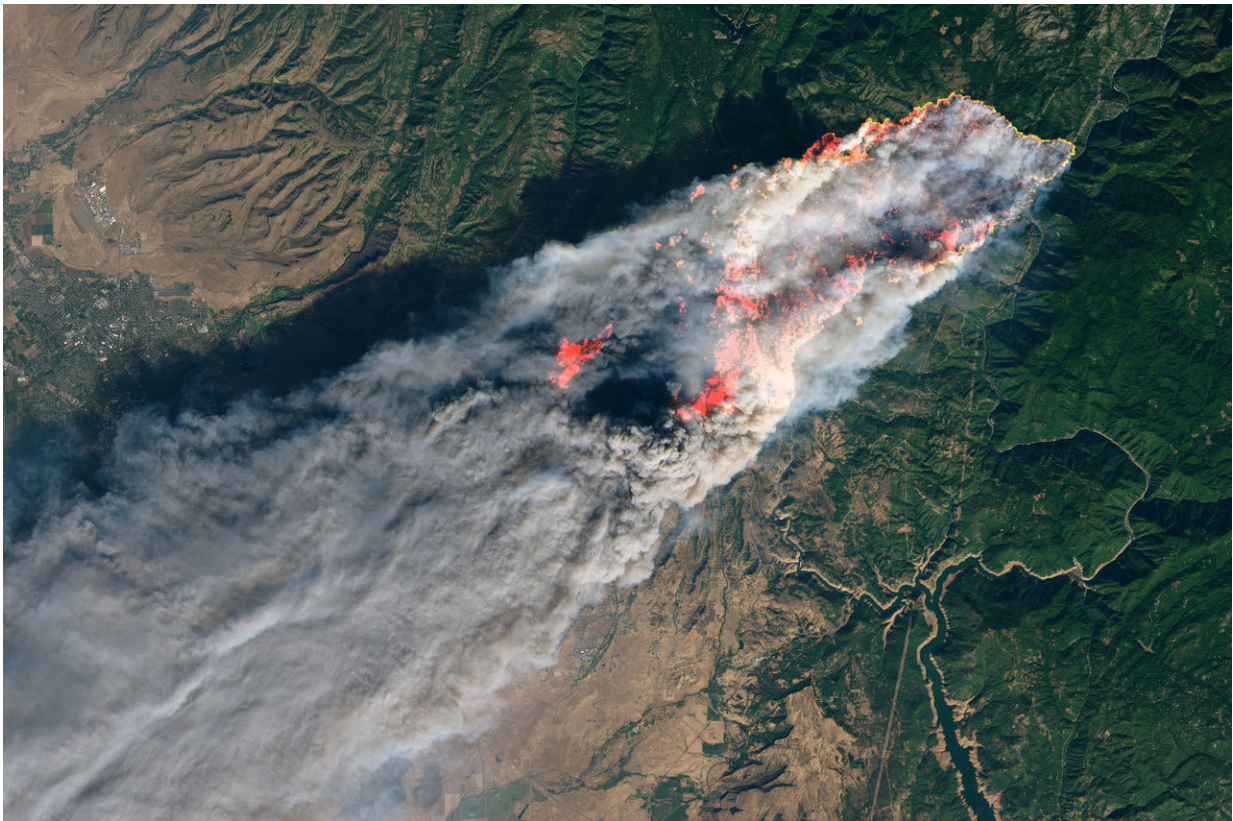


Yes, climate change is making wildfires worse

November 13 2018, by Rebecca Fowler



The Camp fire burning in northern California on November 8, 2018. Credit: NASA Earth Observatory image by Joshua Stevens, using Landsat data from the U.S. Geological Survey

Three powerful wildfires are blazing in California. By Friday morning, [the Camp fire had burned 70,000 acres in 24 hours](#), destroying

Paradise, a community of about 26,000 people north of Sacramento.

Near Los Angeles, the Woolsey and Hill fires have already scorched more than 7,000 acres, resulting in the evacuation of 88,000 homes by Friday morning, [according to the *Los Angeles Times*](#).

The three wildfires are being fueled by [dry conditions and strong Santa Ana winds](#). And on Friday, each of the fires remained almost completely uncontained. The severe fire activity is raising questions about whether [climate](#) change is influencing wildfires, especially in the American West.

Park Williams, a bioclimatologist at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, was awarded funding from the Center for Climate and Life to study this topic. Williams examines the drivers of drought and the role of [human-induced climate change](#), particularly on the health and resilience of forests.

A 2016 study co-authored by Williams and John Abatzoglou, a professor of geography at the University of Idaho, [found that rising temperatures have doubled the area affected by forest fires](#) in the western United States over the last 30 years.

"No matter how hard we try, the fires are going to keep getting bigger, and the reason is really clear," [said Williams in an interview about their findings](#). "Climate is really running the show in terms of what burns. We should be getting ready for bigger [fire](#) years than those familiar to previous generations."

Provided by Columbia University

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