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Winter outlook remains generally mild

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BRIAN SNYDER/REUTERS/FILE

A woman shoveled snow on Joy Street on Beacon Hill last February. While forecasters say cold, stormy weather is expected to arrive in the region at the end of the month, it will be a far cry from last year's unrelenting February.

By Matt Rocheleau

GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 02, 2016

The unseasonably warm temperatures New Englanders have been enjoying recently are expected to

give way to cold, stormy weather toward the end of February, setting the stage for potential late-winter snowfall, forecasters say.

“There could be a last surge of winter before we see the transition into spring,” said AccuWeather.com long-range meteorologist Paul Pastelok.

Still, it will be a far cry from last year’s unrelenting February, which was marked by bitter cold and incessant snow.

“El Niño is kind of holding back the full charge of cold from getting to the East,” Pastelok said. “There are opportunities for cold, but it doesn’t look like it wants to get into full force in New England.”

To close out the season, expect “some up and down swings” in terms of temperature, he said.

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Official Mass. groundhog sees shadow — six more weeks of winter?

Ms. G, the official state groundhog, saw her shadow when she went outside early Tuesday.

**Punxsutawney Phil ‘predicts’ an
early spring**

The mild weather this week should continue into the start of next week before average to below-average temperatures roll in for several days, Pastelok said. He said that will be followed by another warm stretch, but he expects cold air to return for the final week of February and into the first week of March.

“It could also be stormy at the same time,” creating the potential for snow, he said.

But “after that, the chances for snow get smaller and smaller,” and if that period between late-February and early March doesn’t produce any major snowfall, Boston is “likely going to finish the winter with below-average snowfall,” said Pastelok.

So far, 10.4 inches of snowfall have been recorded this winter in Boston, according to data from the National Weather Service.

The city sees about 43 inches on average each year. Last year, Boston was hit with a record 110.6 inches, including 64.8 inches in February alone.

Pastelok said there’s also a chance that Boston could wind up breaking its record for the warmest winter in recorded history.

The record for the warmest meteorological winter, which runs from December through February, was in 2001-2002, when the average temperature for the season was 37.8 degrees, data from the weather service shows.

The average temperature so far this season through Monday was 43.3 degrees, compared with the historical average winter temperature, which is about 31 degrees. (Granted, there are plenty of February days left that could drag down this year’s average.)

“We may have an above-normal February overall, and that could get us into one of the warmest



winters we've seen, following last year's February, which is such a dramatic change," said Pastelok.

And as spring approaches this year, temperatures are expected to warm up faster than they have in each of the past two years.

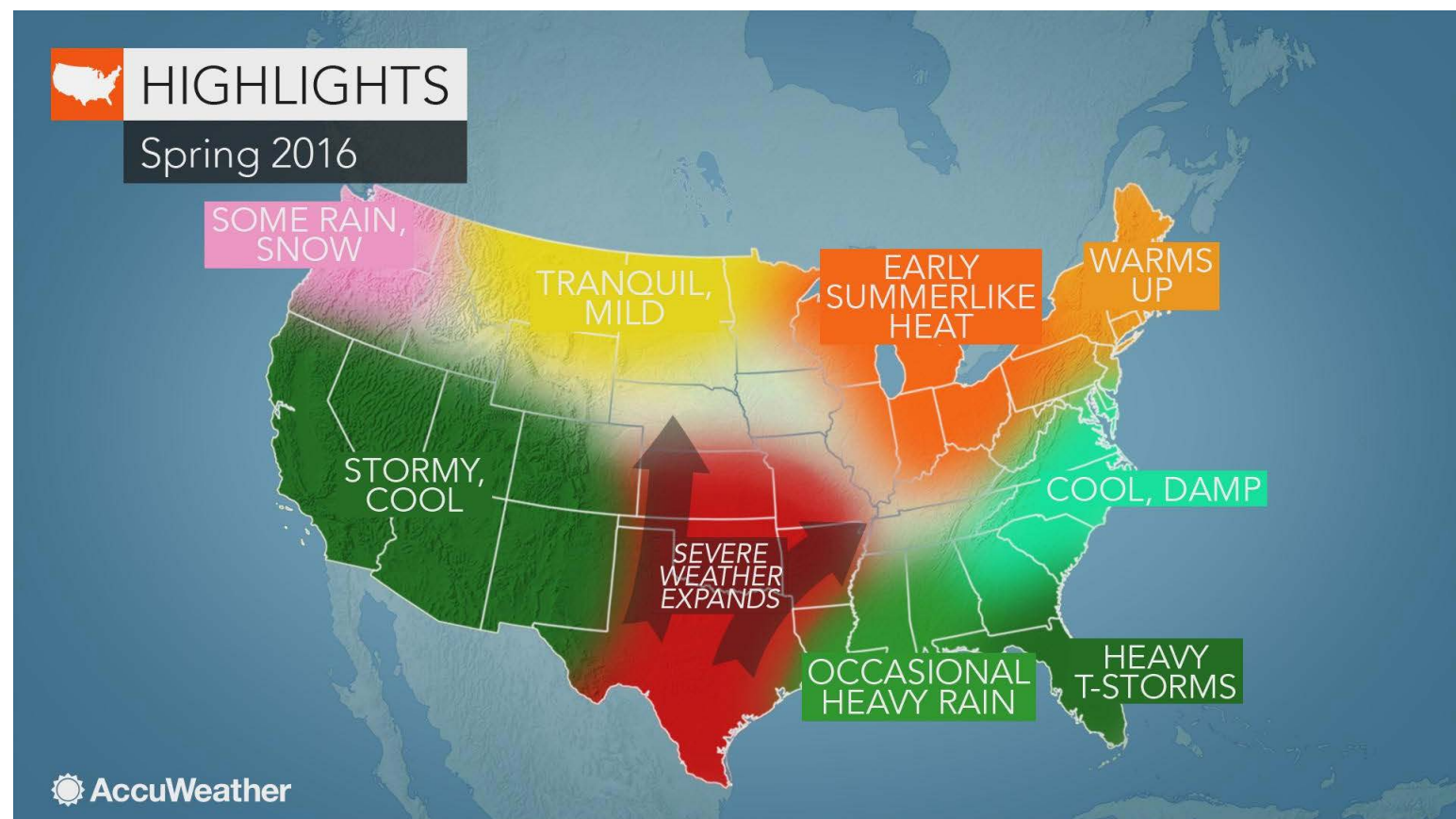
"A lack of arctic air in the region and the sun getting higher and higher in the sky will make it feel pretty nice, I think, by mid-March," Pastelok said.

There is potential for some rainy stretches during March and April, he said. In May, he said to expect more consistently mild, above-average temperature.

"Those warmups could be impressive," he said.

It's not just the humans that believe spring will come soon. Some rodents do, too. The prediction of an early start to the season was also made Tuesday by Pennsylvania groundhog Punxsutawney Phil.

On the other hand, local groundhog Ms. G, gave her prognostication Tuesday at Lincoln's Mass Audubon Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary. She saw her shadow, which means six more weeks of winter.



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