LAURA BRUGGER

Climate & Socio-Environmental Scientist

Climate and socio-environmental scientist with nearly a decade of experience integrating environmental and social data to assess climate risk and resilience. Focused on using spatial analysis and scientific synthesis to support climate adaptation, conservation, and resilience efforts for government and nonprofit partners.

🎓 EDUCATION

2024

Saint Louis University
Ph.D. in Public and Social Policy – *Dissertation: "Spatial heterogeneity in the relationship between disasters, resilience, and political participation."*
📍 St. Louis, MO

2019

Saint Louis University
M.A. in Sociology
📍 St. Louis, MO

2011

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
B.A. in Psychology & Spanish
📍 Lincoln, NE

💼 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2024 -

Assistant Research Professor
Washington University in St. Louis
📍 St. Louis, MO

- Lead interdisciplinary research integrating geospatial, environmental, and social data to help establish the Brown School's environmental research portfolio.
- Launched and directed the Disasters & Democracy Lab, creating a dedicated research platform for work on disaster risk, governance, and civic outcomes.
- Convened and led five interdisciplinary research teams advancing new research agendas and proposals across climate risk, urban ecology, and conservation.
- Publish peer-reviewed research and applied briefs on disaster risk, environmental exposure, biodiversity, pollution, and human health outcomes.
- Provide scientific leadership in multi-institutional collaborations on nature-based solutions, contributing to grant proposals and research presentations.
- Translate scientific evidence into decision-relevant guidance and syntheses for conservation, climate adaptation, and resilience.

2021 | 2024

Senior Statistical Data Analyst
Social Policy Institute, Washington University in St. Louis
📍 St. Louis, MO

- Led end-to-end data collection, management, and analysis for concurrent research projects, delivering decision-ready datasets for multiple principal investigators.
- Designed and executed quantitative and spatial analyses of climate risk and vulnerability, producing maps and research syntheses.
- Authored research briefs and technical outputs translating complex findings for policy and practitioner audiences.
- Produced 20+ briefings for government, nonprofit, and community stakeholders, with research cited in federal policy discussions, including the White House (2021).

2015 | 2021

Grants Specialist / Program Coordinator
Saint Louis University
📍 St. Louis, MO

- Coordinated proposal development to support competitive interdisciplinary projects.
- Delivered interdisciplinary programs, events, and stakeholder engagement activities.

✊ NONPROFIT EXPERIENCE

2025 –
Board Member
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
📍 St. Louis, MO

2011 – 2015
Program Manager
The Covering House
📍 St. Louis, MO

📖 SELECTED RESEARCH OUTPUTS

2025
Disasters and democracy: Spatial analysis of how Hurricane Helene impacted the 2024 election.
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Research Conference.
📍 Seattle, WA

Alexander, L., Brugger, L., Li, B., & Reeves, A.

2025
Staying afloat: How families raising children with disabilities used the expanded Child Tax Credit.
Journal of Disability Policy Studies.

Brugger, L., Parker, C., Hamilton, L., Baughman, A., Jarzombek, C., Comeau, M., & Roll, S.

2024
Spatial Variation in Disaster Risk and Voter Turnout: Insights from Los Angeles, Miami, and San Antonio
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Research Conference.
📍 Washington, D.C.

Brugger, L., Spindler-Ruiz, P. & Sandoval, N.

💰 SELECTED FUNDING

2025-2026
Hurricane Helene & the 2024 Election
WashU Geospatial Research Initiative, $20,000
Co-Principal Investigator

2025
Mapping the Vote: Climate & Voter Behavior
WashU Here & Next Initiative, $25,000
Co-Principal Investigator

2025
Disasters & Democracy Lab
WashU Center for the Environment
Principal Investigator

2022-2025
Workforce Economic Inclusion & Mobility Project
JPMorgan Chase Foundation, $1.58M
Co-Investigator

🖥 TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2025
Environmental Justice & Mental Health
Washington University in St. Louis

2022-2024
Policy Evaluation & Analysis
Washington University in St. Louis

2022-2024
Foundations of Biostatistics
Washington University in St. Louis