

Vanishing weekly hydropeaking cycles in American and Canadian rivers

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1 Vanishing weekly hydropeaking cycles in American and
2 Canadian rivers

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26 **Abstract**

27 Sub-daily and weekly flow cycles termed ‘hydropeaking’ are common features in
28 regulated rivers worldwide. Weekly flow periodicity arises from fluctuating hydropower
29 demand and production tied to socioeconomic activity, typically with higher consumption
30 during weekdays followed by reductions on weekends. Here, we propose a novel
31 weekly hydropeaking index to quantify the 1920-2019 intensity and prevalence of
32 weekly hydropeaking cycles at 400 sites across the United States of America and
33 Canada. A robust weekly hydropeaking signal exists at 1.1% of sites starting in 1920,
34 peaking at 17.0% in 1963, and diminishing to 3.2% in 2019, marking a 21st century
35 decline in hydropeaking intensity. We propose this decline may be tied to recent, above-
36 average precipitation, socioeconomic shifts, alternative energy production, and
37 legislative and policy changes impacting water management in regulated systems.
38 Vanishing weekly hydropeaking cycles may offset some of the prior deleterious
39 ecohydrological impacts from hydropeaking in highly regulated rivers.

40 **Introduction**

41 In 2019, the United States of America (USA) and Canada generated a combined 674
42 TWh of hydroelectricity from a total 184 GW of installed capacity, ranking them with
43 China and Brazil in the four largest global producers of hydroelectricity¹. With the
44 proliferation of dam and reservoir construction during the 20th and early 21st centuries²,
45 ³, many of the two countries’ main rivers are now moderately or strongly affected by
46 fragmentation, regulation and/or diversions⁴⁻⁶. With increasing demands for renewable
47 sources of energy, additional generating capacity is being developed or planned across
48 Canada. This includes the 1,100 MW Site C Dam on the Peace River in northeastern

49 British Columbia (BC), the 824 MW Muskrat Falls development on the lower Churchill
50 River in Labrador, and the 695 MW Keeyask Generating Station on the Nelson River in
51 northern Manitoba¹, with its first of seven units becoming operational in February 2021.

52

53 While overall demand for electricity continues to increase, consumption patterns vary
54 depending on socioeconomic activity, short-term weather conditions, seasonal climate
55 fluctuations and long-term climate trends^{7, 8}. In the northern USA and Canada, the
56 winter season usually incurs peak hydroelectric demand due to domestic, commercial
57 and industrial heating and lighting requirements⁹. With climate change, winter cold
58 waves subside while summer heat waves intensify^{10, 11}, shifting some of the demand
59 from winter heating to summer cooling¹²⁻¹⁴. Apart from seasonality shifts, day-to-day
60 activities influence hydroelectricity demand as well. Similar to many other industrialized
61 countries, North American educational, industrial and commercial activity intensifies on
62 weekdays (Monday through Friday) but abates on weekends, particularly on Sundays⁹.
63 This weekly rhythm of socioeconomic activity can thus impact water retention and
64 releases in regulated rivers¹⁵. These rapid, frequent and periodic flow fluctuations
65 downstream of regulation points are commonly termed ‘hydropeaking’ events and are
66 known to disrupt a range of ecohydrological processes^{16, 17}. Yet the characteristics and
67 trends in weekly hydropeaking cycles due to daily variation in hydropower demands
68 remain largely unknown. This is despite the general availability of discharge data at a
69 daily time scale and the distinct weekly rhythm of socioeconomic activity including
70 hydropower production, and hence water releases in regulated waterways, which
71 impact ecohydrological processes.

72 To address that knowledge gap and a demand for global attention to hydropeaking
73 rivers¹⁸, we assess here the prevalence of weekly hydropeaking cycles for 400 gauging
74 sites along rivers of the USA and Canada spanning a wide range of basin
75 characteristics, regulation, hydrological and climatic regimes. Specifically, we develop a
76 scale-independent and dynamic weekly hydropeaking index (WHI) with both time and
77 frequency domain terms, allowing quantification of weekly flow periodicity. Application of
78 the novel WHI to 1920-2019 time series of river discharge provides evidence of
79 vanishing weekly hydropeaking cycles in many regulated rivers of the USA and Canada
80 with the 2010s comparable to the 1920s for hydropeaking prevalence. We conclude that
81 increased commercial and industrial activity on weekends, a shift towards other modes
82 of energy production, policy changes altering water management practices, electrical
83 grid interconnectivity and deregulation of electricity generation, plus a relatively wet
84 decade in the 2010s are contributing factors to waning weekly hydropeaking cycles.

85 **Results**

86 **Overall WHI statistics.** The 1980-2019 mean, median, and standard deviation of WHI
87 for the 400 sites reach 0.097, 0.005 and 1.115, respectively (Supplementary Table 1).
88 An application of the Shapiro-Wilk test to the WHI data suggests the distribution is not
89 Gaussian ($W = 0.974$, $p = 1.32 \times 10^{-6}$, $n = 400$); yet, the low skewness (0.157) and
90 excess kurtosis (0.754) along with a Cullen and Frey graph (Supplementary Fig. 1) infer
91 a reasonable fit. Twenty-five sites attain a mean annual WHI ≥ 2.0 for 1980-2019 with
92 another 49 sites achieving WHI ≥ 1.0 . A list of sites with the top ten ranking WHI values
93 reveals their wide regional distribution with foci in the Chattahoochee, Colorado,
94 Columbia, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence, Nelson and upper Tennessee drainage basins

95 (Table 1), all of which are heavily dammed. The Chattahoochee River at Buford Dam
96 claims the top WHI score of 3.299 while BC's Stuart River shows the lowest score of
97 -3.469. Some highly regulated systems such as Manitoba's Burntwood River, which
98 funnels water diverted from the Churchill River into the Nelson River, exhibit large
99 negative WHI values (-1.892) as Notigi (the upstream point of regulation) is a control
100 structure for a large reservoir operated in a longer term (e.g., seasonal) manner.
101 Similarly, while several large dams impound the Missouri River, they are managed not
102 only for hydropower production but also for flood control, irrigation, navigation and
103 recreational values. As such, the three sites along the Missouri River used in this study
104 exhibit an average WHI = -0.492 revealing an absence of significant weekly
105 hydropeaking cycles.

106 **Spatial analyses.** A map of the 1980-2019 WHI values reveals that weekly
107 hydropeaking rivers abound across the USA and Canada. Clusters of high WHI values
108 emerge in the Alabama, Chattahoochee, and Tennessee river basins of the
109 southeastern USA, in waterways draining the Ozark Mountains, the Colorado River and
110 in northern Ontario rivers draining into the Great Lakes (Fig. 1). The Columbia River has
111 several major points of regulation ($WHI \geq 1.5$) from its headwaters in BC to its outlet in
112 the Pacific Ocean. Highly hydropeaking sites ($WHI \geq 2.0$) appear in both small (e.g.,
113 Alberta's Kananaskis River, $A = 899 \text{ km}^2$) and large (Manitoba's Nelson River, $A = 1.1 \times$
114 10^6 km^2) systems. In contrast to their adjacent regulated rivers, free-flowing rivers of
115 northern Canada, particularly those draining into Hudson Bay, exhibit large, negative
116 WHI values. These unregulated rivers manifest strong annual cycles dominated by
117 snowmelt-driven freshets and contain large natural storage capacity in the form of

118 extensive lakes, ponds and wetlands. Free-flowing, pluvial rivers of the southeastern
119 USA (e.g. the Choctawhatchee, Ogeechee, Pascagoula, Satilla and Suwanee rivers)
120 also exhibit negative, albeit > -1.5 , WHI scores. WHI values diminish moving
121 downstream from a point of regulation. For instance, WHI = 1.437 on the Peace River
122 just downstream of BC's WAC Bennett and Peace Canyon dams where minimum flows
123 arise on weekends; 400 km downstream from the dams¹⁹, however, WHI declines to
124 0.929 at the community of Peace River in Alberta where minimum flows occur on
125 Mondays/Tuesdays, indicating a 2-day delay in signal propagation. A cascade of dams
126 and reservoirs can amplify or sustain the hydropeaking signals along waterways (e.g.,
127 the Colorado, Columbia, and Tennessee rivers) or attenuate them (e.g., Ottawa River).

128

129 Sites with high values of WHI (≥ 1.5) also show a preponderance of flow reductions on
130 the weekends (Saturdays/Sundays) as identified by the larger symbols in Fig. 1. Of the
131 44 sites with WHI ≥ 1.5 , 39 experience the two consecutive days with low flows on
132 weekends. In contrast, sites with negative WHI values show a range of low flow days
133 with no distinct pattern emerging. No less than 30.8% of all sites used in this study
134 exhibit low flows on Saturdays/Sundays, more than twice the expected value (Fig. 2).
135 This disproportionate amount of weekend low flows occurs mainly in hydropeaking
136 rivers (WHI > 0). Weekday combinations show frequencies at, or lower than, the
137 expected value with the Friday/Saturday sequence appearing at only 6.0% of sites. A
138 Chi-Square test applied to the frequency of two consecutive low flow days reveals that
139 the results differ significantly from the expected value of 0.143 ($\chi^2 = 109.95$, $p < 2.2 \times$
140 10^{-16} , $n = 7$ with six degrees of freedom). The mean WHI equals 0.292 for 123 sites with

141 low flows on weekends while it remains near zero or slightly negative for the six other
142 two-day combinations. The distribution of mean WHI for the two-day combinations
143 differs significantly from a uniform distribution based on a Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 8.43$, p
144 = 0.05 based on 10,000 replicates with $n = 7$).

145 **Temporal evolution and trend analysis.** The temporal evolution of the mean and
146 median WHI shows a rapid increase in hydropeaking intensity from the 1920s to the
147 1950s at which point they level off and fluctuate near zero (Supplementary Fig. 2).
148 Starting in the 1990s, though, there is a gradual decline in both the mean and median
149 WHI values with a return in the 2010s to statistics first seen in the 1930s (largely pre-
150 regulation), a pattern observed both in the USA and Canada (not shown). The
151 discharge-weighted WHI_Q emphasizes the increasing volumes of regulated flows
152 starting from the 1920s through the 1980s; however, WHI_Q also declines markedly
153 thereafter into the 21st century. In 1920, only 1.1% of available sites rank in the top
154 decile of 1920-2019 WHI values ($WHI \geq 2.021$). This fraction peaks at 17.0% of
155 available sites in 1963 but thereafter diminishes consistently. In 2000, 50 or 13.2% of
156 available sites score in the top decile of 1920-2019 WHI values but these counts fall
157 precipitously to just 12 or 3.2% of the available sites by 2019, marking a 21st century
158 declining pattern in weekly hydropeaking intensity. Trend analysis applied to the overall
159 mean annual WHI reveals a statistically-significant decline of -0.40 over 1980-2019
160 (Supplementary Fig. 3). These temporal results, however, rely on the availability of
161 discharge data, as the record length averages 78.4 years, ranging from a minimum of
162 24 years at one site to a full century at 87 sites (Supplementary Fig. 4). The number of
163 available sites increases steadily from 1920 into the early 1990s and peaks at 393 sites

164 in 1985 and 1992 but then declines to 373 sites by 1996 thereafter averaging 383 ± 6
165 sites until 2019. Notable gaps appear in the discharge records starting in the 1990s,
166 particularly for regulated rivers in Ontario and Québec; however, adjusting the time
167 series of mean annual WHI for unavailable sites reveals little difference in the overall
168 pattern and trend of WHI during 1980-2019 (Supplementary Fig. 3).

169

170 Data availability also factors in the appraisal of the decadal evolution of hydropeaking
171 intensity across the USA and Canada (Fig. 3a-j). Nevertheless, this shows the gradual
172 inception of hydropeaking cycles during the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in the north-
173 central, northeastern, and southeastern USA and in northern Ontario. The 1940s show
174 an expansion of weekly hydropeaking rivers into the western USA including within the
175 Colorado, Columbia and Sacramento river basins. The 1940s and 1950s mark an
176 intensification of regulation in the Tennessee and Alabama river basins as well as rivers
177 of northern Ontario draining to Lakes Superior and Huron. A pronounced expansion and
178 amplification of the hydropeaking signal appears in the 1960s, particularly across the
179 Great Lakes-St. Lawrence river basin in Ontario and Québec. Some stabilization of the
180 hydropeaking pattern marks the 1970s but a resurgence follows in the 1980s and 1990s
181 when additional hydropeaking rivers emerge in western Canada. The 2000s retain a
182 wide distribution of hydropeaking rivers across both countries; yet, by the 2010s, the
183 number of highly hydropeaking rivers diminishes considerably, particularly in parts of
184 the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence and Tennessee river basins. The decadal distribution of
185 the 10 WHI bins (Fig. 3k) further highlights the peak fraction of sites with $\text{WHI} \geq 1.5$
186 attained in the 1960s (19.6%), with nearly matching minimum values in the 1920s

187 (6.8%) and 2010s (6.7%). After the 1960s, there is a steady decline in the relative
188 number of sites with low flows either on the Saturday/Sunday or Sunday/Monday
189 combinations, indicating waning differences between weekday and weekend flows
190 across the USA and Canada (Fig. 3l).

191 The temporal evolution of the annual maximum WHI value shows a rapid increase from
192 ~3.0 in the 1920s to > 4.0 in the 1930s onward (Supplementary Fig. 2d). Annual peak
193 WHI values > 4.0 are generally sustained for the remainder of the 20th century but then
194 fall below that threshold starting in 2003 until 2019. The peak WHI value each year over
195 the study period is distributed among 19 sites, with the Winnipeg River at the outlet of
196 the Lake of the Woods capturing the top spot 12 times in the 1920s to early 1960s
197 (Supplementary Fig. 5). The Colorado River at Hoover Dam dominates the list 25 times
198 between the 1940s into the early 1980s. From the 1960s to 2010s, the Chattahoochee
199 River at Buford Dam ranks first 12 times while in the 1990s and 2000s, the Montreal
200 River that drains to Lake Superior tops the list 10 times. The overall maximum WHI
201 score of 4.587 arises in 1961 at the Winnipeg River at the outlet of Lake of the Woods.

202

203 Further statistical analysis reveals an abundance of strong, negative WHI trends
204 interspersed with positive ones for the 380 sites with $n_y \geq 30$ years over 1980-2019 (Fig.
205 4). A total of 104 sites show locally statistically-significant ($p < 0.05$) declines in WHI
206 while 26 show locally statistically-significant inclines. Of the 130 locally-significant
207 trends, 81 remain globally significant. Significant negative WHI trends abound in the
208 southeastern and northeastern USA, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin, and the

209 Pacific Northwest while a cluster of positive trends arises in Québec's Saguenay
210 watershed. While regulated rivers of Newfoundland show increasing WHI values, their
211 unregulated counterparts show similar tendencies. Similarly, in New Brunswick, the
212 regulated St. John River shows a decreasing trend in WHI while the proximal,
213 unregulated Southwest Miramichi River shows an increasing trend. Sixty-four percent of
214 the locally-significant WHI trends arise in hydropeaking rivers ($WHI > 0$) with fewer
215 locally-significant trends in non-hydropeaking rivers ($WHI < 0$; Supplementary Fig. 6).

216

217 **Interannual and interdecadal variability.** Water management practices and climate
218 variability, among other factors, yield significant interannual variation in hydropeaking
219 intensity. For example, the Colorado River at Lees Ferry shows marked declines in WHI
220 during high flow years (Supplementary Fig. 7a). Indeed, heavy precipitation during
221 strong El Niño events in the early 1980s induced high flows in the Colorado River
222 including at Lees Ferry. Due to the unusually wet weather, the bypass tubes and
223 spillway at Glen Canyon Dam were used to release additional water downstream,
224 thereby moderating hydropeaking signals from 1983 to 1986²⁰. Similar declines in WHI
225 appear in 1997 and 2011 when flows exceed the recent annual average. Computing the
226 Pearson correlation coefficient between the 1980-2019 annual river discharge and the
227 corresponding WHI yields 81 statistically-significant negative correlations and only 16
228 statistically-significant positive correlations (Supplementary Fig. 7b). Thus high flows
229 over extended periods attenuate weekly periodicity even in heavily regulated rivers such
230 as the Colorado.

231 This analysis suggests that sustained wet periods may attenuate hydropeaking intensity
232 while dry periods may accentuate it. Binned distributions of decadal standardized
233 anomalies in river discharge reveal the contrasting dry 1930s vs. the wet 1970s, the
234 latter coinciding with a suppression of hydropeaking across the USA and Canada
235 (Supplementary Fig. 8). Yet, while the 2010s experienced relatively high flows, 6.7% of
236 sites have WHI ≥ 1.5 whereas in the similarly wet 1990s, 15.6% of sites achieve WHI \geq
237 1.5. Of 20 sites with large (> 1), positive standardized discharge anomalies during the
238 2010s, only three (the Betsiamites, La Grande and Nelson rivers) have WHI > 1 , which
239 are likely more in response to enhanced diverted flows rather than high precipitation.
240 Thus it is unlikely interdecadal climate variations alone account for recent WHI declines.

241
242 **Dispersion of daily flows.** Apart from climate variations, changes in day-of-the-week
243 flows may influence WHI trends. Sites with WHI > 0 generally observe greater
244 dispersion of day-of-the-week flows although pluvial and intermittent rivers, particularly
245 in the southern USA, also experience greater day-to-day flow variations (Supplementary
246 Fig. 9a). A trend analysis reveals significant declines in the dispersion of flows across
247 the seven days of the week, concomitant with diminishing WHI values from 1980 to
248 2019 (Supplementary Fig. 9b). As an example, an abrupt reduction in dispersion of day-
249 of-the-week flows in Labrador's Churchill River appears in 1997 and is then sustained,
250 suggesting factors other than climate variations are altering daily flows (Supplementary
251 Fig. 10).

252

253

254 **Discussion**

255 **Possible factors leading to recent WHI declines.** The recent decline in weekly
256 hydropeaking cycles in the USA and Canada emerges as a key finding in this study.
257 Several possible factors may be contributing to this general pattern observed over the
258 study area. Firstly, hydropower demand, production and consumption may have shifted
259 in recent years, thereby diminishing differences between weekdays vs. weekends. For
260 instance, there has been a gradual shift towards more commercial (including e-
261 commerce) and industrial activity on weekends that could alter the weekly discharge
262 patterns in regulated rivers^{21, 22}. A shifting manufacturing sector, globalization, and
263 lifestyle changes are all socioeconomic factors modifying electricity demand. Another
264 possible factor is the development and expansion of other modes of energy production
265 such as dispatchable combustion turbines and non-dispatchable solar and wind energy.
266 Solar and wind energy production activate during favourable weather conditions with
267 hydropower otherwise matching the demand, which may disrupt the typical weekly
268 pattern in regulated flows. Regulatory bodies and changing governmental policies may
269 also be altering how utilities manage regulated waterways. Indeed, there is renewed
270 interest for environmental, ecological and cultural (e.g., from a First Nations
271 perspective) flows in human-influenced systems, with emerging regulations and policies
272 supporting their implementation²³. For instance, regulatory changes in the operation of
273 the Prickett hydroelectric facility from a peaking to run-of-river site to assist spawning
274 lake sturgeon²⁴ induced a significant WHI decline (of $-0.216 \text{ decade}^{-1}$) along the
275 Sturgeon River in the upper peninsula of Michigan starting in the 1990s. Indeed,

276 changes in operation away from peaking hydropower generating stations, whether
277 mandated or voluntary, could influence hydropeaking patterns.

278

279 Additionally, the increasing interconnectivity of the North American power grid,
280 deregulation, and centralization of electricity dispatching may further contribute to a
281 recent reduction of hydropeaking intensity. Finally, climate variations may also play a
282 role in hydropower production as wet periods may require greater spillage of water from
283 reservoirs thereby diminishing hydropeaking intensity. The relatively wet climate of the
284 2010s could account for part of the recent declines in WHI across the USA and Canada.
285 Thus a combination of factors including changing hydropower demand patterns tied to
286 lifestyle factors and socioeconomic activity, the emergence of alternative modes of
287 energy production plus power grid interconnectivity, implementation of regulations and
288 policies, and climate variations may be influencing the day-to-day hydrology of many
289 regulated waterways across the USA and Canada.

290

291 **Spatio-temporal patterns within and across jurisdictions.** Given the vast territory of
292 the USA and Canada, their waterways often drain multiple jurisdictions including
293 international transboundary watersheds (e.g., the Rio Grande, Great Lakes-St.
294 Lawrence, Winnipeg and Columbia rivers). Regional water authorities, inter-
295 jurisdictional water boards, federal, provincial, and state legislation, and international
296 water treaties and commissions all affect how waterways are managed. Furthermore,
297 synchronous inter-jurisdictional power grids (e.g., interconnections) can also affect
298 hydropower generation and hence regulated flows, leading to distinct spatio-temporal

299 patterns in hydropeaking intensity. Decadal maps of WHI values reveal the progression
300 of weekly hydropeaking systems from the eastern and central USA to the Pacific
301 Northwest in the 1960s when development in the Columbia River Basin expanded
302 rapidly. The international Columbia River Treaty implemented in 1961 led to the
303 construction of three major dams along the Columbia River (Duncan, Keenleyside and
304 Mica Dams in Canada) plus another on the Kootenai River (Libby Dam in the USA)²⁵.
305 These dams and generating stations expanded the presence of hydropeaking cycles
306 from the lower to the upper Columbia Basin in the 1970s and 1980s (Fig. 3). As such,
307 regulation in the Canadian portion of the Columbia Basin now leads to downstream
308 propagation of hydropeaking into the northern USA where it is regenerated at multiple
309 points of regulation including Grand Coulee Dam and the Dalles.

310

311 Another noticeable pattern in the decadal results is the WHI decline in many rivers of
312 southern Québec in the 1970s and 1980s. As the 5,428 MW Churchill Falls generating
313 station in Labrador came online in late 1971 (with hydropower sold mainly to the
314 provincial utility Hydro-Québec)²⁶, followed a decade later by the 17,418 MW James
315 Bay Hydroelectric Complex in northern Québec¹⁵, a northward shift in hydropower
316 generation abated the weekly hydropeaking cycles in more southern waterways.
317 Simultaneous reductions in WHI in the northeastern USA (e.g., Hudson and Connecticut
318 Rivers) may also be tied to transboundary power grid interconnections and Hydro-
319 Québec's large export capacity (7,974 MW in 2019²⁷). Similar to regional climate
320 trends²⁸, synchronous power grids thus have the capacity to shift the intensity of
321 hydropeaking signals 1000s of kms away from points where hydropower is consumed,

322 thereby creating *hydropеaking teleconnections* with potential for far-reaching social and
323 ecohydrological effects.

324

325 **Ecohydrological implications.** Ecohydrological impacts of hydropеaking are site-
326 specific and may include rapid changes in water temperature (i.e., 'thermo-peaking'),
327 increases in soil erosion and suspended matter, and habitat degradation, which affect
328 ecosystems, reduce species abundance, and limit biodiversity (e.g., fish, riparian plants,
329 macroinvertebrates)^{16, 29, 30}. Across the USA and southern Canada, hydropеaking
330 emerged relatively early in the 20th century with the proliferation of dams and flow
331 regulation in these regions. Starting in the 1960s, hydropower infrastructure expanded
332 northwards into regions previously devoid of any significant flow regulation and
333 hydropеaking. This includes major waterways like BC's Peace River, Manitoba's Nelson
334 River, Ontario's Moose and Abitibi rivers, and Québec's La Grande Rivière. On these
335 systems, major dams and reservoirs were built from the 1960s to early 1980s, vastly
336 expanding the northern reach of hydropеaking rivers (Supplementary Fig. 11). This
337 shifted potential ecohydrological impacts of hydropеaking to areas also undergoing
338 rapid climate change through Arctic amplification of global warming³¹. As such, sub-
339 Arctic species of fish (e.g., brook trout, lake sturgeon, northern pike, and walleye),
340 insects and riparian plants may now be exposed to the cumulative impacts of these
341 environmental stressors¹⁷. Additionally, winter frazil ice production and ice jams may be
342 precipitated and accentuated downstream of hydroelectric facilities with persistent
343 hydropеaking signals such as in the Peace River¹⁹.

344

345 Despite their recent northward expansion, weekly hydropeaking cycles are generally
346 waning across the USA and southern Canada, suggesting a 21st century *hydropeaking*
347 *recovery* in some of these river systems. Indeed, prior ecohydrological impacts of
348 hydropeaking may be partially offset, benefiting local biota and ecosystem biodiversity³².
349 For instance, recovery of lake sturgeon in the northern peninsula of Michigan
350 demonstrates some of the benefits of shifting away from peaking hydropower
351 operations²⁴. This is particularly important as evidence is also mounting that
352 hydropeaking influences aquatic species in rivers of Canada³³⁻³⁶. Other aspects of flow
353 regulation, such as sub-daily flow fluctuations and associated ramping up and down
354 cycles not investigated in this study, may negate this hydropeaking recovery^{16, 17}.
355 Additional research is thus needed to explore hydropeaking cycles at other temporal
356 scales to establish their site-specific ecohydrological impacts.

357

358 **Advantages and limitations of the WHI relative to other metrics.** The proposed
359 index to infer weekly hydropeaking signals provides a complementary metric to those
360 developed in other studies^{5, 37, 38}. Advantages of our approach include its scale
361 independence, dynamic response, and relatively simple implementation. The WHI can
362 be applied from small ($< 1 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^2$) to large ($> 1 \times 10^6 \text{ km}^2$) river basins with available
363 daily discharge data (whether observed, reconstructed or simulated). The WHI
364 responds to interannual variability in climate (e.g., wet/dry periods), changes in water
365 management practices and policies, commissioning of new hydroelectric facilities or
366 decommissioning of old ones, and other factors that affect flows. The use of daily
367 discharge data also avoids the need for extensive databases on dams, reservoirs and

368 other infrastructure that influence flows. Its possible implementation for short-term flow
369 predictions emerges as another distinct advantage of the WHI. As an example, a
370 running value of the WHI can be computed on the past year's daily flows and used to
371 infer the possible deviations in daily flows over a given week based on recent historical
372 patterns. Its computational simplicity, coded in our study in Fortran, allows processing of
373 results for the 400 sites in < 2.5 minutes. As such, it is feasible to implement a version
374 of the code for short-term flow predictions so long as up-to-date daily flow records
375 remain available. It would also be relatively straightforward to adapt the code to explore
376 sub-daily hydropeaking cycles⁹ if appropriate discharge data are available.

377

378 One challenge in implementing the WHI is access to daily discharge records. While
379 considerable gauging stations exist in most of the USA and southern Canada, other
380 waterways are not necessarily well monitored. A late 20th century decline in hydrometric
381 stations due to budget restraints³⁹ and the Water Survey of Canada's curtailment of
382 data collection combined with stricter quality standards from third parties have
383 exacerbated hydrological data accessibility. As well, private industry and government-
384 owned corporations often record discharge at or near their hydroelectric facilities but
385 may consider these data as sensitive such that they are not released publicly. Thus,
386 acquisition of daily discharge data in regulated systems, particularly as the number of
387 small, private firms operating run-of-river hydroelectric facilities expands³, yields a
388 distinct challenge in accessing flow data. Therefore, remote sensing⁴⁰, data
389 reconstructions (e.g. from statistical models or machine learning methods⁴¹) and

390 numerical simulations that incorporate regulation⁴² are key in filling spatio-temporal
391 gaps where and when *in situ* observations are lacking.

392 **Concluding remarks.** As hydropower generation and infrastructure development
393 continues to expand across the USA and Canada, it is important to establish how water
394 management practices affect downstream river flows and ecosystems. A common
395 feature in regulated rivers are discharge periodicities associated with hydropower
396 production ebbs and flows including weekly cycles. In this study, a new measure of this
397 weekly rhythm in flows, the weekly hydropeaking index (WHI), is formulated and applied
398 to 400 sites over parts of North America. Our findings reveal vanishing weekly
399 hydropeaking cycles across the USA and Canada in the 2010s, suggesting diminishing
400 differences between discharge on weekends vs. weekdays. Factors possibly yielding
401 this result include increased commercial and industrial activity on weekends, a shift
402 towards other modes of energy production during peak demand hours or days, and
403 policy changes altering water management practices including for ecological and
404 environmental flows. This reduction in weekly hydropeaking also may benefit aquatic
405 species, insects and riparian vegetation that otherwise are susceptible to rapid shifts in
406 flows and water levels. Future efforts should therefore establish the ecohydrological
407 implications of waning hydropeaking cycles. The application of the WHI to other regions
408 over the globe would provide broader perspectives on the commonality of this feature in
409 regulated rivers.

410

411

412 **Methods**

413 **Study area.** The USA and Canada harbor abundant freshwater resources that include
414 some of the world's largest rivers (by annual volumetric flows) including the Mississippi,
415 St. Lawrence, Mackenzie, Ohio and Columbia rivers^{4,3}. Many of these rivers and/or their
416 tributaries have been impounded for hydropower generation, flood control, irrigation,
417 potable water supply, navigation and recreation, leading to fragmented river networks
418 and regulated flows^{4, 6}. Indeed, numerous dams have been built across the USA and
419 Canada in the 20th and early 21st centuries^{2, 3}. While many dams in North America have
420 multiple purposes, hydropower generation remains a principal function. Distinct weekly
421 patterns mark hydropower production except perhaps at run-of-river facilities and those
422 supplying industries continuously in operation such as aluminum smelters or pulp and
423 paper mills^{8, 9}. As such, this study focuses on both regulated and unregulated
424 waterways of the USA and Canada to explore the prevalence and intensity of weekly
425 periodicity in discharge.

426 **Site selection.** A total of 400 sites across the USA and Canada ranging 480-1,805,222
427 km² in gauged area (*A*), 25-60°N in latitude, 54-132°W in longitude, and 0.11-268.28
428 km³ in mean annual discharge are selected for this study (Supplementary Fig. 12 and
429 Supplementary Table 2). A primary site selection criterion is discharge data availability
430 for ≥ 24 years between 1920-2019, with ≥ 14 years during the focus period of 1980-
431 2019. The chosen sites span a wide range of hydrological regimes from pluvial rivers in
432 warmer climates (e.g., BC's Yakoun River) to nival and glacial systems at higher
433 elevations or latitudes in cooler climates (e.g., BC's Lillooet River)⁴⁴. Thus, the study
434 area spans regions with little to no snowmelt where sub-annual scales govern temporal

435 variability while others are mainly snowmelt-driven with predominant annual cycles⁴⁵.

436 The database also includes intermittent streams in warmer, drier climates such as
437 California's Santa Ana River and Arizona's Little Colorado River. Regulated and
438 unregulated rivers are selected (using guidance from Benke and Cushing⁴³) to allow
439 comparisons between sites. Some sites such as Lees Ferry on the Colorado River
440 include extended records that cover pre- and post-regulation effects on flows.

441 **Data.** Data and metadata (station ID, gauge coordinates, and gauged area) are
442 extracted from various sources including publicly accessible databases maintained by
443 federal, provincial and state agencies in addition to proprietary data from private
444 industry, government-owned utilities and international commissions. For most
445 unregulated rivers, daily discharge data are sourced partly from the Water Survey of
446 Canada's Hydrometric Database (HYDAT), the Centre d'Expertise Hydrique du Québec
447 (CEHQ) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS). For regulated rivers, though,
448 daily discharge data are not necessarily available from these sources or other public
449 repositories as they are partially or entirely collected, quality controlled and archived by
450 government-controlled utilities or private industry (see Supplementary Tables 2 and 3).
451 This includes: Nalcor Energy for the Salmon and Exploits rivers plus the Churchill Falls
452 (Labrador) Corporation Limited for the Churchill River at Churchill Falls Powerhouse in
453 Newfoundland and Labrador; NB Power for the St. John River in New Brunswick; Rio
454 Tinto for the Kemano Powerhouse in BC and the Saguenay and Péribonca rivers in
455 Québec; Hydro-Québec for La Grande Rivière, Betsiamites, Manicouagan, des
456 Outaouais, des Outardes and St-Maurice rivers; Evolgen by Brookfield Renewable for
457 the Coulonge, Lièvre, and Noire rivers in Québec and Mississagi and Aux Sables rivers

458 in Ontario; Ontario Power Generation for the Abitibi, English, Kaministiquia,
459 Madawaska, Mattagami (tributary to the Moose River), Montreal and Ottawa rivers; H2O
460 Power for the Abitibi River; Manitoba Hydro for the Nelson and Winnipeg rivers;
461 Transalta for the North Saskatchewan and Kananaskis rivers; and BC Hydro for the
462 Columbia River at Mica Dam. Additional data for gauges along the Rio Grande on the
463 border between the USA and Mexico and the Pecos River are provided by the
464 International Boundary and Water Commission. Data at six sites in the Tennessee River
465 Basin are provided by the Tennessee Valley Authority. Recent records of daily
466 discharge from the US Bureau of Reclamation supplement those from the USGS for
467 sites on the Colorado and upper Rio Grande rivers. Finally, the 1 October to 31
468 December 2019 daily discharge data for the Snake River at Hells Canyon Dam are
469 sourced from Idaho Power. Potential errors associated with discharge measurements
470 and implications to our results are discussed in the Supplementary Methods.

471 **Time series construction.** The overall study period spans 1 January 1920 to 31
472 December 2019 for which at least partial, extended (≥ 24 years) records of daily
473 discharge are available at all sites. Time series of daily streamflow (in $\text{m}^3 \text{s}^{-1}$) are
474 constructed based on data availability for each site of interest (Supplementary Table 2)
475 and follows Déry et al.⁴⁶ in its approach. Daily discharge data sourced from the USGS,
476 US Bureau of Reclamation, Tennessee Valley Authority, Idaho Power, Nalcor Energy
477 (Exploits River) and NB Power are converted to metric units prior to analysis. For
478 several waterways (e.g., the Nelson and Saguenay Rivers), data furthest downstream
479 are first used, but when unavailable (prior to construction of dams and hydroelectric
480 facilities), are replaced with those from the closest upstream gauging station while

481 adjusting the data for the missing contributing area as necessary^{46, 47}. Gaps are in-filled
482 with the mean daily discharge over the period of record; however, any calendar year
483 with $\geq 10\%$ missing records is excluded from analysis. Supplementary Table 2 lists the
484 percentage of in-filled data at each site (average: 0.02%, maximum: 0.55%) omitting
485 years when $\geq 10\%$ of the data remain unavailable. Uncertainty in the results associated
486 with data homogeneity and the gap-filling strategy is evaluated and discussed in the
487 Supplementary Methods.

488 **Development of the WHI.** Various approaches are commonly used to explore flow
489 alterations in regulated rivers including comparisons of hydrographs pre- and post-
490 regulation^{9, 48, 49}, trends in peak and/or low flows⁵⁰ or of naturalized versus observed
491 (regulated) flows⁵¹⁻⁵³. A broader approach employs a set of multiple (up to 33) indicators
492 of hydrologic alteration (IHA) to quantify changes over the water year arising from
493 regulation⁵⁴⁻⁵⁶. Another method combines hydrological data, reservoir information and a
494 database of large dams in developing river regulation and fragmentation indices with a
495 matrix of impact for application to all major global watersheds^{4, 5}. Apart from time
496 domain analyses, Discrete Fourier Transforms (DFTs) or wavelet analyses offer
497 additional insights on impacts of flow alterations from human interventions^{15, 20, 45, 57}.
498 Consult Jumani et al.³⁸ for a review of river regulation and fragmentation indices
499 including their applications, advantages and limitations.

500 While various approaches exist to infer hydrologic alterations from diversions, dam and
501 reservoir operations including sub-daily hydropeaking cycles^{58, 59}, none focuses on the
502 weekly timescale, a primary periodicity of socioeconomic activity. Therefore, we develop
503 a novel WHI that combines time and frequency domain terms to quantify weekly

504 periodicity in river discharge. The time domain term (T_T , %) counts the number of weeks
 505 (D_w) in a given calendar year when two consecutive days exhibit flows lower than the
 506 corresponding weekly average ($\overline{Q_{1-7}}$), followed by five sequential days above the
 507 corresponding weekly average:

$$508 \quad T_T = \max \left\{ \frac{100}{52} \sum_{w=1}^{52} D_w, 0.001 \right\} \text{ and where} \quad (1)$$

$$510 \quad D_w = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } Q_{1,2} < \overline{Q_{1-7}} \text{ and if } Q_{3,\dots,7} > \overline{Q_{1-7}} \\ 0.25 & \text{if } Q_1 < \overline{Q_{1-7}} \text{ and if } Q_{2,\dots,7} > \overline{Q_{1-7}} \\ 0 & \text{if otherwise} \end{cases}$$

511
 512 This sequence of daily flows is chosen to emphasize the typical weekly rhythm
 513 observed in hydropeaking rivers: low flows on weekends when hydropower demand
 514 wanes, followed by high flows on weekdays when hydropower demand waxes⁹. A
 515 partial score of 0.25 is ascribed to sites where six consecutive days above the weekly
 516 average follow a single low flow day for that week. As some gauging sites lie
 517 downstream from points of regulation such that low flows are shifted later in the week
 518 rather than occurring on Saturdays and Sundays, we test all seven possible
 519 combinations of two consecutive days (e.g., Saturday/Sunday, Sunday/Monday, ...,
 520 Friday/Saturday) and select the one that maximizes WHI at each site over the period of
 521 record. This approach for the time domain term attenuates the effects of cyclical (rather
 522 than periodic) variations from synoptic-scale storm activity, which otherwise leads to
 523 marked weekly cycles in pluvial rivers⁴⁵.

524 An application of DFTs to the daily discharge data provides the frequency domain term.
 525 Here we follow Wilks⁶⁰ in partitioning the daily discharge time series into sine and
 526 cosine waves of amplitude C_k for harmonic k . DFTs are computed for each calendar
 527 year with the 52nd harmonic representing the weekly timescale of interest here. Then we
 528 compute the explained variance of the 52nd harmonic (T_F):

$$529 \quad T_F = \frac{\left(\frac{n}{2}\right)C_{52}^2}{(n-1)s_Q^2} \quad (2)$$

530
 531 where n is the number of days in a given year (365 or 366 for a leap year), C_{52} is the
 532 amplitude of the 52nd harmonic, and s_Q is the standard deviation in discharge.

533 After expressing T_T and T_F as percentages, we take the base 10 logarithm of their
 534 product to obtain an annual WHI:

$$535 \quad \text{WHI} = \log_{10}[B(T_T \times T_F)] \quad (3)$$

536 in which $B (= 10)$ is a coefficient chosen so that the median WHI ≈ 0 among all 400
 537 sites. Annual WHI values range typically from about -4 to +4 (although WHI values have
 538 no theoretical upper or lower bounds), with large positive values indicating strong
 539 weekly periodicity attributed to flow regulation at hydropower stations. In contrast, rivers
 540 with robust annual cycles with flows dominated by potent snowmelt-driven freshets
 541 and/or large (natural) storage capacity within abundant lakes, ponds and wetlands
 542 exhibit large negative WHI values. The transition between negative to positive WHI
 543 values marks a shift from annual to weekly dominant time scales of variability in flow.
 544 The 1980-2019 mean daily flows (considering the day of the week) for the Stuart River
 545 (BC), Mohawk River (New York), and Chattahoochee River at Buford Dam (Georgia)

546 illustrate the WHI ranging from the minimum, median, and maximum values
547 (Supplementary Fig. 13). WHI values remain site-specific and must be interpreted with
548 care, particularly moving away (both upstream and downstream) from measurement
549 sites with an intervening body of water, a confluence or another point of regulation
550 altering hydropeaking intensity.

551 **Statistical analyses.** We first compute WHI time series at all 400 sites and develop a
552 ‘climatology’ of index values for 1980-2019, with $14 \text{ years} \leq n_y \leq 40 \text{ years}$ depending on
553 data availability at each site. Summary statistics (mean, median, standard deviation,
554 etc.) of the 1980-2019 WHI data are tabulated and their distribution tested for normality
555 using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Similar climatological analyses are developed for each
556 decade (1920s to 2010s) with results reported when $n_y \geq 5$ years at a given site. The
557 Mann-Kendall test (MKT^{61, 62}) applied to all WHI time series with $n_y \geq 30$ years over
558 1980-2019 yields linear, monotonic trends in hydropeaking intensity, with $p < 0.05$
559 considered locally statistically-significant. The field (or global) significance of the
560 individual (or local) trend tests is assessed following Wilks⁶⁰. The approach minimizes
561 the false discovery rate (FDR) by first ranking p -values in ascending order for all trend
562 tests with $n_y \geq 30$ years. Trends are then globally significant if $p < p_{FDR}$ depending on the
563 distribution of sorted p -values as:

$$564 \quad p_{FDR} = \max_{i=1,2,\dots,N} \{p_i: p_i \leq (i/N) \alpha_{\text{global}}\} \quad (4)$$

565 in which we set $\alpha_{\text{global}} = 0.10$. Trend analysis sensitivity to autocorrelation is tested in the
566 Supplementary Methods.

567 We assess the 1920 to 2019 annual mean, median and maximum WHI across all sites
 568 with available data in a given year to track the overall evolution of hydropeaking
 569 intensity across the USA and Canada. We also count the annual number and
 570 percentage of sites that fall in the top decile of all 1920-2019 WHI scores. An additional
 571 metric reported is the discharge-weighted WHI_{Q_j} computed each calendar year (index j)
 572 as:

$$573 \quad WHI_{Q_j} = \sum_{i=1}^{n=400} WHI_{i,j} \times Q_{i,j} / \sum_{i=1}^{n=400} Q_{i,j} \quad (5)$$

574 where $Q_{i,j}$ ($\text{km}^3 \text{ yr}^{-1}$) denotes the annual discharge and i is the site index. This yields a
 575 relative measure of annual volumetric flows affected by weekly hydropeaking cycles
 576 rather than just the number of sites. For monotonic trend analysis, the MKT is applied to
 577 time series of overall mean annual WHI over the 1980-2019 focus period. The potential
 578 influence of missing data on the evolution of average WHI over 1980-2019 is assessed
 579 by substituting incomplete time series with each missing site's average WHI computed
 580 over the remainder of the focus period. This yields an adjusted mean annual WHI time
 581 series for a first order assessment of the influence of incomplete data.
 582

583 A histogram illustrates the distribution of two consecutive days when low flows emerge
 584 relative to the expected value of $1/7 = 0.143$ were these randomly distributed. Fractions
 585 of the seven possible two-day combinations are partitioned according to $WHI \geq 0$. The
 586 histogram also includes the corresponding mean WHI across all rivers for a given two-
 587 day combination of low flows. A Chi-Square goodness-of-fit test⁶³ verifies the hypothesis
 588 of whether the distribution of low flow days differs significantly from the expected value
 589 with threshold $p = 0.05$. Similarly, we test if the corresponding mean WHI values for the

590 two-day pairs with low flows follow a uniform distribution using a Chi-Square test. The
591 relationship between annual WHI values and mean annual flows over 1980-2019 is
592 evaluated using Pearson's correlation coefficient with $p < 0.05$ considered statistically-
593 significant values. Next, we transform annual discharge time series to standardized
594 anomalies over the period of record at each site (with $< 10\%$ missing data in a calendar
595 year). Decadal mean standardized anomalies for all available sites are then computed
596 when $n_y \geq 5$ years in a given decade. These decadal average anomalies are binned in
597 increments of 0.25 standard anomaly for comparison with WHI decadal distributions.

598 To explore possible factors contributing to WHI trends we assess whether the
599 dispersion of flows across the seven days of the week is changing over time. Here we
600 first compile total annual flows (in $\text{m}^3 \text{s}^{-1}$) for each of the seven days of the week, as well
601 as the overall average, over each calendar year. Then we quantify departures (as a
602 percentage) for each day of the week relative to the annual mean. Next, we calculate
603 standard deviations (σ) in the percentage departures for the seven days of the week
604 each year, creating σ time series for all 400 sites over 1980-2019. Finally, application of
605 the MKT on the σ time series (when $n_y \geq 30$ years) yields 1980-2019 dispersion trends.

606 **Data availability**

607 Data related to this article can be found in the Supplementary Information and
608 Supplementary Data files. Discharge data used in this study are available in the
609 following publicly accessible databases: Centre d'Expertise Hydrique du Québec
610 (http://www.cehq.gouv.qc.ca/hydrometrie/historique_donnees/info_validite.htm), US
611 Bureau of Reclamation (<https://data.usbr.gov/>), United States Geological Survey

612 (<https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis>), Water Survey of Canada's Hydrometric Database
613 (<https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca>), Idaho Power (<https://idastream.idahopower.com/Data/>)
614 and the International Boundary and Water Commission
615 (https://www.ibwc.gov/Water_Data/). For some regulated rivers, proprietary discharge
616 data can be requested from the following data providers: BC Hydro, Evolugen, H2O
617 Power, Hydro-Québec, International Boundary and Water Commission, Manitoba
618 Hydro, Nalcor Energy, NB Power, Ontario Power Generation, Rio Tinto, Tennessee
619 Valley Authority, and TransAlta (see Supplementary Table 3). Source data are provided
620 with this paper.

621 **Code availability**

622
623 The Fortran code used in this study is available online with explanation at
624 <http://web.unbc.ca/~sbery/NatComm.zip>.
625

626 **References**

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799

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803 analyses, and drafted line graphs with support from M.A.H.H., T.A.S., and T.J.T. S.J.D.
804 wrote the manuscript with contributions from all co-authors and all contributed to
805 manuscript refinement and revisions.

806 **Competing interests.** The authors declare no competing interests.

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816 **Figure Legends**

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818 **Fig. 1 Map of the 1980-2019 mean WHI values for 400 sites across the USA and**
819 **Canada.** Circle size corresponds to the two consecutive days with low flows beginning
820 with the Saturday/Sunday (SS, largest symbols) combination and ending with the
821 Friday/Saturday (FS, smallest symbols).

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823 **Fig. 2 Histogram of the 1980-2019 frequency distribution of low flow days and**
824 **corresponding WHI values.** Black bars denote the two consecutive days with low
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827 partitioned according to positive (solid) and negative (hatched) WHI values. The days of
828 the week begin with the Saturday/Sunday (SS) combination and end with the
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830 if the two-day low flows were distributed randomly while the horizontal red line marks
831 the mean WHI across the 400 sites.

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833 **Fig. 3 Maps of the decadal mean WHI values for 400 sites across the USA and**
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842 the maroon bars indicate $WHI \geq 3.0$ starting at a zero cumulative percentage). In **l**, the
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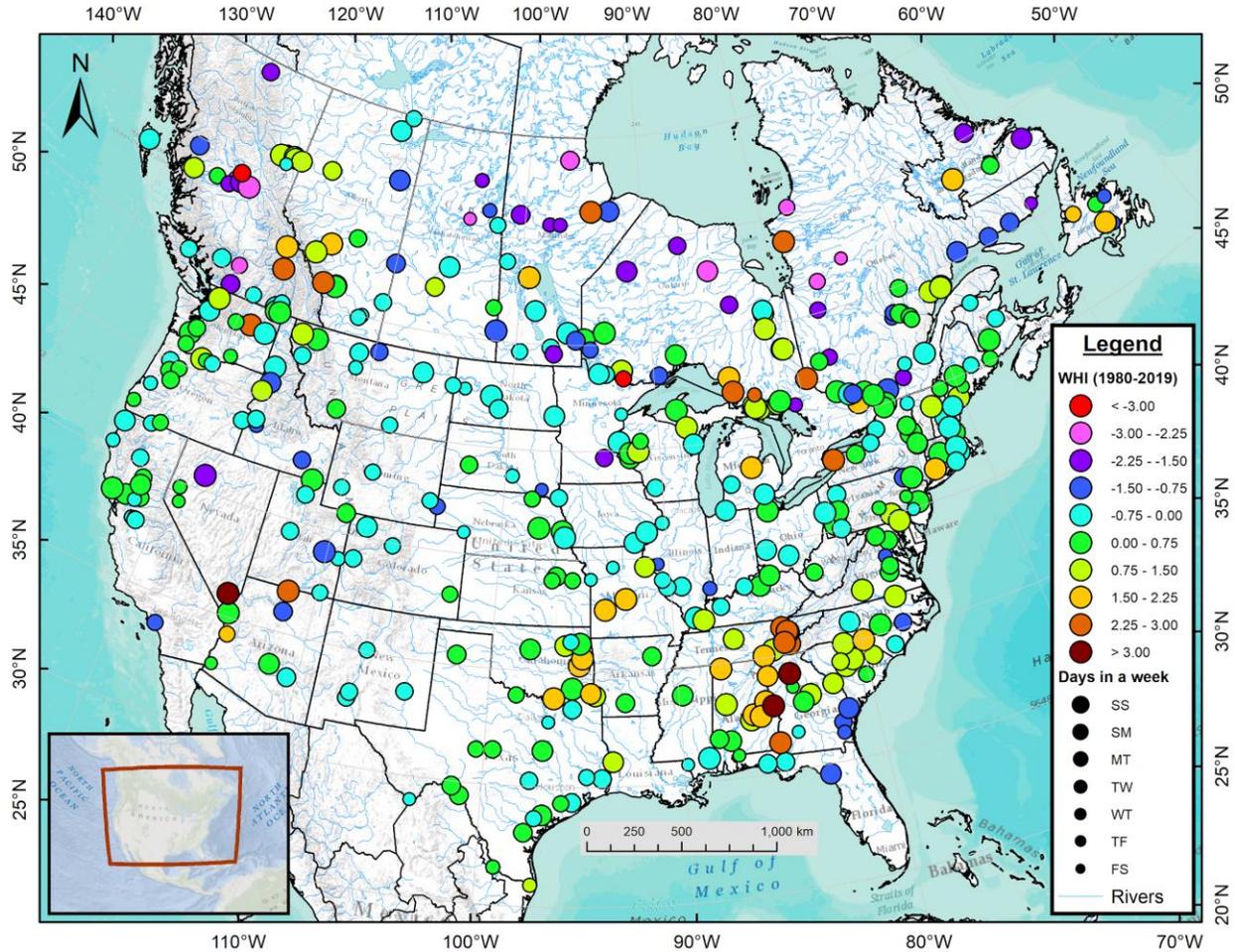
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847 **Fig. 4 Map of the 1980-2019 monotonic trends in WHI at 380 sites across the USA**
848 **and Canada.** Red upward (blue downward) pointing triangles indicate positive
849 (negative) trends. Trend magnitudes are proportional to the triangle sizes and green
850 circles (pink outlines) indicate locally (globally) statistically-significant trends ($p < 0.05$).
851 Results are shown only when $n_y \geq 30$ years.

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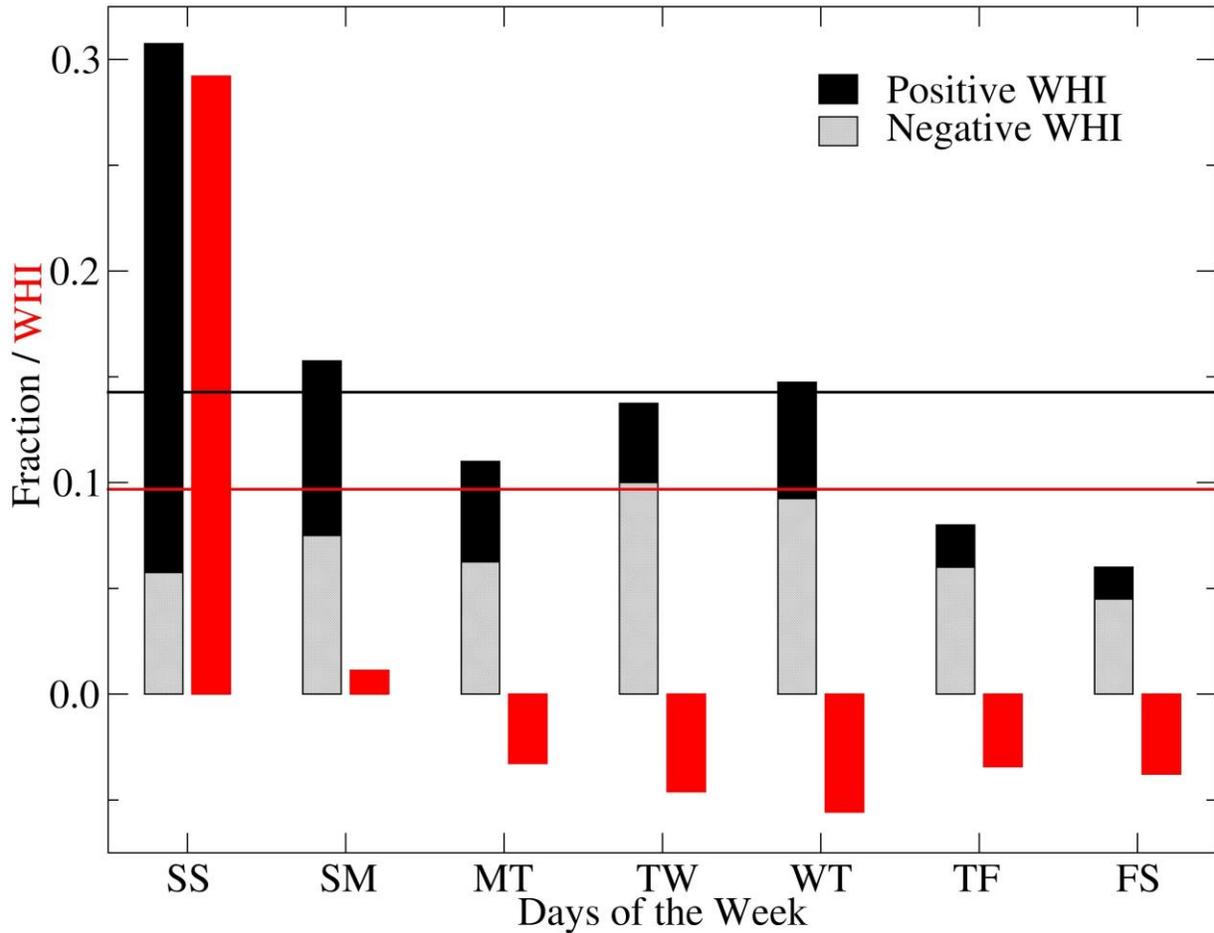


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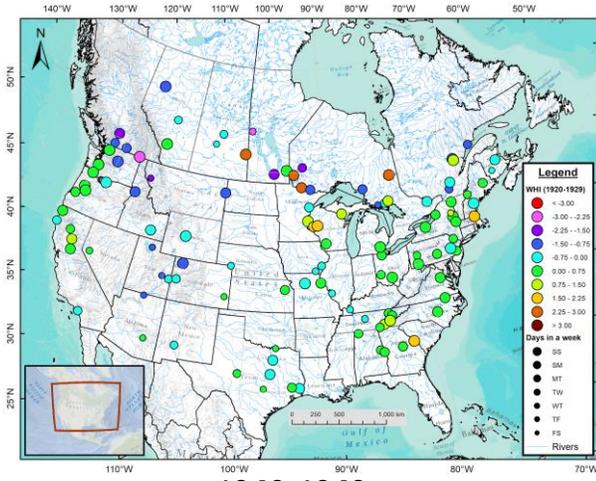


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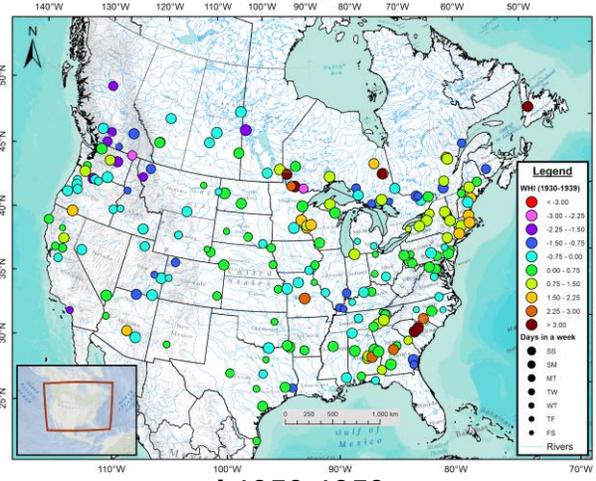
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a 1920-1929

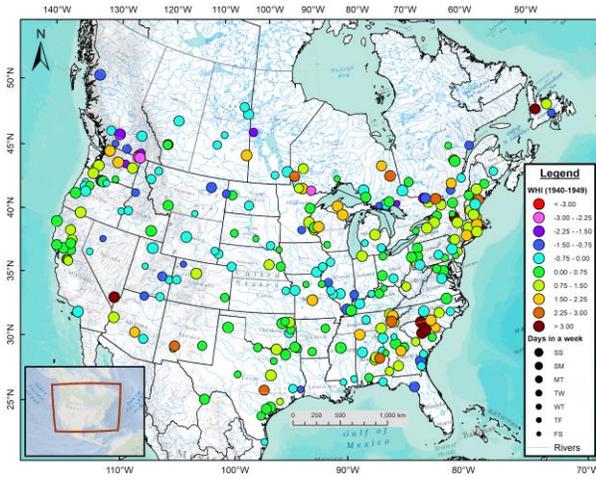


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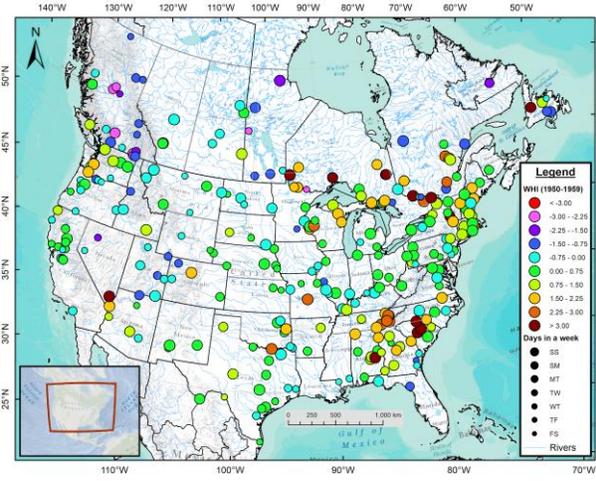


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c 1940-1949



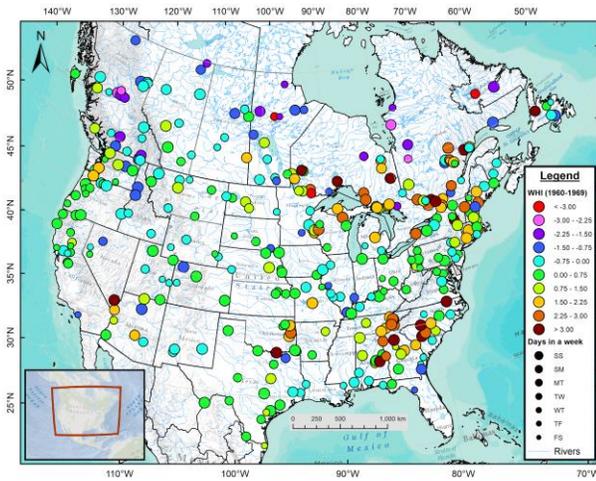
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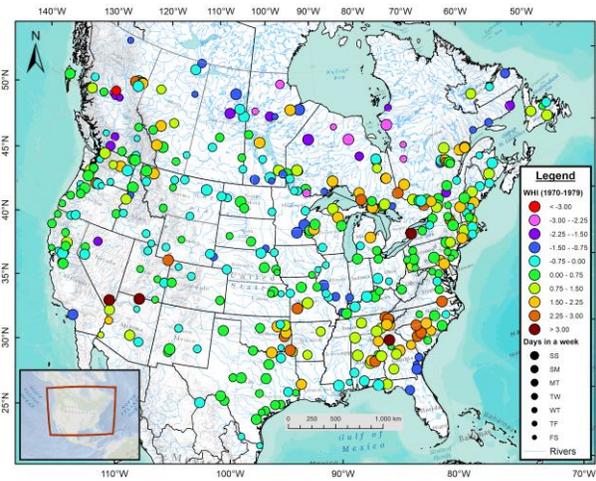
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e 1960-1969



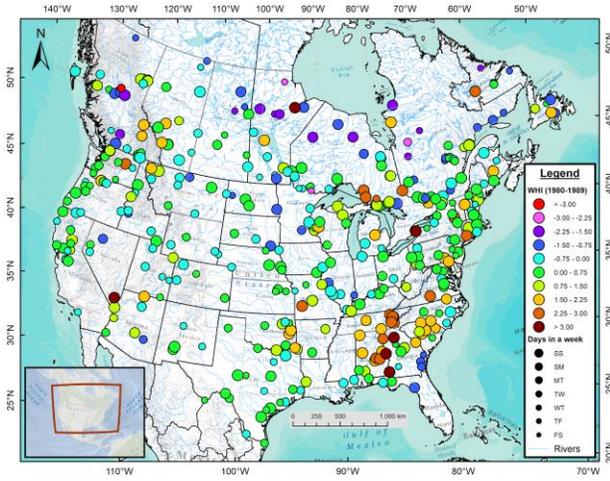
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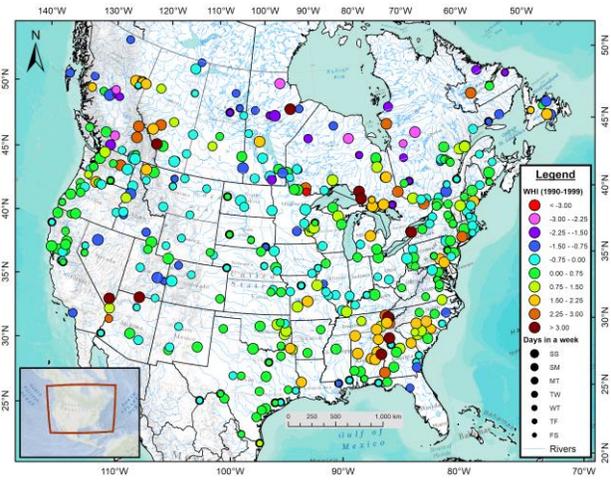
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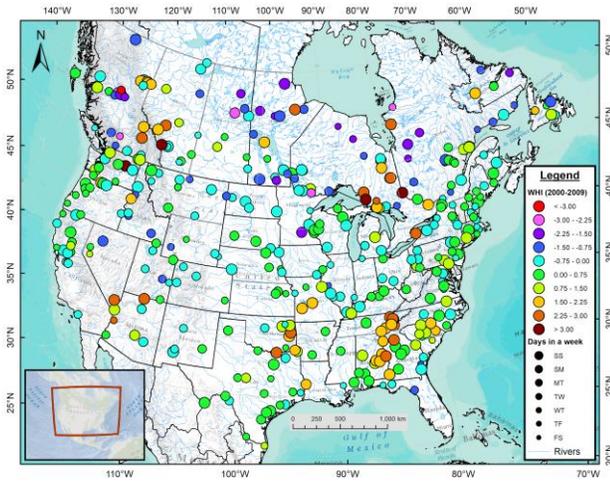
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h 1990-1999



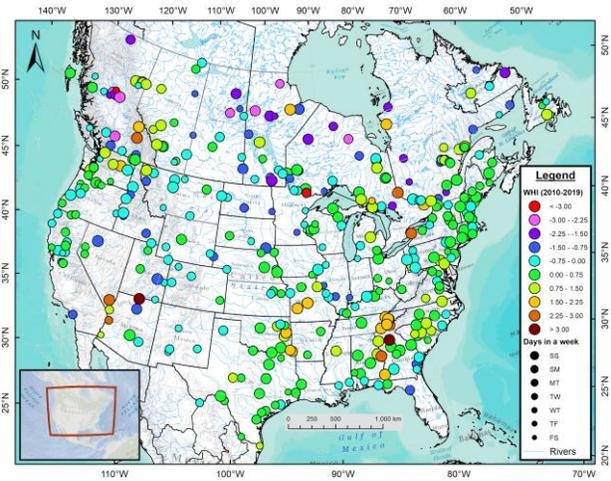
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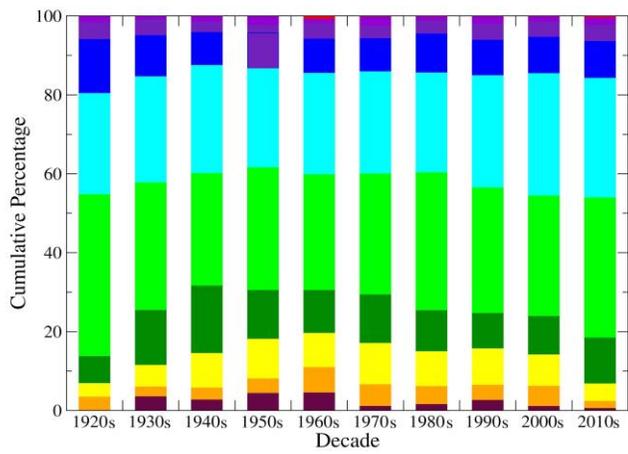
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j 2010-2019

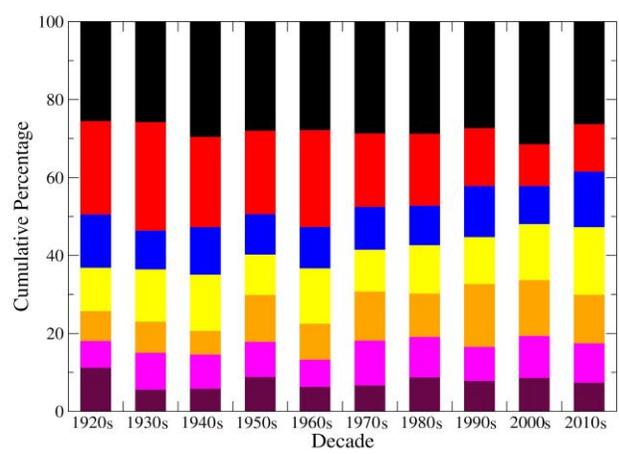


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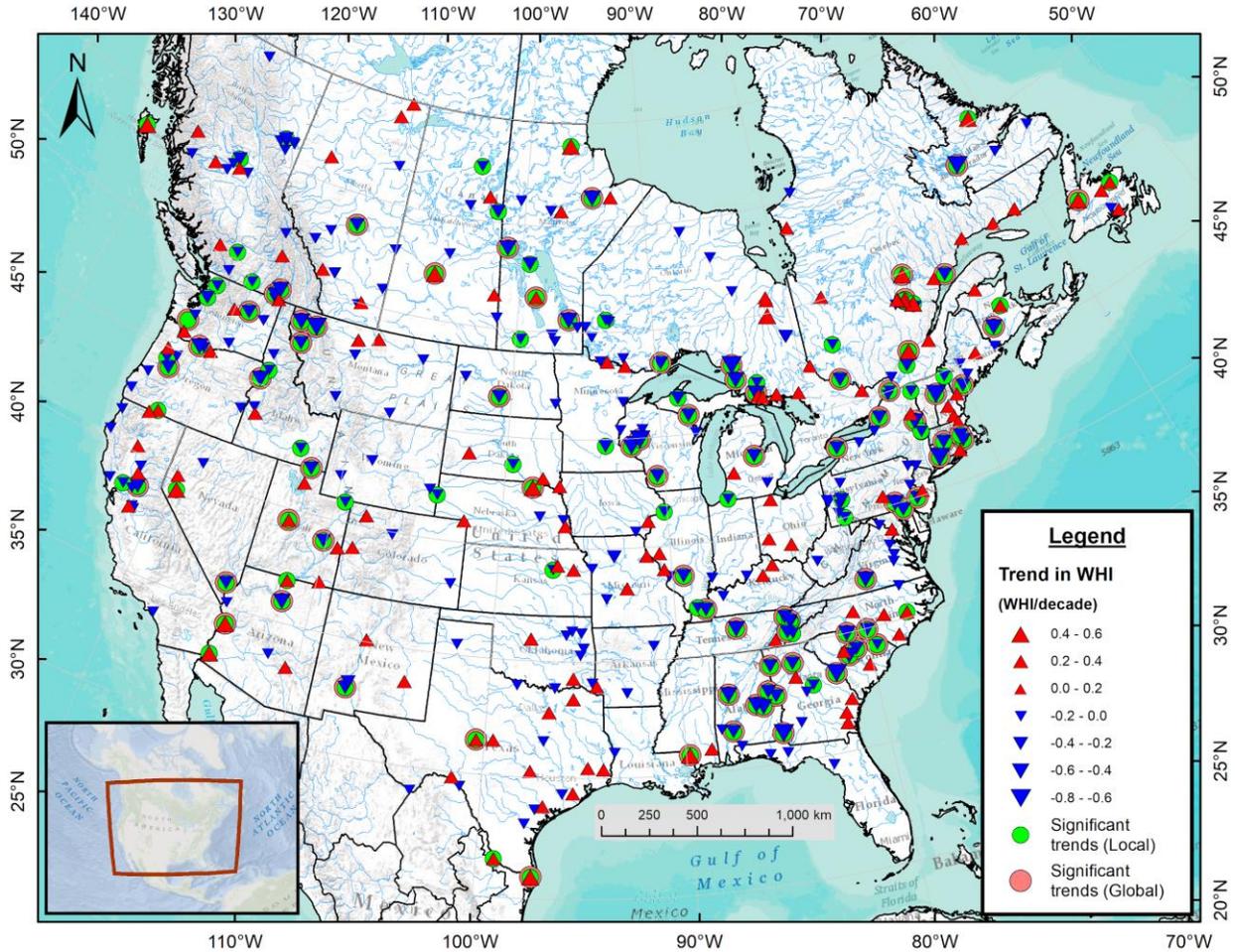
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Fig. 4 Map of the 1980-2019 monotonic trends in WHI at 380 sites across the USA and Canada. Red upward (blue downward) pointing triangles indicate positive (negative) trends. Trend magnitudes are proportional to the triangle sizes and green circles (pink outlines) indicate locally (globally) statistically-significant trends ($p < 0.05$). Results are shown only when $n_y \geq 30$ years.

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Table 1 List of sites with the top ten ranking WHI values, 1980-2019.

Rank	Site	WHI
1	Chattahoochee R. at Buford Dam (GA)	3.299
2	Chattahoochee R. at West Point (GA)	3.276
3	Colorado R. at Hoover Dam (AZ/NV)	3.222
4	Nelson R. (MB)	2.916
5	Niagara R. (ON/NY)	2.900
6	Colorado R. at Lees Ferry (AZ)	2.844
7	Montreal R. (Lake Superior, ON)	2.790
8	Montreal R. (Ottawa Basin, ON)	2.716
9	Holston R. at Cherokee Dam (TN)	2.675
10	Columbia R. at Grand Coulee Dam (WA)	2.662

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AZ: Arizona, GA: Georgia, MB: Manitoba, NV: Nevada, NY: New York,
ON: Ontario, TN: Tennessee, WA: Washington

Figures

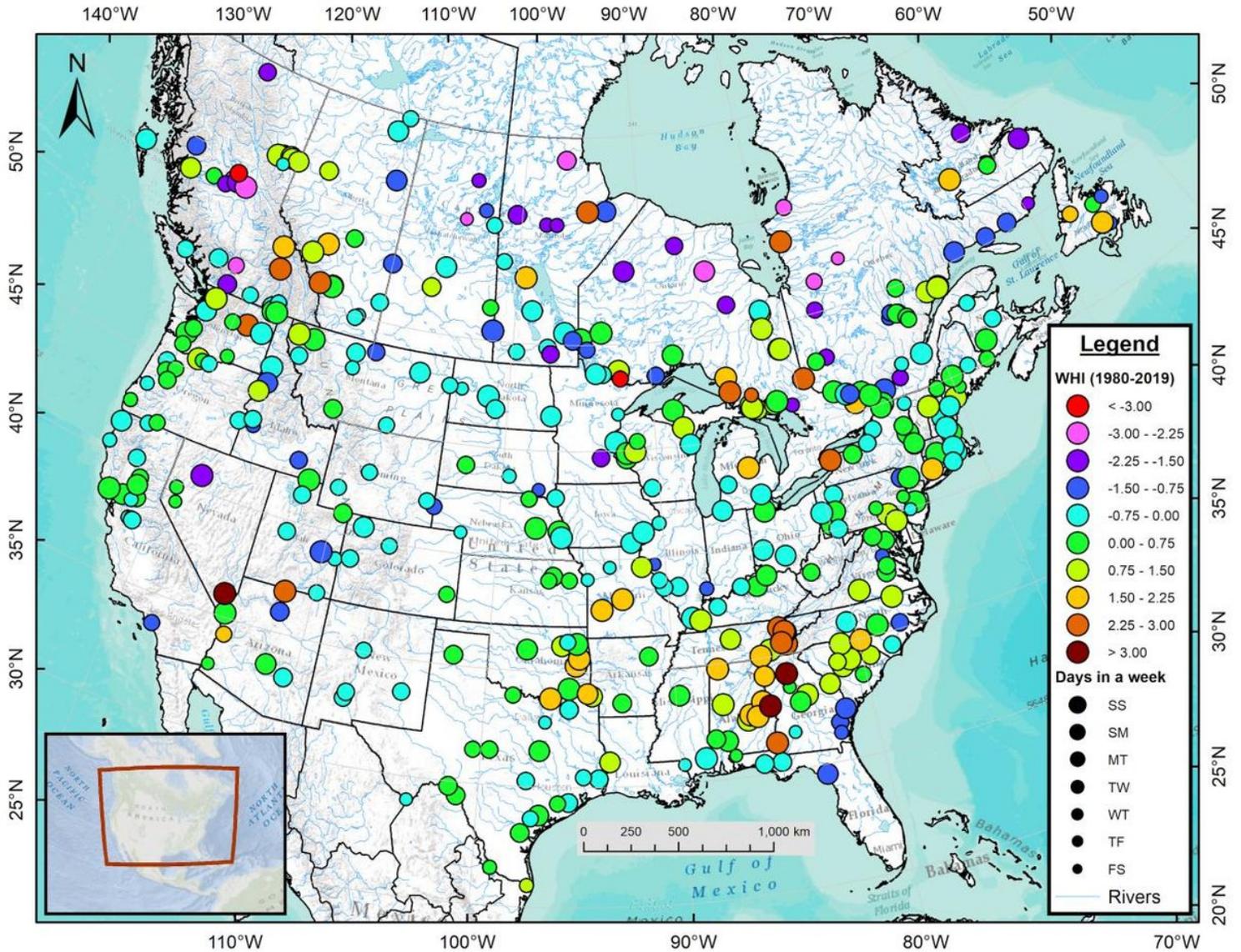


Figure 1

Map of the 1980-2019 mean WHI values for 400 sites across the USA and Canada. Circle size corresponds to the two consecutive days with low flows beginning with the Saturday/Sunday (SS, largest symbols) combination and ending with the Friday/Saturday (FS, smallest symbols).

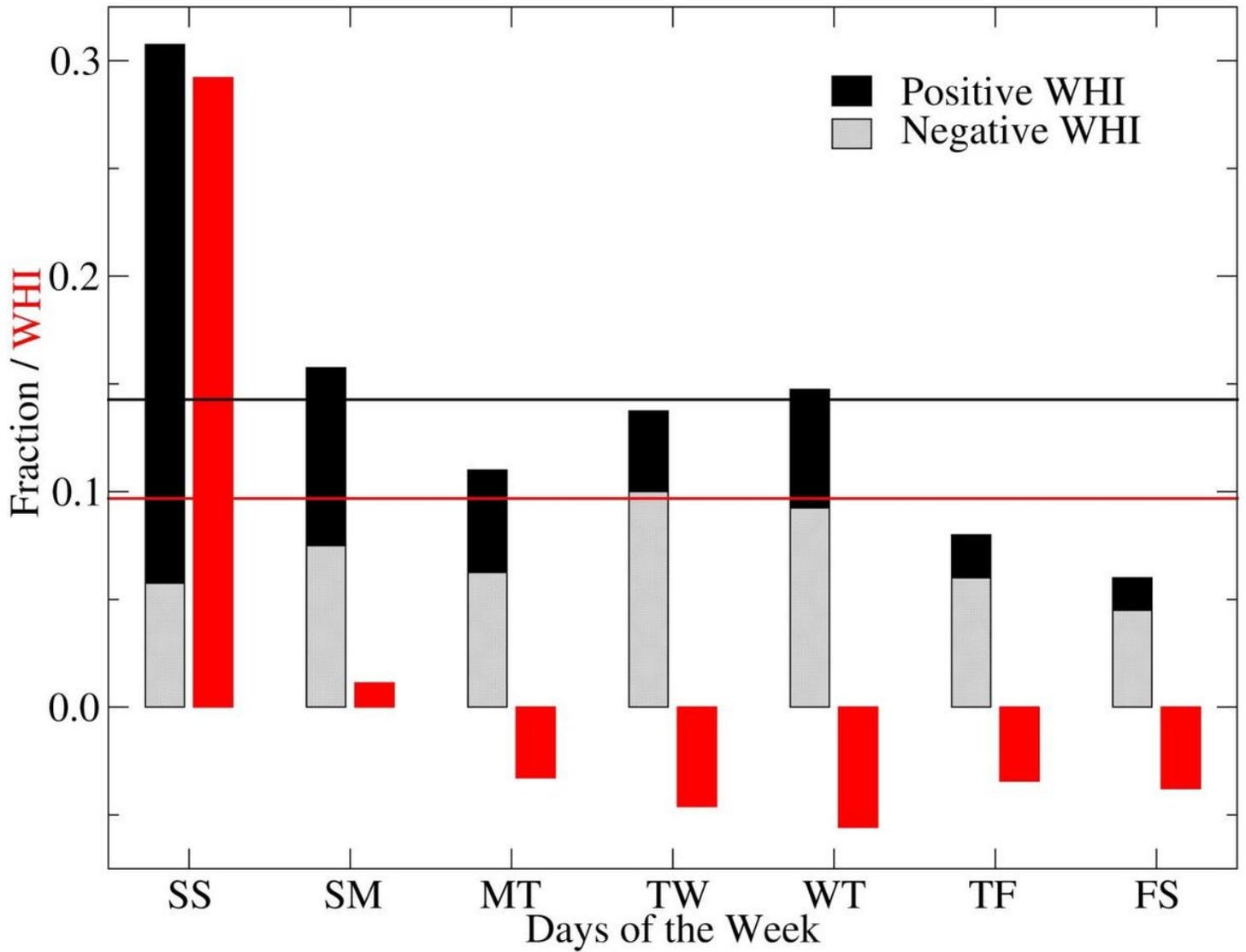


Figure 2

Histogram of the 1980-2019 frequency distribution of low flow days and corresponding WHI values. Black bars denote the two consecutive days with low flows while red bars represent the WHI values for 400 sites across the USA and Canada, 1980-2019. Fractions of the two consecutive days with low flows are partitioned according to positive (solid) and negative (hatched) WHI values. The days of the week begin with the Saturday/Sunday (SS) combination and end with the Friday/Saturday (FS) combination. The horizontal black line denotes the expected value if the two-day low flows were distributed randomly while the horizontal red line marks the mean WHI across the 400 sites.

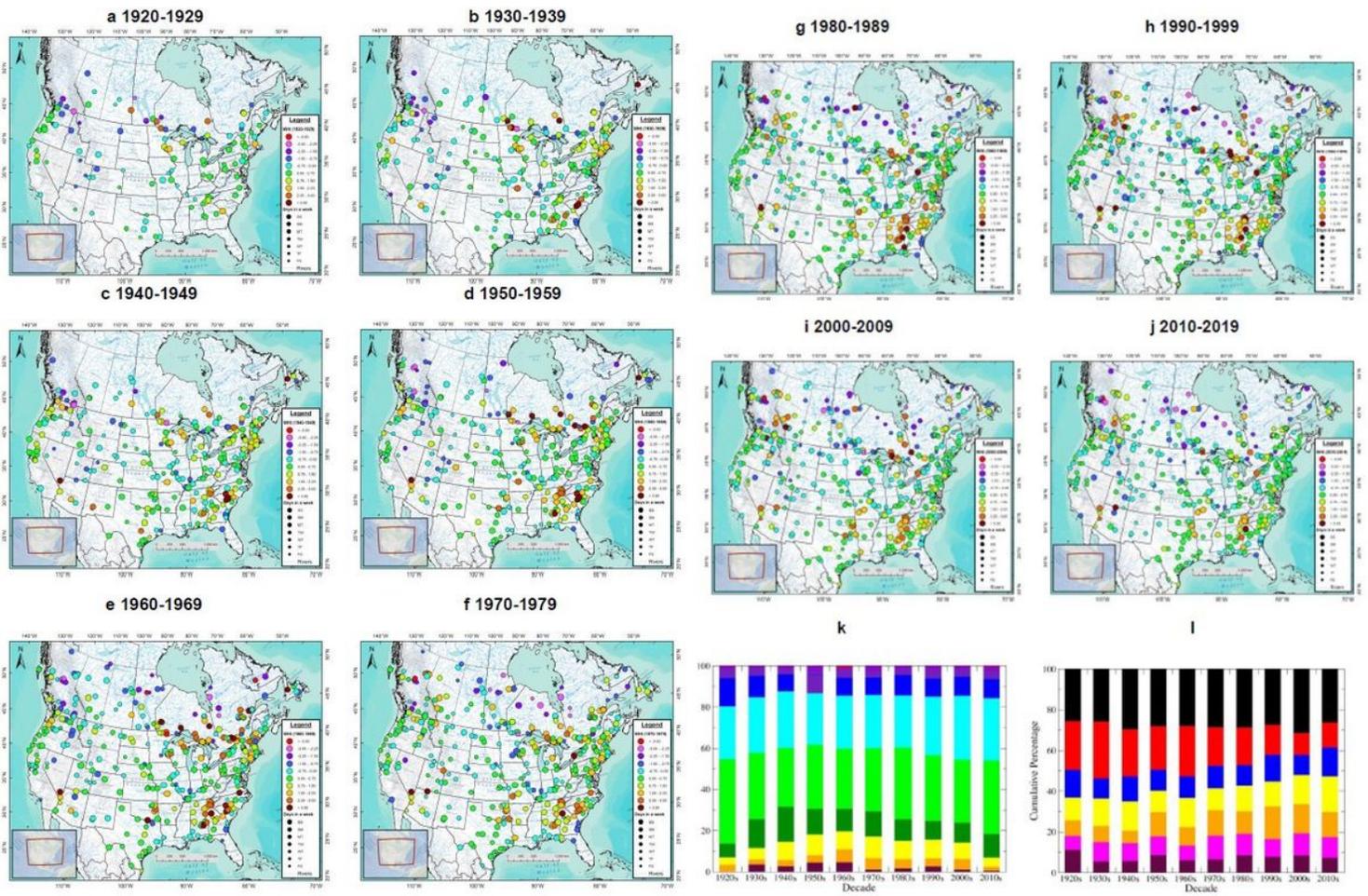


Figure 3

Maps of the decadal mean WHI values for 400 sites across the USA and Canada. Maps are shown for a 1920-1929, b 1930-1939, c 1940-1949, d 1950-1959, e 1960-1969, f 1970-1979, g 1980-1989, h 1990-1999, i 2000-2009, and j 2010-2019. Circle size corresponds to the two consecutive days with low flows beginning with the Saturday/Sunday (SS, largest symbols) combination and ending with the Friday/Saturday (FS, smallest symbols). Results are shown only when $n_y \geq 5$ years in a given decade. Panels k and l represent the cumulative percentage of sites falling within one of 10 WHI bins and one of seven two-day combinations of low flows, respectively. In k, WHI bins match those used in the spatial plots a-j with a similar color palette (e.g., the maroon bars indicate $\text{WHI} \geq 3.0$ starting at a zero cumulative percentage). In l, the two-day combinations with low flows start on Friday/Saturday at a zero cumulative percentage (maroon bars) and end on Saturday/Sunday at 100% (black bars).

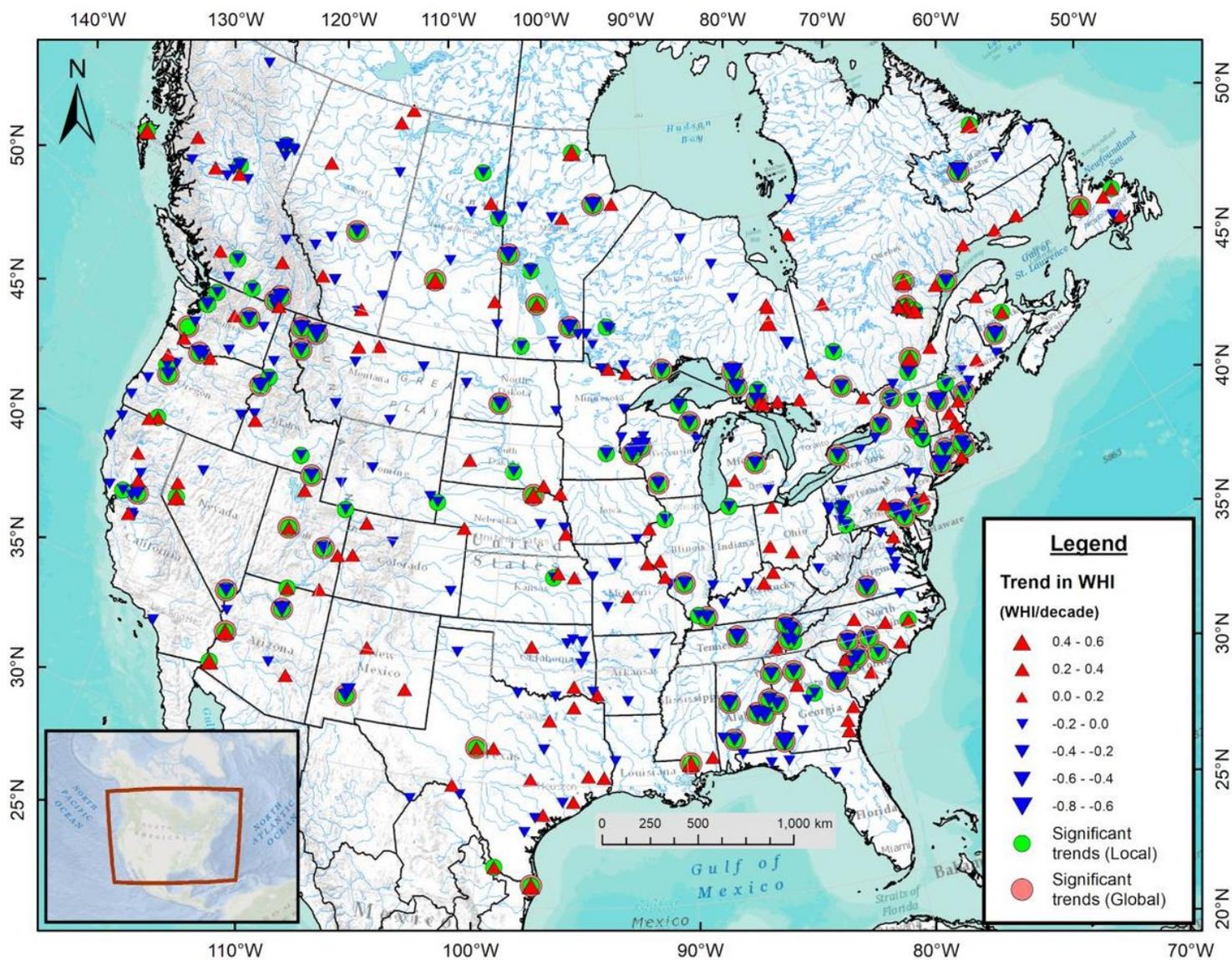


Figure 4

Map of the 1980-2019 monotonic trends in WHI at 380 sites across the USA and Canada. Red upward (blue downward) pointing triangles indicate positive (negative) trends. Trend magnitudes are proportional to the triangle sizes and green circles (pink outlines) indicate locally (globally) statistically-significant trends ($p < 0.05$). Results are shown only when $n_y \geq 30$ years.

Supplementary Files

This is a list of supplementary files associated with this preprint. Click to download.

- [SupplementaryInformation.pdf](#)
- [SupplementaryTable2.xlsx](#)
- [SupplementaryTable3.xlsx](#)
- [WHITimeSeries.xlsx](#)