University of Missouri – Atlantic Ocean Basin Tropical Forecast 2026

Predicted (15 April)

	Predicted*	**Observed**	**Difference**
Number of Named Storms:	*11*		
Tropical Storms:	*5*		
Category 1-2:	*4*		
Category 3-5:	*2*		
Regional (where they will form):			
West Atlantic (to 45° W):	*6*		
East Atlantic (to 45° W):	*3*		
Gulf of Mexico:	*1*		
Caribbean:	*1*		

Reasoning: In 2025 – 2026, we are coming off a weak La Niña and there is much discussion of migration toward a strong El Niño or what the media is calling a "super El Niño. That is the over-riding factor on our forecast for 2026. *The pressure is also on as we've now had 4 seasons in 6 of hitting the number of hurricanes exactly.* This season is characterized by us being in the easterly phase of the QBO which is less favorable for tropical cyclone development, but we are drifting back toward the westerly phase. During this season, the majority of forecast models are projecting the Eastern Tropical Pacific to warm significantly and a strong El Nino would be more of what we call a "classic" El Niño versus an ENSO Modoki. The former tends to be even less active in the Atlantic than the latter. This suggests a reasonable bias in our forecasts toward a less active season. Our group discussed 11 – 13 named storms, but seemed settled on six hurricanes with either a 3/3 split among Cat. 1-2 versus Cat. 3 – 5 storms or a 4/2 split. The team decided to go with the latter, again based on the predicted hostility of the Atlantic Basin environment including the anticipated eastern/central Atlantic-based subtropical shear. Also, there is the prospect for a warm Gulf of Mexico so any storms that form or drift into the region could be very strong. Additionally, based on the 45 to 60-day evolution of the Intraseasonal Oscillation (ISO) (aka MJO), the MJO is strengthening a bit currently and is projected to continue moving forward. Based on the current 45 – 60-day cycle, this projection would land more conducive MJO impacts towards Africa and the North Atlantic during mid-July, late August to early September, and mid-October on the fast end or mid -August and mid-October on the slower end. We referenced climatological research from

a few different analog platforms. We looked at El Niño years recently from 1997 to 2023, separating them into “classic” and “Modoki” types. All of these years suggest around 12 storms with 5 – 6 hurricanes, with classic years pointing to even less activity. Lately, we’ve seen that newer satellites are picking up more marginal tropical cyclones, but the inactivity of ENSO classic has overridden this in our thought process.

The forecasters this year are: Dr. Sarah Weaver, Thomas Schwent, Bria Hughley, Talon Grimm, Joe Renken, and Tony Lupo