

NOUS41 KWBC 111515
PNSWSH

Public Information Statement 26-40
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring MD
1115 AM EDT Mon May 11 2026

To: Subscribers:
 -NOAA Weather Wire Service
 -Emergency Managers Weather Information Network
 -NOAAPort
 Other NWS Partners and Employees

From: Jon Gottschalck, Chief
 Operational Prediction Branch
 Climate Prediction Center

Subject: Soliciting Comments on experimental updates and modifications to the Monthly and Seasonal U.S. Drought Outlooks from the Climate Prediction Center through June 11, 2026.

The National Weather Service (NWS) Climate Prediction Center (CPC) issues monthly and seasonal U.S. Drought Outlooks 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 products are outlook maps for the upcoming month (CPC monthly drought outlook) and for the upcoming next three months (CPC seasonal drought outlook). The maps highlight the tendency of drought changes at the end of each of these forecast periods 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 CPC drought outlooks are prepared are listed in the Product Description Document (PDD) link below:

https://nsdesk.servicenowservices.com/api/g_noa/nwspc/res2/a410ddfe97d4c3508881bb7de053af17

The NWS is soliciting public comments through June 11, 2026 on two areas:

- (1) a redesign of the drought outlook display to improve stakeholder useability, understanding, and interpretation for decision making and,
- (2) the addition of a new category to make the outlooks parallel for both the improvement and degradation of potential outcomes.

Both of these topical changes were recommended after an extensive social science study. The changes include (1) less text, change in product color scheme, and adjustments to wording, and (2) a new category labelled "Drought worsens".

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

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

These side-by-side comparison images illustrate the proposed changes to the drought outlook's color scheme, text adjustments, and category updates allowing users to provide comment. Feedback will be reviewed and pending any adjustments, the proposed Drought Outlook maps will be implemented operationally on or around July 31, 2026. If implemented operationally, the products will be available in PNG, GIS shapefile, and KML formats. These changes are a part of a longer term plan to convert CPC drought outlooks from the current deterministic format to a probabilistic format and the category adjustments align best with this important goal.

Comments are being solicited on the proposed changes detailed above. Please submit your feedback by June 11, 2026:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/proposedchangestodroughtoutlooks>

Additional Comments may be sent to:

Jon Gottschalck, Chief
Operational Prediction Branch, CPC
Telephone: 301-683-3449
Email: jon.gottschalck@noaa.gov

National Public Information Statements are online at:
<https://www.weather.gov/notification/>

NNNN