

Scientists predict increase in megafires due to climate change

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More megafires are predicted into the mid-21st century as scientists apply climate models to fire-prone regions across the country.

"Climate change will increase the odds of conditions that have historically led to megafires," said UI's Renaud Barbero, a postdoctoral researcher and lead author of a paper published this month in the *International Journal of Wildland Fire*.

The team of UI researchers collaborated with U.S. and Canadian forest service scientists to better understand how climate change might influence the occurrence of exceptionally large wildfires like the Carlton Complex that burned last summer in Central Washington.

The team developed a model to accurately simulate locations and timing of the largest wildfires across the U.S. in the past 30 years. Applying climate change projections to the model, they saw an increase in fire potential in nearly all regions, but especially in the northwest, northern California, Florida and the northern Great Lakes.

"Our study paints a fairly grim picture," said co-author John Abatzoglou, associate professor of geography at UI. "Climate change will up the odds of conditions that have historically accompanied these large fires. While it may be challenging to slow the pace of [climate change](#), our work highlights hot spots where land management might be able to focus adaptation efforts."

More information: "Climate change presents increased potential for very large fires in the contiguous United States." *International Journal of Wildland Fire* [DOI: 10.1071/WF15083](https://doi.org/10.1071/WF15083)

Provided by University of Idaho

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