

Westward Shift in Tropical Storm Eta Track Makes Sense

By Drew Lerner

Kansas City, November 9 (World Weather Inc.) – [A series of changes occurred in the forecast model data and in upper air weather patterns today led the U.S. National Hurricane Center into notably shifting the predicted track of Tropical Storm Eta later this week to the west of its previous track. The change removes the landfall prospect for the Cross City, Florida area late this week. The latest forecast from the Hurricane Center moves the storm to within 70 miles of the Apalachicola area of Florida Saturday afternoon and the storm is advertised to be a tropical depression. There is still room for additional shifting of the storm to the west and it should be expected that the forecast will be further adjusted in the next few days.](#)



The 1600 EST forecast for Tropical Storm Eta was shifted to the west mostly in the second half of this week removing the risk of landfall in northwestern Florida near the Cross City area and bringing the storm closer to Apalachicola area Saturday. The westward shift in the storm's path resulted after many of today's forecast model runs began building a stronger ridge of high pressure aloft over open water east of Florida. The high pressure system builds to the west over time, according to both the GFS and ECMWF models. These

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changes seem to be consistent with near term changes in the atmosphere. The setup is beginning to look more and more like that which was present when Hurricane Zeta was moving through the central Gulf of Mexico and brought the storm inland over southeastern Louisiana. The initial position of Eta is farther to the east and the upstream trough of low pressure expected late this week and during the weekend will come into the Gulf of Mexico at a lower latitude limiting the Eta from getting as far to the west as Zeta.

The approaching trough of low pressure will also bring with it much more wind shear than was present with Zeta because of the lateness of the season. That wind shear suggests that if Eta does get farther to the west it will run into a more hostile environment sooner and the storm will be ripped apart prior to reaching land leaving the storm's threat potential for Louisiana and Mississippi lower than that of Zeta. However, under the current conditions there would be less shear for a longer period of time if Eta moves more to the north and it could hold together a little better.

Most computer forecast models are suggesting dry air intrusion and some light wind shear will be present during the middle and latter part of this week which will also interfere with the storm's ability to intensify. Already the National Hurricane Center has backed off of the storm's predicted intensity greatly from early this morning when there was talk of the system becoming a hurricane tonight and Tuesday. That is no longer an expected outcome for the storm over the next couple of days.

The bottom line to this discussion is provide a comment or two on what is expected to happen to Tropical Storm Eta over the next few days and to add a little confidence to the recent changes coming from the computer forecast models. Eta has been a real challenge to forecast, but finally there is beginning to be more agreement over the conditions for the balance of this week. We should expected a possible further shift in the storm's track to the west over the next day or two, but not all the way to Louisiana and the odds are high that the storm will be diminished to at least depression status before moving inland.

There are still some strongly conflicting models out there. The Navy model brings the storm inland to Florida north of Tampa and south of Cedar Key later this week as a hurricane, but that scenario does not seem likely to verify. One of the National Hurricane Center models has also suggested a major hurricane could still evolve over the southeastern Gulf of Mexico, but if it does it is not likely to move much for an extended period of time leaving the door of opportunity for weakening later in the month before it becomes a threat to land.

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