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Water Source Partitioning for Shrubland Transpiration Using Innovative Field Methods

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Water Source Partitioning for Shrubland Transpiration Using Innovative Field Methods

D.A. Devitt, M.H. Young and M. Lachniet
A. Wagner, J Koonce, B. Bird, and J. Healey
Introduction

• Climate change models predict a decline in precipitation over the next few decades throughout much of the southwest.

• Such change has the potential to shift water uptake dynamics of phreatophytes

• If groundwater pumping also occurs, the impact of climate change could be exacerbated.

• A better understanding of the forces that drive the coupling and decoupling of phreatophytes to groundwater is needed.
Nevada is a Basin Range State

Vegetation on the valley floor of Spring Valley and Snake Valley is dominated by a mixed shrubland
Research Hypotheses

• A shift in groundwater oscillations may signal a shift in water uptake (vadose vs groundwater)
• The shift in water source may depend on shrub type, time of ppt. and soil water in storage.
• Estimating transpiration at the plant level combined with % cover of each species will enable eddy flux stand ET estimates to be partitioned.
• Estimate groundwater evapotranspiration based on groundwater oscillations.
\[ ET_G = S_Y (\Delta s/t + R) \]

- \( S_Y \) is the specific yield of the aquifer
- \( \Delta s \) is the daily change in storage
- \( t \) is the time
- \( R \) is the slope of the net inflow
Estimates of specific yield based on soil texture

Loheide et al. 2005
Soil Sampling In The Capillary Fringe

Actual Measurement of Specific Yield
• Estimate mix stand evapotranspiration based on eddy covariance.
Vegetation Assessment

Species Composition

Canopy Breakdown

- Bare Soil: 54.55%
- Greasewood: 20.21%
- Sagebrush: 15.54%
- Dead Cover: 6.99%
- Shadscale: 1.37%
- Rabbitbrush: 1.0231%

Percent Species

Sagebrush
Greasewood
Shadscale
Rabbitbrush
Estimate actual transpiration at the species level with Granier probes.
Use of Sanfranin Red Dye

Assessing area of conductive tissue
• Use isotopic analyses of soil moisture, groundwater and stem exudation to help estimate fractional water uptake from the vadose zone.
• Link groundwater oscillations to % phreatophytes, depth to groundwater, $ET_{\text{ref}}$, transpiration and vadose soil water in storage.
Fiber Optic (FO) Distributed Temperature Sensing (DTS) Pole Setup

- 7.6 cm (3”) Sch 40 PVC Pole wrapped with FO cable
- Thermocouples located every 20 cm for first 100 cm, and 100 cm thereafter
- Install to depth just below groundwater table
- Measures average temperature over 1 m of FO cable (vertical resolution of approximately 1.14 cm depth per 1 m of cable)
Example Results

- 16 Jan through 23 Jan, 2010 temperature variations as a function of soil depth
- Diurnal variations more pronounced near the surface and damped with depth
- Phase lag in soil temperature as compared to ambient air temperature
• Newly DTS-wrapped PVC poles need to be installed
• Pending on an instrument grant, soil moisture instruments (5TE/MPS-1) and drain gauges, will also be installed
Current Status

• Assessed species composition and % cover.

• Collecting groundwater, eddy flux and Penman Monteith ET_{ref} data (Arnone and Jasoni)

• Dye studies conducted to assess area of conductive tissue of each species and general patterns to guide probe installation to occur within the next two weeks.

• Installation of DTS (distributed temperature sensing fiber cable) is now ready for installation.

• Samples taken in late fall - soil, groundwater and transpirational capture for isotopic analysis. Additional samples will be taken in two weeks, and then during the active growing period in May and more stressful periods of July and August.

• Still waiting for permit for the Snake Valley site!!
2007
5/10-9/5

\[ Y = 5.04 + 0.47X, \quad R^2 = 0.96^{**} \]
Snake Valley 1
2007

Cumulative ET, ET, Rain (mm)

Month

Snake Valley 2
2007

Cumulative ET, ET, Rain (mm)

Month