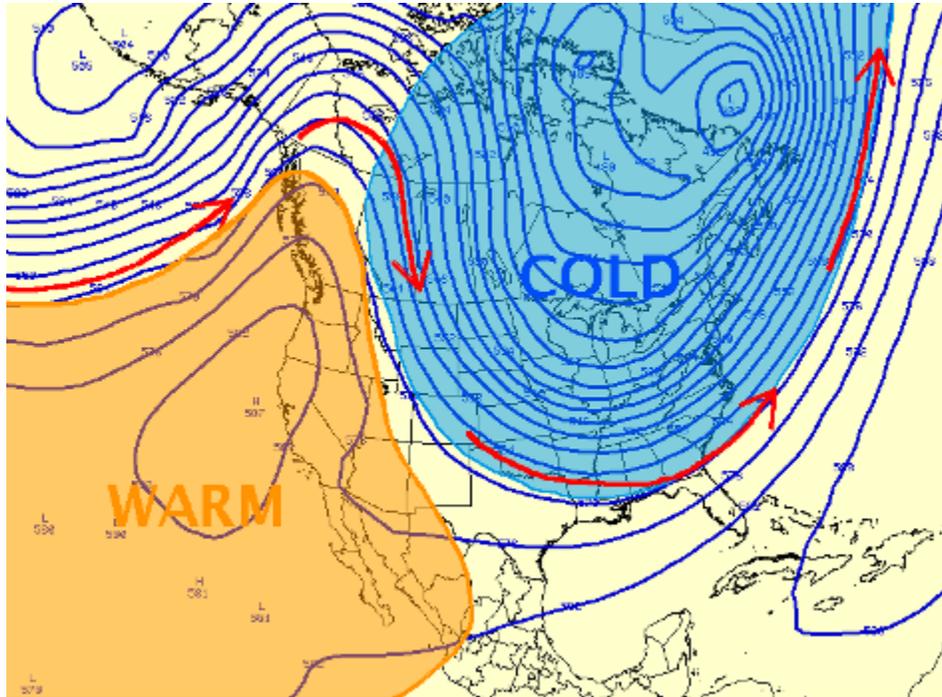


...STREAK OF WARM WEATHER COMING TO AN END...

The large scale pattern in the upper levels across the United States is beginning to shift once again with a trough expected to setup across the eastern U.S. this week and continuing into at least next week. This is in contrast to the overall ridging that we have see across the region for the last four weeks which has kept temperatures near to above normal, with the exception of only three or four days.



Upper level pattern expected later this week with red arrows indicating approximate position of the Jet Stream.

This shift in the large scale pattern will bring our streak of rather warm weather to an end as a series of cold fronts moves south through the region. Behind these fronts temperatures are expected to drop 10 to as much as 20 degrees below normal at night and about 5 to 10 degrees below normal during the day. At this time it appears that temperatures should remain above the record cold levels from some winters in the past.

The first of these fronts will arrive tonight, but weaken and become nearly stationary across south central Florida during Monday. Some cooler air will move into the northern and central portions of the area behind this front on Monday with daytime highs only climbing into the lower to mid 60s across the nature coast and to near 70 across the Tampa Bay area eastward through Lakeland and Winter Haven.

A second stronger front will move through during Tuesday and then be reinforced by a third front Thursday night with arctic high pressure building in from the central U.S. late in the week. Behind these boundaries some of the coldest air since early December will overspread the Florida peninsula. Temperatures will likely fall below freezing across inland portions of the nature coast each night from Tuesday night through Saturday night, with the potential for a hard freeze in some spots Wednesday night and again Thursday night. Farther south, temperatures could fall to around or just below freezing in some of the normally colder inland locations around the Tampa Bay area southward into interior portions of Southwest Florida each night from Wednesday night through Saturday night.

Residents, especially those north of the Tampa Bay area, should be prepared to protect vegetation and pets each night beginning Tuesday night and continuing into this weekend. Prolonged temperatures near or below freezing may severely damage sensitive vegetation, and can be harmful to pets. In addition, if you plan on being outdoors late each night into the early morning hours beginning Tuesday night and continuing into the weekend, be sure to bundle up and dress in layers. If you plan on using space heaters please remember they can be a fire hazard, and you should keep linens, blankets, curtains and other flammables away from the heater at all times.

Stay tuned to your favorite media source or your National Weather Service for the latest details on this upcoming cold spell.

PRC