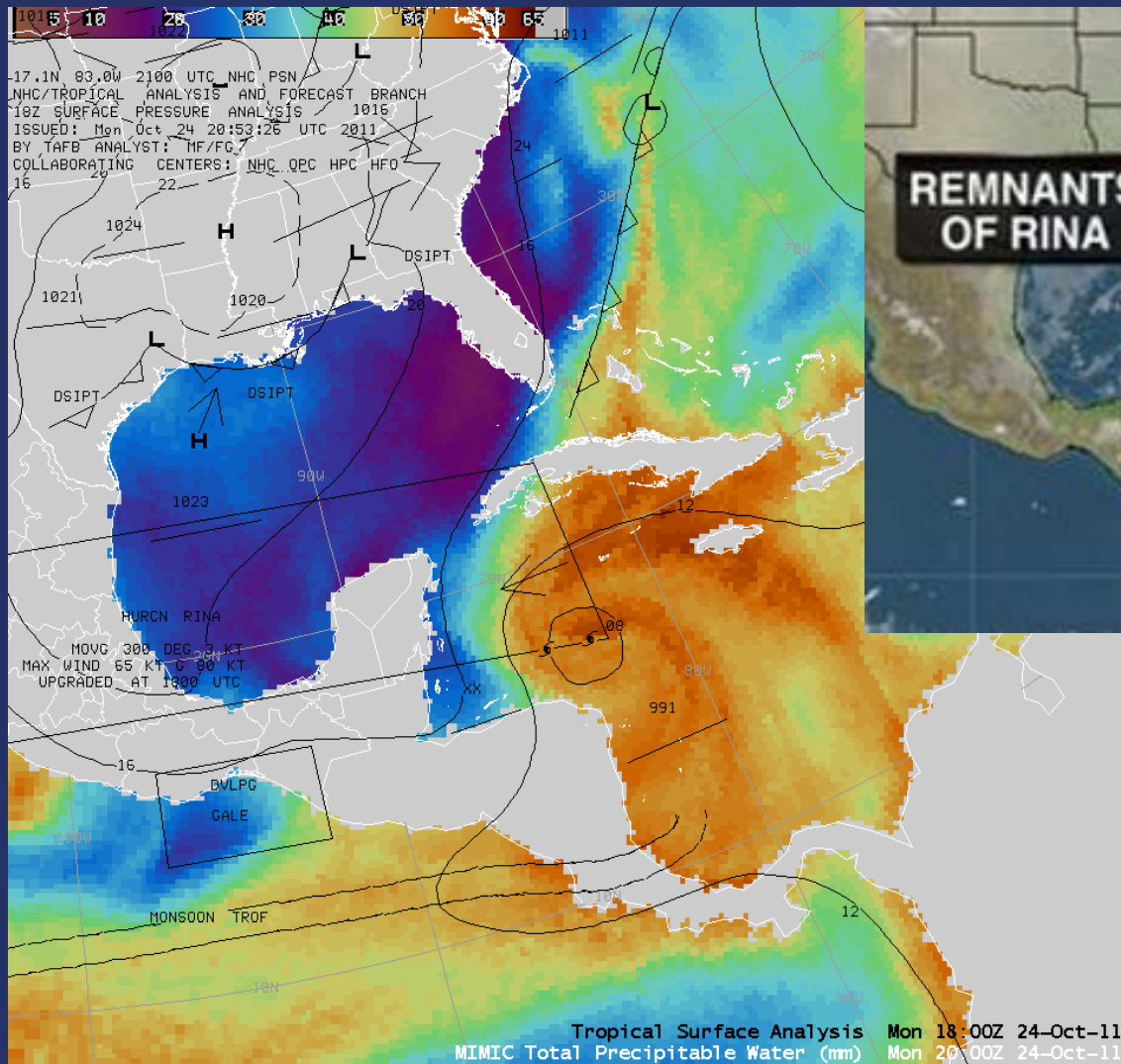


- Do the models have a good handle on the current storm structure?
- If yes, then more trust in model QPF forecasts going forward
- If not, adjustments to the models may be needed. Is the structure expected to change?
- Models tend to struggle most with structure during the developmental phase of a system and with weaker/disorganized systems



Production of Tropical Cyclone Quantitative Precipitation Forecasts

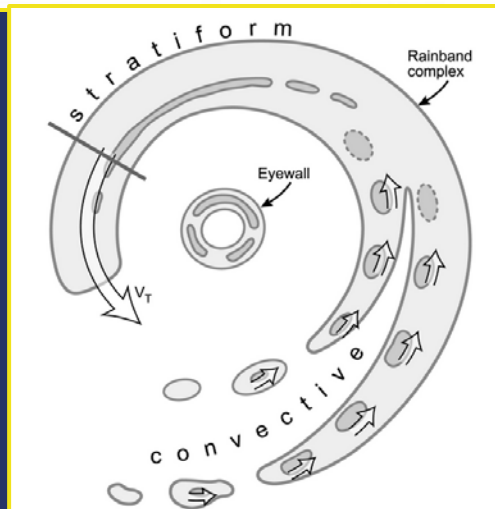
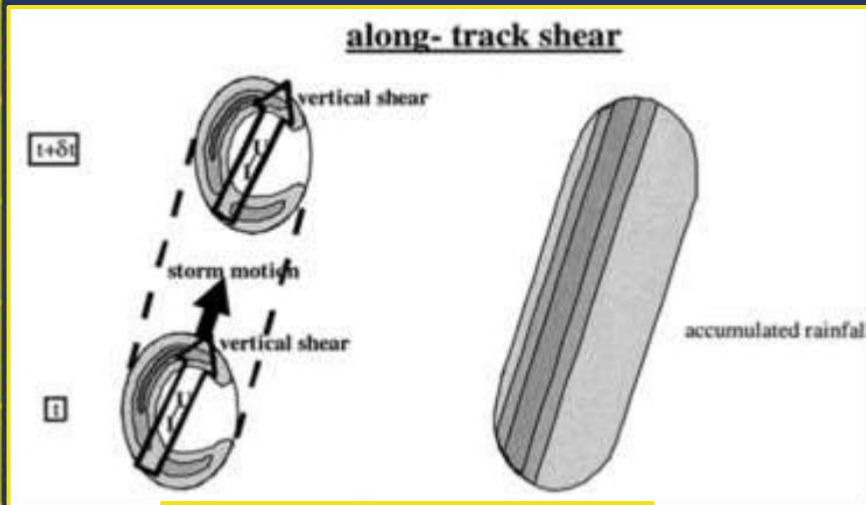
Locate relevant synoptic scale and meso-scale boundaries



Hurricane
Rina (2011)

Production of Tropical Cyclone Quantitative Precipitation Forecasts

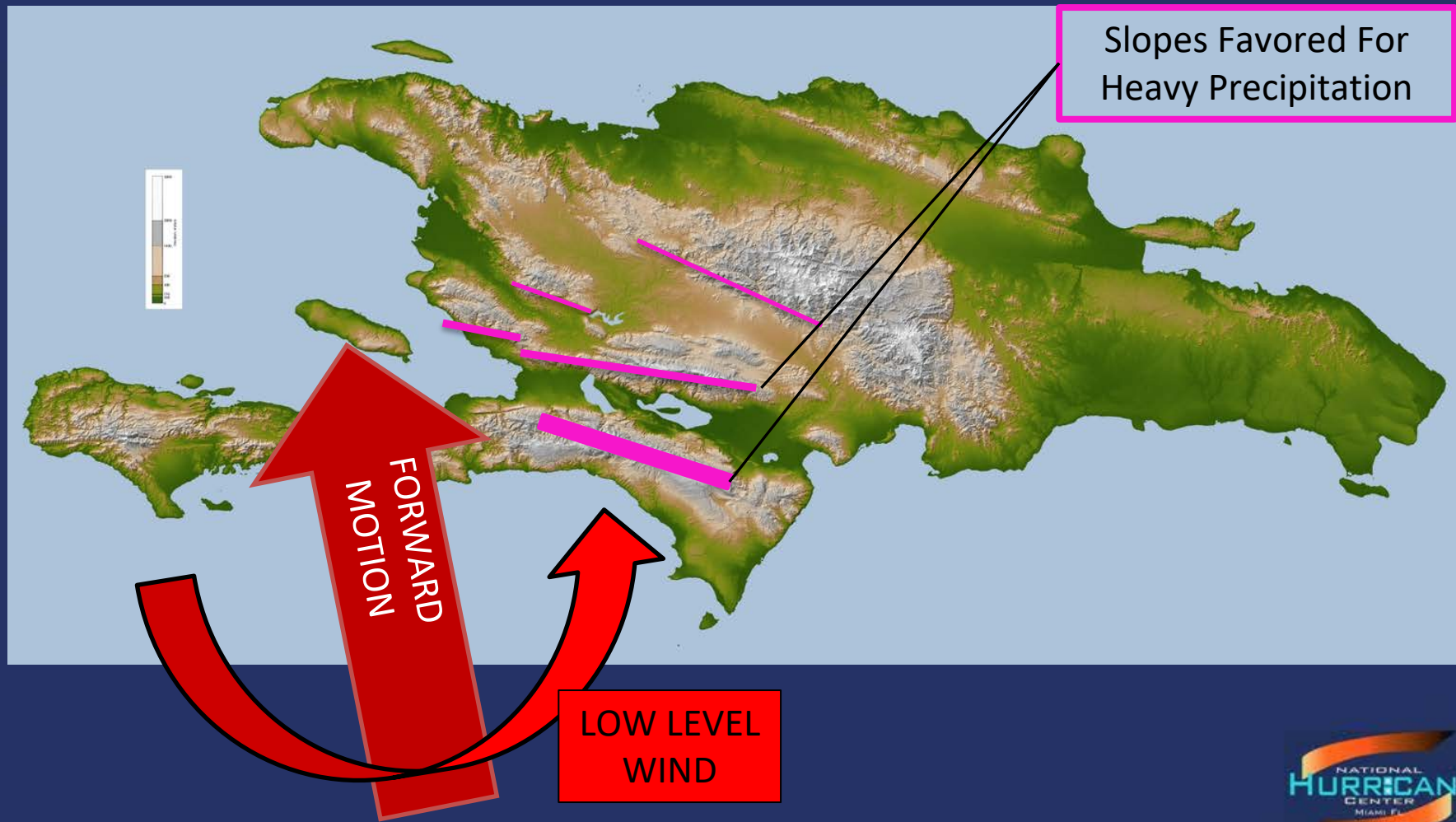
Use conceptual models and pattern recognition to further adjust QPF as needed



- Model QPF forecasts have improved considerably over the last couple decades
- Often have a good handle on approximate magnitudes and placement of higher QPF (left or right of track)
- However, conceptual models and pattern recognition can become important when models are not properly depicting the initial structure/size/intensity of the storm

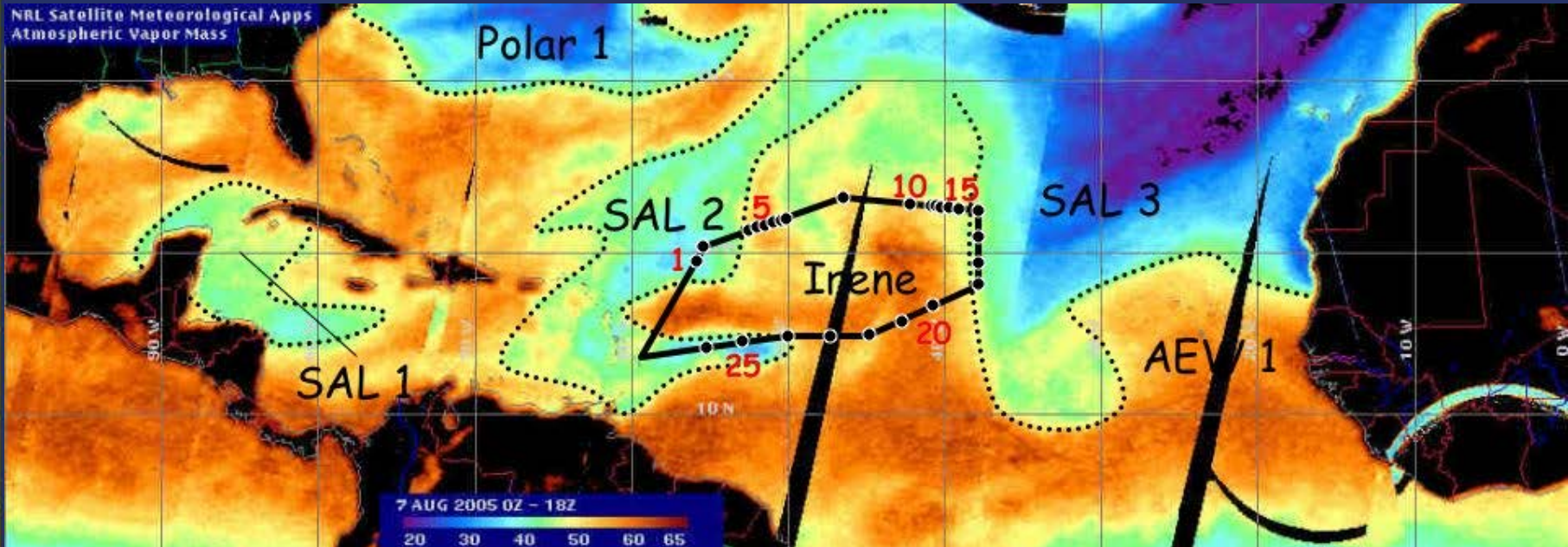
Production of Tropical Cyclone Quantitative Precipitation Forecasts

Identify areas of orographic enhancement



Production of Tropical Cyclone Related QPF

Determine how a change in available moisture could increase, decrease, or redistribute rainfall



Production of Tropical Cyclone Related QPF

Use climatology (CLIQR, R-CLIPER, TC Rainfall Climatology) and data from past storms to:

- Increase/decrease amounts
- Adjust numerical guidance biases
- Reality check
- Highlight areas significantly impacted by terrain effects

INVEST_AL96

Results ranked from best match to worst match, with ties being won by the earlier storm.

BETA 2005: No graphic available.

[GERT 1993](#)

HATTIE 1961: No graphic available.

[JOAN 1988](#)

MARCO 1996: No graphic available.

NOT NAMED 1964: No graphic available.

[GORDON 1994](#)

[KATRINA 1999](#)

MARTHA 1969: No graphic available.

THIRTEEN 1985: No graphic available.

BRET 1993: No graphic available.

[ALMA 1970](#)

IRENE 1971: No graphic available.

UNNAMED 1981: No graphic available.

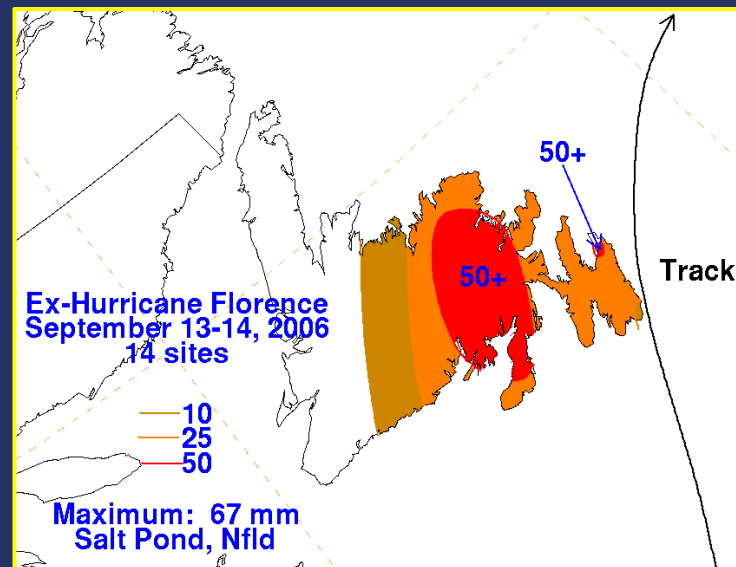
FOURTEEN 2002: No graphic available.

SIX 1969: No graphic available.

LAURA 1971: No graphic available.

SEVENTEEN 1973: No graphic available.

CESAR 1996: No graphic available.



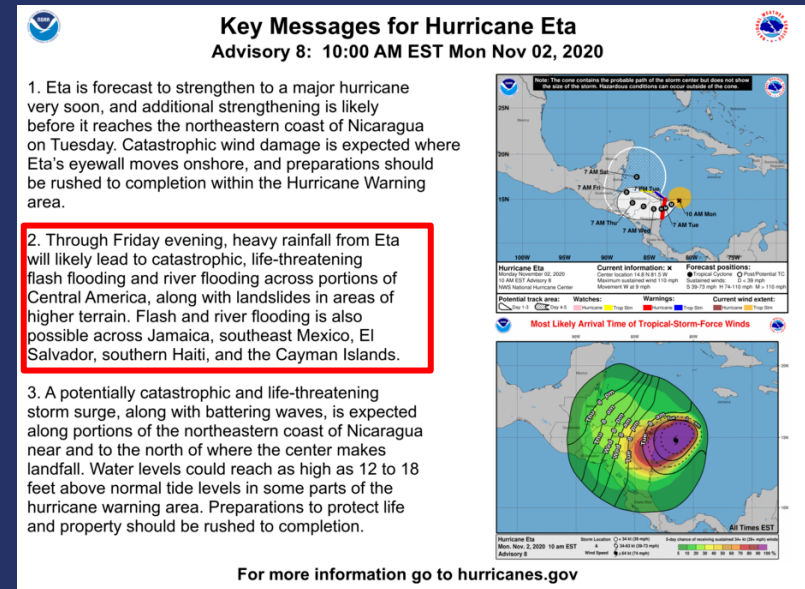
Summary

- Remember factors that influence TC rainfall
 - Size of storm, time of day, speed etc.
- Evaluate quality of the model data compared to current conditions
- Assess the amount of shear in the environment
 - How will it influence rainfall?
- Are there past TCs that resemble the rainfall distribution and forecast of the TC?
- Use all of the tools available
 - Satellite rainfall products, NWP models, etc.
- Remember, heavy rain can also occur well away from the TC itself
 - PREs, secondary disturbances, CAG, etc.

Role of the Weather Prediction Center (WPC)

WPC responsible for the wording of the rainfall statement included within NHC public advisories (TCP) beginning in 2005

- WPC produces QPF and excessive rainfall graphics for systems impacting the CONUS
- For all other NHC systems WPC is responsible for the rainfall statement and Key Message related to rainfall hazards
- The WPC Senior Branch Forecaster (SBF) is responsible for issuing these products in coordination with the WPC International Desk (ID). More info on that desk next.
- WPC SBF also coordinates these products with NHC and the NWC (for systems impacting Puerto Rico/Hawaii or CONUS)



RAINFALL: Eta is expected to produce the following rainfall amounts through Friday evening:

Much of Nicaragua and Honduras: 15 to 25 inches (380 to 635 mm), isolated amounts of 35 inches (890 mm).

Eastern Guatemala and southern Belize: 10 to 20 inches (255 to 510 mm), isolated amounts of 25 inches (635 mm).

Portions of Panama and Costa Rica: 10 to 15 inches (255 to 380 mm), isolated amounts of 25 inches (635 mm).

Jamaica and southeast Mexico: 5 to 10 inches (125 to 255 mm), isolated amounts of 15 inches (380 mm) over southern areas.

El Salvador, Southern Haiti, and the Cayman Islands: 3 to 5 inches (75 to 125 mm), isolated amounts of 10 inches (255 mm)

This rainfall would lead to catastrophic, life-threatening flash flooding and river flooding, along with landslides in areas of higher terrain of Central America. Flash flooding and river flooding would be possible across Jamaica, southeast Mexico, El Salvador, southern Haiti, and the Cayman Islands.

Role of the WPC International Desks (ID)

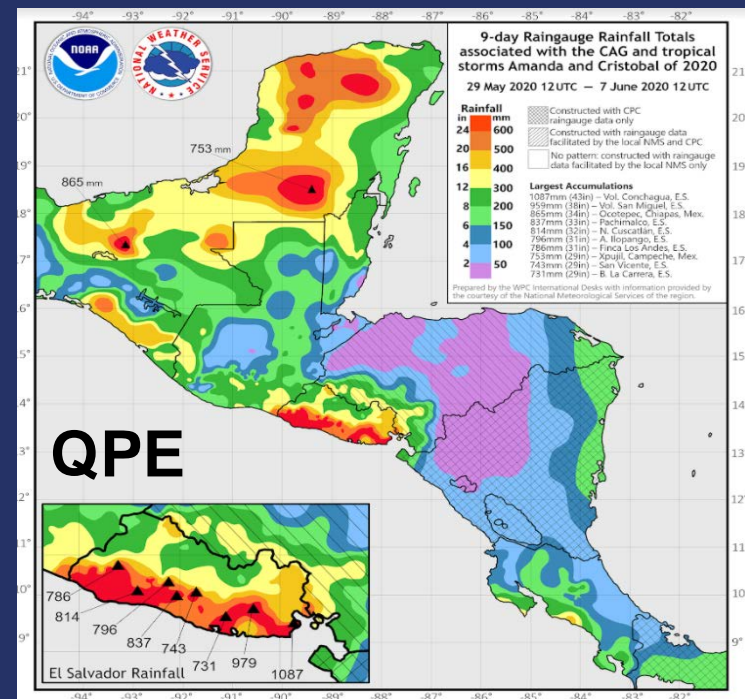
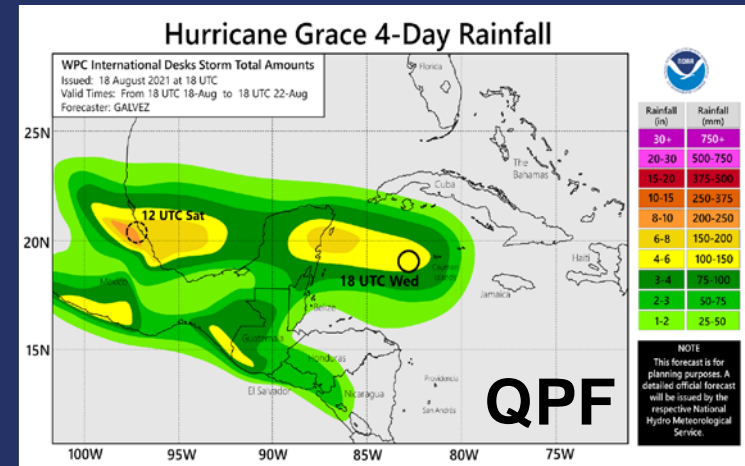
Provide support to Caribbean and Central American nations by producing products similar to those for the US

★ 1) QPF Charts:

- Coordinated with NHC and WPC SBF.
- Charts follow WPC/NHC formats.
- Non-official forecasts, but they are largely valued by RA-IV NWS as tools to produce their official QPF; and by USAID and US SOUTHCOM for planning purposes.

2) Input to NHC's rainfall statements for non-US locations

3) Help generating or coordinating the generation of QPE charts.



Steps to generate an ID QPF Chart

Identification of a perturbation that poses a heavy rainfall threat to the Caribbean or Central America in several guidance options and/or satellite

Is NHC tracking it?

YES

NO

Raise awareness: Brief email to partners

Chart Dissemination via email to partners

YES

QPF Chart Generation or Update

(by 11:30 UTC daily, while the threat exists)

- NHC's track and intensity used as the base
- Consistency with previous forecasts and NHC's rainfall statement
- Consider: Rainfall from many models. Weight closeness to NHC's track, recent model skill, SST and anomalies along track, cyclone speed, synoptic features in track, potential topographic enhancement.
- If less than 2 days away: Consider satellite signatures (e.g. health of outflow, dry air entrainment convection in core, precipitable water, ETRAP estimates, rainfall observations)

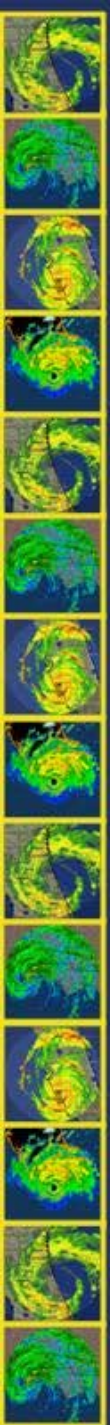
Does everyone agree?

Coordinate with WPC SBF and NHC TAFB. Include San Juan WFO if relevant.

NO

Chart adjusted accordingly

*Partners: USAID, US SOUTHCOM, NHC TAFB, NOAA International Affairs and NWS in the potential path.



Thank You

Questions?