

# Dr Joel Fiddes

Geoscientist

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## Currently

I am a geoscientist with over 15 years of interdisciplinary experience working across research institutions, international organisations and donor projects. My main interest is on high mountain processes related to natural hazards, water resources and resulting impacts upon communities. I use and develop geoscientific models and other datascience tools in combination with field campaigns to understand these processes and improve mapping and forecasting methods. I am currently working at the WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research, based in Davos, Switzerland.

## Education

- 2009-13 **University of Zurich** PhD Geoscience. Thesis: Subgrid Simulation of Land Surface Variables in Heterogeneous and Remote Environments: Application to Mountain Permafrost. [ETH library](#).
- 2006-07 **University of Edinburgh** MSc Environment & development. Thesis: Impact of climate change on snow-based water resources in Afghanistan.
- 2001-04 **University of Aberdeen** BSc Tropical Environmental Science. Thesis: Sustainability of subsistence hunting on Neotropical mammal species in North-East Peruvian Amazon.

## Employment & Projects

- 2018- **WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF** *Research scientist*. Investigating snow processes in High Asia using models, EO data and field measurements under SNF project "From Cloud to Ground: Snow Accumulation in Extreme Environments". SDC funded projects in Central Asia CROMO-ADAPT (2021-2025) and WWCS together with CARITAS CH (2020-2024). Both projects focus on mountain related water and hazards nexus and collaborate with an extensive network of regional partners. Member of the Swiss Polar Institute flagship project "PAMIR".
- 2020-2022 **Permian Global** *Consultant*. Supporting carbon prospecting projects through remote sensing analysis, code routines for carbon models. Tools for automated retrieval and analysis of remote sensing datasets to estimate deforestation rates.
- 2018-20 **Landell Mills Ltd** *Consultant* Zarafshan River Basin Programme, EU TA project with Ministry of Energy and Water Resources, Tajikistan. Develop pilot routines for monitoring and modelling snow based water resources.
- 2017-18 **University of Oslo** *Scientist* Swiss National Science Foundation research scholar. Developing data assimilation and uncertainty framework for large area snowpack simulations in mountain regions.
- 2017-18 **World Meteorological Organisation** *Consultant* for the WMO programme Global Cryosphere Watch. Developing a global solution for interoperability of CryoNet monitoring stations and GCW dataportal.
- 2014-17 **WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF** *Data scientist*. Developing and managing data systems for the SwissEx/ OSPER project a large interdisciplinary environmental data acquisition and management project with multiple ETH domain partners. The WSL/ SLF is a leading federal institute in Switzerland for both hydrology and natural hazard assessments.
- 2016 **Himalaya Permafrost ETH SEED** *Scientist* Establishment of high altitude permafrost monitoring sites Langtang, Nepal. Training young Nepalese scientists. International permafrost and data tools workshop with participants from Afghanistan, India and Nepal.
- 2014 **University of Zurich** *Scientist*. Managing PERMOS network of ground and rock temperature measurements at Jungfrauoch, Schilthorn, Piz Corvatsch. Including extensive fieldwork and rope-access work. Processing GST, meteorological station and borehole data ([www.permos.ch](http://www.permos.ch)).
- 2014 **University of Zurich** *Scientist*. Swiss Development Cooperation/DEZA funded climate change adaptation programme ([www.ihcap.in](http://www.ihcap.in)). Developing baseline maps for key land surface variables in the Indian Himalaya with direct coordination with several Indian Government agencies (lead Department of Science & Technology).
- 2012 **Afganistan Research Evaluation Unit** *Consultant*. Remote sensing analysis of water availability in irrigated zones in Sar-i-Pul River Basin.
- 2011 **GIZ/ Hydroc** *Consultant*. Disaster risk management project in Badakhshan, Afghanistan for GIZ. Component avalanche hazard risk zones.

- 2011 **Afghanistan Research Evaluation Unit** *Consultant*. Remote sensing analysis of water availability in irrigated zones in Panj Amu River Basin.
- 2010-11 **Landell Mills Ltd.** *Consultant*. As part of Panj-Amu River Basin Programme (P-ARBP) in north-east Afghanistan developed a strategy together with a range of tools to improve water resource management. Training the first government team in snow sampling techniques (training course Wakhan Corridor). Establishment of high altitude field sites.
- 2009 **Agha Khan Foundation** *Consultant*. Project "PMIS": Remote sensing analysis of irrigated zones in Baghlan NE Afghanistan. GIS & Remote Sensing – Applications in Social Water Management. ->
- 2009-13 **University of Zurich** *Scientific researcher/ PhD Candidate*. National science foundation funded research undertaken to develop and test tools that enable efficient application of numerical models driven by climate datasets in complex terrain. Work resulted in three first author publications. Oral and poster presentations at several international conferences. Supervision of Msc and BSc. students. Fieldwork in high mountain environments. Large-scale deployment of temperature sensors.
- 2009 **Agha Khan Foundation** *Consultant*. Training in GIS systems and geospatial survey for AKF project engineers in Puli Khumri NE Afghanistan.
- 2007-17 **Independent Consultant** Projects mainly in field of water resources include: Environmental change analysis, capacity building, surveying / mapping, technical training. Clients include: multinational/ national donors, development consultancies, NGOs, e.g. European Commission, Landell Mills Ltd. Agha Khan Foundation, GIZ, Concern Worldwide.
- 2008 **Welt Hunger Hilfe** *Consultant*. Upper catchment protection project "PEEP": training in geospatial survey and GIS systems for PEEP project staff.
- 2008 **Concern Worldwide/ Welt Hunger Hilfe** *Consultant*. Social water management and upper catchment protection projects "SWIM/SMILE": Established GIS systems and conducted training in geospatial surveys for project staff. Surveying of irrigation channels and infrastructure.
- 2008 **Concern Worldwide** *Consultant*. Market analysis for natural resource based products in Takhar NE Afghanistan.
- 2007 **Landell Mills Ltd.** *Consultant*. Environmental screening report for irrigation rehabilitation component of Kunduz River Basin Programme. Additionally provided concept note on methods in snow and ice monitoring.
- 2007 **Mercy Corps** *Researcher*. Author of a policy document for global humanitarian agency Mercy Corps. Construction and analysis of a 30 year satellite data record to assess possible changes in snowcover area (SCA) over this period and implications for water resources of Northern Afghanistan. Collaboration with the Landell Mills led European Commission Kunduz River Basin Programme.
- 1999-04 **Formative research expeditions** Gulf apex predator prey project (*University Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska, 2004*). Subsistence hunting study (*University of Aberdeen/ Royal Geographical Society, Peruvian Amazon, 2003*), Coral reef biodiversity monitoring (*Greenforce/ University of Malaysia, Borneo, 2001*), Tian Shan biodiversity study (*BSES/CEH, Kyrgyzstan, 1999*).

## Core competences

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|-----------|---|
| Technical | Land-surface modelling and model development with focus on mountain environments.<br><br>Environmental analysis using climate data and other large datasets.<br><br>Remote sensing services, analysis of environmental change, snow cover, drought conditions, cropping patterns etc.<br><br>Proposal writing and Project management. |
| Field     | Establishment of field monitoring tools, deployment of sensors/ stations.<br><br>Scientific expedition planning and leading.<br><br>Impact of climate change in mountain regions and implications for development activities/ communities.  |
| Training  | Development of project specific modelling tools.<br><br>Workshops and lectures.<br><br>Field training in glacio-hydrological methods.   |

## Technical skills

Geospatial analysis  
 Numerical models  
 Remote sensing / image processing  
 Statistical analysis  
 Large data processing  
 SQL / Postgres  
 Database management  
 Server admin  
 Cluster/HPC computing  
 Linux  
 R  
 Python  
 AWK  
 Bash  
 LaTeX

## Publications

### Peer reviewed

- 2022 **Fiddes, J.**, K. Aalstad, and M. Lehning, 2022: TopoCLIM: rapid topography-based downscaling of regional climate model output in complex terrain v1.1. *Geosci. Model Dev.*, 15, 1753–1768.
- Kronenberg, M., W. van Pelt, H. Machguth, **J. Fiddes**, M. Hoelzle, and F. Pertziger, 2022: Long-term firn and mass balance modelling for Abramov glacier, Pamir Alay. *The Cryosphere Discussions*, 1–33.
- Kruyt, B., R. Mott, **J. Fiddes**, F. Gerber, V. Sharma, and D. Reynolds, 2022: A Downscaling Intercomparison Study: The Representation of Slope-and Ridge-Scale Processes in Models of Different Complexity. *Front Earth Sci. Chin.*, 10, 789332.
- 2021 Shugar, D. H., **et al.** “A massive rock and ice avalanche caused the 2021 disaster at Chamoli, Indian Himalaya.” *Science (New York, NY)* 373.6552 (2021): 300-306.
- 2020 Barandun, Martina, **Joel Fiddes**, Martin Scherler, Tamara Mathys, Tomas Saks, Dmitry Petrakov, and Martin Hoelzle. 2020. “The State and Future of the Cryosphere in Central Asia.” *Water Security* 11 (December): 100072.
- Bavay, M., **Fiddes, J.** and Godøy, Ø., 2020. Automatic Data Standardization for the Global Cryosphere Watch Data Portal. *Data Science Journal*, 19(1), p.6. DOI: [10.5334/dsj-2020-006](https://doi.org/10.5334/dsj-2020-006)
- Bender, E., Lehning, M., & **Fiddes, J.** 2020. Changes in climatology, snow cover and ground temperatures at high alpine locations, *Front. Earth Sci. In press*.
- Philipson, Christopher D., Mark E. J. Cutler, Philip G. Brodrick, Gregory P. Asner, Doreen S. Boyd, Pedro Moura Costa, **Joel Fiddes**, et al. 2020. “Active Restoration Accelerates the Carbon Recovery of Human-Modified Tropical Forests.” *Science* 369 (6505): 838–41.
- 2019 **Fiddes, J.**, Aalstad, K., and Westermann, S.: Hyper-resolution ensemble-based snow reanalysis in mountain regions using clustering, *Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci.*, 23, 4717–4736, 2019, [10.5194/hess-23-4717-2019](https://doi.org/10.5194/hess-23-4717-2019)
- 2016 Allen, SK., **Fiddes J.**, Linsbauer, A., Randhawa, S.S., Salzmann, N. 2016: Indo-Swiss partnership initiates first local permafrost studies in the Indian Himalaya. *Current Science*, 11, 3, 550-553, [Researchgate](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311111111)
- 2015 **Fiddes, J.**, Endrizzi, S., and Gruber, S.: Large-area land surface simulations in heterogeneous terrain driven by global data sets: application to mountain permafrost, *The Cryosphere*, 9, 411–426, doi:10.5194/tc-9-411-2015, 2015. [10.5194/tc-9-411-2015](https://doi.org/10.5194/tc-9-411-2015)
- 2014 **Fiddes, J.** & Gruber, S. 2014: TopoSCALE v.1.0: downscaling gridded climate data in complex terrain, *Geoscientific Model Development*, 7, 387–405, [10.5194/gmd-7-387-2014](https://doi.org/10.5194/gmd-7-387-2014)
- 2013 Habib, H., Anceno, A. J., **Fiddes, J.**, Beekma, J., Ilyuschenko, M., Nitivattananon, V., & Shipin, O. V. (2013). Jumpstarting post-conflict strategic water resources protection from a changing global perspective: Gaps and prospects in Afghanistan. *Journal of environmental management*, 129, 244–259. [Researchgate](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260111111)
- 2012 **Fiddes, J.** & Gruber, S. 2012: TopoSUB: a tool for efficient large area numerical modelling in complex topography at sub-grid scales, *Geoscientific Model Development*, 5, 1245–1257, [10.5194/gmd-5-1245-2012](https://doi.org/10.5194/gmd-5-1245-2012)
- Schmid, M.-O., Gubler, S., **Fiddes, J.** & Gruber, S. 2012: Inferring snow pack ripening and melt out from distributed ground surface temperature measurements, *The Cryosphere*, 6, 1127–1139, [10.5194/tc-6-1127-2012](https://doi.org/10.5194/tc-6-1127-2012)
- 2011 Gubler, S., **Fiddes, J.**, Keller, M., & Gruber, S. 2011. Scale-dependent measurement and analysis of ground surface temperature variability in alpine terrain. *The Cryosphere*, 5(2), 431–443,

- 2010 Matthias Keller, Guido Hungerbuehler, Oliver Knecht, Suhel Sheikh, Jan Beutel, Stefanie Gubler, **Joel Fiddes**, and Stephan Gruber. 2010. iAssist: rapid deployment and maintenance of tiny sensing systems. In Proceedings of the 8th ACM Conference on Embedded Networked Sensor Systems (SenSys '10). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 401-402. [10.1145/1869983.1870043](https://doi.org/10.1145/1869983.1870043)

#### Non-peer reviewed

- 2021 Allen, S., H. Playford Frey, and J. Fiddes, 2021: Assessment of Contributing Factors of the May 2021 Disasters in Tajikistan : A Forensic Study Under the Strengthening Critical Infrastructure Against Natural Hazards Project.
- 2019 Muccione, V, and **Fiddes, J.** "State of the Knowledge on Water Resources and Natural Hazards under Climate Change in Central Asia and South Caucasus." Managing Disaster Risks and Water under Climate Change. 2019. [reliefweb](#)
- The Status and Role of the alpine Cryosphere in Central Asia(Book Chapter). Martin Hoelzle, Martina Barandun, Tobias Bolch, **Joel Fiddes**, Abror Gafurov, Veruska Muccione, Tomas Saks and Maria Shaghedanova in The Aral Sea Basin: Water for Sustainable Development in Central Asia eds.Stefanos Xenarios, Dietrich Schmidt-Vogt, Manzoor Qadir, Barbara Janusz-Pawletta, Iskandar Abdullaev, 2019, Routledge ISBN 9781138348882. [Chapter 8 open access](#)
- 2018 Muccione, Veruska; Huggel, Christian; Salzmann, Nadine; **Fiddes, Joel**; Nussbaumer, Samuel U; Novikov, Viktor; Hughes, Geoff (2018). Climate-cryosphere-water nexus: Central Asia outlook. Zoï Environment Network. [doi: 10.5167/uzh-161876](#).
- Mathias Bavay,**Joel Fiddes**, Charles Fierz, Michael Lehning, Fabiano Monti, Thomas Egger. The Meteolo pre-processing library for operational applications. Proceedings, International Snow Science Workshop, Innsbruck, Austria, 2018 [Montana Library](#).
- 2014 **Fiddes, J. T.** (2014). Subgrid Simulation of Land Surface Variables in Heterogeneous and Remote Environments: Application to Mountain Permafrost (Doctoral dissertation). [ETH library](#).
- 2011 Beekma, J. and **Fiddes, J.** 2011. Floods and droughts: The Afghan water paradox. Centre for Policy and Human Development, Afghanistan Human Development Report 2011. [online version](#)
- 2010 Keller, M., Hungerbuehler, G., Knecht, O., Sheikh, S., Beutel, J., Gubler, S., **Fiddes, J.** and Gruber, S. (2010). iAssist: rapid deployment and maintenance of tiny sensing systems. In Proceedings of the 8th ACM Conference on Embedded Networked Sensor Systems (pp. 401-402). ACM.
- Fiddes, J.** (2010). Climbs and expeditions: Asia, Afghanistan, Hindu Kush, Koh-i-Beefy. American Alpine Journal. 52, 84, pp.255. [online version](#) [BBC article](#)
- 2007 **Fiddes, J.** (2007). Afghanistan: Implications Of Climate Change For Water Resources In The Kunduz River Basin in Climate Challenges: Bridging the Knowledge Gap.Mercy Corps Climate change unit. [online version](#)

#### Grants & Awards

- 2019 Expedition to install permafrost monitoring network in Northern Alai Range Tajikistan, Mount Everest Foundation (4K CHF)
- 2017 TopoSAT: High resolution surface modelling of the Himalayan cryosphere with satellite data assimilation. Swiss National Science Foundation Post-doc mobility (120K CHF)
- 2015 Data and monitoring tools for improved water resource management in Afghanistan. SEED Grant (10K CHF)
- 2001 Prince of Wales Student Scholarship (Tuition fees)

#### Professional memberships

International Association of Cryospheric Sciences  
European Geosciences Union

#### Reviewer for

The Cryosphere  
Geoscientific Model Development  
Remote Sensing  
Journal of Climatology  
Geographica Helvetica  
Environmental Earth Sciences  
Annals of Glaciology  
Journal of Geophysical Research

## Languages

English (*Mother tongue*)  
German (*Intermediate*)  
Romansh (*Basic*)  
Dari (*Basic*)

## Country experience

Afghanistan  
Borneo  
Kyrgyzstan  
India  
Nepal  
Norway  
Peru  
Switzerland  
Tajikistan

## References

Available on request.  
[Short CV](#)