

JOHN ABATZOGLOU



The escalating control of weather and climate extremes on wildfire

Extreme wildfires account for a disproportionate share of burned area and losses across the western US and arise preferentially under compound climate-weather extremes. Large summer fires and regional extreme fire years are driven by fuel desiccation in tandem with critical fire weather, while downslope wind-driven fires dominate structural losses and fatalities. Escalating anthropogenic pressures, including wildland-urban interface expansion, fuel accumulation due to fire exclusion in dry forests, and climate change, have amplified both fire typologies and their consequences. Absent multi-scalar mitigation, these trends are projected to intensify.

Dr. Abatzoglou is a Professor of Climatology at the University of California, Merced. John received his bachelor's degree in Atmospheric Science from UC Davis, doctorate in Earth Systems Science from UC Irvine. John's academic interests are focused around climate science and impacts on water resources, wildfire, and agriculture in the American West. His research group also develops web-based climate services to help scientists and practitioners improve climate readiness.

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