

MIDWEST DROUGHT ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

September 16-18, 2026 | Grand Rapids, Michigan

Courtyard Marriott Downtown Grand Rapids (Kent Room)

This meeting will convene state and regional partners from across the Midwest to explore drought assessment using a place-based, peer-to-peer approach. Participants will share experiences, compare methodologies, and identify opportunities to improve drought assessment practices across the region.

Meeting Goals

- **Compare drought assessment approaches.** Discuss and document current state and regional approaches to drought assessment, including drought indicator selection across seasons, locations, sectors, and drought types. Explore appropriate assessment timescales, reference periods, and methods for developing a more holistic picture of drought across the Midwest.
- **Identify challenges and opportunities.** Examine common challenges in drought assessment, including conflicting datasets, limited impact observations, and differences between short- and long-term drought conditions. Identify priority data, indicators, and impact information needed to improve drought monitoring and decision-making.
- **Strengthen connections to decision-making.** Share approaches for integrating drought assessment into state monitoring processes and linking assessments to drought planning, triggers, mitigation, and response actions.

Optional Tuesday Social (6 p.m.): Knoop Rooftop Beer Garden (131 Ionia Ave SW)

Wednesday, September 16, 2026 (9 a.m.–4 p.m. ET)

Time (ET)	Topic	Speaker/Moderator
8:30 a.m.	Registration & Breakfast	
MORNING SESSION: Setting the Stage		
9:00 a.m.	Welcome & Introductions	Molly Woloszyn, CIRES/NOAA/NIDIS
9:10 a.m.	Setting the Stage: Meeting Goals & Development of Regional Drought Assessment White Paper	Molly Woloszyn, CIRES/NOAA/NIDIS
9:30 a.m.	Initial Findings from State Input Forms & Discussion: Top Indicators & Top Challenges for	Molly Woloszyn, CIRES/NOAA/NIDIS

	<i>Drought Assessment</i>	
10:15 a.m.	Small Group Discussions: <i>Indicators by Season, Type of Drought, and Sector</i>	All
11:00 a.m.	Break	
11:15 a.m.	Overview of National Academies Study: <i>Improving Future U.S. Drought Assessment</i>	Trent Ford, University of Illinois
12:00 p.m.	Lunch (provided)	
AFTERNOON SESSION: Impact Data and Discussion		
1:00 p.m.	Initial Findings from State Input Forms & Discussion: <i>Impact Data + Brief overview of NDMC's drought impact data efforts</i>	Austin Pearson, Purdue University Mark Svoboda, National Drought Mitigation Center
1:30 p.m.	Small Group Discussions: <i>Impact Data Needs</i> What impact data do we need (by sector, by season)? Who collects this data?	All
2:15 p.m.	Brief Small Group Recaps	All
2:30 p.m.	Break	
2:45 p.m.	Discussion on Human-Based Reporting: <i>How do we gather a higher quantity and quality of reports on a more regular basis?</i>	Austin Pearson, Purdue University
3:15 p.m.	Think Outside the Box: <i>How can we make impact data that is available MORE useful for drought assessment?</i>	Molly Woloszyn, CIRES/NOAA/NIDIS
4:00 p.m.	Quick Recap + Preview of Tomorrow	Molly Woloszyn, CIRES/NOAA/NIDIS
6:00 p.m.	Optional Evening Social: New Holland Brewpub (417 Bridge Street NW)	

Thursday, September 17, 2026 (9 a.m.–4 p.m. ET)

Time (ET)	Topic	Speaker/Moderator
8:30 a.m.	Breakfast	
MORNING SESSION: Drought Assessment Tools and Data		
9:00 a.m.	New Drought Data Dashboard (D3) Tool Demo (https://d3drought.org/)	Trent Ford, University of Illinois
9:30 a.m.	National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) Updates	Mark Svoboda, National Drought Mitigation Center
10:00 a.m.	North American Land Data Assimilation System version 3 (NLDAS-3) Updates (Virtual)	Kim Locke, SSAI/NASA and Ryan Wade, University of Alabama-Huntsville/NASA
10:30 a.m.	Break	
10:45 a.m.	Deep Dive Into Data Needs Discussion: <i>Soil Moisture, Evapotranspiration, Groundwater</i>	Dennis Today, USDA Midwest Climate Hub and Molly Woloszyn, CIRES/NOAA/NIDIS
12:00 p.m.	Lunch (provided)	
AFTERNOON SESSION: Tackling the Challenges of Drought Assessment		
1:00 p.m.	Brief Presentation + Discussion: <i>How do you assess drought when there are not any obvious impacts?</i> <i>Molly Woloszyn and Dennis Today (moderators)</i>	Zack Leasor, University of Missouri
1:45 p.m.	Grappling with Nonstationarity Presentation & Discussion: <i>Precipitation Effectiveness, Reference Periods, and More</i>	Trent Ford, University of Illinois
2:15 p.m.	Break	
2:30 p.m.	Challenges of Drought Assessment: Part 1 • <i>Reconciling short-term vs. long-term conditions</i> • <i>Solutions for addressing conflicting indicators</i> • <i>Filling in the data gaps for ecological and vegetation-based agricultural drought</i>	Planning Team

	• <i>Other topics of interest from prior discussion</i>	
4:00 p.m.	Quick Recap + Review of Tomorrow	Molly Woloszyn

Friday, September 18, 2026 (9 a.m. – 12 p.m. E)

Time (ET)	Topic	Speaker/Moderator
8:30 a.m.	Breakfast	
MORNING SESSION: Tackling Drought Assessment Challenges (Continued)		
9:00 a.m.	Challenges of Drought Assessment: Part 2 • <i>Reconciling short-term vs. long-term conditions</i> • <i>Solutions for addressing conflicting indicators</i> • <i>Filling in the data gaps for ecological and vegetation-based agricultural drought</i> • <i>Other topics of interest from prior discussion</i>	Planning Team
10:15 a.m.	Break	
10:30 a.m.	Regional Drought Assessment White Paper: <i>Where have we identified information during this workshop? What needs more discussion?</i>	Molly Woloszyn, CIRES/NOAA/NIDIS
10:50 a.m.	Small Group Discussions: <i>Regional Drought Assessment White Paper</i>	All
11:50 a.m.	Workshop Wrap-Up, Evaluation, & Next Steps	Molly Woloszyn, CIRES/NOAA/NIDIS
12:00 p.m.	Workshop Ends - Safe Travels Home!	