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Yields on money-market mutual funds continued to slide, amid signs that portfolio managers expect further declines in interest rates.

[20004002]

The average seven-day compound yield of the 400 taxable funds tracked by IBC's Money Fund Report eased a fraction of a percentage point to 8.45% from 8.47% for the week ended Tuesday.

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Average maturity of the funds' investments lengthened by a day to 41 days, the longest since early August, according to Donoghue's.

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Longer maturities are thought to indicate declining interest rates because they permit portfolio managers to retain relatively higher rates for a longer period.

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Shorter maturities are considered a sign of rising rates because portfolio managers can capture higher rates sooner.

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The average maturity for funds open only to institutions, considered by some to be a stronger indicator because those managers watch the market closely, reached a high point for the year - 33 days.

[20004008]

Nevertheless, said Brenda Malizia Negus, editor of Money Fund Report, yields "may blip up again before they blip down" because of recent rises in short-term interest rates.

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The yield on six-month Treasury bills sold at Monday's auction, for example, rose to 8.04% from 7.90%.

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Despite recent declines in yields, investors continue to pour cash into money funds.

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Assets of the 400 taxable funds grew by \$ 1.5 billion during the latest week, to \$ 352.7 billion.

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Typically, money-fund yields beat comparable short-term investments because portfolio managers can vary maturities and go after the highest rates.

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Dreyfus World-Wide Dollar, the top-yielding fund, had a seven-day compound yield of 9.37% during the latest week, down from 9.45% a week earlier.

