JULY 2006 WEATHER SUMMARY

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The first half of July 2006 saw near-seasonal temperatures, but the latter half was dominated by strong high pressure that brought record temperatures (maximum and/or high minimum) to the central California interior. The most notable feature during the first part of July was a weak upper-level trough that brought short-lived cooling to the region from July 5th through the 7th. Temperatures rebounded quickly on the 8th, with both Fresno and Bakersfield warming 7 degrees, into triple digits. This warming turned out to be the harbinger of the heat that dominated the latter half of the month, as there would be only two days—the 12th and the 13th--that the temperature was not in triple digits until the last few days of the month.

An upper-level high pressure ridge centered over the desert southwest dominated the California weather for the latter half of the month. Monsoonal moisture rotating around the ridge brought isolated to scattered thunderstorms to the Southern Sierra Nevada, the Tehachapi Mountains and the Kern county deserts through much of the period. This monsoonal moisture also caused dew points to rise into the 50s and 60s, resulting in heat indexes exceeding 105 degrees in several San Joaquin Valley locations, and even at some desert sites.

Strong thunderstorms developed over the Kern county mountains and deserts on July 20th, causing some flooding in the Lake Isabella area. A more widespread thunderstorm outbreak occurred the next day, with a severe thunderstorm hitting El Portal and strong thunderstorms causing flooding near Huntington Lake, Walker Basin and Pine Mountain Club. Strong thunderstorms erupted again on the 23rd, not only over the Southern Sierra Nevada, but also over the Coastal Range. Some of the latter storms drifted over the west side of the San Joaquin Valley during the late afternoon of the 23rd.

The heat developed in earnest on the 22nd, with Fresno setting record high minimum temperatures daily from July 21st through the 25th, including setting the all-time record high minimum temperature of 90 degrees on July 23rd. (The old record was 86 degrees, set on August 1st, 1908.)

During the daytime, Fresno saw temperatures above 110 degrees for 5 consecutive days, from July 22nd through the 26th, setting record highs on the first four days. This string of consecutive 110+ degree days was only one day shy of the record of 6 consecutive days, set on July 26th-31st, 1908. On three of the days, July 23rd-25th, Fresno had highs of 113 degrees, 2 degrees shy of the all-time record high for Fresno of 115 degrees, set on July 8th, 1905. The record heat also resulted in Fresno seeing its warmest July on record; the previous warmest July had been 75 years earlier, in 1931.

Bakersfield was slightly cooler, but hit 110 degrees on July 24th, and 112 the next day. No record highs were set at Meadows Field, but record high minimum temperatures were tied or broken from July 22nd through the 25th.

Debris clouds from the mountain thunderstorms brought a few sprinkles to the San Joaquin Valley. Because rainfall in July is sparse, the trace of rain that fell on Fresno on July 18th tied a 50-year old record. Bakersfield also tied a record rainfall for Meadows Field, with the trace that fell on July 22nd matching the record set previously in 1997.

An upper-level trough approached the Pacific coast toward the end of the month, weakening the ridge and dropping temperatures to below normal for the last two days of the month.