Indicators are observations or calculations that can be used to track conditions and trends. Indicators of climate change can communicate key aspects of our changing environment, identify vulnerabilities, and inform decisions about policy, planning, and resource management. Such indicators are an important part of the vision for the sustained National Climate Assessment.

What Makes a Good Indicator?

A quality indicator should:

- Have a clear relationship to a changing climate.
- Illustrate the change in a relevant variable over time.
- Be understandable and easy to interpret.
- Cover a relevant geographic area.
- Fill a knowledge gap in the current set of indicators.
- Be based on federally supported data.
- Be updated at regular intervals.
- Have been scientifically vetted (i.e., peer reviewed).
- Link to related agency work or resources.

USGCRP Indicators meet a high standard of scientific integrity. The IndIWG leverages tools and expertise from the National Climate Assessment Technical Support Unit in order to provide full data transparency and reproducibility for every indicator.

The indicators and their underlying datasets are fully documented and publicly accessible via USGCRP’s Global Change Information System (GCIS).