



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We have not yet conducted a comprehensive analysis to determine if the pages described in this report have been archived in a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) website archive or another government web archive, though we have not yet found such an archive.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

Comparison of <https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov> - History - mobile version - view as grid

rendered: side-by-side

Jul 24 2017 9:13 PM

Jul 28 2017 1:39 PM

USDA United States Department of Agriculture Climate Hubs

Search

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

Regions

Popular Topics:

- Climate Hubs Factsheet
- Climate Hubs Mission and Vision
- Climate Tools
- Drought Tools
- Events Calendar
- Climate Hubs Update
- Partners
- Contact Us

View National Land Cover Dataset Legend

Click on the region to learn more about the USDA Climate Hub in your area

News:

- Irrigation Pays in Protecting Crop Revenues in the Northeast
- Cocaine Farms Talks Data Driven Decision Making
- New USGS Shallow Well Design Resists Drought

Focus on Climate:

- Croplands
- Forestlands
- Livestock
- Grazing Lands

Events Calendar:

July

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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

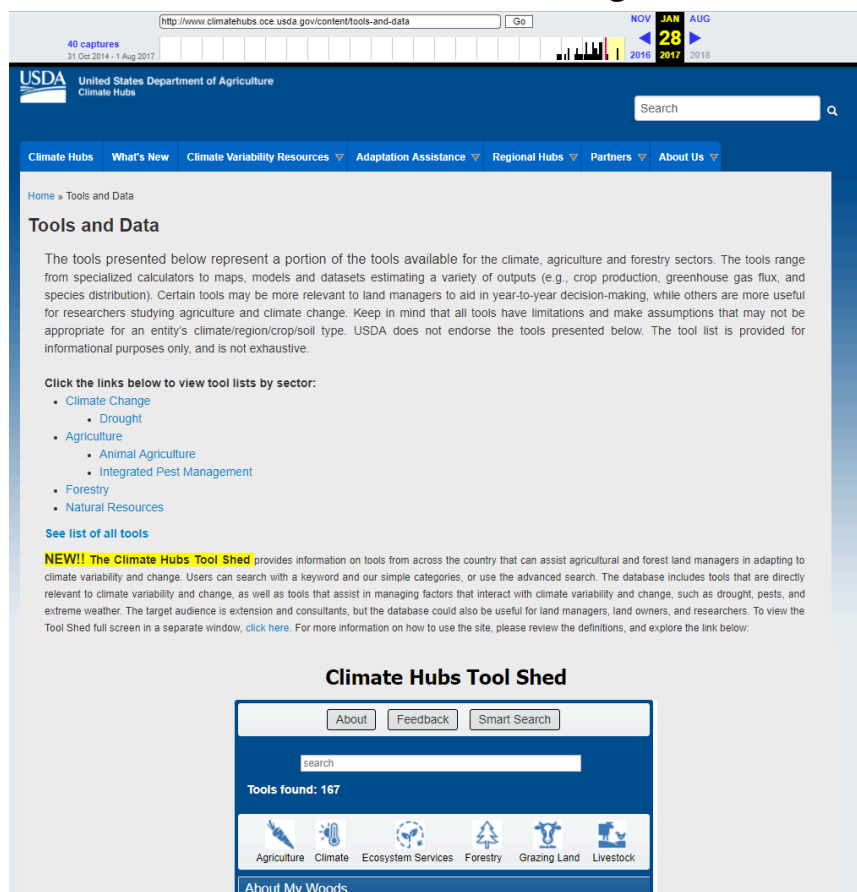
Page 2: Tools and Data

- 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 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



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

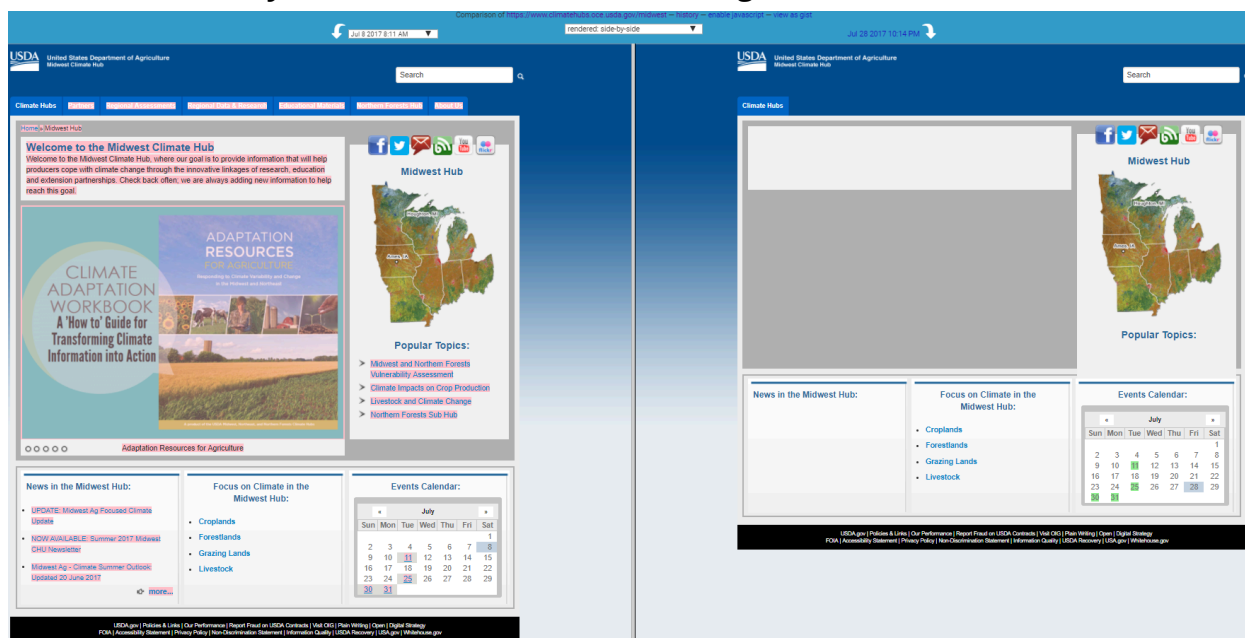
Link Text	Link URL	Page Status	Previous IA Version	Current IA Version
Midwest and Northern Forests Vulnerability Assessment	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Midwest%20Region%20Vulnerability%20Assessment%203_20_2015.pdf	Live	11/29/16	-
Climate Impacts on Crop Production	https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/midwest-hub/focus-croplands	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-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](#)

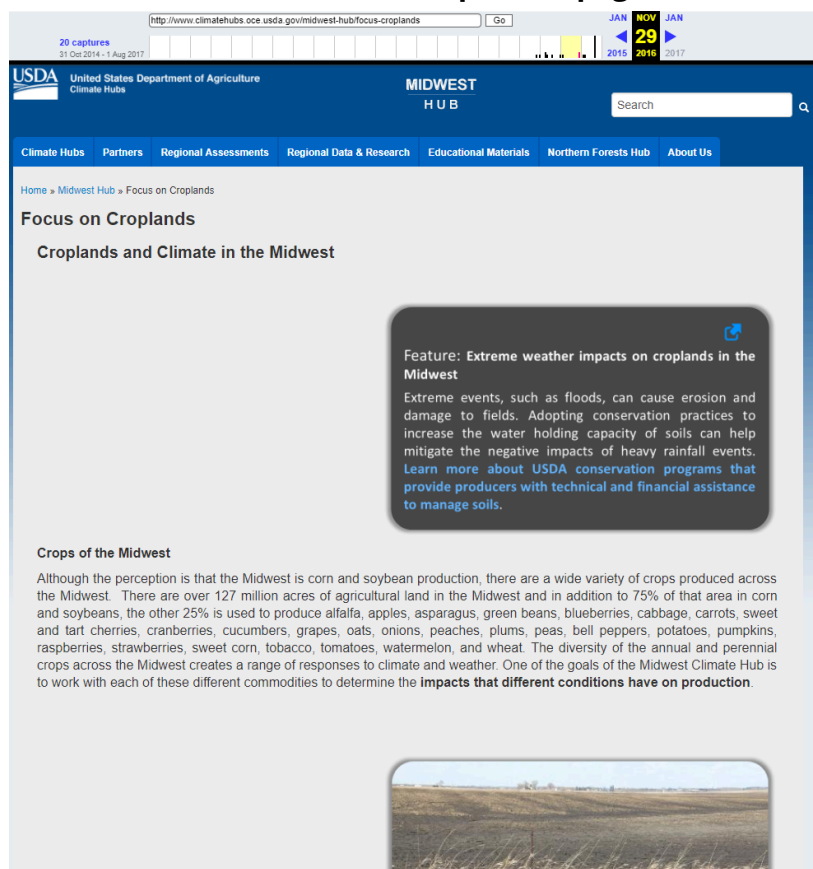
Page 4: Midwest Hub - Focus on Croplands

- 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



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](#)