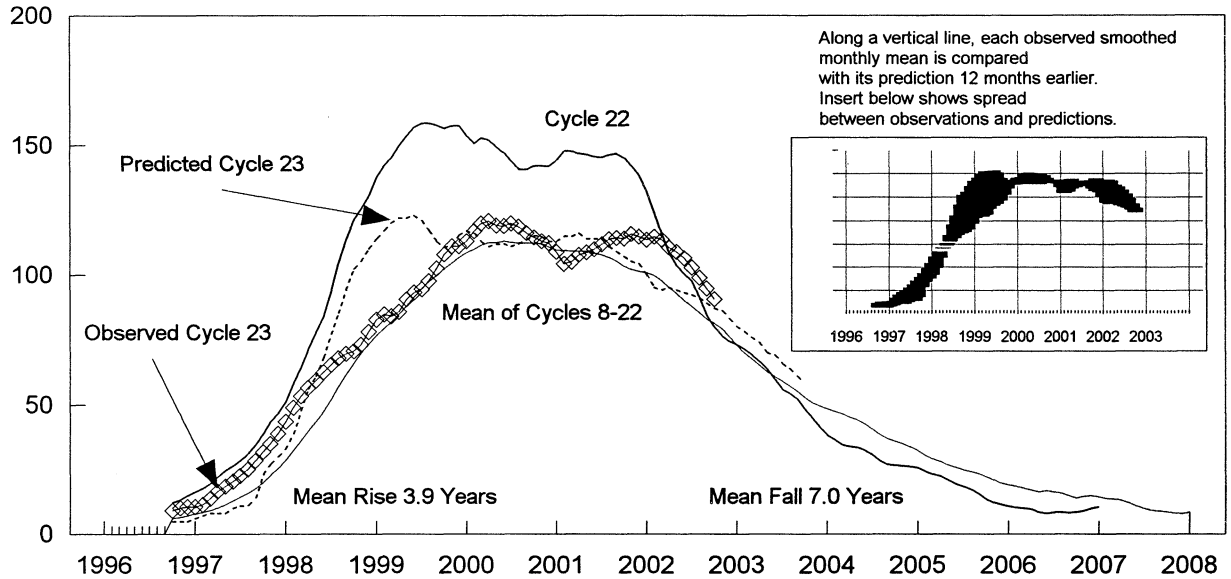
Cycle 23 Smoothed Sunspot Numbers: Observed and Predicted



Smoothed Sunspot Numbers (Observed and Predicted) for Parts of Solar Cycles 22 and 23

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Avg
1994	37	35	34	34	33	31	29	27	27	27	26	26	31
1995	24	23	22	21	19	18	17	15	13	12	11	11	17
1996	10	10	10	9	8*	9	8	8	8	9**	10	10	8
1997	11	11	14	17	18	20	23	25	28	32	35	39	23
1998	44	49	53	57	59	63	65	68	69	71	73	78	62
1999	83	85	84	85	90	93	94	98	102	108	111	111	95
2000	113	117	120	121+	119	119	120	119	116	115	113	112	107
2001	109	104	105	108	109	110	112	114	114	114	115	115	111
2002	114	115	113	111	109	106	103	99	95	91	88	84	102
											(3)	(5)	(1)
2003	80	77	75	72	69	66	65	63	61	58	56	55	66
	(6)	(6)	(7)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(11)	(11)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(17)	(11)

Solar Cycle 22 | Solar Cycle 23 | Min, Max, and Predi

*** May 1996 marks Cycle 22's mathematical minimum. ** October 1996 marks the consensus minimum**

+ April 2000 marks Cycle 23 maximum.

Observed and Predicted Numbers. For the end of Cycle 22, and the rise and decline of Cycle 23, the table above lists observed smoothed sunspot numbers up to the one that includes the most recent monthly mean. We based these smoothed values on final monthly means through Dec 2002 and on provisional numbers thereafter. Table entries with numbers in parentheses below them denote predictions by the McNish-Lincoln method. (See page 9 in the Jul 1987 supplement to *Solar-Geophysical Data.*) Adding the number in parentheses to the predicted value generates the upper limit of the 90% confidence interval. Subtracting the number from the predicted value generates the lower limit. Consider, for example, the October 2003 prediction. There exists a 90% chance that in October 2003, the actual smoothed number will fall somewhere between 44 and 72.

Points to Ponder. The McNish-Lincoln prediction method generates useful estimates of smoothed, monthly mean sunspot numbers for no more than 12 months ahead. Beyond 12 months, the predictions regress toward the mean of all 15 cycles of observations used in the computation. Moreover, the method remains very sensitive to the date defining the onset of the current cycle, that is, to the date of the most recent sunspot minimum. The new cycle predictions tabulated above are based on the consensus minimum value of 8.8 that occurred in October 1996.

Note: Please visit http://www.sec.noaa.gov for solar minimum and Cycle 23 discussions.