“Western US Wildfire in the Anthropocene: Is anthropogenic climate change responsible for the new normal of wildfire activity across the western US?”

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210 ASB (Aline Skaggs Biology Bldg.)
Abstract
A significant uptick in wildfire activity across the western United States (US) is evident since the turn of the millennia. The consortium of factors that enabled these changes include both natural climate variability as well as anthropogenic factors including land management policies, a legacy of successful fire suppression, and climate change. Numerous studies have speculated on the linkage between anthropogenic climate change and fires and have highlighted wildfire as a climate change indicator; however, it remains challenging to quantify the direct or indirect influence of climate change on wildfire. Recent advances in understanding relationships between atmospheric processes on synoptic-to-interannual timescales and wildfire activity, including the very largest wildfires, will be reviewed. This framework will then be used to explore projected changes in wildfire under a changing climate as well as sources of uncertainty and gaps in scientific knowledge. Finally, I provide an empirical approach for quantifying the contribution of anthropogenic climate change to wildfire potential from 2000-2015 across the western US.

Bio
John is a climatologist with research interests spanning the weather-climate continuum and both theoretical and applied aspects. He conducts climate research specific to the American West and collaborates across a broad range of disciplines to better understand climate impacts to water resources, agriculture and ecology. John earned his doctoral degree in Earth System Science from the University of California Irvine following a bachelors in Atmospheric Science from the University of California, Davis. Prior to joining the University of Idaho in 2009, he worked at the Western Regional Climate Center in Reno, NV and San Jose State University.