Defining Hydrologic Response Units to Account for Variable Source Area Hydrology in SWAT

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Defining Hydrologic Response Units (HRUs) to Account for Variable Source Area (VSA) Hydrology in SWAT. NSF-REL Cornell University Biological and Environmental Engineering

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Soil & Water Laboratory

Immoduction:

Methodology:

Example Application:

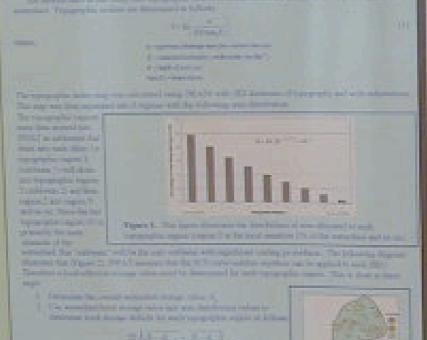


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Improvements is Water Quality Modeling:

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Abstract

Assessing the anthropogenic influences on the water quality of a watershed is essential when developing watershed management plans. Current watershed level water quality models assume that Hortonian overland flow is the dominating mechanism for runoff (e.g., SWAT). However, humid, well-vegetated watersheds with steep landscapes require variable source area (VSA) hydrology such that saturation overland flow is the primary mechanism for runoff generation. The objective of this study was to allow SWAT to account for VSA hydrology by changing the way in which it defines its hydrologic response units (HRUs). This method was demonstrated on Town Brook watershed (TBW) in Delaware County, NY. The TBW was separated into topographic regions that represent sensitivity to runoff generation using GIS databases. These regions were based on upstream drainage area, slope and transmissivity. The topographic regions became subbasins in SWAT. Each of these regions was separated into HRUs. SWAT predicted runoff and phosphorus (P) concentrations well with these HRU definitions. Using the output of SWAT, one can create maps that display where runoff and P are being generated. This is a major advantage over current water quality models.

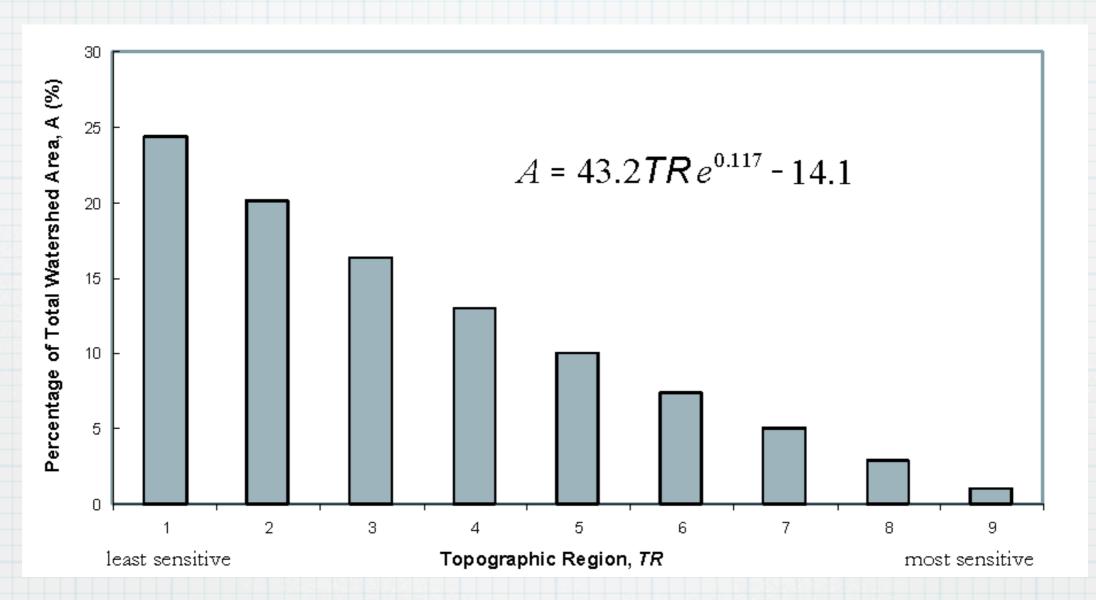
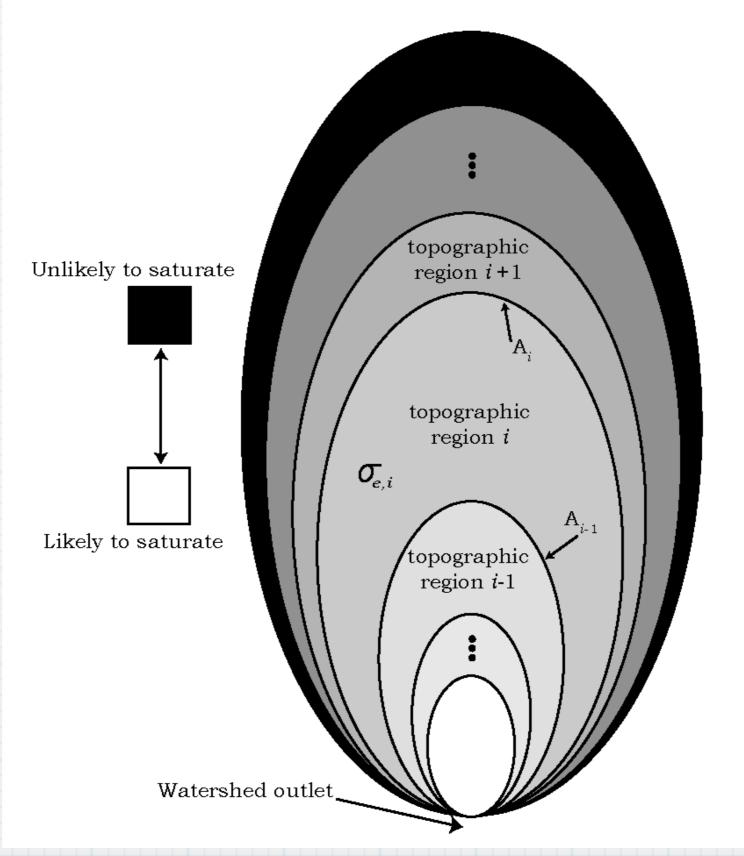


Figure 1: The exponential distribution of areas given to each of the topographic regions.



TFigure 2: This diagram indicates the orientation of the variables in Equation 3.

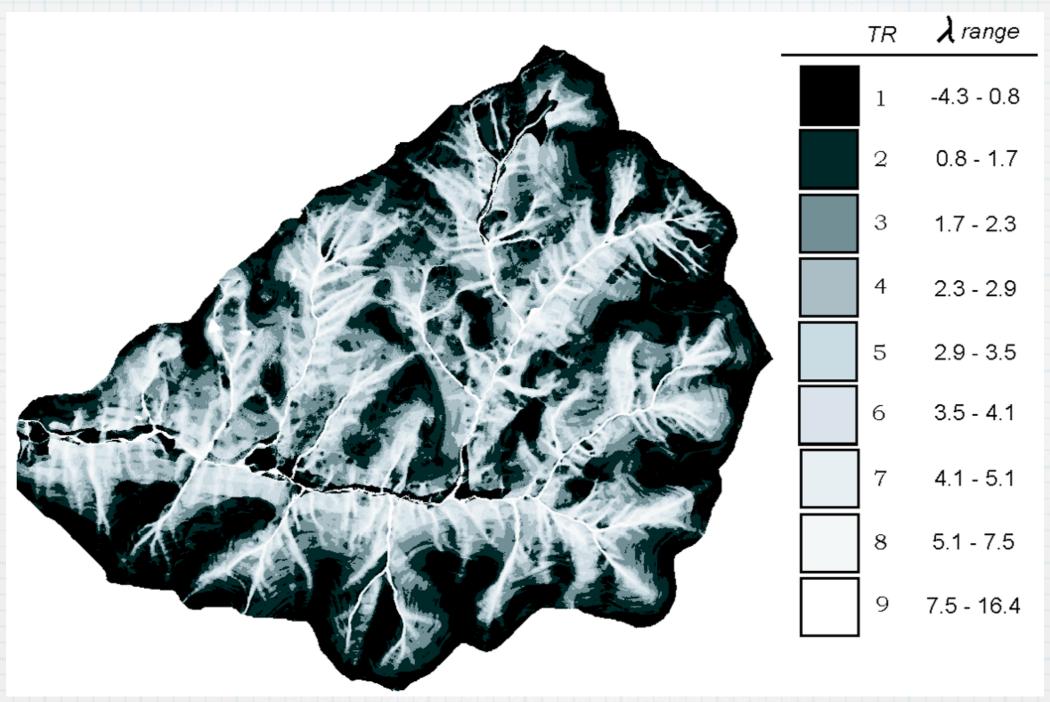


Figure 3: This map illustrates the division of Town Brook watershed into topographic regions. The lighter the value the more sensitive the region is to generating runoff.

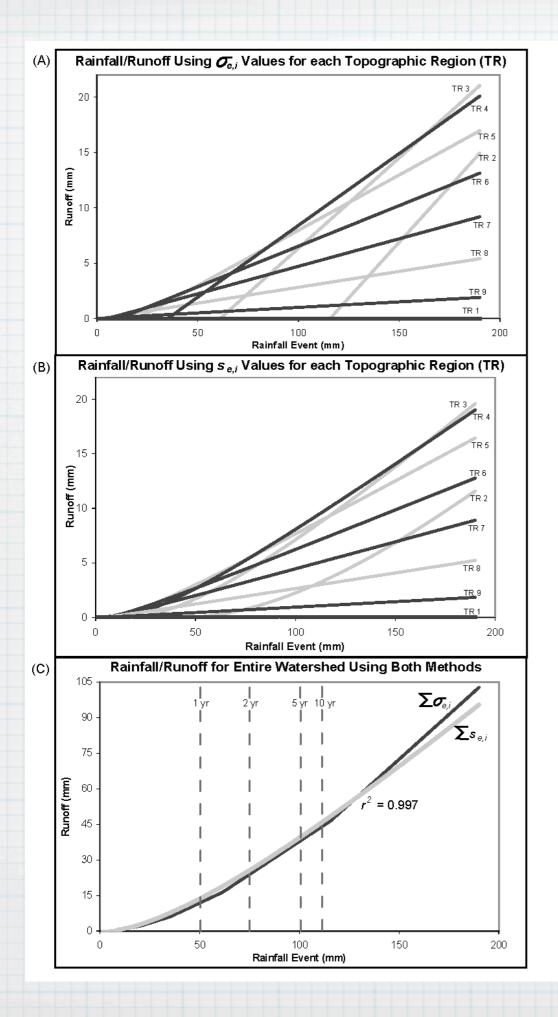


Figure 4: These plots illustrate (A) the linear $\sigma_{e,i}$ rainfall/runoff relationships and (B) their respective "fitted" SCS curve number equations; (C) illustrates a comparison of the two methods on a watershed level (i.e., the sum of each of the individual topographic regions for both methods) and the 1, 2, 5, and 10 year flood events (USWB, 1961).

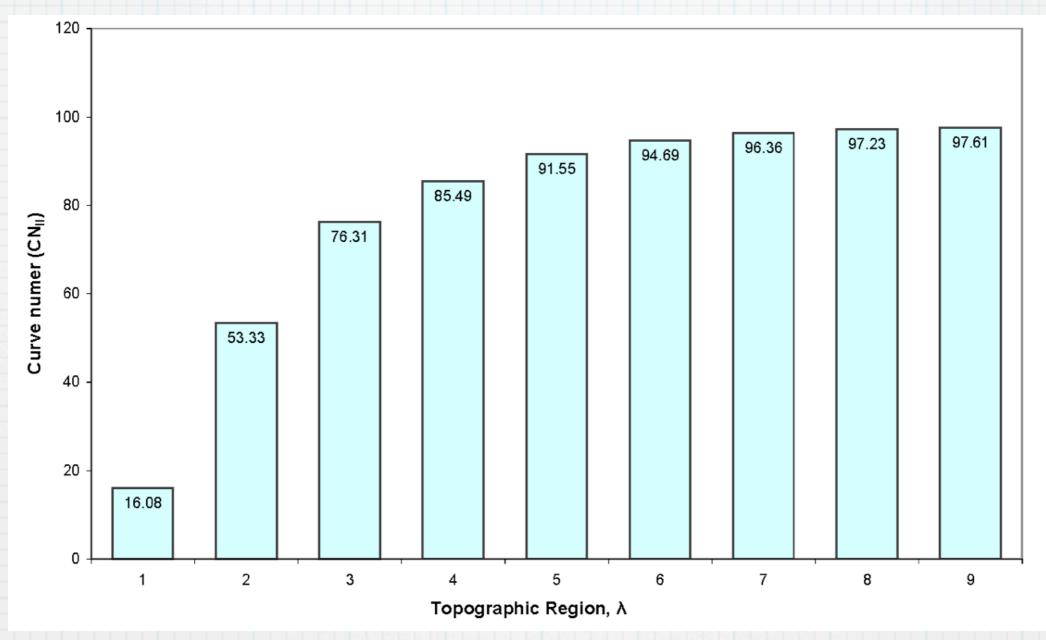


Figure 5: The curve numbers for each topographic region in the Town Brook watershed.

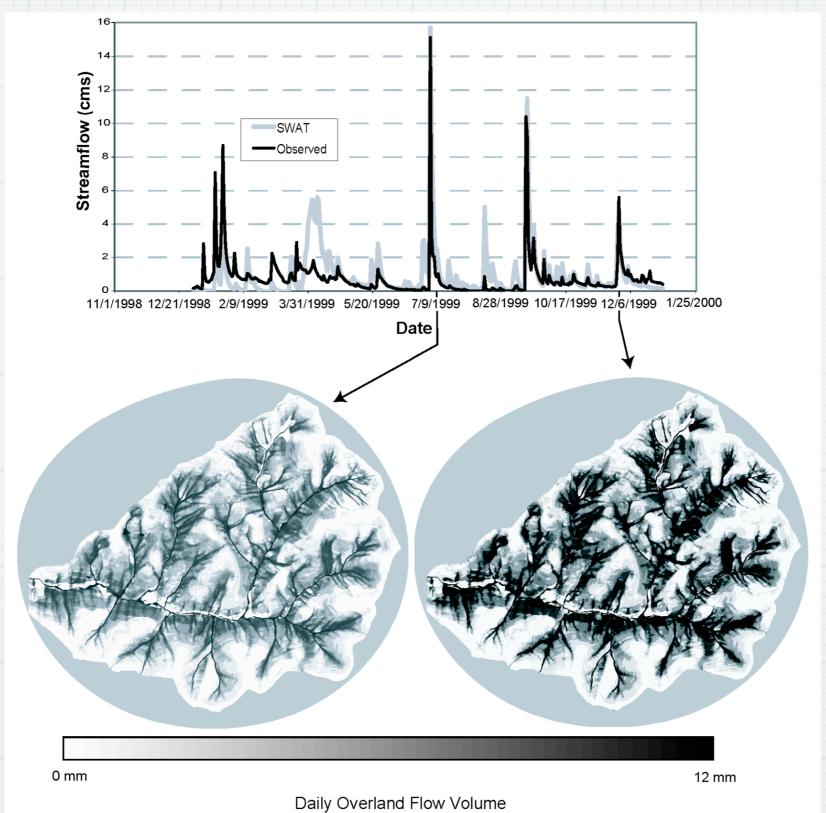
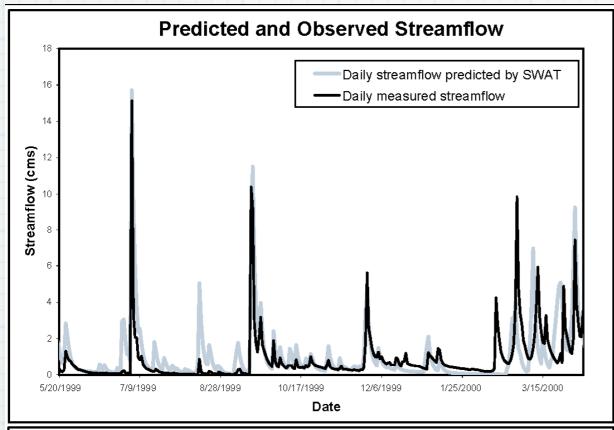


Figure 6 Predicted and actual runoff for the outlet of Town Brook watershed in 1999; the maps indicate the saturation excess volume distribution for two sample days.



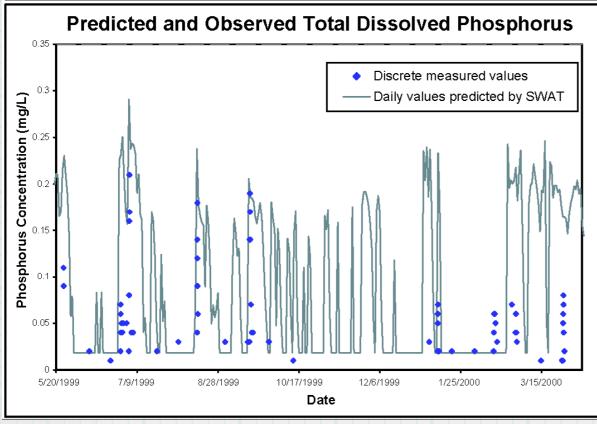


Figure 7: These plots display both (A) runoff and (B) P concentrations (observed and predicted) for the outlet of Town Brook Waterhsed.

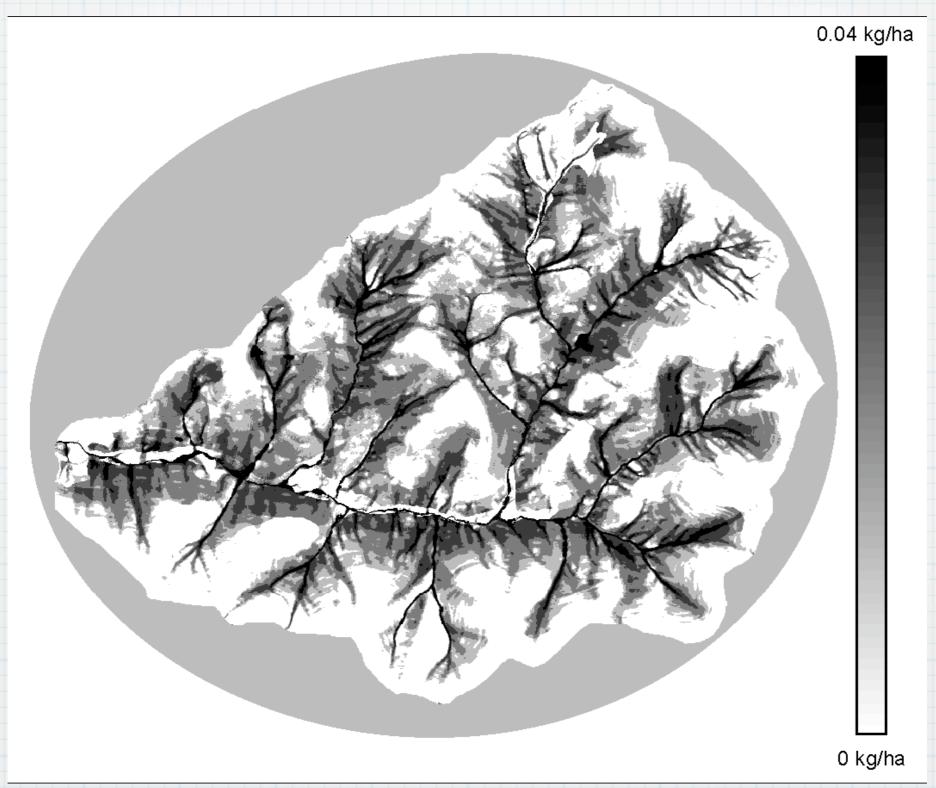


Figure 8: This map illustrates the predicted P load distribution of Town Brook watershed on November 27, 1999.