

The Chicago Chapter of the AMS December 2006 meeting was at Chesapeake Energy in Chicago. Speakers were Mr. Mark Russo and Mr. Jon Davis, both of Chesapeake Energy.

Mr. Russo discussed the new Chicago AMS website <http://www.chicagoams.org>. The website has information on meeting information, officers, minutes, bylaws, events & photo gallery, education & outreach, local weather and a Chicago Weather Forum. The parts of the website that are still under construction will be functional sometime soon. Many present members gave their e-mail address to Mr. Russo to receive future meeting notices electronically. Encouragement was given to all to submit photos and participate in the website. Any suggestions regarding the website are welcome.

Mr. Davis once again gave us, 'The Winter Weather Outlook 2006-07', a yearly tradition at the December meetings. After a brief history of Chesapeake Energy, currently the second largest gas company in the nation, Mr. Davis stated several variables in the energy futures market. Cooling demand, tropical activity and heating demand are the crucial factors in determining market volatility which has increased in the last couple of years.

Regarding the winter weather outlook, Mr. Davis mentions three major factors to determine the seasonal outlook. Trends, early conditions and sea surface temperatures (SST's) are important to the seasonal outlook. Trends, such as the recent warm years and consistent warmer than normal global water temperatures, point in the direction of a warmer winter. Current early conditions such as the expansive cold air over the North Pole and recent snow cover from the December 1st snowstorm point towards colder conditions. Lastly, sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean have been slightly above normal leading to an El Nino winter. However, the magnitude of the El Nino (weak or moderate) decides how much colder or warmer than average it will be. Thus, near normal temperatures are forecasted versus the 30 year average. Due to the cold winters in the late 1970's and warmer winters in this century, colder than normal temperatures are predicted versus the 10 year average.