Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 14, EGU2012-1929, 2012
EGU General Assembly 2012

Assessment of the 2011 Atlantic Hurricane Season

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The 2011 North Atlantic hurricane season was above normal when considering overall hurricane activity. It is shown that, for this season, large scale environmental factors such as increased sea surface temperatures across the tropical Atlantic and below normal sea level pressure forced by the weak La Niña event in the peak season contributed strongly to the observed tropical cyclone activity across the basin. While there was much activity in weaker storms earlier in the season, the first hurricane occurred later than normal, in the second part of August. Dry air in the tropical Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico as well as increased subtropical vertical wind shear strongly contributed to this. Lastly, the activity in the Atlantic in 2011 is compared to that in the Eastern North Pacific Western Development Region (10° N to 20° N and 116° W to 180°), and the potential for long-range seasonal forecasting of Atlantic tropical cyclones is noted.