

GOES-16 ABI L2+ Aerosol Optical Depth (AOD) Release  
Provisional Data Quality  
September 14, 2018  
Read-Me for Data Users

The GOES-R Peer Stakeholder - Product Validation Review (PS-PVR) for GOES-16 Advanced Baseline Imager (ABI) L2+ Aerosol Optical Depth (AOD) Provisional Maturity was held on September 14, 2018. As a result of this review, the PS-PVR panel recommended that the ABI AOD product be declared Provisional maturity.

The ABI L2+ AOD product includes the aerosol optical depth at 550 nm over land and over water, associated quality flags, mean, maximum, minimum and standard deviation of 550-nm AOD for the entire domain and in 10-degree latitude bands. The AOD is a measure of the columnar extinction (scattering + absorption) of radiation by aerosols. It is proportional to the amount (number or mass concentration) of aerosols in an atmospheric column.

- *Measurement range:* -0.05 to +5.00.
- *Temporal coverage:* AOD retrievals are produced only during daytime with view and solar zenith angles less than 90 degrees.
- *Refresh:* Temporal resolution of the product depends on the mode ABI operates in. Data over the Full Disk (FD) of the Earth is available every 15 minutes and over the Continental United States (CONUS) region every five minutes in operational mode 3. In mode 4, FD observations are taken every five minutes, from which the CONUS domain is extracted.
- *Spatial coverage:* Full Disk (FD) and Continental United States (CONUS). The AOD product is not generated for the Mesoscale domain.

Retrieval of AOD is performed only for clear-sky (cloud-free) pixels.

Because the current algorithm restricts retrievals to dark surfaces AOD data is not retrieved for most non-vegetated, sparsely vegetated, desert land surfaces, snow- or ice-covered surfaces, and for water surface in the sun-glint region.

Low sun (solar zenith angle larger than 80°) and/or low satellite (satellite zenith angle larger than 60°) elevation reduces the spatial coverage in medium- and high-quality AOD data.

- *Spatial resolution:* The AOD product is provided on a 2-km fixed grid.
- *Quality:* Based on the results of internal tests, which are designed to measure the level of compliance of pixels with algorithm assumptions, four quality levels (no retrieval, low, medium and high) are assigned to the AOD retrievals. A limited evaluation of the AOD product with ground-based sunphotometer measurements indicates that biases are smaller than 0.06, 0.04 and 0.12 respectively for  $AOD < 0.04$ ,  $0.04 \leq AOD \leq 0.8$  and  $AOD > 0.8$  over land, about 0.02 for  $AOD < 0.4$  and somewhat larger than 0.1 for  $AOD \geq 0.4$  over water. For the above stated ranges of AODs, the standard deviations of biases are less than 0.13, 0.25 and 0.35 over land, and less than 0.15 and 0.23 over water.

In general, the high quality retrievals are recommended for quantitative applications due to their better overall performance; however, the lower quality retrievals also have their merit for qualitative examination of local episodic events due to their greater spatial coverage. The performance is expected to be further improved by updating the spectral land surface relationships and internal test thresholds used in the retrieval algorithm.

The AOD product quality is sensitive to upstream processing, such as the quality of calibration, navigation, cloud mask, snow mask and total precipitable water.

Full description and format of the AOD product is in the Product Definition and User's Guide (PUG) document (<http://www.goes-r.gov/products/docs/PUG-L2+-vol5.pdf>). The algorithm used to derive AOD from ABI observations is described in the "GOES-R Advanced Baseline Imager (ABI) Algorithm Theoretical Basis Document for Suspended Matter/Aerosol Optical and Aerosol Size Parameter" ([http://www.goes-r.gov/products/ATBDs/baseline/AAA\\_AODASP\\_v2.0\\_no\\_color.pdf](http://www.goes-r.gov/products/ATBDs/baseline/AAA_AODASP_v2.0_no_color.pdf)). Data starting July 25, 2018 meet the Provisional maturity definition.

Provisional maturity, by definition, means that:

- Validation activities are ongoing and the general research community is now encouraged to participate;
- Severe algorithm anomalies are identified and under analysis. Solutions to anomalies are in development and testing;
- Incremental product improvements may still be occurring;
- Product performance has been demonstrated through analysis of a small number of independent measurements obtained from select locations, periods, and associated ground truth or field campaign efforts;
- Product analysis is sufficient to establish product performance relative to expectations (Performance Baseline);
- Documentation of product performance exists that includes recommended remediation strategies for all anomalies and weaknesses. Any algorithm changes associated with severe anomalies have been documented, implemented, tested, and shared with the user community;
- Testing has been fully documented; and
- Product is ready for operational use and for use in comprehensive cal/val activities and product optimization.

Users bear all responsibility for inspecting the data prior to use and for the manner in which the data are utilized. Persons desiring to use the GOES-16 ABI AOD product for any reason, including but not limited to scientific and technical investigations, are encouraged to consult the NOAA algorithm working group (AWG) scientists for feasibility of the planned applications.

Known product issues:

1. Blocks of missing values occur sometimes and randomly in Mode 3, and in even larger numbers in Mode 4.

2. The variable “algorithm\_dynamic\_input\_data\_container”, meant to list names of dynamic input data files required to run the AOD algorithm, is currently not set (null).
3. Some of the zonal average values stored in variables “lat\_band\_...” are assigned to the wrong latitude bands.
4. Inconsistent units (percent) and valid range (0, 1) in metadata variables “lat\_band\_aod550\_percent\_...”. (Long name indicates values are in percent but actually they are fractions.)
5. The long name of variable “aod\_outlier\_pixel\_count” is set as “number of aerosol optical depth at 550 nm pixels over land whose value is outside valid measurement range”; it should read “number of aerosol optical depth at 550 nm pixels over land **and ocean** whose value is outside valid measurement range”.
6. The AOD and its valid range are stored as packed 16-bit unsigned integers in the product files. This may be important when reading the data as some software may interpret them as signed integers. For example, the packed values of AOD valid range [-0.05, 5] may be shown as [0, -6].

Known PUG issues:

1. The PUG defines the valid AOD range as [-1, 5]. The valid range now should be [-0.05, 5]. This is the value that appears in the product files starting April 5, 2018 at 15:15 UTC for Full Disk and 15:07 UTC for CONUS.
2. The PUG lists values of the data quality flag (DQF) as 0 and 1. Starting April 5, 2018 at 15:15 UTC for Full Disk and 15:07 UTC for CONUS DQF values are 0, 1, 2, and 3.
3. Table 5.10.4 of the PUG lists the spectral AOD and surface reflectance in specific ABI bands, which are recorded in variables “latitude band AOD at specific ABI sensor band ...”, “latitude band surface reflectivity at specific ABI sensor band ...” and “AOD at specific ABI sensor band ...”, as variables included in the product file. However, starting April 5, 2018 at 15:15 UTC for Full Disk and 15:07 UTC for CONUS these variables are no longer part of the product file.

Contact for further information: OSPO User Services at [SPSD.UserServices@noaa.gov](mailto:SPSD.UserServices@noaa.gov)

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