SUMMARY OF THE JANUARY 1991 WEATHER ON THE MONTEREY PENINSULA, CALIFORNIA

General: January 1991 was relatively dry with near normal temperatures, light winds and excessive fog.

Temperature: January 1991 temperatures were near the 40-year normal (51.4°F vs 51.5°F normal) with daytime highs below normal (59.4°F vs 60.0°F) and niitetime lows above normal (43.4°F vs. 43.0°F). A persistent circulation of cool north/northeasterly flow by day and niitetime low clouds/fog through mid month explain the January temperature pattern. Quite a difference from the great December 1990 chill, with an average temperature of 3.8°F less than the January just past.

High for the month, 67°F, was recorded on both 17 and 18 January 1991, while the month's low, 38°F, was observed early morning 1 January 1991. The 67°F maximum is the lowest January absolute maximum since a 63°F maximum in January 1979.

Precipitation: The five-year drought was never so evident as in January!! With only 0.70" (3.78" is normal), the January 1991 rainfall is the third lowest in 40 years! Four days with measureable rain in January 1991 compares to ten on the average! At month's end the rain year total stood at just 30.8% of normal (3.22" vs 10.53"). There isn't another rain year in at least the past 40 when the amount of rain received by January 21 was so low compared to normal. Closest competitor is rain year 1975/76 – them on 31 January 1976, 32.4% (3.39") of the 40-year normal had fallen. It is to be noted that the 1975/76 rain year ended up with 9.86", the lowest annual total in the past 40 years!!

At month’s end the circulation pattern was shifting to allow moister mid-Pacific air to enter the Central California Coast, but the National Weather Service’s 30-day outlook was not too encouraging, with an indication for near to below median rainfall for February 1991.

The combination of a devastating freeze in late 1990 and a deepening drought in January 1991 cast a brown vegetative pall on a Peninsula typically “in the green” at this time of the year!

Fog: The month’s most significant anomaly is the high number of fog days. 12 such days in January 1991 is a 28-year record (11 days was the previous record set in the January’s of 1974, 1981, 1986 and 1989). Normally, January is the least foggy month of the year, with only six fig days expected. (A fog day is one with at least one hour of horizontal visibility equal or less than 6 miles due to fog). Many of the January fog days were associated with daytime and niitetime fogginess.

Wind: Winds were light in January, with only a six mile per hour (mph) average at the Airport (observations 6 AM to 11 PM) and an average maximum daily wind gust of 16 mph at the National Weather Service Climate Station (NWS). Absolute high gust at the NWS Station was only 25 mph (on 18 January 1991).