

**Revisiting “Is a Scientist-Advocate an
Oxymoron?”:
reflections on a brief journey into advocacy
and back**

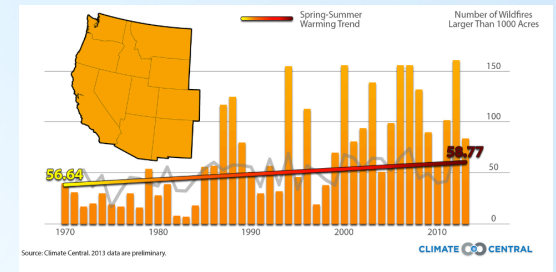
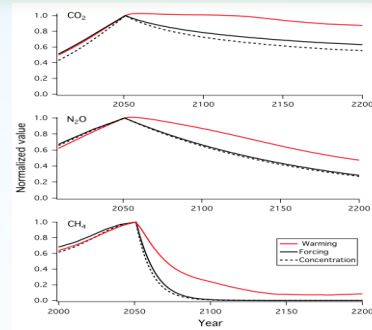
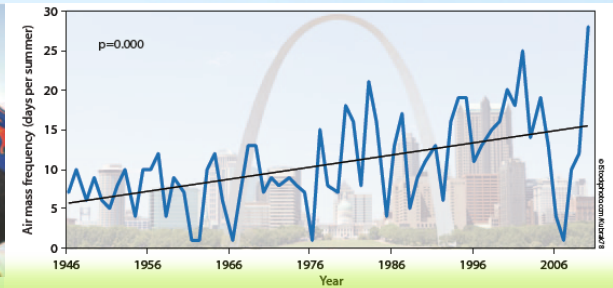
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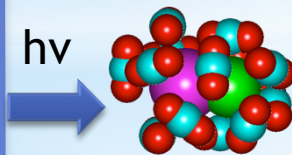
AGCI Frontiers of Global Change Science

19 August, 2014

Policy
prescriptive



Policy
relevant



Then

Now

Career timeline

How bright is the line actually?

Pop Quiz via Gavin Schmidt

1. Scientists should communicate more about what they do and find.
2. Funding for scientific research should be a higher priority.
3. People should understand the basics of the greenhouse effect.
4. Global warming should be in high school science curriculum.
5. Geoengineering should be seriously considered.
6. There should be a price on carbon emissions.
7. The only solution to global warming is nuclear power.

Responsible Advocacy (via Dr. Schneider):

- know your values
- make them explicit
- don't let them distort your subjective priors on issues of “fact”
- defend them separately from debates over probabilities/consequences

Table 1. Recommended best practices for science-based advocacy

Accurately characterize the best available, policy-relevant science

Clearly and thoroughly present the argument

Accurately characterize scientific uncertainty – avoid guesswork

Transparently represent the scientific basis for policy recommendations and explicitly acknowledge the values that also inform them

Be open to revising a policy recommendation in light of new information

Avoid hyperbole

Clearly acknowledge when expressing a personal opinion or making policy recommendations on issues that lie beyond the bounds of one's technical expertise

Note: These are intended to suggest “norms of behavior” for scientist-advocates, to ensure that their policy recommendations are grounded in science; ie to distinguish “science-based advocacy” from “advocacy-driven science”. A related set of “best practices” for effective communication with policy makers is discussed by Pace *et al.* (2010). Adapted from Blockstein (2002) and Nelson and Vucetich (2009).

Biggest personal challenges as a scientist-advocate

“You have your science and I have mine.”

-I think I made this up, but someone else has probably said it.

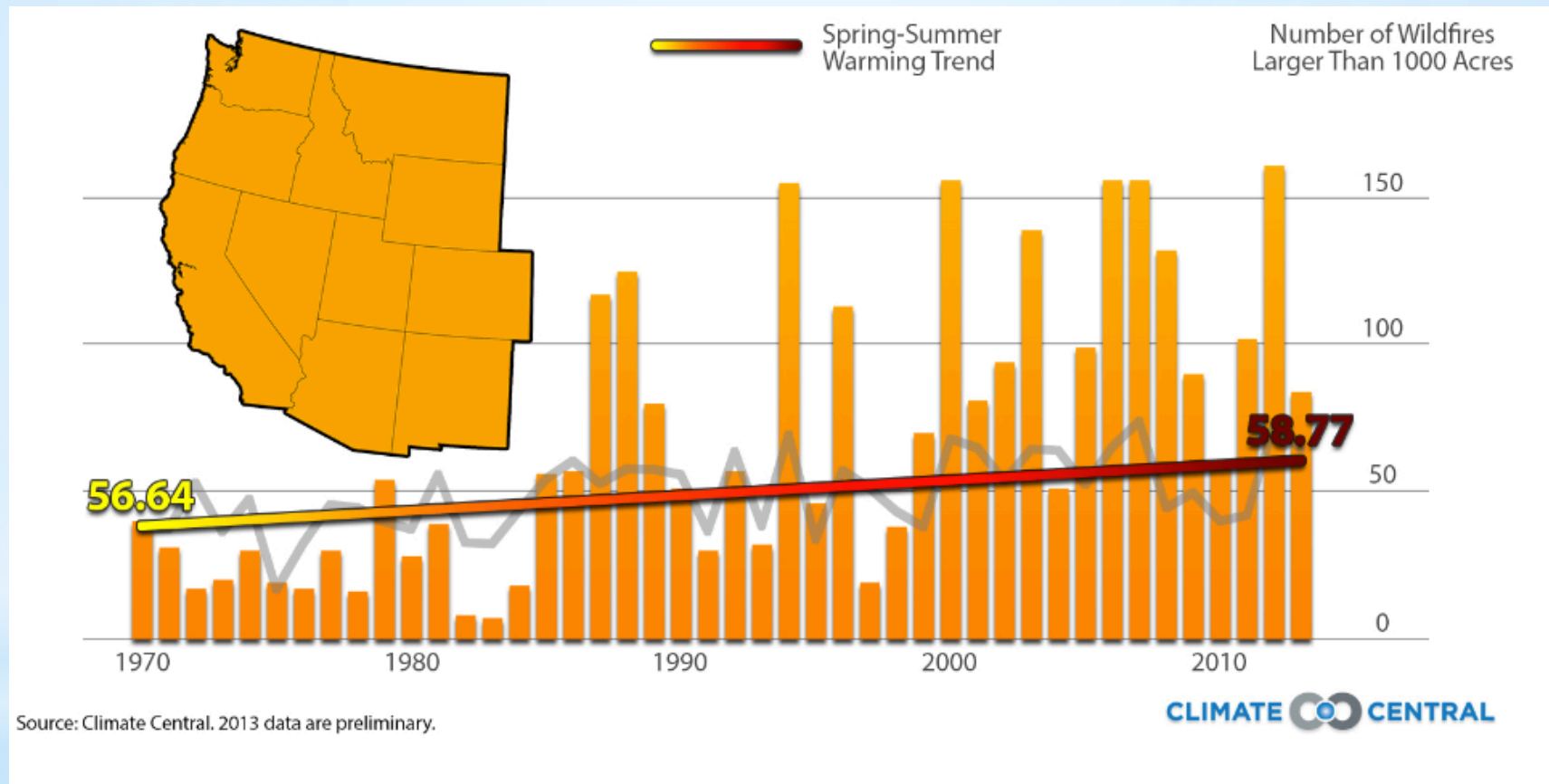


Biggest personal challenges as a scientist-advocate



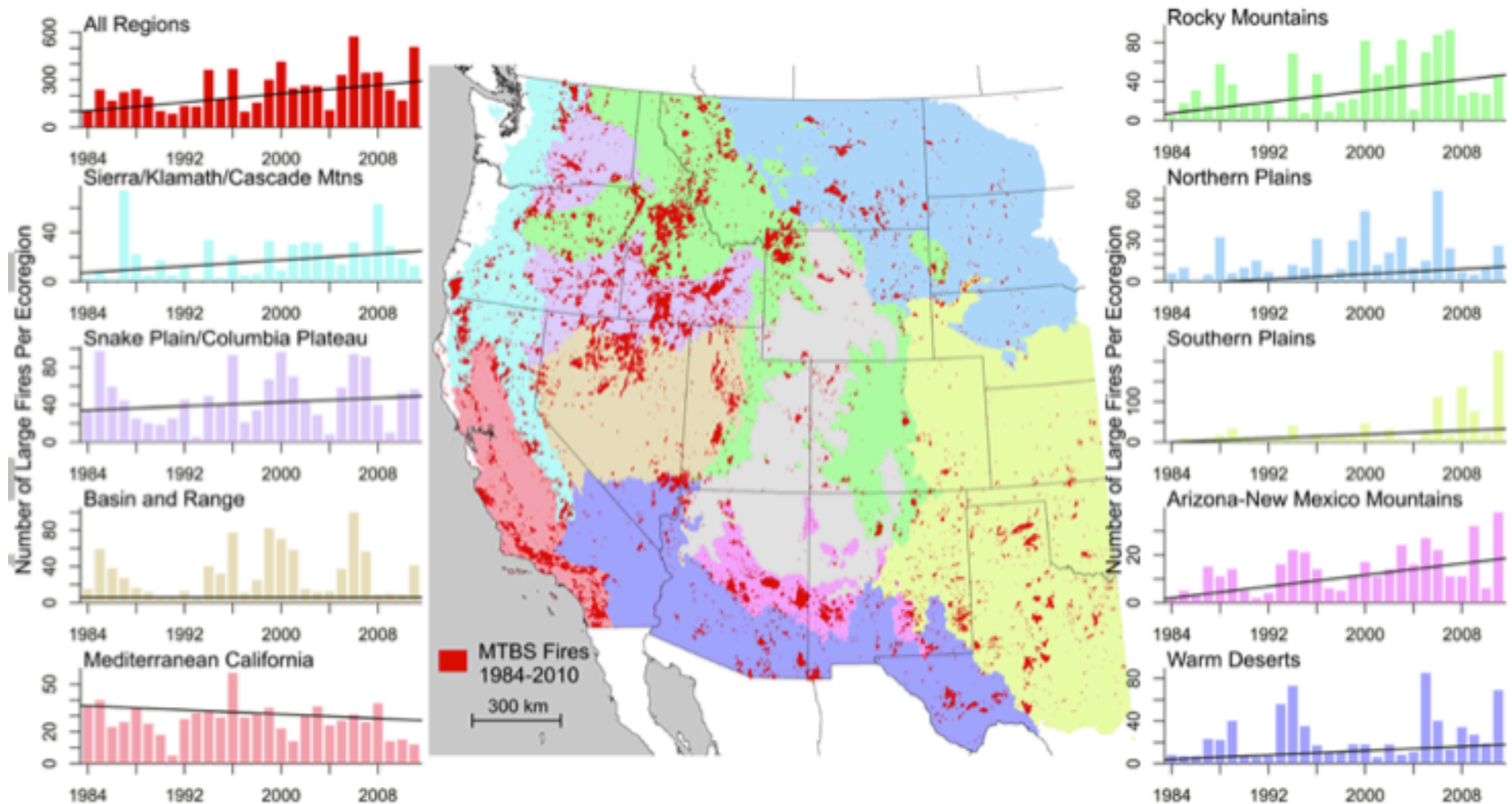
Speaking only to
your expertise

Broader community challenges



“Double ethical bind”

Not allowing the brush strokes to get too broad,
but keeping the message



Dennison et al 2014

Make information local*

*when scientifically appropriate and defensible



SCIENCE, COMMUNICATION, AND CONTROVERSIES

Above the din but in the fray: environmental scientists as effective advocates

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Environmental policies and actions can be improved when environmental scientists engage in science-based advocacy, by calling attention to relevant scientific information and ensuring that policies and their implementation are consistent with the best available science. There are many models for scientist-advocates within and outside of advocacy organizations, and the roles they play may vary, depending on career stage. Here, we discuss the challenges and rewards for scientific staff in science-based advocacy organizations, as well as for an academic working with an advocacy organization, as a consultant, collaborator, or member of an advisory board. We identify some best practices for science-based advocacy and encourage the environmental science community to recognize the importance of the scientist-advocate's role in strengthening environmental policy.

Guiding (willing) scientists from the realm of
“is” to “ought”



David Hume

Roles for AGCI and the broader
Global Change community