

CHAZ Florida Hurricane Hazard Map

Interactive Visualization of Tropical Cyclone Wind Hazard Data

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Abstract

This report documents an interactive web-based visualization tool for exploring tropical cyclone wind hazard data for Florida. The tool displays exceedance intensity data from the Columbia HAZard (CHAZ) model, allowing users to compare historical baseline conditions (1995–2014) with mid-century (2041–2060) and late-century (2081–2100) climate projections. Users can select from three SSP emissions scenarios (SSP245, SSP370, SSP585), six different CMIP6 climate models (or a multi-model mean), and various return periods to explore how hurricane wind hazards may evolve under different future pathways.

1 Introduction

Tropical cyclones pose significant risks to Florida’s coastal communities. Understanding how hurricane wind hazards may change under future climate scenarios is essential for long-term planning, infrastructure design, and risk assessment. This project provides an accessible, interactive tool for exploring CHAZ model output data.

The visualization is available online at: <https://metaphorz.github.io/CHAZHazard/>

2 Data Source

The underlying data comes from the CHAZ Hazard Maps dataset published on Dryad:

Meiler, S., et al. (2025). CHAZ Hazard Maps: Global coastal wind hazard maps from the CHAZ tropical cyclone model. Dryad. <https://doi.org/10.5061/dryad.qfttdz0vz>

The dataset provides exceedance intensity values—the wind speeds (in m/s) expected to be exceeded at various return periods (10, 25, 50, 100, 250, and 1000 years)—for coastal locations worldwide. For this visualization, we extracted 2,094 land-based points covering Florida.

3 The CHAZ Model

3.1 Overview

The Columbia HAZard model (CHAZ) is a statistical-dynamical downscaling model for estimating tropical cyclone hazard. Rather than predicting specific future hurricanes, CHAZ generates thousands of synthetic storms based on climate conditions from global climate models (GCMs), then aggregates statistics to estimate hazard metrics.

3.2 Model Components

CHAZ consists of three primary modules:

1. **Genesis Module:** Uses the Tropical Cyclone Genesis Index (TCGI) to estimate where and when storm precursors form based on environmental conditions.
2. **Track Module:** Employs a Beta-Advection Model (BAM) that moves storms forward using environmental steering flow from the climate model.
3. **Intensity Module:** Evolves storm intensity using an autoregressive model with deterministic forcing (based on potential intensity, wind shear, humidity) and stochastic elements.

3.3 Return Period Calculation

A common question is how CHAZ calculates return periods (e.g., 100-year or 1000-year wind speeds) from a historical period of only 20 years. The key is that CHAZ uses the *climate conditions* from each period to generate thousands of synthetic storms—far more than actually occurred.

The process works as follows:

1. **Climate input:** CHAZ reads environmental conditions (SST, wind shear, humidity, etc.) from the climate model for the time period of interest
2. **Synthetic storm generation:** Using these conditions, CHAZ generates approximately 1,600 synthetic years of storms (80 ensemble members \times 20 years per member)
3. **Wind speed sampling:** For each grid point, CHAZ records the maximum wind speed from every synthetic storm that passes nearby
4. **Extreme value statistics:** These thousands of wind speed samples are fitted to an extreme value distribution
5. **Return period extraction:** From the fitted distribution, CHAZ calculates the wind speed expected to be exceeded with probability $1/T$ per year, where T is the return period

For example, a 100-year return period wind speed is the value that has a 1% annual exceedance probability based on the statistical distribution of all synthetic storms. This approach allows robust estimation of rare events (like 1000-year winds) because the synthetic storm ensemble provides sufficient statistical samples, even when the underlying climate period is only 20 years.

3.4 Model Scope and Limitations

CHAZ focuses on large-scale environmental factors that drive tropical cyclone behavior:

- Sea Surface Temperature (SST)
- Potential Intensity (PI)
- Vertical wind shear
- Mid-level humidity
- Atmospheric steering flow

The model does account for landfall-induced weakening—storms lose intensity over land due to the loss of oceanic energy and increased surface friction—but this is handled in a simplified, parameterized way.

What CHAZ does not include:

- Detailed surface roughness variations (urban vs. rural vs. forest)
- Terrain effects (hills, valleys, elevation changes)
- Building density or urban canopy effects
- Specific land cover types

The wind speeds in this dataset represent maximum sustained winds at standard measurement height (10m) from synthetic storms, without site-specific adjustments for local surface conditions. For detailed local wind hazard assessment, CHAZ output would typically be post-processed with wind field models (e.g., Holland parametric model), surface roughness correction factors, and terrain adjustments.

Additionally, because CHAZ is a *coastal* wind hazard model, data coverage is naturally denser near coastlines where hurricanes make landfall, with sparser coverage in interior regions.

3.5 Climate Model Input

The visualization includes data from six CMIP6 climate models, each run under all three SSP scenarios (SSP245, SSP370, SSP585). Users can select any individual model or view a multi-model mean that averages across all six. Table 1 describes each available model.

Table 1: Climate models available in the visualization

| Model | Institution | Country |
|-------------------------|---|---------|
| CESM2 | National Center for Atmospheric Research | USA |
| CNRM-CM6-1 | Centre National de Recherches Météorologiques | France |
| EC-Earth3 | EC-Earth Consortium | Europe |
| IPSL-CM6A-LR | Institut Pierre Simon Laplace | France |
| MIROC6 | Multiple Japanese Institutions | Japan |
| UKESM1-0-LL | UK Met Office / NERC | UK |
| <i>Multi-Model Mean</i> | <i>Average of all 6 models</i> | — |

3.6 About the CMIP6 Models

These models are all part of the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 6 (CMIP6), which provides the foundation for the IPCC Sixth Assessment Reports. They represent the cutting edge of climate simulation, moving beyond simple physics to include complex Earth System processes like the carbon cycle and vegetation dynamics.

CESM2 (Community Earth System Model v2) from the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), USA, is a highly flexible, community-driven model known for its advanced representation of land-ice (ice sheets) and its CAM6 atmospheric component. It is often used as a benchmark due to its extensive documentation and broad scientific community.

CNRM-CM6-1 from CNRM (Centre National de Recherches Météorologiques), France, uses the ARPEGE-Climat atmospheric model with significant improvements in cloud representation, convection, and surface-atmosphere interactions via the SURFEX system. It is highly efficient and frequently used for High Resolution Model Intercomparison (HighResMIP).

EC-Earth3 from a European consortium of 27 research institutes across 10 countries is based on the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) Integrated Forecasting System (IFS). Uniquely, it uses the same core as the world’s leading weather prediction model, bridging short-term weather forecasting and long-term climate projection.

IPSL-CM6A-LR from Institut Pierre-Simon Laplace (IPSL), France, is a complete Earth System Model including the LMDz atmospheric model and ORCHIDEE land surface model. “LR” indicates Low Resolution, enabling very long multi-century simulations. It excels at simulating the carbon cycle and biosphere-atmosphere interactions.

MIROC6 (Model for Interdisciplinary Research on Climate) from JAMSTEC, University of Tokyo, and NIES in Japan focuses on improving internal variability—natural climate swings like El Niño. It features improved stratosphere and shallow convection representation, with particular strength in simulating the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) and tropical rainfall patterns.

UKESM1-0-LL from the Met Office Hadley Centre, UK, is a full-complexity Earth System Model that takes the physical core of HadGEM3 and adds fully interactive chemistry, aerosols, and marine/terrestrial biogeochemistry. It is one of the most comprehensive models in CMIP6, used to explore tipping points and complex climate feedbacks.

Table 2 compares the core components of each model.

Table 2: Core components of the CMIP6 climate models

| Model | Atmosphere | Land Surface | Ocean |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|
| CESM2 | CAM6 | CLM5 | POP2 |
| CNRM-CM6-1 | ARPEGE-Climat v6.3 | ISBA-CTrip | NEMO 3.6 |
| EC-Earth3 | IFS | HTESSEL | NEMO 3.6 |
| IPSL-CM6A-LR | LMDz6 | ORCHIDEE | NEMO 3.6 |
| MIROC6 | CCSR-NIES AGCM | MATSIRO | COCO 4.9 |
| UKESM1-0-LL | HadGEM3-GC3.1 | JULES | NEMO 3.6 |

3.7 Why Multiple Models?

Different climate models make different assumptions about physical processes, leading to a range of projections. By including all six models, users can:

- Assess **model uncertainty** by comparing projections across models
- Identify **robust signals** that appear consistently across models
- Use the **multi-model mean** as a consensus estimate that smooths individual model biases

4 Future Emissions Scenarios (SSP)

The visualization allows users to explore hurricane hazard under three Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs), which represent different assumptions about future socioeconomic development and greenhouse gas emissions. Table 3 describes each scenario.

Table 3: SSP scenarios available in the visualization

| Scenario | Description | CO ₂ by 2100 | Warming |
|----------|---|-------------------------|---------|
| SSP245 | Middle of the road, moderate mitigation | ~600 ppm | ~2.7°C |
| SSP370 | Regional rivalry, medium-high emissions | ~850 ppm | ~3.6°C |
| SSP585 | Fossil-fueled development, high emissions | ~1100 ppm | ~4.4°C |

The SSP number (e.g., 585) encodes both the socioeconomic pathway (first digit) and the approximate radiative forcing in W/m² by 2100 (remaining digits). SSP585 represents a future with high energy demand met primarily by fossil fuels, while SSP245 assumes moderate mitigation efforts leading to stabilization.

By comparing hazard maps across SSP scenarios, users can assess:

- How emissions pathway choices affect future hurricane hazard
- The range of possible futures for Florida’s coastal communities
- Whether certain regions show consistent hazard increases regardless of scenario

5 Time Periods and Climate Projections

The visualization includes three time periods, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Time periods available in the visualization

| Period | Years | Description |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Historical (base) | 1995–2014 | Baseline climate conditions |
| Mid-Century (fut1) | 2041–2060 | Near-future projection |
| Late-Century (fut2) | 2081–2100 | End-of-century projection |

5.1 How Future Projections Are Generated

For each time period, CHAZ:

1. Reads climate conditions (SST, winds, humidity, etc.) from the GCM
2. Calculates genesis probability using TCGI
3. Seeds thousands of synthetic storms based on genesis rates
4. Simulates each storm’s track using steering winds
5. Evolves intensity based on environmental conditions
6. Aggregates statistics across 80 ensemble members (~1,600 synthetic years)

Key climate variables that change between periods include:

- **Sea Surface Temperature (SST):** Warmer oceans provide more energy for storms
- **Potential Intensity (PI):** Maximum theoretical storm strength increases

- **Vertical Wind Shear:** Affects storm formation and intensification
- **Mid-level Humidity:** Influences moisture availability
- **Atmospheric Circulation:** Alters steering currents and track patterns

6 Visualization Features

The interactive map includes the following features:

- **Future Scenario Selector:** Choose from three SSP emissions scenarios (SSP245, SSP370, SSP585)
- **Climate Model Selector:** Choose from six individual CMIP6 models or the multi-model mean (CESM2 is the default)
- **Time Period Selector:** Switch between historical, mid-century, and late-century projections
- **Return Period Selector:** Choose from 10, 25, 50, 100, 250, or 1000-year return periods
- **Color-Coded Markers:** Circle markers colored by wind speed intensity
- **Data Point Tooltips:** Hover over any marker to display coordinates, wind speed (m/s, km/h, mph), hurricane category, and all return period values
- **Legend:** Wind speed scale with three unit systems

6.1 Interactive Help Tooltips

Each dropdown selector in the control panel includes an information icon (*i*). Hovering over any selector label displays a contextual tooltip (dark box appearing to the left) that explains:

- **Future Scenario:** Description of each SSP pathway and its warming implications
- **Climate Model:** Information about CMIP6 models and the multi-model mean
- **Time Period:** Explanation of historical baseline vs. future projections
- **Return Period:** Definition of return periods and exceedance probability

These tooltips provide in-context guidance without requiring users to consult external documentation.

7 Results

Figure 1 shows the 250-year return period wind speeds for the historical baseline (1995–2014). Figure 2 shows the same metric for the late-century projection (2081–2100).

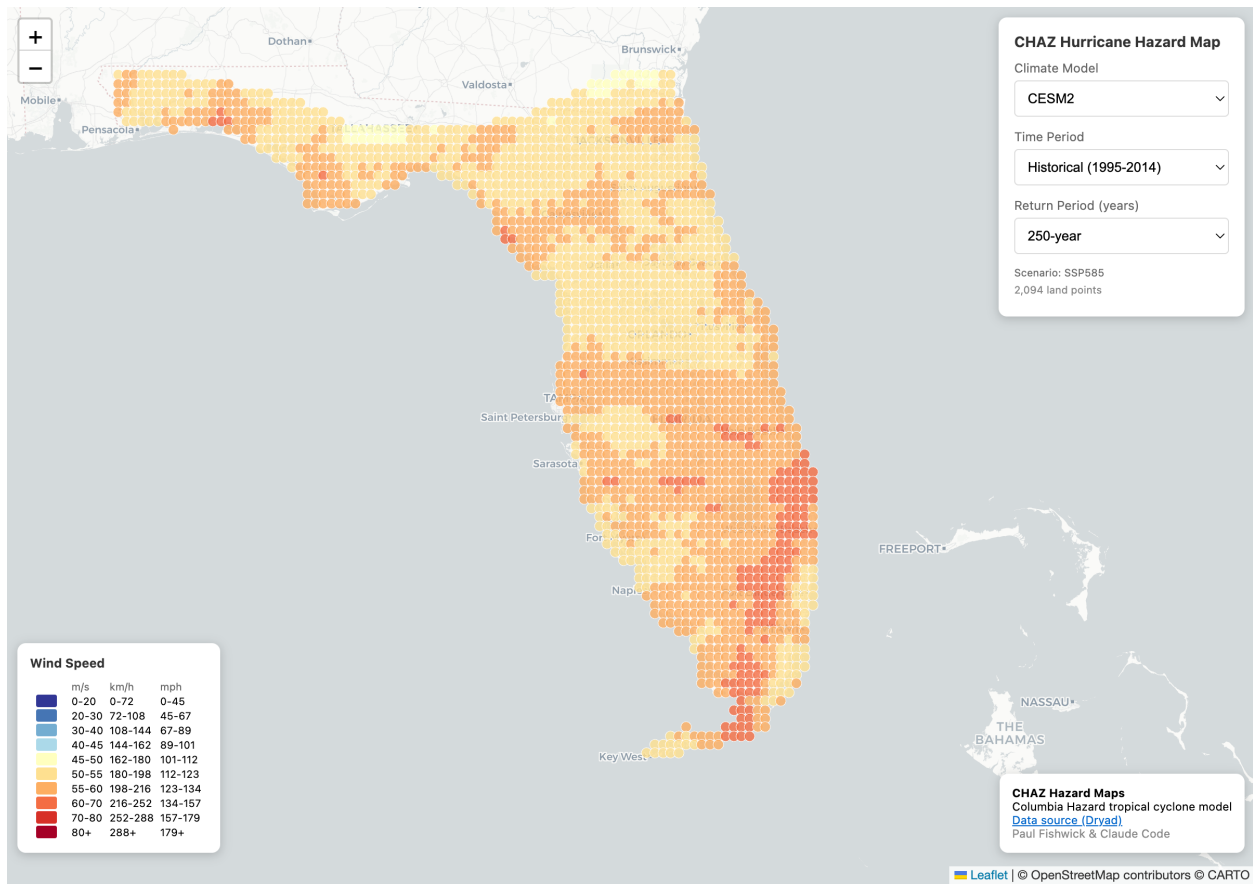


Figure 1: 250-year return period wind speeds for Florida under historical climate conditions (1995–2014). Colors indicate wind intensity from blue (lower) to red (higher).

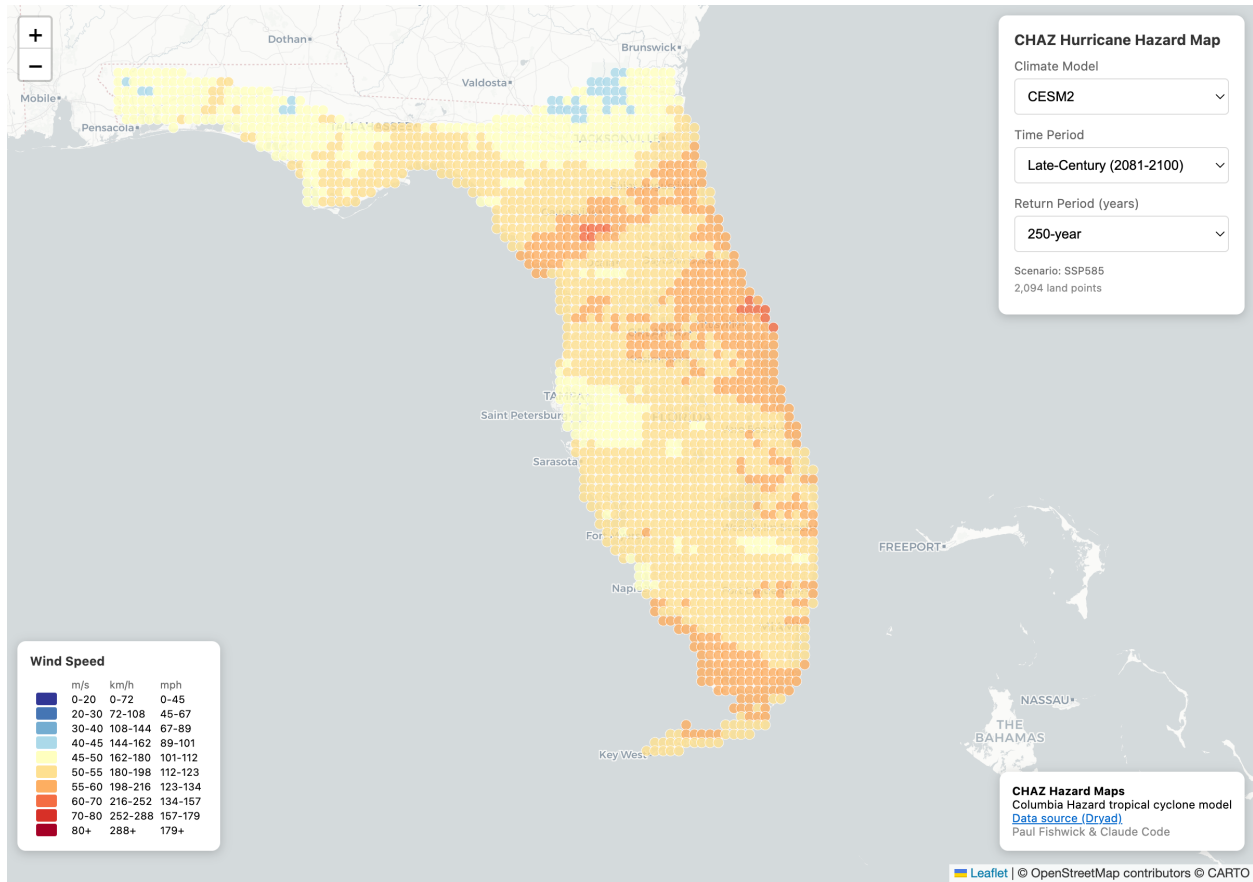


Figure 2: 250-year return period wind speeds for Florida under late-century climate projections (2081–2100, SSP585). Comparison with Figure 1 reveals changes in hazard distribution.

7.1 Key Observations

Comparing the historical and future projections reveals several patterns consistent with climate change projections for tropical cyclones:

- Overall wind intensities show increases in many coastal areas
- The spatial pattern of highest hazard remains concentrated along the southeast coast and Keys
- Some inland areas show modest changes in projected hazard

8 Technical Implementation

The visualization is built using:

- **Leaflet.js**: Open-source JavaScript library for interactive maps
- **HTML/CSS/JavaScript**: Standard web technologies for broad compatibility

- **GitHub Pages:** Free hosting for static web content

Data is embedded directly in the HTML file to avoid CORS restrictions and enable offline use. The approximately 2,094 land points are rendered efficiently using Leaflet’s CircleMarker class.

9 Data Processing

The original CHAZ data covers global coastal areas with over 1 million points per model. For this visualization:

1. Florida points were extracted using a bounding box (lat: 24–31°N, lon: 88–79.5°W)
2. Ocean points were filtered out using a Florida land polygon
3. Data for all three SSP scenarios, six climate models, and three time periods was extracted
4. The multi-model mean was computed by averaging wind speeds across all six models at each grid point for each SSP/period combination
5. Wind speeds were rounded to one decimal place to reduce file size
6. All data (3 SSP scenarios \times 7 model options \times 3 time periods \times 2,134 points) was embedded in the HTML

The resulting standalone HTML file is approximately 15 MB and requires no server—users can simply open it in any modern web browser.

10 Acknowledgments

This visualization was developed by Paul Fishwick with assistance from Claude Code. The underlying CHAZ model was developed by the Columbia University team: Drs. Suzana J. Camargo, Chia-Ying Lee, Michael K. Tippett, and Adam H. Sobel.

11 License

The visualization code is released under the MIT License. The underlying CHAZ hazard data is released under Creative Commons Zero (CC0).

12 References

1. Lee, C.-Y., Tippett, M.K., Sobel, A.H., and Camargo, S.J. (2018). An environmentally forced tropical cyclone hazard model. *Journal of Advances in Modeling Earth Systems*, 10, 233–241.
2. Lee, C.-Y., Camargo, S.J., Sobel, A.H., and Tippett, M.K. (2020). Statistical-dynamical downscaling projections of tropical cyclone activity in a warming climate. *Journal of Climate*, 33, 4815–4834.
3. CHAZ GitHub Repository: <https://github.com/cl3225/CHAZ>