



Environmental Data and Governance Initiative Website Access Assessment Report

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Removal of Substantial Portion of Content and Reduction in Access to Resources on the USDA's Climate Hubs Website

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Writing and review of this report was conducted and overseen by the members of EDGI's Website Monitoring Committee: Maya Anjur-Dietrich, Andrew Bergman, Gretchen Gehrke, and Toly Rinberg

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Removal of Substantial Portion of Content and Reduction in Access to Resources on the USDA's Climate Hubs Website

The USDA has removed substantial portions of its ["Climate Hubs" website](#). Between the evenings of July 27 and July 28, 2017, content, including links, text, and entire web pages, was removed from the website. Many pages linked from the homepage and various regional Climate Hub pages currently lead to pages with an "Access denied" notice. Information and resources, including links to external resources and visualizations of data, do not appear to be accessible elsewhere. Various links to different parts of the website have also been removed from the top panel. Certain pages hosting PDF documents (like the [assessment of climate change vulnerability for the Midwest Climate Hub](#)) remain live, although access to those pages has been greatly reduced, and they do not appear to be accessible from the "Climate Hubs" website.

We have not yet conducted a comprehensive analysis to determine if the pages described in this report have been archived in a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) website archive or another government web archive, though we have not yet found such an archive. In addition, we do not yet know if the overhaul described in this report is a temporary reduction in access to the resources described or if they are currently being hosted elsewhere on the USDA's public website, in a location we have not yet found. We will continue to search for these resources and write an update to this report if they are found.

UPDATE: On August 2, following media inquiries made with the USDA based on this report, the "Climate Hubs" website appears to have been restored to the pre-July 27 version. We have not confirmed that the restored version is identical.

Description of Changes in Access

1. Removal of information, links, calendar events, web pages, and other content from the USDA's "Climate Hubs" website. Most pages linked from the homepage now direct to a page with an "Access denied" notice (Page 1).
 - a. Page removals include the ["Climate Science FAQ"](#) and ["Tools and Data"](#) pages (Page 2), containing substantial information and links to tools from governmental and non-governmental entities for working with data.
2. The regional Climate Hubs pages have removed substantial content, including their main banners, news sections, and descriptive text. Most links on the page lead to a page with an "Access denied" notice, rendering substantial numbers of PDFs and other resources inaccessible from the website.
 - a. Changes to the "Midwest Climate Hub" page have been detailed as a representative example (Page 3). Page removals include the Midwest Hub's ["Focus on Croplands"](#) page (Page 4) and the ["Regional Data and Research"](#) page, which contained PDFs with data visualizations that are also no longer accessible from the website.

Detailed Description of Change in Access

Note: Internet Archive records indicate that some of these pages (like [this one](#)) may have been taken offline earlier this spring, during which they appear as Page Not Found, 404 Error messages. Since May 2016, our website monitoring software has not found any such 404 Error messages.

Page 1: Climate Hubs

- URL: <https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/>
- Changes occurred between **July 27, 2017 7:57 PM ET** and **July 28, 2017 7:39 PM ET**

Screenshot 1.1

1. Removed links and associated removed pages from the top panel of the “Climate Hubs” page. The following list details the removed link text and link URL from the top panel, along with the associated status of the page corresponding to each link. In this section and in the entire report, links to the Internet Archive (IA) versions of the current and previously live versions of the corresponding pages are provided for reference:

Link Text	Link URL	Page Status	Previous IA Version	Current IA Version
Climate Variability FAQs	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/climate-science-faqs	Access Denied	2/7/17	8/1/17
Vulnerabilities in Ag and Forestry	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/vulnerabilities-agriculture-and-forestry	Access Denied	2/7/17	8/1/17
Tools	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/tools-and-data	Access Denied	2/8/17	8/1/17
Regional Vulnerability Assessments	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/regional-vulnerability-assessments	Access Denied	2/8/17	8/1/17
Conservation Programs	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/conservation-programs	Access Denied	2/8/17	8/1/17
Field Offices	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/usda-field-offices	Access Denied	2/8/17	8/1/17
Forest & Rangeland Drought	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/forest-rangeland-drought	Access Denied	2/8/17	8/1/17
Northeast Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/northeast	Content Removed	2/8/17	8/1/17
Midwest Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest	Content Removed	2/8/17	8/1/17
Southeast Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/southeast	Content Removed	2/8/17	8/1/17
Northern Plains Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/northernplains	Content Removed	2/8/17	8/1/17
Southern Plains Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/southernplains	Content Removed	2/8/17	8/1/17
Northwest Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/northwest	Content Removed	1/29/17	8/1/17
Southwest Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/southwest	Content Removed	2/8/17	8/1/17

Caribbean Sub Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/caribbean	Content Removed	2/9/17	8/1/17
Northern Forests Sub Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/northernforests	Content Removed	2/9/17	8/1/17
California Sub Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/california	Content Removed	2/9/17	8/1/17
Federal Partners	https://toolkit.climate.gov/content/federal-agency-coordination [This is not a USDA.gov page]	Live	-	8/1/17
Climate Learning Network	http://www.climatelearning.net/e-learning-modules/ [This is not a .gov page of the US government]	Live	-	8/1/17
Mission and Vision	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/mission-and-vision	Access Denied	5/12/17	8/1/17
How we Work	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/how-we-work	Access Denied	2/11/17	8/1/17
Leadership	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/leadership	Access Denied	2/11/17	8/1/17

Note: The ten “Hub” pages in the table above can still be accessed from the “Climate Hubs” page through the links from the “Climate Hub Regions” map (the links from the map redirect to the URLs in the table above). As noted in the table, and demonstrated through a detailed description of the “Midwest Climate Hub” page (Page 3 below) as a representative example, substantial content and links have been removed from these “Hub” pages.

2. Assessment of access to pages from links in the “Popular Topics” section. The PDF linked from the “Climate Hubs Update” below has also been removed.

Link Text	Link URL	Page Status	Previous IA Version	Current IA Version
Climate Hubs Factsheet	http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA%20Regional%20Climate%20Hubs%20Factsheet%202016.pdf	Live	11/15/16	-
Climate Hubs Mission and Vision	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/mission-and-vision [this URL is also found in section 1 above]	Access Denied	5/12/17	8/1/17
Climate Tools	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/tools-and-data [this URL is also found in section 1 above]	Access Denied	2/8/17	8/1/17
Drought Tools	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/drought-tools	Access Denied	2/11/17	8/1/17
Events Calendar	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/events/all	No Content	2/11/17	8/1/17
Climate Hubs Update	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/climate-hubs-update-april-2015	Access Denied	2/11/17	8/1/17
Partners	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/partners	Access Denied	2/9/17	8/1/17
Contact Us	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/people	Access Denied	2/11/17	8/1/17

3. Assessment of access to pages from links in the “Focus on Climate” section

Link Text	Link URL	Page Status	Previous IA Version	Current IA Version
Croplands	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/focus-croplands	Access Denied	2/11/17	8/1/17
Forestlands	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/focus-forestlands	Access Denied	2/11/17	8/1/17
Livestock	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/focus-livestock	Access Denied	2/11/17	8/1/17
Grazing Lands	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/focus-grazing-lands	Access Denied	2/11/17	8/1/17

4. Removed links to news pages from “News” section and removed linked events from “Events Calendar” section. The specific removed links are not detailed in this report.

Side-by-side View of “Climate Hubs” Page: 7/24/2017 - 7/28/2017



Internet Archive: Previous versions of page from [January 12, 2017](#) and [May 20, 2017](#) and current version from [August 1, 2017](#).

Page 2: Tools and Data

- URL: <https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/tools-and-data>
- Changes occurred between **July 27, 2017 8:29 PM ET** and **July 28, 2017 7:56 PM ET**
- **Note:** The “Tools and Data” page is included in this report as a representative example of a page from the tables in Page 1 above that that contained information and resources, but which currently has an “Access denied” notice.

Screenshot 2.1

1. Removed the “Tools and Data” page. The URL that previously lead to this page now leads to a page stating “Access denied.” The removed content on the page has not been detailed. The page appears to have been an aggregator of references to other websites, and included a “Climate Hubs Tool Shed” portal that enabled users to search information about tools from various governmental and non-governmental sources. **The page does not appear to have hosted datasets.**

Previous Version of “Tools and Data” Page from: 1/28/17

40 captures
31 Oct 2014 - 1 Aug 2017

http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/content/tools-and-data

NOV 2016 JAN 28 2017 AUG 2018

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Climate Hubs

Search

Climate Hubs What's New Climate Variability Resources Adaptation Assistance Regional Hubs Partners About Us

Home » Tools and Data

Tools and Data

The tools presented below represent a portion of the tools available for the climate, agriculture and forestry sectors. The tools range from specialized calculators to maps, models and datasets estimating a variety of outputs (e.g., crop production, greenhouse gas flux, and species distribution). Certain tools may be more relevant to land managers to aid in year-to-year decision-making, while others are more useful for researchers studying agriculture and climate change. Keep in mind that all tools have limitations and make assumptions that may not be appropriate for an entity's climate/region/crop/soil type. USDA does not endorse the tools presented below. The tool list is provided for informational purposes only, and is not exhaustive.

Click the links below to view tool lists by sector:

- Climate Change
 - Drought
- Agriculture
 - Animal Agriculture
 - Integrated Pest Management
- Forestry
- Natural Resources

[See list of all tools](#)

NEW!! The Climate Hubs Tool Shed provides information on tools from across the country that can assist agricultural and forest land managers in adapting to climate variability and change. Users can search with a keyword and our simple categories, or use the advanced search. The database includes tools that are directly relevant to climate variability and change, as well as tools that assist in managing factors that interact with climate variability and change, such as drought, pests, and extreme weather. The target audience is extension and consultants, but the database could also be useful for land managers, land owners, and researchers. To view the Tool Shed full screen in a separate window, [click here](#). For more information on how to use the site, please review the definitions, and explore the link below.

Climate Hubs Tool Shed

About Feedback Smart Search

search

Tools found: 167

Agriculture Climate Ecosystem Services Forestry Grazing Land Livestock

[About My Woods](#)

Internet Archive: Previous version of page from [January 28, 2017](#) and current version from [August 1, 2017](#)

Page 3: Midwest Climate Hub

- URL: <https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest>
- Changes occurred between **July 27, 2017 10:47 PM** and **July 28, 2017 10:14 PM ET**
- **Note:** This page was included in this report as a representative example of the type of content removed from regional Climate Hub pages. Other Climate Hub region pages were not explored in this report.

Screenshot 3.1

1. Removed links from the top panel. The following list details the removed link text and link URL, and the associated status of the page corresponding to each link:

Link Text	Link URL	Page Status	Previous IA Version	Current IA Version
Partners	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest/partners	Access Denied	2/19/17	8/1/17
Regional Assessments	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest/regional-assessments	Access Denied	2/19/17	8/1/17
Regional Data & Research	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest/regional-data-and-research	Access Denied	2/19/17	8/1/17
Educational Materials	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest/educational-materials	Access Denied	2/19/17	8/1/17
Northern Forests Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/northernforests	Content Removed	2/9/17	8/1/17
About Us	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest/about-us	Access Denied	2/19/17	8/1/17

2. Removed main panel titled “Welcome to the Midwest Climate Hub”. This panel included five informational sub-panels with links. These specific removed links and resources are not detailed in this report.

3. Removed links and assessment of access to associated pages from the “Popular Topics” section

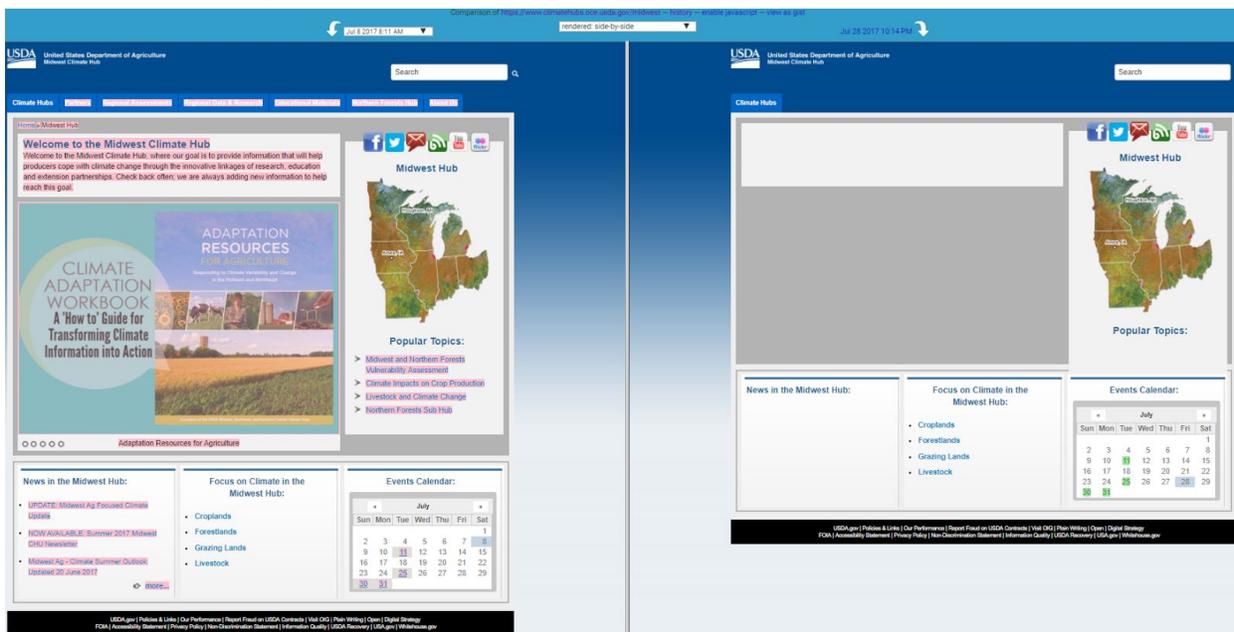
Link Text	Link URL	Page Status	Previous IA Version	Current IA Version
Midwest and Northern Forests Vulnerability Assessment	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Midwest%20Region%20Vulnerability%20Assessment%203_20_2015.pdf	Live	11/29/16	-
Climate Impacts on Crop Production	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest-hub/focus-croplands	Access Denied	2/19/17	8/1/17
Livestock and Climate Change	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest-hub/focus-livestock	Access Denied	1/22/17	8/1/17
Northern Forests Sub Hub	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/northernforests [this URL is also found in section 1 above]	Content Removed	2/9/17	8/1/17

4. Assessment of access to pages from links in the “Focus on Climate in the Midwest Hub” section

Link Text	Link URL	Page Status	Previous IA Version	Current IA Version
Croplands	http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest-hub/focus-croplands [this URL is also found in section 3 above]	Access Denied	2/19/17	8/1/17
Forestlands	http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest-subHub-focus-forestry	Redirects to URL “...usda.gov/northernforests” also found [in section 3 above]		
Grazing Lands	http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest-hub/focus-rangelands-and-pastures	Access Denied	1/22/17	8/1/17
Livestock	http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest-hub/focus-livestock [this URL is also found in section 3 above]	Access Denied	1/22/17	8/1/17

5. Removed links to news pages from “News in the Midwest Hub” section and removed linked events from “Events Calendar” section. The specific removed links are not detailed in this report.

Side-by-side View of “Midwest Hub” Page: 7/8/2017 - 7/28/2017



Internet Archive: Previous versions of page from [January 22, 2017](#) and [February 8, 2017](#) and current version from [August 1, 2017](#)

Page 4: Midwest Hub - Focus on Croplands

- URL: <https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest-hub/focus-croplands>
- Changes occurred between **February 18, 2017 10:26 PM ET** and **August 1, 2017 4:05 AM ET** (*Note: the unusually wide range of times is due to the fact that EDGI was not tracking these pages. Instead, we accessed past versions through the Internet Archive. It is very likely, however, that this page was altered at the same time as those in the pages above since all other Climate Hubs pages in our software's records (+15) were changed around July 28, 2017.*)
- **Note:** The Midwest Hub "Focus on Croplands" page is included in this report as a representative example of an informational page linked from a regional Hub page, like Page 3 above, that currently has an "Access denied" notice.

Screenshot 3.1

1. Removed the "Focus on Croplands" page. The URL now leads to a page stating "Access denied." The page contained information and links to outside resources, now removed.

Previous Version of "Focus on Croplands" page from: 11/29/16

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest-hub/focus-croplands>. The page is titled "MIDWEST HUB" and includes a search bar. The navigation menu contains: Climate Hubs, Partners, Regional Assessments, Regional Data & Research, Educational Materials, Northern Forests Hub, and About Us. The breadcrumb trail is "Home » Midwest Hub » Focus on Croplands".

Focus on Croplands
Croplands and Climate in the Midwest

Feature: Extreme weather impacts on croplands in the Midwest
 Extreme events, such as floods, can cause erosion and damage to fields. Adopting conservation practices to increase the water holding capacity of soils can help mitigate the negative impacts of heavy rainfall events. [Learn more about USDA conservation programs that provide producers with technical and financial assistance to manage soils.](#)

Crops of the Midwest
 Although the perception is that the Midwest is corn and soybean production, there are a wide variety of crops produced across the Midwest. There are over 127 million acres of agricultural land in the Midwest and in addition to 75% of that area in corn and soybeans, the other 25% is used to produce alfalfa, apples, asparagus, green beans, blueberries, cabbage, carrots, sweet and tart cherries, cranberries, cucumbers, grapes, oats, onions, peaches, plums, peas, bell peppers, potatoes, pumpkins, raspberries, strawberries, sweet corn, tobacco, tomatoes, watermelon, and wheat. The diversity of the annual and perennial crops across the Midwest creates a range of responses to climate and weather. One of the goals of the Midwest Climate Hub is to work with each of these different commodities to determine the **impacts that different conditions have on production.**

The page also includes a small image of a field at the bottom.

Note: the screenshot above is from [November 29, 2017](#) since later Internet Archive versions were not rendering properly.

Internet Archive: Previous versions of page from [November 29, 2017](#) and [February 19, 2017](#) and current version from [August 1, 2017](#)