



Integrated SMAP and SMOS Soil Moisture Data Products, Version 2

SMOS-Based SMAP L2 Radiometer Half-Orbit 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture and SMAP/SMOS L3 Radiometer 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture

USER GUIDE

How to Cite These Data

As a condition of using these data, you must include a citation:

Chaubell, J., Bindlish, R., Hayashi, A., Colliander, A., Yueh, S., Dunbar, S., and D. Entekhabi. 2026. SMOS-Based SMAP L2 Radiometer Half-Orbit 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture, Version 2. [Indicate subset used]. Boulder, Colorado USA. NASA National Snow and Ice Data Center Distributed Active Archive Center. <https://doi.org/10.5067/OT7M8VAIGLIE>. [Date Accessed].

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National Snow and Ice Data Center

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	DATA DESCRIPTION	2
1.1	Summary.....	2
1.2	Parameters.....	2
1.3	File Information.....	3
1.3.1	Format	3
1.3.2	File Contents.....	3
1.4	Spatial Information	9
1.4.1	Coverage	9
1.4.2	Resolution.....	9
1.4.3	Geolocation.....	9
1.5	Temporal Information	10
1.5.1	Coverage	10
1.5.2	Resolution.....	11
2	DATA ACQUISITION AND PROCESSING	11
2.1	Background	11
2.2	Acquisition.....	11
2.3	Processing.....	12
2.4	Quality, Errors, and Limitations	13
3	VERSION HISTORY	13
4	RELATED DATA SETS	14
5	RELATED WEBSITES	14
6	REFERENCES	14
7	DOCUMENT INFORMATION.....	14
7.1	Publication Date	14
7.2	Date Last Updated	14

This user guide applies to the following data sets:

[SMOS-Based SMAP L2 Radiometer Half-Orbit 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture \(NSIDC-0799, referred to as the "L2 Product"\)](#)

[SMAP/SMOS L3 Radiometer 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture \(NSIDC-0800, referred to as the "L3 Product"\)](#)

1 DATA DESCRIPTION

1.1 Summary

The Soil Moisture Active Passive (SMAP, launched in 2015) and the Soil Moisture and Ocean Salinity (SMOS, launched in 2009) missions are each L-band satellites that provide brightness temperature and soil moisture estimates and vegetation optical depth approximately every 2-3 days with a spatial resolution of ~40 km. By integrating brightness temperature observations from both satellites, these data products reduce the revisit time to about one day, improving the ability to monitor fast-response processes such as groundwater drainage and recharge, early dry-down after storms, and pre-storm soil moisture conditions for runoff determination.

The Integrated SMAP and SMOS Soil Moisture Data is available in two products:

- **SMOS-Based SMAP L2 Radiometer Half-Orbit 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture (NSIDC-0799):** This product is generated by processing half-orbit granules (either 6 AM ascending or 6 PM descending) from the pre-processed SMOS product. The L2 product consists solely of SMOS-based data, incorporating information after SMOS brightness temperatures (TBs) at a 40° incidence angle were inter-calibrated and the soil moisture (SM) and vegetation optical depth (VOD) were retrieved using the SMAP Dual Channel Algorithm (DCA).
- **SMAP/SMOS L3 Radiometer 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture (NSIDC-0800):** To generate this product, processing software ingests one day's worth of granules from both the SMAP SPL2SMP_E product and the SMOS-derived L2 data. The L3 product contains both SMAP and SMOS descending (6:00 AM/PM) and ascending (6:00 PM/AM) data stored in separate arrays.

1.2 Parameters

The main parameters of both data products are surface soil moisture (SM) and vegetation optical depth (VOD) presented on the Global EASE-Grid 2.0 projection. Data is derived by integrating brightness temperatures from two L-band satellites: Soil Moisture Active Passive (SMAP) enhanced Level-2 and Soil Moisture Ocean Salinity (SMOS).

1.3 File Information

1.3.1 Format

The data are available as HDF5-formatted files.

1.3.2 File Contents

The integrated SMAP and SMOS soil moisture data consists of two main products: SMOS-Based SMAP L2 Radiometer Half-Orbit 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture (NSIDC-0799, the L2 Product) and SMAP/SMOS L3 Radiometer 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture (NSIDC-0800, the L3 Product). File details for both are described below.

1.3.2.1 L2 Product

As shown in Figure , each HDF5 file is organized into two top-level groups: Metadata_SMOS and SMOS_Based.

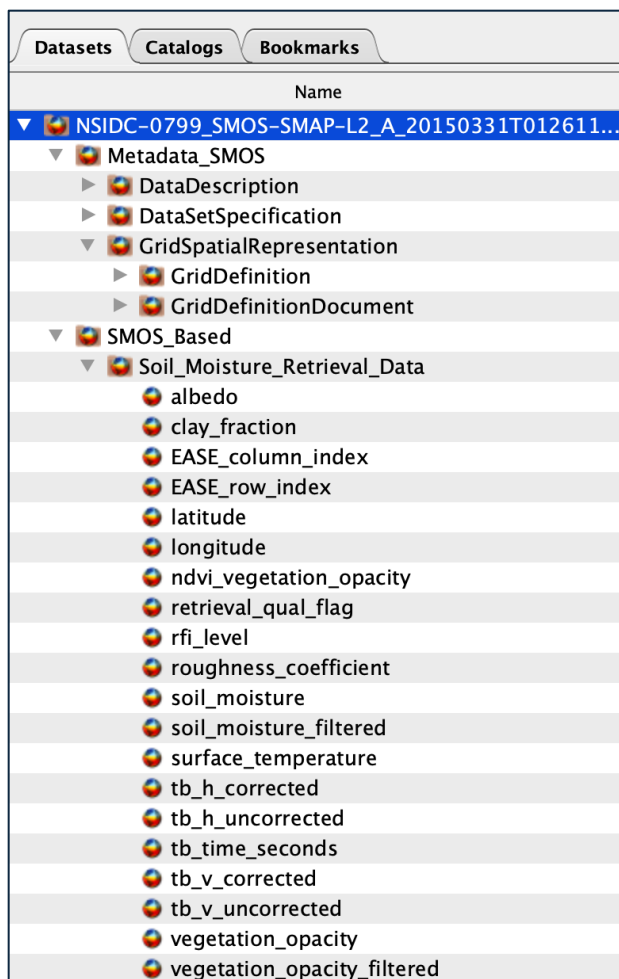


Figure 1. L2 Product File Contents

The Metadata_SMOS group includes metadata that describe the full content of each file. This includes when the data were created, swath width, and information about grid spatial extent.

The Soil_Moisture_Retrieval_Data group contains data regarding both corrected/filtered and uncorrected/unfiltered values, spatial information, SM, VOD, and quality flags. Each parameter is described in Table 1.

Table 1. L2 Product Data Parameters

Parameters	Description
albedo	Diffuse reflecting power of the Earth's surface within the grid cell
clay_fraction	The aggregated clay fraction, as used in the soil moisture retrieval, within the 9 km grid cell
EASE_column_index	Zero-based column index of a 9-km EASE Grid 2.0 cell
EASE_row_index	Zero-based row index of a 9-km EASE Grid 2.0 cell
latitude	EASE-2 grid center latitude
longitude	EASE-2 grid center longitude
ndvi_vegetation_opacity	The vegetation opacity derived from NDVI climatology that is used for the DCA regularized algorithm
retrieval_qual_flag	Bit flags that record the conditions and the quality of the DCA retrieval algorithms that generate soil moisture for the grid cell
rfi_level	RFI probability value * 200
roughness_coefficient	A unitless value that is indicative of bare soil roughness within the 9 km grid cell derived by retrieval of global map of h from DCA
soil_moisture	Retrieved soil moisture using the DCA algorithm
soil_moisture_filtered	Retrieved soil moisture using the DCA algorithm filtered by RFI. RFI level = 0
surface_temperature	Temperature at land surface based on GMAO GEOS-5 data
tb_h_corrected	H-polarized TB with water correction and relative calibration applied
tb_h_uncorrected	H-polarized TB without water correction and before relative calibration applied
tb_time_seconds	Arithmetic average of the acquisition time of all the brightness temperature footprints with a center that falls within the EASE grid cell in seconds since noon on January 1, 2000 UTC
tb_v_corrected	V-polarized TB with water correction and relative calibration applied
tb_v_uncorrected	V-polarized TB without water correction and before relative calibration applied
vegetation_opacity	Retrieved vegetation optical depth using the DCA algorithm
vegetation_opacity_filtered	Retrieved vegetation optical depth using the DCA algorithm filtered by RFI. RFI level = 0

1.3.2.1.1 Naming Convention

Files are named according to the following convention:

NSIDC-0799_SMOS-SMAP-L2_[pass direction]_YYYYMMDDThhmmss-YYYYMMDDThhmmss_V02.0.h5

For example:

NSIDC-0799_SMOS-SMAP-L2_A_20150331T012611_20150331T021932_V02.0.h5

The variables within a file name are described in Table .

Table 2. File Naming Convention of the L2 Product

Variable	Description
NSIDC-0799	National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) data set authoritative identification
SMOS-SMAP-L2	Indicate SMOS mission data used in conjunction with SMAP enhanced Level-2 data
[pass direction]	Half Orbit Designator, where 'A' represents 6:00 am ascending pass; 'D' represents 6:00 pm descending pass
YYYYMMDDThhmmss	First/End Date/Time Stamp: Date/time stamp in Universal Coordinated Time (UTC) of the first and last data element, specified as 4-digit year (YYYY), 2-digit month (MM), 2-digit day (DD), with Time (T) designated as 2-digit hour (hh), 2-digit minutes (mm), 2-digit seconds (ss)
V02.0	Indicates Version number 2.0
.h5	File extension for an HDF5 data file

1.3.2.2 L3 Product

As shown in Figure 2, each HDF5 file is organized into five top-level groups: Metadata, Metadata_SMAP, Metadata_SMOS, SMAP_Based, and SMOS_Based.

Datasets Catalogs Bookmarks	
Name	
▼	NSIDC-0800_SMOS-SMAP-L3_20150331...
▶	Metadata
▶	Metadata_SMAP
▶	Metadata_SMOS
▼	SMAP_Based
▶	Soil_Moisture_Retrieval_Data_AM
▶	Soil_Moisture_Retrieval_Data_PM
▼	SMOS_Based
▶	Soil_Moisture_Retrieval_Data_AM
▼	Soil_Moisture_Retrieval_Data_PM
	albedo_pm
	clay_fraction_pm
	latitude_pm
	longitude_pm
	ndvi_vegetation_opacity_pm
	retrieval_qual_flag_pm
	rfi_level_pm
	roughness_coefficient_pm
	soil_moisture_filtered_pm
	soil_moisture_pm
	surface_temperature_pm
	tb_h_corrected_pm
	tb_h_uncorrected_pm
	tb_time_seconds_pm
	tb_v_corrected_pm
	tb_v_uncorrected_pm
	vegetation_opacity_filtered_pm
	vegetation_opacity_pm

Figure 2. L3 Product File Contents

The Metadata, Metadata_SMAP, Metadata_SMOS groups include metadata that describe the full content of each file. This includes information about grid spatial extent and description of the data through abstracts.

There are two groups of data in the product: SMAP_based and SMOS_based. The SMAP_based group contains fields copied from the [SMAP Enhanced L3 Radiometer Global and Polar Grid Daily 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture, Version 6 \(SPL3SMP_E\)](#) product without further processing. The SMOS_based group contains the same information but derived using the SMOS-based TBs, which were inter-calibrated with SMAP, with the SM and VOD data retrieved by means of the SMAP DCA.

Further, these two groups contain two subgroups: `Soil_Moisture_Retrieval_Data_AM` and `Soil_Moisture_Retrieval_Data_PM`. The subgroups contain data regarding both corrected/filtered and uncorrected/unfiltered values, spatial information, SM, VOD, and quality flags. Each parameter is described in Table 3.

Table 3. L3 Product File Parameters

Parameters	Description
<code>albedo_(am/pm)</code>	Diffuse reflecting power of the Earth's surface within the grid cell
<code>clay_fraction_(am/pm)</code>	The aggregated clay fraction, as used in the soil moisture retrieval, within the 9 km grid cell
<code>latitude_(am/pm)</code>	EASE-2 grid center latitude
<code>longitude_(am/pm)</code>	EASE-2 grid center longitude
<code>ndvi_vegetation_opacity_(am/pm)</code>	The vegetation opacity derived from NDVI climatology that is used for the DCA regularized algorithm
<code>retrieval_qual_flag_(am/pm)</code>	Quality flag of retrieved soil moisture using DCA
<code>rfi_level_(am/pm)</code>	RFI probability value * 200 (only in SMOS data group)
<code>roughness_coefficient_(am/pm)</code>	A unitless value that is indicative of bare soil roughness within the 9 km grid cell derived by retrieval of global map of α from DCA
<code>soil_moisture_filtered_(am/pm)</code>	Retrieved soil moisture using the DCA algorithm filtered by RFI. RFI level = 0
<code>soil_moisture_(am/pm)</code>	Retrieved soil moisture using the DCA algorithm
<code>surface_temperature_(am/pm)</code>	Temperature at land surface based on GMAO GEOS-5 data
<code>tb_h_corrected_(am/pm)</code>	H-polarized TB with water correction and relative calibration applied
<code>tb_h_uncorrected_(am/pm)</code>	H-polarized TB without water correction and before relative calibration applied
<code>tb_time_seconds_(am/pm)</code>	Average TB sample acquisition time in a grid cell
<code>tb_v_corrected_(am/pm)</code>	V-polarized TB with water correction and relative calibration applied
<code>tb_v_uncorrected_(am/pm)</code>	V-polarized TB without water correction and before relative calibration applied
<code>vegetation_opacity_filtered_(am/pm)</code>	Retrieved vegetation optical depth using the DCA algorithm filtered by RFI. RFI level = 0.
<code>vegetation_opacity_(am/pm)</code>	Retrieved vegetation optical depth using the DCA algorithm

1.3.2.2.1 Naming Convention

Files are named according to the following convention:

NSIDC-0800_SMOS-SMAP-L3_YYYYMMDD_V02.0.h5

For example:

NSIDC-0800_SMOS-SMAP-L3_20150331_V02.0.h5

The variables within a file name are described in Table 4.

Table 4. File Naming Convention of the L3 Product

Variable	Description
NSIDC-0800	National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) data set authoritative identification
SMOS-SMAP-L3	Indicate SMOS mission data used in conjunction with SMAP data
YYYYMMDD	Date stamp, specified as 4-digit year (YYYY), 2-digit month (MM), 2-digit day (DD)
V02.0	Indicates Version number 2.0
.h5	File extension for an HDF5 data file

1.4 Spatial Information

1.4.1 Coverage

Both data products have global, gridded coverage.

1.4.2 Resolution

Both data products have 9 km grid resolution.

1.4.3 Geolocation

Both data products are provided on the Global 9 km EASE-Grid 2.0 projection. The following tables provide information for geolocating this data set. For more information on EASE-Grid 2.0, refer to the [EASE Grids](#) website.

Table 5. Geolocation Details for the Global 9 km EASE-Grid 2.0

Geographic coordinate system	WGS 1984
Projected coordinate system	EASE-Grid 2.0 Global
Longitude of true origin	0
Latitude of true origin	30
Scale factor at longitude of true origin	N/A
Datum	WGS 1984
Ellipsoid/spheroid	WGS 1984
Units	Meters
False easting	0
False northing	0
EPSG code	6933
PROJ4 string	+proj=cea +lat_ts=30 +lon_0=0 +x_0=0 +y_0=0 +datum=WGS84 +units=m +no_defs +type=crs
Reference	https://epsg.org/crs_6933/WGS-84-NSIDC-EASE-Grid-2-0-Global.html

Table 6. 9 km Resolution EASE-Grid 2.0 Global Grid Details

Grid cell size (x, y pixel dimensions)	9,008.05 m (x) × 9,008.05 m (y)
Number of rows	1624
Number of columns	3856
Nominal gridded resolution	9 km by 9 km
Grid rotation	N/A
ulxmap – x-axis map coordinate of the center of the upper-left pixel (XLLCORNER for ASCII data)	-17367530.44
ulymap – y-axis map coordinate of the center of the upper-left pixel (YLLCORNER for ASCII data)	7314540.83

1.5 Temporal Information

1.5.1 Coverage

Both data products span 01 May 2015 to 30 June 2026. The product temporal coverage is expected to be updated annually.

1.5.2 Resolution

The L2 and L3 products have different temporal resolutions:

- L2 Product: Each half-orbit file spans approximately 45 minutes.
- L3 Product: Each file spans one day, where AM and PM passes are contained in the same file.

2 DATA ACQUISITION AND PROCESSING

2.1 Background

The SMAP and SMOS missions provide TB and SM estimates, as well as vegetation optical depth VOD approximately every 2–3 days with a spatial resolution of ~40 km. Due to their sun-synchronous orbits, they have an overpass time of approximately 6 AM and 6 PM local time. The integration of the brightness temperature observations (both AM and PM) from both L-band satellites (SMAP and SMOS) can reduce the revisit time to about 1 day and thus help to address fast-response processes, such as drainage and recharge to groundwater, early dry down after storms, and pre-storm soil moisture for runoff determination. However, due to their different instrument configurations, ancillary data, retrieval algorithms, and calibration strategies, it is very difficult to develop an integrated brightness temperature, surface SM, and VOD data product through a simple merging of the corresponding products. A successful integration of both missions' products requires: (1) processing of the SMAP-like TB at a fixed 40° incidence angle, (2) processing of SMAP ancillary data over the 9 km EASE 2.0 grid at the SMOS overpass time, (3) elimination of the water contamination over SMOS TB over land, (4) removal of bias between the SMOS and SMAP TB, and (5) application of SMAP retrieval algorithm to obtain a new set of SM and VOD.

2.2 Acquisition

The L2 Product is derived from the pre-processed [SMOS L1B and L1C Version 724](#) TBs at a 40° incidence angle and posted on the 9 km grid.

The L3 Product is a daily global composite of the [SMAP Enhanced L2 Radiometer Half-Orbit 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture, Version 6, R19 \(SPL2SMP_E\)](#) product and the SM and VOD retrieved from relatively calibrated SMOS brightness temperatures using SMAP ancillary data and the SMAP Dual Channel Algorithm (DCA).

2.3 Processing

An inter-calibration between SMOS TBs and SMAP TBs and a linear regression of SMAP TBs vs SMOS TBs provided the relative calibration parameters (slope and offset) to remove bias. Only brightness temperatures separated by less than 1 km at the surface from both missions were used in the inter-calibration. To minimize inter-calibration errors associated with temporal changes in soil moisture and temperature, a maximum time window between the two satellite observations of 30 minutes was used. The analysis utilized quality flags from both missions. Only brightness temperature observations with quality flag set to zero were used in the match-up analysis.

To generate the L2 Product, the processing software ingests half-orbit granules (either 6 AM ascending or 6 PM descending half orbits) of the pre-processed SMOS product. The ingested data are then inspected for retrievability according to input data quality, ancillary data availability, and land surface conditions. When retrievability criteria are met, the software invokes the baseline retrieval to generate soil moisture and vegetation optical depth fields. Only cells that are covered by the actual swath are included in the product. The L2 product consists solely of SMOS-based data, including information after the SMOS-based TBs at 40° were inter-calibrated and the SM and VOD were retrieved using the SMAP DCA.

To generate the L3 Product, the processing software ingests one day's worth of granules from the SMAP SPL2SMP_E product and SMOS-derived data, then creates individual global composites as two-dimensional arrays. SMAP/SMOS descending (6:00 AM/PM) and ascending (6:00 PM/AM) data are integrated and stored in separate arrays within the L3 product. Wherever data overlap occurs (typically at high latitudes due to overlapping orbits), the data point where acquisition time is closest to the 6:00 AM local solar time or 6:00 PM local solar time is chosen.

The SMAP-SMOS integration methodology can be summarized as follows:

1. Converting SMOS TB to 40° incidence angle using a multi-step regression and curve fitting approach to process SMOS L1C brightness temperatures to a constant incidence angle observed by the SMAP radiometer.
2. Inter-calibration between SMOS and SMAP to remove bias between the two data sets (detailed in section 2.2 of the ATBD).
3. SMOS TB processing to perform a water body correction to the brightness temperature data for cases where a significant percentage of the grid cell contains open water.
4. Retrieval of soil moisture and vegetation optical depth via utilization of the SMAP DCA.

The DCA, the baseline SMAP retrieval algorithm, requires *a priori* determination of several ancillary data: the dynamic parameter (effective surface temperature) and the static parameters, including clay fraction, bulk fraction, roughness coefficient, single scattering albedo ω , and the NDVI τ for which day-of-the-year climatology was used. To mimic the SMAP algorithm as closely as possible, the *a priori* parameters

mentioned above were obtained directly from the [SMAP Enhanced L2 Radiometer Half-Orbit 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture, Version 6, R19 \(SPL2SMP_E\)](#) product instead of using the direct input from the SMAP ancillary files. It is important to note that the SMAP processing algorithm applies a 33 km averaging over the data on the ancillary files. The DCA is based on the zeroth order radiative transfer equation known as the *tau-omega* model.

More details on data processing and methodology can be found in the product's ATBD (Chaubell et al. 2026).

2.4 Quality, Errors, and Limitations

The data was filtered by the radio frequency interference (RFI) probability information included in the SMOS data files. Because the presence of RFI can affect the inter-calibration parameters and therefore the resulting SM and VOD, only data with RFI probability equal to zero were considered. Because most of the RFI affects a large region between approximately 10° and 50° North in the Eastern Hemisphere, areas with higher VOD values were removed due to their high probability of RFI contamination. The analysis was done for both the horizontal and vertical polarizations over land only. To minimize the error caused by water contamination, only TBs over grid cells with water fraction less than 0.01 were compared.

During assessment of the soil moisture retrievals over the SMAP Calibration Validation Sites, the Twente and Hobe sites were found to have poor quality data available. Specifically, if Twente and Hobe are not included for both the AM and PM half orbit passes, values for unbiased Root Mean Square Differences Mean Differences; and Root Mean Square Differences decreased.

For further discussion of data quality and removal of bias or errors, see the ATBD (Chaubell et al. 2026).

3 VERSION HISTORY

Table 7. Version History

Version	Date Implemented	Impacted Temporal Coverage	Description of Changes
v02.0	July 2026	31 March 2015 to 30 June 2026	Algorithm updates and the addition of the following new fields: albedo, surface_temperature, ndvi_vegetation_opacity, clay_fraction, roughness_coefficient
v01.0	January 2025	01 May 2015 to 31 Dec 2021	Initial release

4 RELATED DATA SETS

[SMAP Enhanced L2 Radiometer Half-Orbit 9 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture, Version 6 \(SPL2SMP_E\)](#)

[SMOS L1B and L1C Version 724](#)

5 RELATED WEBSITES

[Soil Moisture Active Passive Data \(SMAP\) | Overview](#)

[SMOS L1 and L2 Science data | Overview](#)

6 REFERENCES

Chaubell, J., A. Hayashi, S. Dunbar, A. Colliander, S. Yueh, and R. Bindlish. (2026). Integrated SMAP and SMOS Soil Moisture Data Algorithm Theoretical Basis Document: Level 2-3 Soil Moisture Integrated Data Product, version 2. SMAP project, JPL D-110706. Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, CA. (see [PDF](#))

7 DOCUMENT INFORMATION

7.1 Publication Date

July 2026

7.2 Date Last Updated

July 2026