



# SMAP L3 Radiometer Global Daily 36 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture, Version 9

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## USER GUIDE

### How to Cite These Data

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

O'Neill, P. E., S. Chan, E. G. Njoku, T. Jackson, R. Bindlish, and J. Chaubell. 2021. *L3 Radiometer Global Daily 36 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture, Version 9*. [Indicate subset used]. Boulder, Colorado USA. NASA National Snow and Ice Data Center Distributed Active Archive Center.

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FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE DATA, CONTACT [NSIDC@NSIDC.ORG](mailto:NSIDC@NSIDC.ORG)

FOR CURRENT INFORMATION, VISIT <https://nsidc.org/data/SPL3SMP>



National Snow and Ice Data Center

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	DATA DESCRIPTION.....	2
1.1	Parameters .....	2
1.2	File Information .....	3
1.2.1	Format .....	3
1.2.2	File Contents .....	3
1.2.3	Data Fields .....	4
1.2.4	Metadata Fields .....	5
1.2.5	File Naming Convention .....	5
1.3	Spatial Information .....	6
1.3.1	Coverage .....	6
1.3.2	Resolution.....	6
1.3.3	Geolocation .....	6
1.4	Temporal Information.....	7
1.4.1	Coverage .....	7
1.4.2	Satellite and Processing Events .....	7
1.4.3	Latencies .....	7
1.4.4	Resolution.....	7
2	DATA ACQUISITION AND PROCESSING .....	8
2.1	Background.....	8
2.2	Instrumentation .....	8
2.3	Acquisition .....	8
2.4	Processing .....	8
2.5	Quality, Errors, and Limitations .....	9
2.5.1	Error Sources .....	9
2.5.2	Quality Assessment.....	9
2.5.3	Data Flags .....	10
3	SOFTWARE AND TOOLS.....	13
4	VERSION HISTORY .....	13
5	RELATED DATA SETS .....	15
6	RELATED WEBSITES.....	15
7	REFERENCES .....	16
8	DOCUMENT INFORMATION.....	16
8.1	Publication Date.....	16
8.2	Date Last Updated .....	17
	APPENDIX – DATA FIELDS .....	18
	Data Field Definitions .....	21
	Fill/Gap Values.....	30
	Acronyms and Abbreviations .....	32

# 1 DATA DESCRIPTION

## 1.1 Parameters

The main output of this data set is surface soil moisture (representing approximately the top 5 cm of the soil column on average, given in  $m^3/m^3$ ) presented on the global 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 projection. Also included are brightness temperature ( $T_B$ ) measurements (K), representing the weighted average of SMAP Level-1B brightness temperatures whose boresights fall within each 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 grid cell. Refer to the *Appendix – Data Fields* Section of this document for details on all parameters.

This product includes soil moisture retrievals from three algorithms:

- **Dual Channel Algorithm (DCA)**
- Single Channel Algorithm – Vertical polarization (SCA-V),
- Single Channel Algorithm – Horizontal polarization (SCA-H).

Beginning with **Version 8** of this product, released in 2021, **the new baseline algorithm is the Dual Channel Algorithm (DCA)**. This marks a departure from prior versions where the baseline algorithm was the Single Channel Algorithm-Vertical Polarization (SCA-V). The DCA has been shown to perform slightly better than SCA-V over some agricultural cropland core validation sites (CVS), although their overall performance is similar. Additional information about site performance can be found in the R18 Assessment Report (O'Neill et al., 2021b).

Table 1 shows soil moisture algorithms and associated variables. Table 2

Table 1. Soil Moisture Algorithm Options and associated Variables

DCA – current baseline	SCA-V	SCA-H
soil_moisture_dca <sup>^</sup>	soil_moisture_scav	soil_moisture_scah
vegetation_opacity_dca <sup>^</sup>	vegetation_opacity_scav	vegetation_opacity_scah
retrieval_quality_flag_dca <sup>^</sup>	retrieval_quality_flag_scav	retrieval_quality_flag_scah
roughness_coefficient_dca <sup>^</sup>	roughness_coefficient_scav	roughness_coefficient_scah
albedo_dca <sup>^</sup>	albedo_scav	albedo_scah
<sup>^</sup> these variables also correspond to the pointer elements listed in the table below		
NOTE: The variable names in the Soil_Moisture_Retrieval_Data_PM data group have the suffix “_pm” attached.		

The baseline retrieval algorithm is linked to the pointer elements for soil\_moisture, vegetation\_opacity, retrieval\_quality\_flag, roughness\_coefficient, and albedo, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Pointer Elements and Corresponding Variables

Pointer Element	Variable
soil_moisture[_pm]	soil_moisture_dca[_pm]
vegetation_opacity[_pm]	vegetation_opacity_dca[_pm]
retrieval_quality_flag[_pm]	retrieval_quality_flag_dca[_pm]
roughness_coefficient[_pm]	roughness_coefficient_dca[_pm]
albedo[_pm]	albedo_dca[_pm]

For a more extensive discussion of the algorithms, users should refer to the SPL2/3SMP/\_E Algorithm Theoretical Basis Document, or ATBD (O'Neill et al., 2021a).

## 1.2 File Information

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### 1.2.1 Format

Data are in HDF5 format. For software and more information, including an HDF5 tutorial, visit the HDF Group's [HDF5](#) website.

### 1.2.2 File Contents

As shown in Figure 1, each HDF5 file is organized into three main groups, Metadata and both Soil\_Moisture\_Retrieval\_Data\_[AM|PM], all of which contain sub-groups and/or data sets.

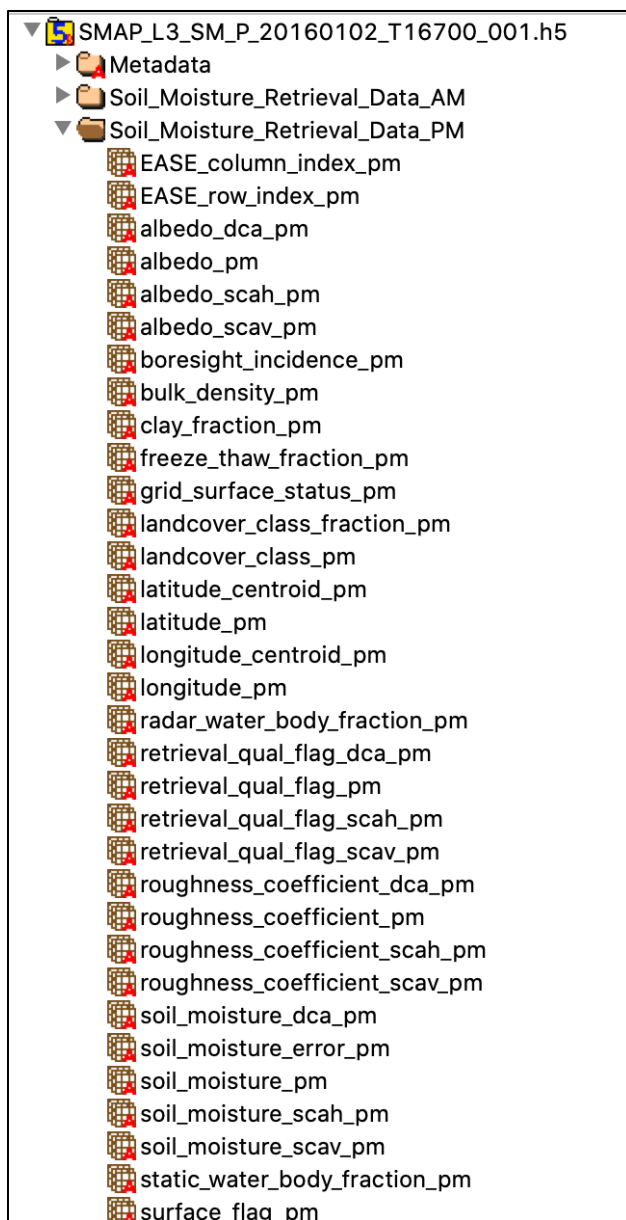


Figure 1. Subset of File Contents. For a complete list of file contents for the SMAP Level-3 soil moisture product, refer to the *Appendix – Data Fields*.

### 1.2.3 Data Fields

The Soil\_Moisture\_Retrieval\_Data\_AM and \_PM groups contain soil moisture data, ancillary data, and quality assessment flags for each half-orbit pass of the satellite, descending or ascending, respectively.

The AM group represents data for each descending half-orbit pass of the satellite (where the satellite moves from North to South and 6:00 a.m. is the Local Solar Time (LST) at the equator). The PM group represents data for each ascending half-orbit pass of the satellite (where the

satellite moves from South to North and 6:00 p.m. is the LST at the equator). Corrected brightness temperatures are also provided for each AM and PM group.

### 1.2.4 Metadata Fields

This group includes metadata that describes the full content of each file. For a description of all metadata fields for this product, refer to the Product Specification Document (Chan & Dunbar, 2021).

### 1.2.5 File Naming Convention

Files are named according to the following convention:

SMAP\_L3\_SM\_P\_yyyymmdd\_RLVvvv\_NNN.[ext]

For example:

SMAP\_L3\_SM\_P\_20150401\_R17400\_001.h5

Table 3 describes the variables within a file name:

Table 3. File Naming Convention

Variable	Description								
SMAP	Indicates SMAP mission data								
L3_SM_P	Indicates specific product (L3: Level-3; SM: Soil Moisture; P: Passive)								
yyymmdd	4-digit year, 2-digit month, 2-digit day of the first data element that appears in the product.								
RLVvv	Composite Release ID, where: <table border="1" style="width: 100%; margin-top: 5px;"> <tr> <td>R</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>L</td> <td>Launch Indicator (1: post-launch standard data)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>V</td> <td>1-Digit CRID Major Version Number (Note: the data set's major version does not necessarily coincide with the CRID major version)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>vvv</td> <td>3-Digit CRID Minor Version Number</td> </tr> </table> Example: R17400 indicates a post-launch data product with a version of 7.400. Refer to the <a href="#">SMAP Data Version History</a> page for version information.	R	Release	L	Launch Indicator (1: post-launch standard data)	V	1-Digit CRID Major Version Number (Note: the data set's major version does not necessarily coincide with the CRID major version)	vvv	3-Digit CRID Minor Version Number
R	Release								
L	Launch Indicator (1: post-launch standard data)								
V	1-Digit CRID Major Version Number (Note: the data set's major version does not necessarily coincide with the CRID major version)								
vvv	3-Digit CRID Minor Version Number								
NNN	Number of times the file was generated under the same version for a particular date/time interval (002: 2nd time)								
.[ext]	File extensions include: <table border="1" style="width: 100%; margin-top: 5px;"> <tr> <td>.h5</td> <td>HDF5 data file</td> </tr> <tr> <td>.qa</td> <td>Quality Assurance file</td> </tr> <tr> <td>.xml</td> <td>XML Metadata file</td> </tr> </table>	.h5	HDF5 data file	.qa	Quality Assurance file	.xml	XML Metadata file		
.h5	HDF5 data file								
.qa	Quality Assurance file								
.xml	XML Metadata file								

## 1.3 Spatial Information

### 1.3.1 Coverage

Coverage spans from 180°W to 180°E, and from approximately 85.044°N and 85.044°S.

### 1.3.2 Resolution

36 km

### 1.3.3 Geolocation

These data are provided on the 36-km EASE-Grid 2.0 equal-area 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 4. Geolocation details for the Global EASE-Grid 2.0

<b>Geographic coordinate system</b>	WGS 84
<b>Projected coordinate system</b>	EASE-Grid 2.0 Global
<b>Longitude of true origin</b>	0
<b>Standard Parallel</b>	30° N
<b>Scale factor at longitude of true origin</b>	N/A
<b>Datum</b>	WGS 84
<b>Ellipsoid / spheroid</b>	WGS 84
<b>Units</b>	meter
<b>False easting</b>	0
<b>False northing</b>	0
<b>EPSG code</b>	6933
<b>PROJ4 string</b>	+proj=cea +lon_0=0 +lat_ts=30 +x_0=0 +y_0=0 +ellps=WGS84 +towgs84=0,0,0,0,0,0,0 +units=m +no_defs
<b>Reference</b>	<a href="http://epsg.io/6933">http://epsg.io/6933</a>

Table 5. Grid details for the Global EASE-Grid 2.0

<b>Grid cell size (x, y pixel dimensions)</b>	36,032.22 m (x) 36,032.22 m (y)
<b>Number of columns</b>	964
<b>Number of rows</b>	406
<b>Geolocated lower left point in grid</b>	85.044° S, 180.000° W

<b>Nominal gridded resolution</b>	36 km by 36 km
<b>Grid rotation</b>	N/A
<b>ulxmap – x-axis map coordinate of the outer edge of the upper-left pixel</b>	-17367530.45
<b>ulymap – y-axis map coordinate of the outer edge of the upper-left pixel</b>	7314540.83

## 1.4 Temporal Information

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### 1.4.1 Coverage

Coverage spans from 31 March 2015 to present.

### 1.4.2 Satellite and Processing Events

Due to instrument maneuvers, data downlink anomalies, data quality screening, and other factors, small gaps in the SMAP time series will occur. Details of these events are maintained on two master lists:

[SMAP On-Orbit Events List for Instrument Data Users](#)

[Master List of Bad and Missing Data](#)

Significant gaps in coverage occurred between 19 June and 23 July 2019 and between 6 August and 20 September 2022 after the SMAP satellite went into Safe Mode. A brief description of the 2019 event and its impact on data quality is available in the [SMAP Post-Recovery Notice](#). The SMAP data acquired after the 2022 event were determined to be of high quality and consistent with the data acquired prior to the event.

### 1.4.3 Latencies

For further information, see [What are the latencies for SMAP radiometer data sets?](#) web page.

### 1.4.4 Resolution

Each Level-3 file is a daily composite of half-orbit files/swaths. Note that data from descending passes (a.m.) and ascending passes (p.m.) are stored separately in the same daily composite granule.



## 2 DATA ACQUISITION AND PROCESSING

### 2.1 Background

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The microwave portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, which includes wavelengths from a few centimeters to a meter, has long held the most promise for estimating surface soil moisture remotely. Passive microwave sensors measure the natural thermal emission emanating from the Earth's surface. The variation in the intensity of this radiation depends on the dielectric properties and temperature of the target medium, which for the near-surface soil layer is a function of the amount of moisture present. Low microwave frequencies (long wavelengths), at L-band or approximately 1 GHz (20-30 cm), offer the following advantages:

- The atmosphere is almost completely transparent, providing all-weather sensing.
- Transmission of signals from the underlying soil is possible through sparse and moderate vegetation layers (up to at least 5 kg/m<sup>2</sup> of vegetation water content).
- Measurement is independent of solar illumination which allows for day and night observations.

For more details, refer to Section 2 of the Algorithm Theoretical Basis Document (ATBD) for this product (O'Neill et al., 2021a), which is available as a Technical Reference.

### 2.2 Instrumentation

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For a detailed description of the SMAP instrument, visit the [SMAP Instrument](#) page at Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) SMAP website.

### 2.3 Acquisition

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The SMAP Level-3 radiometer soil moisture product (SPL3SMP, Version 9) is a daily gridded composite of the [SMAP L2 Radiometer Half-Orbit 36 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture, Version 9 \(SPL2SMP\)](#) data. The derivation of soil moisture from SMAP brightness temperatures occurs in the Level-2 processing. Refer to the [SPL2SMP User Guide](#) for details on soil moisture algorithms and ancillary data.

### 2.4 Processing

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The SPL3SMP data set is a daily global product. Individual SPL2SMP half-orbit files, acquired over the course of a 24-hour period, are composited to produce a daily multi-orbit global map of retrieved soil moisture. Where the SPL2SMP swaths overlap, poleward of approximately +/- 65° latitude, three options were considered for compositing multiple data points at a given grid cell:

1. Use the most recent (or last-in) data point
2. Take the average of all data points within the grid cell
3. Choose the data points observed closest to 6:00 a.m. Local Solar Time (LST) for observations derived from SMAP descending passes and closest to 6:00 p.m. LST for observations derived from SMAP ascending passes

The current approach for the SPL3SMP product is to use the third option - choosing the nearest 6:00 a.m. LST and nearest 6:00 p.m. LST pass to perform Level-3 compositing separately for descending and ascending passes, respectively. For a given L2 half-orbit granule whose time stamp (yyyymmddThhmmss) is expressed in UTC, only the hhmmss part is converted into local solar time (O'Neill et al., 2021a).

## 2.5 Quality, Errors, and Limitations

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### 2.5.1 Error Sources

Anthropogenic RFI (Radio Frequency Interference), principally from ground-based surveillance radars, can contaminate both radar and radiometer measurements at L-band frequencies. The SMAP radar and radiometer electronics and algorithms include design features to mitigate the effects of RFI. The SMAP radiometer implements a combination of time and frequency diversity, kurtosis detection, and use of thresholds to detect and, where possible, mitigate RFI (Bringer et al., 2021).

Level-2/3 radiometer data can also contain bit errors caused by noise in communication links and memory storage devices. More information about error sources is provided in Section 4.6 of the ATBD (O'Neill et al., 2021a).

### 2.5.2 Quality Assessment

SMAP products provide multiple means to assess quality. Each product contains bit flags, uncertainty measures, and file-level metadata that provide quality information. For information regarding the specific bit flags, uncertainty measures, and file-level metadata contained in this product, refer to the Product Specification Document (Chan & Dunbar, 2021). For in-depth details regarding the quality of these data, refer to the Assessment Report (O'Neill et al., 2021b).

Each HDF5 file contains metadata with Quality Assessment (QA) metadata flags that are set by the SDS at the JPL prior to delivery to the National Snow and Ice Data Center Distributed Active Archive Center (NSIDC DAAC). A separate QA file with a .qa file extension is also associated with each data file. QA files are ASCII text files that contain statistical information in order to help users better assess the quality of the associated data file.

### 2.5.3 Data Flags

Bit flags generated from input SMAP data and ancillary data are employed to help determine the quality of the retrievals. Ancillary data help determine either specific aspects of the processing, such as corrections for transient water, or the quality of the retrievals, such as the precipitation flag. These flags provide information as to whether the ground is frozen, covered with snow, flooded, or whether it is actively precipitating at the time of the satellite overpass. Other flags will indicate whether masks for steeply sloped topography or for urban, heavily forested, or permanent snow/ice areas are in effect. Unless otherwise stated, all areal fractions defined below refer to 36 x 36 km<sup>2</sup> inversion domain.

Table 6. Retrieval Quality Flag Definition

Bit	Retrieval Information	Bit Value and Interpretation
0	Recommended Quality	0: Soil moisture retrieval has recommended quality
		1: Soil moisture retrieval doesn't have recommended quality
1	Retrieval Attempted	0: Soil moisture retrieval was attempted
		1: Soil moisture retrieval was skipped
2	Retrieval Successful	0: Soil moisture retrieval was successful
		1: Soil moisture retrieval was not successful
3	Retrieval Successful	0: Freeze/thaw state retrieval was successful
		1: Freeze/thaw state retrieval was not successful
4-15	Undefined	0 (not used)

A brief description of the retrieval quality flags (*retrieval\_qual\_flag\_[\_dca | \_scat | \_scav]*) is provided in Table 6. A description of each surface flag bit is provided below, with Bit 0 being the "rightmost" or the least significant bit. For more details on all data flags, users should refer to the *Appendix – Data Fields* Section of this User Guide and the Product Specification Document (Chan & Dunbar, 2021).

- **Open Water Flag (Bits 0 and 1)**

Open water fraction is determined by *a priori* information on permanent open freshwater from the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) [MOD44W v006](#) database. Open water fraction is reported in Bits 0 and 1 in the *surface\_flag* field of the SPL2SMP product, with Bit 0 using the MOD44W v006 database. Bit 1 was set to be equal to Bit 0 after the failure of the SMAP radar on July 5, 2015. This water fraction information serves as a flag to affect soil moisture retrieval processing in the following ways:

- If water fraction is 0.00–0.05, then retrieve soil moisture, but flag for recommended quality.
- If water fraction is 0.05–0.50, then retrieve soil moisture, and flag for uncertain quality.
- If water fraction is 0.50–1.00, then flag, but do not retrieve soil moisture.

- **Urban Area Flag (Bit 3)**

Since the  $T_B$  of man-made, impervious, and urban areas cannot be estimated theoretically, the presence of urban areas in the 36 km Level-2 soil moisture grid cell cannot be corrected for during soil moisture retrieval. Thus, the presence of even a small amount of urban area in the radiometer footprint is likely to adversely bias the retrieved soil moisture. The SMAP urban flag is set based on the Columbia University Global Rural-Urban Mapping Project (GRUMP) data set (O'Neill et al., 2021a). The urban fraction affects soil moisture retrieval processing in the following ways:

- If urban areal fraction is 0.00–0.25, then retrieve soil moisture, but flag for recommended quality.
- If urban areal fraction is 0.25–1.00, then flag for uncertain quality, and retrieve soil moisture.

- **Precipitation Flag (Bit 4)**

The SMAP precipitation flag is set based on either forecasts of precipitation or using data from the Global Precipitation Mission (GPM). It is a binary *precipitation/no precipitation* flag which indicates the presence or absence of precipitation in the 36 km grid cell at the time of the SMAP overpass. The presence of liquid precipitation at the time of the SMAP overpass can adversely bias the retrieved soil moisture due to its large impact on  $T_B$ ; corrections for precipitation are part of the Level-1B  $T_B$  processing. Unlike other flags, soil moisture retrieval will always be attempted even if precipitation is flagged unless precipitation is very heavy. However, this flag serves as a warning to users to view the retrieved soil moisture with some skepticism if precipitation is present.

- If precipitation is 0–1 mm/hr, then retrieve soil moisture, but flag for recommended quality.
- If precipitation is 1–25.4 mm/hr, then flag for uncertain quality, and retrieve soil moisture.
- If precipitation is above 25.4 mm/hr, then flag, but do not retrieve soil moisture.

- **Snow Flag (Bit 5)**

Although the SMAP L-Band Radiometer can theoretically see through dry snow to the soil underneath a snowpack, the snow flag is set based on the snow fraction as reported in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Interactive Multisensor Snow and Ice Mapping System (IMS) database. The snow flag affects soil moisture retrieval processing in the following ways:

- If snow areal fraction is 0.00–0.05, then retrieve soil moisture, but flag for recommended quality.
- If snow areal fraction is 0.05–0.50, then flag for uncertain quality, and retrieve soil moisture.
- If snow areal fraction is above 0.50, then flag, but do not retrieve soil moisture.

- **Frozen Ground Flag (Bits 7 and 8)**

Frozen ground conditions are reflected in Bits 7 and 8 of the *surface\_flag*. Bit 7 is determined by the SMAP radiometer-derived freeze/thaw state and Bit 8 is determined by the effective soil temperature ( $T_{\text{eff}}$ ) estimated using NASA Global Modeling and Assimilation Office (GMAO)

model soil temperatures (which is stored in the *surface\_temperature* data field). The SMAP Level 2 passive soil moisture retrieval processor uses  $T_{\text{eff}}$  to determine if frozen ground is observed by the SMAP radiometer. When frozen ground is detected, the frozen ground bit (Bit 8) will be set to 1 in the *surface\_flag* data field in the product. The frozen soil flag affects soil moisture retrieval processing in the following ways:

- If frozen ground areal fraction is 0.00–0.05, then retrieve soil moisture, but flag for recommended quality.
- If frozen ground areal fraction is 0.05–0.50, then flag for uncertain quality, and retrieve soil moisture.
- If frozen ground areal fraction is 0.50–1.00, then flag, but do not retrieve soil moisture.

**Note:** SMAP radiometer freeze/thaw flags are presently validated only for all land regions north of 45°N. While the SPL3SMP product contains global SMAP freeze/thaw flags, uncertainty in the flags is higher south of 45°N due to small differences in the SMAP radiometer-derived reference freeze and thaw states upon which the freeze/thaw algorithm is based. More information is available in the SMAP Level-3 Freeze/Thaw (SPL3FTP) Assessment Report (Xu et al., 2020).

Additionally, although the current flag encodes the presence/absence of frozen ground based on the GMAO/GEOS model temperatures in Bit 8 and the SMAP radiometer-based freeze/thaw detection algorithm in Bit 7, only the GMAO/GEOS model temperatures are used to guide the operation of the SMAP baseline passive soil moisture retrieval algorithm over non-frozen ground at the present time. It is recommended that Bit 8 in the *surface\_qual\_flag* field or the effective soil temperature values in the *surface\_temperature* field be used to indicate the presence/absence of frozen ground alongside the investigation and analysis of SMAP passive soil moisture estimates. At present, the SMAP radiometer-based freeze/thaw detection algorithm is observed to produce false flags at low latitudes during the growing season of vegetation. Work is underway to mitigate the confounding impacts of dynamic vegetation phenology on the observed Normalized Polarization Ratio (NPR) on which the SMAP radiometer-based freeze/thaw detection algorithm is based.

- **Mountainous Area Flag (Bit 9)**

Large and highly variable slopes present in the radiometer footprint will adversely affect the retrieved soil moisture. The SMAP mountainous area flag is derived from high elevation information from a DEM coupled with a statistical threshold based on the slope variability within each 36 km grid cell.

- If slope standard deviation is 0.0–3.0°, then retrieve soil moisture, but flag for recommended quality.
- If slope standard deviation is 3.0°–6.0°, then flag for uncertain quality, and retrieve soil moisture.
- If slope standard deviation is above 6.0°, then flag, but do not retrieve soil moisture.

As with any satellite retrieval data product, proper data usage is encouraged. The following two simple practices are recommended for using SMAP soil moisture retrievals with maximum scientific benefits:

1. Use the *retrieval\_qual\_flag* field to identify retrievals in the *soil\_moisture* field estimated to be of recommended quality. A *retrieval\_qual\_flag* value of either 0 or 8 indicates high-quality retrievals (8 because a failed F/T retrieval does not affect soil moisture retrieval). Proper use of the *retrieval\_qual\_flag* field is an effective way to ensure that only retrievals of recommended quality will be used in data analyses.
2. For further investigation, use the *surface\_flag* field and the associated definition described above to determine why the *retrieval\_qual\_flag* field did not report recommended quality at a given grid cell.

### 3 SOFTWARE AND TOOLS

For tools that work with SMAP data, refer to the [Tools](#) web page.

### 4 VERSION HISTORY

Table 7. Version History

Version	Release Date	Description of Changes
V1	September 2015	First public data release
V2	October 2015	Changes to this version include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses SPL2SMP V2 Beta data as input</li> <li>• Corrects the retrieval quality flag error</li> </ul>
V3	April 2016	Changes to this version include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitioned to Validated-Stage 2</li> <li>• Uses updated SPL2SMP V3 Validated data as input</li> </ul>

Version	Release Date	Description of Changes
V4	December 2016	<p>Changes to this version include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added 6:00 p.m. ascending half orbits, which provide:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More frequent regional/global coverage (critical in flood monitoring)</li> <li>○ Soil moisture diurnal variability information (useful in data assimilation systems)</li> <li>○ Consistency with other similar satellite-based soil moisture products</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Contains frozen ground flag (Bit 7 of <i>surface_flag</i>) derived using Normalized Polarization Ratio (NPR)-based SMAP passive freeze-thaw retrieval; replaces former SMAP radar-based freeze/thaw flag</li> </ul>
V5	June 2018	<p>Changes to this version include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level-1B water-corrected brightness temperatures are used in passive soil moisture retrieval. This procedure corrects for anomalous soil moisture values seen near coastlines in the previous version and should result in less rejected data due to waterbody contamination. Five new data fields accommodate this correction: <i>grid_surface_status</i>, <i>surface_water_fraction_mb_h</i>, <i>surface_water_fraction_mb_v</i>, <i>tb_h_uncorrected</i>, and <i>tb_v_uncorrected</i>.</li> <li>• Improved depth correction for effective soil temperature used in passive soil moisture retrieval; new results are captured in the <i>surface_temperature</i> data field. This correction reduces the dry bias seen when comparing SMAP data to <i>in situ</i> data from the core validation sites.</li> <li>• Frozen ground flag updated to reflect improved freeze/thaw detection algorithm, providing better accuracy; new results are captured in Bit 7 of the <i>surface_flag</i>.</li> </ul>
V6	August 2019	<p>Changes to this version include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the option algorithm changes in SPL2SMP, the following data fields were added: <i>bulk_density</i>, <i>clay_fraction</i>, <i>bulk_density_pm</i>, <i>clay_fraction_pm</i>.</li> <li>• The baseline algorithm (SCA-V) remains unchanged.</li> <li>• Improved aggregation of values in input ancillary data, e.g. roughness, soil texture, NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index). The fix has negligible impacts on retrievals estimated to be of recommended quality.</li> </ul>

Version	Release Date	Description of Changes
V7	August 2020	<p>Changes to this version include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved calibration methodology was applied to the Level-1B radiometer brightness temperatures.</li> <li>• Improved land surface model outputs from the NASA Global Modeling and Assimilation Office (GMAO) were used to estimate the effective soil temperature used as input to Level-2 soil moisture geophysical inversion. This effective soil temperature is not to be confused with the physical soil temperature at a given depth (Choudhury et al., 1982).</li> <li>• Improved retrieval performance of DCA (formerly known as MDCA or "the option 3" option algorithm in previous releases). DCA retrieves both soil moisture and vegetation optical depth (VOD or tau).</li> <li>• Use of a new global 250-m resolution soils data base called SoilGrid250m, available at <a href="https://openlandmap.org">https://openlandmap.org</a>. Work is underway to address limited spatial anomalies of these soil property estimates at high latitudes over areas rich in organic soils.</li> <li>• Data quality flags were updated and corrected where faulty.</li> <li>• The baseline algorithm (SCA-V) remains unchanged.</li> </ul>
V8	October 2021	<p>Changes to this version include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual Channel Algorithm (DCA) replaces Single Channel Algorithm – Vertical Polarization (SCA-V) as baseline algorithm.</li> <li>• Bulk_density maximum value changed from 1.0 to 2.65.</li> </ul>
V9	December 2023	<p>Changes to this version include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An improved processing methodology was applied to the input Level-2 radiometer brightness temperatures.</li> <li>• The data algorithms, structure, content, or processor code are otherwise unchanged from the previous version.</li> </ul>

## 5 RELATED DATA SETS

[SMAP Data at NSIDC | Overview](#)

[SMAP Radar Data at the ASF DAAC](#)

## 6 RELATED WEBSITES

[SMAP at NASA JPL](#)



## 7 REFERENCES

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## 8 DOCUMENT INFORMATION

### 8.1 Publication Date

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December 2023

## 8.2 Date Last Updated

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January 2024

## APPENDIX – DATA FIELDS

This appendix provides a description of all data fields within the *SMAP L3 Radiometer Global Daily 36 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture (SPL3SMP)* product. The data are grouped into three main HDF5 groups:

- Metadata
- Soil\_Moisture\_Retrieval\_Data\_AM
- Soil\_Moisture\_Retrieval\_Data\_PM

For a description of metadata fields for this product, refer to the Product Specification Document (Chan & Dunbar, 2021). Table A - 1 describes the Soil\_Moisture\_Retrieval\_Data groups associated with this product, with a more detailed description of each data field below.

Table A - 1. Data Fields for Soil\_Moisture\_Retrieval\_Data\_AM (or \_PM)

Data Field Name	Type	Byte	Unit	Valid Min	Valid Max	Fill/Gap Value	Derivation Method(s)**
EASE_column_index	UInt16	2	N/A	0	963	65534	2
EASE_row_index	UInt16	2	N/A	0	405	65534	2
albedo * (albedo_dca   _scah   _scav)	Float32	4	N/A	0	1	-9999.0	6
boresight_incidence	Float32	4	degrees	0	90	-9999.0	1
bulk_density	Float32	4	N/A	0	2.65	-9999.0	6
clay_fraction	Float32	4	N/A	0	1	-9999.0	6
freeze_thaw_fraction	Float32	4	N/A	0	1	-9999.0	6
grid_surface_status	UInt16	2	N/A	0	1	65534	7
landcover_class	UInt8	1	N/A	0	16	254	6
landcover_class_fraction	Float32	4	N/A	0	1	-9999.0	6
latitude	Float32	4	degrees	-90	90	-9999.0	2
latitude_centroid	Float32	4	degrees	-90	90	-9999.0	1
longitude	Float32	4	degrees	-180	180	-9999.0	2
longitude_centroid	Float32	4	degrees	-180	180	-9999.0	1
radar_water_body_fraction	Float32	4	N/A	0	1	-9999.0	6
retrieval_qual_flag* (retrieval_qual_flag_dca   _scah   _scav)	UInt16	2	N/A	0	65536	65534	4
roughness_coefficient* (roughness_coefficient_dca   _scah   _scav)	Float32	4	N/A	0	3	-9999.0	6
soil_moisture* (soil_moisture_dca   _scah   _scav)	Float32	4	m <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>3</sup>	0.02	soil porosity	-9999.0	4
soil_moisture_error	Float32	4	m <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>3</sup>	0.0	soil porosity	-9999.0	4
static_water_body_fraction	Float32	4	N/A	0	1	-9999.0	6
surface_flag	UInt16	2	N/A	0	65536	65534	4
surface_temperature	Float32	4	K	253.15	313.15	-9999.0	6
surface_water_fraction_mb_h	Float32	4	N/A	0	1	-9999.0	1

Data Field Name	Type	Byte	Unit	Valid Min	Valid Max	Fill/Gap Value	Derivation Method(s)**
surface_water_fraction_mb_v	Float32	4	N/A	0	1	-9999.0	1
tb_3_corrected	Float32	4	K	-50	50	-9999.0	1
tb_4_corrected	Float32	4	K	-50	50	-9999.0	1
tb_h_corrected	Float32	4	K	0	330	-9999.0	1
tb_h_uncorrected	Float32	4	K	0	340	-9999.0	1
tb_qual_flag_3	Uint16	2	N/A	0	65536	65534	4
tb_qual_flag_4	Uint16	2	N/A	0	65536	65534	4
tb_qual_flag_h	Uint16	2	N/A	0	65536	65534	4
tb_qual_flag_v	Uint16	2	N/A	0	65536	65534	4
tb_time_seconds	Float64	8	seconds	0	N/A	-9999.0	1
tb_time_utc	Char24	24	N/A	2014-10-31T00:00:00.000Z	N/A	N/A	1
tb_v_corrected	Float32	4	K	0	330	-9999.0	1
tb_v_uncorrected	Float32	4	K	0	340	-9999.0	1
vegetation_opacity*	Float32	4	N/A	0	5	-9999.0	6
vegetation_opacity_dca	Float32	4	N/A	0	5	-9999.0	5
vegetation_opacity (_scah   _scav)	Float32	4	N/A	0	5	-9999.0	6
vegetation_water_content	Float32	4	kg/m <sup>2</sup>	0.0	30.0	-9999.0	6

**\*\* Derivation methods are:**

1. From [Level-1C brightness temperature data](#)
2. From 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 array definition
3. Value corrected for the presence of water wherever water/land areal fraction is below a threshold; when the fraction is zero, no correction is performed
4. Determined by [Level-2 radiometer soil moisture](#) processing software
5. Available only with option algorithms that use two polarization channels
6. From external lookup tables or ancillary data whose location and time stamp coincide with those of the input data
7. Nearest-neighbor interpolation

## Data Field Definitions

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### **EASE\_col\_index**

Zero-based column index of a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

### **EASE\_row\_index**

Zero-based row index of a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

### **albedo (albedo\_scah, albedo\_scav, albedo\_dca)**

Daily global composite of single-scattering albedo at 36 km grid posting. There is a value of albedo for each of the algorithm options. Note that this parameter is the same 'omega' parameter in the 'tau-omega' model for a given polarization channel. The generic albedo field is internally linked to the output produced by the baseline algorithm (DCA currently).

### **boresight\_incidence**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input Level-1C brightness temperature granule. The resulting parameter describes the weighted average of incidence angles of Level-1B brightness temperature observations whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell. The incidence angle is defined as the included angle between the antenna boresight vector and the normal to the Earth's surface.

### **bulk\_density**

Daily global composite of bulk density at 36 km grid posting.

### **clay\_fraction**

Daily global composite of clay fraction at 36 km grid posting.

### **freeze\_thaw\_fraction**

Daily global composite of freeze/thaw fraction at 36 km grid posting. The fraction is computed based on the number of frozen land pixels and thawed land pixels reported on the 3-km global cylindrical EASE-Grid 2.0 projection in the SMAP Level 2 Active Soil Moisture Product (L2\_SM\_A). If there are NF frozen ground pixels and NT thawed land pixels within a 36-km grid cell, this parameter refers to the fraction of  $NF / (NF + NT)$ . At present the L2\_SM\_P processing software can be configured to provide this parameter from a dynamic ancillary data database or from the SMAP L2\_SM\_A product. **Since the failure of the SMAP radar, this field has been derived from external soil temperature ancillary data.**

### **grid\_surface\_status**

Surface type (land or water) as determined by the antenna boresight location. Indicates if the grid point lies on land (0) or water (1).

### **landcover\_class**

Daily global composite of the first three most dominant land cover classes according to the [MODIS International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme \(IGBP\) land cover map](#). The relative dominance is determined based on ranking among land cover classes the mode statistic. Table A - 2 provides a description of

MODIS IGBP classes and the percentage of each land type.

**landcover\_class\_fraction**

Daily global composite of the areal fractions of the first three most dominant land cover classes according to a 500-meter MODIS IGBP land cover map. The relative dominance is determined based on ranking among all land cover classes using the mode statistic. For example, if there are N1 pixels that correspond to first class and there are NT pixels comprising all land cover classes within a 36-km grid cells, the corresponding percentage refers to (N1 / NT).

**latitude**

Latitude of the center of a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

**latitude\_centroid**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input Level-1C brightness temperature granule. The resulting parameter thus describes the weighted average of latitudes of Level-1B brightness temperature observations whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

**longitude**

Longitude of the center of a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

**longitude\_centroid**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input Level-1C brightness temperature granule.

The resulting parameter thus describes the weighted average of longitudes of Level-1B brightness temperature observations whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

Table A - 2. MODIS IGBP Land Classification and Percentage of Land Cover

Class	Description	% of Land Cover
0	Water	-
1	Evergreen Needleleaf Forest	3.96
2	Evergreen Broadleaf Forest	10.04
3	Deciduous Needleleaf Forest	0.63
4	Deciduous Broadleaf Forest	1.59
5	Mixed Forests	4.69
6	Closed Shrublands	0.55
7	Open Shrublands	18.26
8	Woody Savannas	7.52
9	Savannas	6.97
10	Grasslands	9.27
11	Permanent Wetlands	0.22
12	Croplands	8.95
13	Urban and Built-Up	0.50
14	Cropland/Natural Vegetation Mosaic	2.10
15	Snow and Ice	11.04
16	Barren or Sparsely Vegetated	13.70

**radar\_water\_body\_fraction**

Daily global composite of the radar-derived water body fraction at 36 km spatial scale. The fraction is computed based on the

number of water pixels and land pixels reported on the 3-km global cylindrical EASE-Grid 2.0 projection in the SMAP Level 2 Active Soil Moisture Product (L2\_SM\_A). If there are NW water pixels and NL land pixels within a 36 km grid cell, this parameter refers to the fraction of NW / (NW + NL). Note that NW is the number of water pixels regardless of their temporal span – NW captures both static water pixels and transient water pixels.

**Since the failure of the SMAP radar, this field has been set to the *static\_water\_body\_fraction* field.**

#### **retrieval\_qual\_flag**

**(retrieval\_qual\_flag\_scah,  
retrieval\_qual\_flag\_scav,  
retrieval\_qual\_flag\_dca)**

Daily global composite of a 16-bit binary string that indicates whether retrieval was performed or not at a given grid cell. When retrieval is performed, it contains additional bits to further indicate the exit status and quality of the retrieval. A summary of bit definition of the *retrieval\_qual\_flag* (*scah* | *scav* | *dca*) field is listed in Table A - 3. The generic *retrieval\_qual\_flag* field is internally linked to the output produced by the baseline algorithm (which is currently DCA).

#### **roughness\_coefficient**

**(roughness\_coefficient\_scah,  
roughness\_coefficient\_scav,  
roughness\_coefficient\_dca)**

Daily global composite of the roughness coefficient at 36 km grid posting. There is a value of roughness\_coefficient for each of the algorithm options. Note that this parameter is the same 'h' coefficient in the

'tau-omega' model for a given polarization channel. The 'h' for the DCA is derived from a special retrieval process and provided as a static ancillary table. The generic roughness\_coefficient field is internally linked to the output produced by the baseline algorithm (DCA currently).

#### **soil\_moisture (soil\_moisture\_scah, soil\_moisture\_scav, soil\_moisture\_dca)**

Daily global composite of the estimated soil moisture at 36 km grid posting, as returned by the L2\_SM\_P processing software. The generic *soil\_moisture* field is internally linked to the output produced by the baseline algorithm (DCA currently).

#### **soil\_moisture\_error**

Daily global composite of the estimated '1-sigma' error of the *soil\_moisture* output parameter. The valid minimum and maximum are subject to further analysis on real data. This data field is currently filled with FillValue.

#### **static\_water\_body\_fraction**

Daily global composite of the static water body fraction at 36 km grid posting. The fraction is computed based on the number of water pixels and land pixels reported on a 250-meter grid. If there are NW water pixels and NL land pixels within a 36 km grid cell, this parameter refers to the fraction of NW / (NW + NL). Note that NW is the number of water pixels regardless of their temporal span – NW captures both static water pixels and transient water pixels from when the original data were acquired.

#### **surface\_flag**

Daily global composite of a 16-bit binary



string that indicates the presence or absence of certain surface conditions at a grid cell. Table A - 4 includes a summary of surface conditions and their thresholds, where '0' indicates the presence of a surface condition favorable to soil moisture retrieval. Each surface condition is numerically compared against two non-negative thresholds: T1 and T2, where T1 < T2. In most cases, when a surface condition is found to be below T1,

retrieval is attempted and flagged for recommended quality. Between T1 and T2, retrieval is still attempted but flagged for uncertain quality. Above T2, retrieval is skipped.

**Note:** Bit position '0' refers to the least-significant bit. Final bit positions and definitions are subject to future revision and expansion as needed.

Table A - 3. Retrieval Quality Flag Definition

Bit	Retrieval Information	Bit Value and Interpretation
0	Recommended Quality	0: Soil moisture retrieval has recommended quality
		1: Soil moisture retrieval doesn't have recommended quality
1	Retrieval Attempted	0: Soil moisture retrieval was attempted
		1: Soil moisture retrieval was skipped
2	Retrieval Successful	0: Soil moisture retrieval was successful
		1: Soil moisture retrieval was not successful
3*	Retrieval Successful	0: Freeze/thaw state retrieval was successful
		1: Freeze/thaw state retrieval was not successful
4-15	Undefined	0 (not used)

**surface\_temperature**

Daily global composite of the effective soil temperature (Choudhury et al., 1982) at 36-km grid spacing. This parameter is used as an input ancillary data parameter to the L2\_SM\_P processing software for both baseline and option algorithms, **and is not to be confused with an actual physical temperature measured at a single depth.** The valid minimum and maximum below are subject to further analysis on real data.

**Note:** The designation “effective” signifies an attempt to capture the soil integrated temperature and canopy temperature in a single parameter, as is widely reported in the

literature. Depending on the actual emission sensing depth (which varies with soil moisture), this parameter usually does not coincide with a thermal physical temperature at a fixed depth (e.g. 5 cm or 10 cm).

**surface\_water\_fraction\_mb\_h**

Water fraction with the SMAP radiometer main-beam (mb) IFOV weighted by antenna gain pattern at the horizontal polarization.

**surface\_water\_fraction\_mb\_v**

Daily global composite of the water fraction with the SMAP radiometer main-beam (mb)

IFOV weighted by antenna gain pattern at the vertical polarization.

**tb\_3\_corrected**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. The resulting parameter thus describes the weighted average of L1B\_TB 3<sup>rd</sup> Stokes polarized brightness temperatures whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

**tb\_4\_corrected**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. The resulting parameter thus describes the weighted average of L1B\_TB 4<sup>th</sup> Stokes polarized brightness temperatures whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

Table A - 4. Surface Condition Bit Flag Definition

Bit	Surface Condition	T1	T2	Bit Value and Interpretation
0	Static Water	0.05	0.50	0: Water areal fraction $\leq$ T1 and IGBP wetland fraction $<$ 0.50: $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval attempted for fraction $\leq$ T2
				1: Otherwise $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval skipped for fraction $>$ T2
1	Radar-derived Water Fraction	0.05	0.50	0: Water areal fraction $\leq$ T1 and IGBP wetland fraction $<$ 0.50: $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval attempted for fraction $\leq$ T2
				1: Otherwise $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval skipped for fraction $>$ T2
2	Coastal Proximity	N/A	1.0	0: Distance to nearby significant water bodies $>$ T2 (# of 36-km grid cells)
				1: Otherwise
3	Urban Area	0.25	1.00	0: Urban areal fraction $\leq$ T1 $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval attempted for fraction $\leq$ T2
				1: Otherwise $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval skipped for fraction $>$ T2
4	Precipitation	2.78e-04 (= 1.0 mm/hr)	7.06e-03 (= 25.4 mm/hr)	0: Precipitation fraction $\leq$ T1 $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval attempted for fraction $\leq$ T2
				1: Otherwise: $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval skipped for fraction $>$ T2
5	Snow	0.05	0.50	0: Snow areal fraction $\leq$ T1 $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval attempted for fraction $\leq$ T2
				1: Otherwise: $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval skipped for fraction $>$ T2
6	Permanent Ice	0.05	0.50	0: Ice areal fraction $\leq$ T1 $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval attempted for fraction $\leq$ T2
				1: Otherwise $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval skipped for fraction $>$ T2
7	Frozen Ground (from radiometer-derived FT state)	0.05	0.50	0: Frozen ground areal fraction $\leq$ T1 $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval attempted for fraction $\leq$ T2
				1: Otherwise $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval skipped for fraction $>$ T2
8	Frozen Ground (from modeled effective soil temperature)	0.05	0.50	0: Frozen ground areal fraction $\leq$ T1 $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval attempted for fraction $\leq$ T2
				1: Otherwise $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval skipped for fraction $>$ T2
9	Mountainous Terrain	3°	6°	0: Slope standard deviation $\leq$ T1
				1: Otherwise
10	Dense Vegetation	5.0	30.0	0: Vegetation Water Content (VWC) $\leq$ T1 $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval attempted for VWC $\leq$ T2
				1: Otherwise $\Rightarrow$ Retrieval skipped for VWC $>$ T2
11	Nadir Region / Undefined			0 (not used in SPL2SMP)
12-15	Undefined			0

**tb\_h\_corrected**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. The resulting parameter thus describes the weighted average of L1B\_TB horizontally polarized brightness temperatures whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell. Wherever water fraction is below a threshold, water brightness temperature correction is applied to this parameter prior to L2\_SM\_P inversion. This value represents the corrected land brightness temperature if grid\_surface\_status is "0" and the water fraction is lower than 0.9 (otherwise no correction is applied) or represents the corrected water brightness temperature if grid\_surface\_status is "1" and water fraction is greater than 0.1 (otherwise no correction is applied).

**tb\_h\_uncorrected**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. The resulting parameter describes the weighted average of the L1B\_TB horizontally polarized brightness temperatures *prior to surface correction* whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

**tb\_qual\_flag\_3**

Daily global composite of a 16-bit or two-byte binary number formed by applying a Boolean 'AND' operation between the same parameters from both fore- and aft-looking

groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. A '0' indicates that both the fore-looking and aft-looking L1C\_TB observations satisfy a given quality criterion described in L1B\_TB's *tb\_qual\_flag\_3* output parameter; a '1' indicates that the same criterion is violated by either fore-looking or aft-looking (or both) L1C\_TB observations. Bit position '0' refers to the least-significant digit. The possible values for each bit position are shown in Table A - 5.

**tb\_qual\_flag\_4**

Daily global composite of a 16-bit or two-byte binary number formed by applying a Boolean 'AND' operation between the same parameters from both fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. A '0' indicates that both the fore-looking and aft-looking L1C\_TB observations satisfy a given quality criterion described in L1B\_TB's *tb\_qual\_flag\_4* output parameter; a '1' indicates that the same criterion is violated by either fore-looking or aft-looking (or both) L1C\_TB observations. Bit position '0' refers to the least significant digit. The possible values for each bit position are shown in Table A - 5.

**tb\_qual\_flag\_h**

Daily global composite of a 16-bit or two-byte binary number formed by applying a Boolean 'AND' operation between the same parameters from both fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. A '0' indicates that both the fore-looking and aft-looking L1C\_TB observations satisfy a given quality criterion described in L1B\_TB's

*tb\_qual\_flag\_h* output parameter; a '1' indicates that the same criterion is violated by either fore-looking or aft-looking (or both) L1C\_TB observations. Bit position '0' refers

to the least significant digit. The possible values for each bit position are shown in Table A - 5.

Table A - 5. Bit Definitions for Brightness Temperature Quality Flags

Bit Position	Bit Value and Interpretation for <i>tb_qual_flag_3/4</i>	Bit Value and Interpretation for <i>tb_qual_flag_h/v</i>
0	0 = Observation had acceptable quality	
	1 = Observation does not have acceptable quality	
1	0 = Observation within physical range	
	1 = Observation beyond physical range	
2	0 = RFI was not detected in the observation	
	1 = RFI was detected in the observation	
3	0 = RFI was detected and corrected in the observation	
	1 = RFI was detected but not correctable in the observation	
4	0 = Observation has acceptable NEDT	
	1 = Observation did not have acceptable NEDT	
5	0 = Direct sun correction was successful	
	1 = Direct sun correction was not successful	
6	0 = Reflected sun correction was successful	
	1 = Reflected sun correction was not successful	
7	0 = Reflected moon correction was successful	
	1 = Reflected moon correction was not successful	
8	0 = Direct galaxy correction was successful	
	1 = Direct galaxy correction was not successful	
9	0 = Reflected galaxy correction was successful	
	1 = Reflected galaxy correction was not successful	
10	0 = Atmosphere correction was successful	
	1 = Atmosphere correction was not successful	
11	<i>Intentionally left undefined</i>	0 = Faraday rotation correction was successful
		1 = Faraday rotation correction was not successful
12	0 = Observation was a valid value	
	1 = Observation was a null value	
13	0 = Observation was within half orbit	0 = Water correction was not performed

Bit Position	Bit Value and Interpretation for <i>tb_qual_flag_3/4</i>	Bit Value and Interpretation for <i>tb_qual_flag_h/v</i>
	1 = Observation was outside half orbit	1 = Water correction was performed
14	0 = TA minus TA_FILTERED was less than a threshold	
	1 = TA minus TA_FILTERED was greater than a threshold	
15	0 = Observation was RFI-free	
	1 = Observation was RFI-contaminated	

**tb\_qual\_flag\_v**

Daily global composite of a 16-bit or two-byte binary number formed by applying a Boolean 'AND' operation between the same parameters from both fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. A '0' indicates that both the fore-looking and aft-looking L1C\_TB observations satisfy a given quality criterion described in L1B\_TB's *tb\_qual\_flag\_v* output parameter; a '1' indicates that the same criterion is violated by either fore-looking or aft-looking (or both) L1C\_TB observations. Bit position '0' refers to the least significant digit. The possible values for each bit position are shown in Table A – 5.

**tb\_time\_seconds**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. The resulting parameter thus describes the average of UTC acquisition times of L1B\_TB observations whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell. The result is then expressed in J2000 seconds [the number of seconds since 12:00:00.000 on January 1, 2000 Barycentric Dynamical Time (TDB)].

**tb\_time\_utc**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. The resulting parameter thus describes the average of UTC acquisition times, in ASCII representation, of L1B\_TB observations whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

**tb\_v\_corrected**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. The resulting parameter thus describes the weighted average of L1B\_TB vertically polarized brightness temperatures whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell. Wherever water fraction is below a threshold, water brightness temperature correction is applied to this parameter prior to L2\_SM\_P inversion. This value represents the corrected land brightness temperature if *grid\_surface\_status* is "0" and the water fraction is lower than 0.9 (otherwise no correction is applied) or represents the corrected water brightness temperature if *grid\_surface\_status* is "1" and

water fraction is greater than 0.1 (otherwise no correction is applied).

#### **tb\_v\_uncorrected**

Daily global composite of the arithmetic average of the same parameters found in the fore- and aft-looking groups in the input L1C\_TB granule. The resulting parameter describes the weighted average of the L1B\_TB vertically polarized brightness temperatures **prior to surface correction** whose boresights fall within a 36 km EASE-Grid 2.0 cell.

#### **vegetation\_opacity**

(**vegetation\_opacity\_scah,**  
**vegetation\_opacity\_scah,**  
**vegetation\_opacity\_scah,**  
**vegetation\_opacity\_dca)**

Daily global composite of the estimated vegetation opacity at 36-km grid posting, as returned by the L2\_SM\_P processing software. Note that this parameter is the same ‘tau’ parameter normalized by the cosine of the incidence angle in the ‘tau-omega’ model:

$$\tau = \frac{b * VWC}{\cos \theta}$$

where  $b$  is a landcover-based parameter described in the SMAP Level 2/3 Passive Soil Moisture Product ATBD,  $VWC$  is vegetation water content in  $\text{kg/m}^2$  derived from NDVI climatology, and  $\theta$  is the incidence angle ( $= 40^\circ$ ) for SMAP. The valid minimum (0.0) and maximum (5.0) are subject to further analysis on real data. For the DCA, the vegetation opacity is retrieved directly along with soil moisture, without referring to the NDVI climatology. The generic *vegetation\_opacity* field is internally linked to the output produced by the baseline algorithm (DCA currently).

#### **vegetation\_water\_content**

Daily global composite of the vegetation water content at 36 km grid posting. This parameter is used as input ancillary data parameter to the L2\_SM\_P processing software when the baseline algorithm is used. The valid minimum (0.0) and maximum (30.0) are subject to further analysis on real data.

## Fill/Gap Values

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SMAP data products employ fill and gap values to indicate when no valid data appear in a particular data element. Fill values ensure that data elements retain the correct shape. Gap values locate portions of a data stream that do not appear in the output data file.

Fill values appear in the SMAP Level-2 soil moisture product when the Level-2 soil moisture Science Production Software (SPS) can process some, but not all, of the input data for a particular swath grid cell. Fill data may appear in the product in any of the following circumstances:

- One of SPS executables that generate the SMAP Level-2 soil moisture product is unable to calculate a particular science or engineering data value. The algorithm encounters an error. The error disables generation of valid output. The SPS reports a fill value instead.

- Some of the required science or engineering algorithmic input are missing. Data over the region that contributes to particular grid cell may appear in only some of the input data streams. Since data are valuable, the Level-2 soil moisture product records any outcome that can be calculated with the available input. Missing data appear as fill values.
- Non-essential information is missing from the input data stream. The lack of non-essential information does not impair the algorithm from generating needed output. The missing data appear as fill values.
- Fill values appear in the input radiometer the Level-1C brightness temperature product.

SMAP data products employ a specific set of data values to connote that an element is fill. The selected values that represent fill are dependent on the data type and are specified in the NetCDF local attribute `_FillValue`.

No valid value in the Level-2 soil moisture product is equal to the values that represent fill. If any exceptions should exist in the future, the Level-2 soil moisture content will provide a means for users to discern between elements that contain fill and elements that contain genuine data values. This document will also contain a description of the method used to ascertain which elements are fill and which elements are genuine.

The Level-2 soil moisture product records gaps in the product level metadata. The following conditions will indicate that no gaps appear in the data product:

- Only one instance of the attributes *Extent/rangeBeginningDateTime* and *Extent/rangeEndingDateTime* will appear in the product metadata.
- The character string stored in metadata element *Extent/rangeBeginningDateTime* will match the character string stored in metadata element *OrbitMeasuredLocation/halfOrbitStartDateTime*.
- The character string stored in metadata element *Extent/rangeEndingDateTime* will match the character string stored in metadata element *OrbitMeasuredLocation/halfOrbitStopDateTime*.

One of two conditions will indicate that gaps appear in the data product:

- The time period covered between *Extent/rangeBeginningDateTime* and *Extent/RangeEndingDateTime* does not cover the entire half orbit as specified in *OrbitMeasuredLocation/halfOrbitStartDateTime* and *OrbitMeasuredLocation/halfOrbitStopDateTime*.
- More than one pair of *Extent/rangeBeginningDateTime* and *Extent/rangeEndingDateTime* appears in the data product. Time periods within the time span of the half orbit that do not fall within the sets of *Extent/rangeBeginningDateTime* and *Extent/rangeEndingDateTime* constitute data gaps.



## Acronyms and Abbreviations

Table A - 6. Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Char	8-bit character
IGBP	International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme
Int8	8-bit (1-byte) signed integer
Int16	16-bit (2-byte) signed integer
Int32	32-bit (4-byte) signed integer
Float32	32-bit (4-byte) floating-point integer
Float64	64-bit (8-byte) floating-point integer
H-pol	Horizontally polarized
N/A	Not Applicable
NF	Number of frozen ground pixels
NL	Number of land pixels
NT	Number of thawed land pixels
NW	Number of water pixels
SI	International System of Units
SPL3SMP	SMAP L3 Radiometer Daily Global 36 km EASE-Grid Soil Moisture
SPS	Science Production Software
T1, T2	Threshold 1, Threshold 2
TB	Brightness Temperature
UInt8	8-bit (1-byte) unsigned integer
UInt16	16-bit (2-byte) unsigned integer
UTC	Universal Coordinated Time
V-pol	Vertically polarized
VWC	Vegetation Water Content