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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Trump administration

Trump orders USDA to take down websites referencing climate crisis

Forest service website among many sites affected as agencies scramble to comply with president's orders

Gabrielle Canon *and agencies*

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On Thursday, the Trump administration **ordered** the US agriculture department to take down its websites documenting or referencing the climate crisis.

By Friday, the landing pages on the United States Forest Service website for key resources, research and adaptation tools - including those that provide vital context and **vulnerability assessments** for wildfires - had gone dark, leaving behind an error message or just a single line: "You are not authorized to access this page."

The government website was one of many that were affected on Friday by new directives from the **Trump administration** on what information federal agencies can publish.

Several went dark on Friday as agencies scrambled to comply with Donald Trump's executive orders declaring his administration would recognize only two genders and ordering an end to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

The changes at the Forest Service website followed a directive issued by the United States Department of Agriculture's office of communications. In the memo, which was reviewed by the Guardian, officials instructed website managers across the agency to "identify and archive or unpublish any landing pages focused on climate change". It also included a Friday deadline to list the mentions in a spreadsheet for further review.

On Friday, USDA officials clarified that the content should not be deleted. "USDA needs to adhere to requirements around records retention, so Archive or Unpublish landing pages focused on climate change," an email sent to agency public affairs directors read.

As of publication, the USDA's Climate Hubs - helpful sites that connect producers to local programs and research - are still live, but many sites were down, including the USFS Climate Change Resource Center, the Climate Action Tracker and the National Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change.

The sites featured important tools and information to help mitigate the effects of the climate crisis and research. For now, the administration has effectively barred access to dozens of programs set up to help a wide range of communities - from farmers to firefighters - as they navigate changing conditions.

The changes are part of a **dizzying flurry of orders** reshaping the federal government's policies on global heating.

Trump repealed environmental protections put in place by Joe Biden, declared a energy emergency to hasten already-booming fossil fuel extraction and withdrew from the Paris climate agreement.

The administration also added confusion and chaos within federal agencies by halting hiring and pausing projects, along with issuing a widespread buyout offer that would guarantee federal workers pay and benefits through September 2025 if they resign within the next week.

Changes at other federal websites on Friday signaled other major shifts in policy.

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In a letter sent on Wednesday, the office of personnel management directed agency heads to terminate grants and contracts related to “gender ideology”, ask staff to remove pronouns from their government emails, and disband resource groups on the issue, too.

Much public health information was taken down from the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): contraception guidance; a factsheet about HIV and transgender people; lessons on building supportive school environments for transgender and non-binary kids; details about National Transgender HIV Testing Day; and a set of government surveys showing transgender students suffering higher rates of depression, drug use, bullying and other problems.

Disease experts said eliminating resources created dangerous gaps in scientific information. The Infectious Diseases Society of America, a medical association, issued a statement decrying the removal of information about HIV and people who are transgender. Access is “critical to efforts to end the HIV epidemic”, the organization’s leaders said.

It is unclear what the agencies will do with the websites or the policies and studies once detailed on them; links to the landing pages are still live, even if the information on each page has been archived.

The Associated Press contributed reporting

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