SUMMARY OF THE FEBRUARY 1980 WEATHER ON THE MONTEREY PENINSULA, CALIFORNIA

General: February was very warm, wet and windy, with near average fog conditions.

Temperature: February 1980, the third wettest Feb on record, was the 11th month of above normal (29 years) temperatures in the past 12 months, November 1979 being the only cold month in that period. With an average of 56.0°F, it was 3°F above the normal, the second highest warm anomaly in the past 12 months. Both day and nite temperatures contributed to the warm month: 64.3°F vs 61.7°F norm for the maximum and 47.8°F vs 44.4°F norm for the minimum. High for the month, 71°F, was recorded on 4 and 25 Feb while 40°F, the absolute minimum, was recorded on 12 Feb. Two new daily temperatures were broken: 55°F on 17 Feb and 57°F on 18 Feb are the warmest nite-time minima on record for those dates. On 14, 15 and 19 Feb the record nite-time minima were matched (49°F, 50°F and 51°F, respectively). Contributing most to the warmth was the high frequency of warm southerly winds and cloudy nites.

This is the third winter out of the past four that a temperature of 34°F (heavy frost) or below has not been recorded (last year was the exception). It appears highly unlikely that such a temperature will occur this year. Three temperatures 35°F to 39°F, normally associated with light frost have occurred at the station as late as 29 Apr (as in 1972) and 28 Apr (as in 1955 and 1967) and 27 Apr (as in 1970).

Precipitation: Monterey experienced the winter season’s second most unusual and prolonged period of rain, 13-22 Feb inclusive. Combined with one other day of moderate rain, Feb ended up with 4.78”. Amounts appeared to be much higher in all directions from the Monterey Peninsula. Normal is 2.76”. Every one of the past five months in a row show above normal amounts, accounting for a total to 1 Mar of 19.00” compared to an expectation of 13.38” on this date. The 19.00” is 0.53” above the whole year’s expectation (Jul 1 – Jun 30).

Although Feb’s rain period gave less than a similar period in Jan, it was much stormier (i.e., more windy) in Feb (see winds below). From 15 Feb through 21 Feb power outages, trees down, brief periods of local flooding, roof damage, high river levels and the like were common. The Chews Ridge area recorded 6” in one day and 35” in the storm period, making this period certainly one of the wettest in recent times for the Central Cal. Coast area.

The last five rain seasons, totals have been as low as 9.86” (Jul 1, 75 to Jun 30, 76) and as high as 29.56” (Jul 1, 77 to Jun 30, 78). This is the third straight above normal rain year, which followed three straight years of below normal amounts.

Wind: The monthly average of 8.0 miles per hour (mph) at the airport is 0.9 mph above the previous three-year average and most certainly is high due to the record high winds mid-month. On four of the five days 15-19 Feb, wind gusts at the NWS station equaled or exceeded 50 mph: 56.5, 50, 54.5, 42 and 59 mph, respectively. There is no comparison to the string of high winds in records on gusts, kept since 1972, although 61 mph did occur on 16 Jan 1978. It is very likely that gusts exceeding those at the NWS site occurred at exposed coastal locations, especially since gust directions were predominantly from the south.

Thunderstorms: Thunder was not recorded at the NWS site in Feb, although lightning was observed early AM 21 Feb. However, thunderstorms were unusually frequent in the Central Cal. area in Feb, to include the local valleys and mountains. Hunter Liggett Military Reservation had six thunderstorms in Feb, matching the previous record for any month. (Hunter Liggett also set a Feb rain record with 12.32”
compared to an expectation of 3.58”. This includes seven straight days with over 1” of rain, one of which was 3.14”.)

**Fog:** Even fog was up for Feb with 8 days compared to a 17-year norm of 6 days. Most fog occurrences were in the first 10 days of Feb – before the rain started.