

# Ecosystem greenhouse gas fluxes respond directly to weather not climate

Exploring the relationship of global circulation, Föhn frequency, and winter weather to northern Alps regional ecosystem phenology and carbon cycling

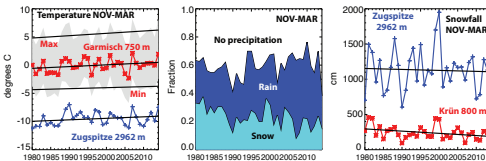
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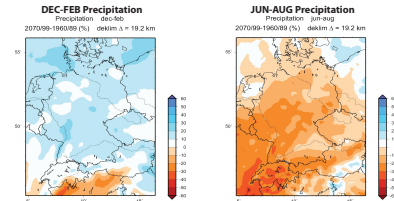
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## 1. The climate change-weather nexus

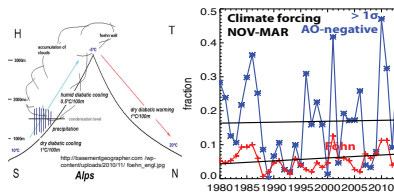
- Regional carbon cycle responses to climate warming are not straightforward
- In the Northern Alps, high resolution climate models (right) project increasing precipitation in winter and decline in summer by 2070-2100
- How do mountain local climate, weather, and ecosystems respond to this?



- Föhn southerly downslope flow (right) promotes drying and warming in Northern and Central Alps
- Frequency objectively determined w/mountain & valley wind velocity and temperature gradients
- Föhn is increasing in frequency and follows Arctic Oscillation (AO) negative pressure anomaly, though AO- frequency has not increased

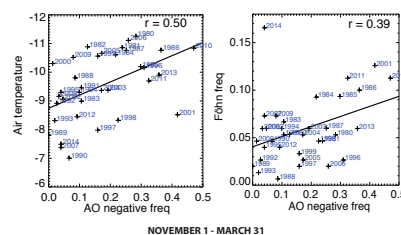
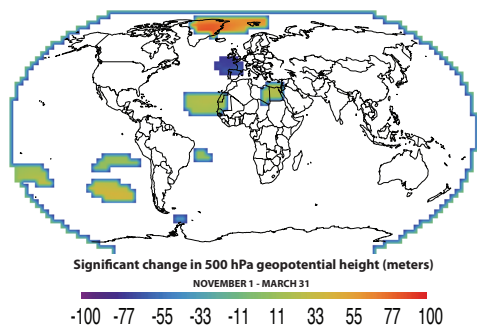


- Valley and mountain winter (Nov-Mar) temperatures (left) increasing in N Alps
- No clear trend in winter precipitation, except decline in snowfall
- But interannual variability is quite large. *What explains this?*



## 2. Climate dynamics of the “snow-eater” / “hair-dryer”

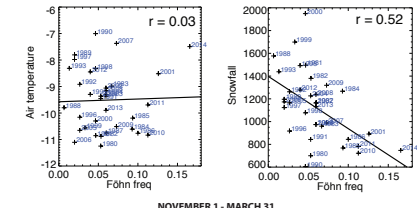
- Arctic oscillation negative pattern promotes southerly flow pattern
- AO negative day frequency determines mean winter air temperature (left panel)
- It also partly explains Föhn frequency (right panel), except in highest Föhn years
- Global circulation drives local meteorology



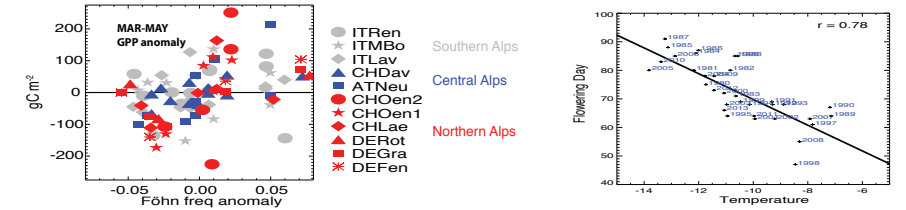
- Top 25% of Föhn years' 500 hPa geopotential height anomaly (left) shows significant differences (ANOVA F-test 99%) to low Föhn years in North Atlantic
- A Western Europe / N. Greenland dipole enhances the Föhn flow
- Recent research has related this pattern to shifts in N Atlantic gulf stream front or Arctic sea ice anomalies
- Climate projections show changes in this blocking pattern with future warming

## 3. Local effects of regional circulation

- Frequency of Föhn flow does not explain winter temperature, since Arctic Oscillation determines synoptic conditions that influence air mass origin
- However, snowfall is inversely related to Föhn conditions, as Föhn promotes drying and inhibits precipitation (right panel)
- How do these responses influence grassland and forest gross primary productivity (GPP)?

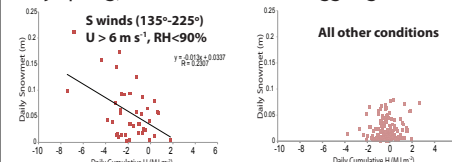


- Multi-year flux tower observations at 11 sites (bottom left) show positive response of spring (Mar-May) GPP anomalies to modest Föhn frequency relative anomalies in winter (Nov-Mar), especially in northern (red) and central (blue) Alps. GPP response muted in strong Föhn years
- One mechanism of spring GPP response is phenology (bottom right), exemplified by decrease in spring flowering day with warmer winters at Austrian Alpine flower monitoring plots



## 4. Simulations with Föhn and conclusions

- SOLVEG multi-layer land surface model deployed for multi-year simulation at a grassland flux tower site in German Alps
- Föhn conditions promote snow melt (right) and in winter, for a short period, carbon emissions increase with snow melt, but long term effect is net uptake
- By spring, snow melt events trigger growth



- In model, southerly flow conditions drive snowmelt that occurs under presence of strong negative heat flux (left)
- Vegetation dynamics could be considered in model to understand snowmelt frequency and grassland mortality relationship

*For many ecosystems, shifts in regional circulation may be just as important as general climate trends for driving key responses of ecosystem carbon fluxes to global warming*  
*- For N Alps, winter Föhn flows, triggered by negative Arctic Oscillation and N Atlantic dipole, promote snow melt, early green-up, enhanced spring GPP, and other impacts*

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