Midwest crop weather 2011-2012: What follows a strong La Niña?

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Midwest crop weather 2011-2012: What follows a strong La Niña?
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The abnormal 2011 weather for much of the Earth turned out very much as it had been during the previous La Niña events of like strength (1952-5/1974). Temperatures in the Midwest tended to alternate from warmer than usual for a week or two to colder than usual for a week or two through the Winter and the Spring. The winter was wet in Montana and dry in Texas. Melting snow brought floods (mainly to the Missouri river basin). Heat exacerbated the Texas drought. Early spring tornadoes brought death and destruction on a scale not known since the previously strong La Niña events. Wet conditions at planting threatened crop establishment and hot/dry spells in the summer reduced yield potentials. Tropical storms had favorable conditions to make landfall on the continental US. All in all 2011 was a year with extreme weather just as expected from previous Strong La Niña Year experience. The previous strong events weakened in late spring then strengthened to persist into a 2nd year leaving forecasters scrambling to discern if 2012 will be a “normal” year or a re-run of the past winter and spring.

• Subsoil moisture for Iowa in November 2011 was lower than during the past 3 years
• A strong La Niña was the likely cause
• The La Niña is expected to persist into March 2012 and perhaps longer
• Argentina drought risk is increased by La Niña
• La Niña Winters tend to be Wet in Montana, Dry in the Western Corn Belt, Wet in the East
• Winter may have extremely warm and extremely cold weeks as did the past winter.
• Summer drought risk is increased by low subsoil moisture in the Fall
• If La Niña continues into spring and summer drought risk is further increased.

References
Long-lead weather forecasts are found at: http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/90day/
The La Niña / El Niño outlook is found at: http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/psd/enso/mei/
The temperature anomaly of the sea is found at: www.osdpm.noaa.gov/ml/ocean/sst/anomaly.html
The current SOI is found at: http://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/
The US Drought map is found at: http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/