

# Introducing the “Fire Social Science” Section of the Journal *Fire*

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## 1. The Increasing Importance of “Fire Social Science”

Climate change is often espoused in public debates as being *the* main culprit of the increasing frequency, scale, and intensity of wildfires around the world. However, since I started my academic career in the early 2000s, there has been a marked shift towards understanding that social factors are equally at play. This shift is associated with the insights provided by fire social scientists through empirical research and publications in a wide range of journals and books [1–9]. It is now established knowledge that the intimate relationship between land use change, fire exclusion, and climate change, acts as a positive feedback loop. It is also clear that socially diverse people can experience exposure, vulnerability, and adaptive capacity quite differently based on historical and structural inequities. Such factors add uncertainty and urgency to a vital question: how can residents, communities, and fire managers—from land stewards and firefighters to disaster recovery workers—co-exist with fire in a hotter and drier climate [10–13]? At present, more communities in more countries than ever before are either at risk, directly impacted by, or in recovery from catastrophic wildfires.

The new “Fire Social Science” section of the journal *Fire* builds on this established expertise, while recognizing the ongoing need for in-depth social science research that can inform a whole-of-society approach to community resilience, and provide practical understandings to help people adapt to fire on their own terms. Co-existing with fire demands mitigation, adaptation, innovation, and a reconnection with the embodied environmental knowledge often held by local and Indigenous people. It is, therefore, with a sense of duty and excitement that I assume the role as Section Editor-in-Chief.

## 2. Setting the Agenda for the “Fire Social Science” Section

*Fire* is an international open access journal concerning the science, policy, and technology of fires and their interactions with communities and the environment. Since its launch in June 2018, the journal has gone from strength to strength, receiving its first Impact Factor (2.726) in June 2022. The addition of a section focusing on “Fire Social Science” ([https://www.mdpi.com/journal/fire/sections/fire\\_social\\_science](https://www.mdpi.com/journal/fire/sections/fire_social_science) accessed on 31 August 2022) aims to create a forum for the advancement of social science theory, methods, and applications in the context of fires.

The “Fire Social Science” section will consider articles that provide significant insights into the interactions between fire and individuals, communities, and society, broadly defined. Contributions are welcome from any social science discipline as well as related interdisciplinary research. Articles that include the development and application of social science survey instruments will also be considered. While theory-based, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research will be considered, articles based on rich empirical research are particularly encouraged.

As *Fire* aims to address a diverse international audience, articles submitted to the “Fire Social Science” section must advance established knowledge by drawing on, extending, or bridging a demonstrated gap in published international fire social science scholarship. Authors should be able to demonstrate how established knowledge informed their study, and how the results of their research advances fire social science scholarship. A strong



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emphasis will also be placed on advancing fire social science that addresses social and environmental justice, diversity and inclusion, privilege and vulnerability, ethics and care. From the perspective of the Section Editorial Board, this means acknowledging the privilege of language, as *Fire* only reviews and publishes articles written with a high standard of English [14].

The “*Fire Social Science*” section also responds to the need for rigorous methodological standards in fire social science and related interdisciplinary research. Two processes will be used to ensure that published articles are methodologically and ethically sound, and that the review process is rigorous and transparent. First, the Section aims to reflect the social diversity of fire social scientists by bringing together outstanding scholars and practitioners to form a Section Editorial Board that is inclusive and diverse in terms of gender, age, and geographical location. Second, the Section aims to build a dynamic international forum where an intellectual community can assist each other in advancing high-quality research. The Section will invite qualified social scientists to review social science research. The Section strives for best practice in submissions as well as constructive peer-reviews, which can serve as a mutual learning process between authors, reviewers, and members of the Section Editorial Board.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this new forum. If you are an active researcher in this field and passionate about publishing cutting-edge research, I hope you will consider submitting your work to the “*Fire Social Science*” section. Furthermore, scholars interested in guest-editing a Special Issue are encouraged to contact the Section Editor in Chief or members of the Section Editorial Board. A first decision on peer-reviewed manuscripts is provided to authors approximately 14.3 days after submission; acceptance to publication is undertaken in 2.8 days (median values for papers published in *Fire* in the first half of 2022). This thorough review and swift publication timeframe, together with the showcasing of published articles through platforms, such as Twitter (@Fire\_MDPI) and LinkedIn, makes *Fire* a front-line journal.

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