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Service Change Notice 26-82
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring MD
1155 AM EDT Tue Sep 15 2026

To: Subscribers:
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From: Jon Gottschalck
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 Climate Prediction Center
 NWS/National Centers for Environmental Prediction

Subject: Experimental updates and modifications to the Monthly and Seasonal U.S. Drought Outlooks from the Climate Prediction Center Will Transition to Operational Status on or about October 15, 2026.

The National Weather Service (NWS) Climate Prediction Center (CPC) will transition the experimental updates and modifications to the monthly and seasonal U.S. Drought Outlooks to operational status on or about October 15, 2026. The redesigned drought outlooks have incorporated slight adjustments that address user feedback received during the open comment period. Namely, (1) the proposed legend label change of "No Change in Drought" has been adjusted to "Drought Unchanged" and (2) the gray color used to depict this category was changed to a light tan color. Based on an extensive social science study, the new drought outlook display improves stakeholder usability, understanding, and decision-making by featuring reduced text, updated color schemes and wording, and the addition of a "Drought worsens" category.

Examples of the current operational (left) and modified/updated (right) versions of the monthly and seasonal drought outlooks are provided at the link below:

<https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/Drought/do-redesign/do-redesign.php>

The drought outlooks are issued each month to support national, regional, state government and other stakeholders for decision making and situational awareness, primarily for the agriculture, water resources, fire weather and emergency management communities. The drought outlook maps highlight the drought category tendency from the start to the end of the forecast period and are available in PNG, GIS shapefile, and KML formats. The monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found at the URLs below respectively:

https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/month_drought.png

https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/season_drought.png

Additional details on how the drought outlooks are prepared are listed in the Product Description Document (PDD) link below:

https://nsdesk.servicenowservices.com/api/g_noa/nwspc/res2/f7ec010ecfd74710fb6eb5f42f851c9e

Additional Comments may be sent to:

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National Service Change Notices are online at:

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