Multi-site evaluation of APEX for crop and grazing land in the Heartland region of the US

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- International SWAT Conference, Pernambuco, Brazil, July 2014 -
In an ideal world...

- We would have tools to:
  - Give feedback on agricultural management
  - Document water quality benefits from agricultural practices
  - Select practices based on what happens with each of them

APEX has been promoted for use with limited data
Can we use APEX to do this?
Is APEX reliable without calibration?
What is APEX?

- Agricultural Policy / Environmental eXtender
- Field- to small watershed-scale model
- Daily time step
  - Daily temperature and rainfall as inputs
- Simulates
  - Crop growth
  - Nutrient & carbon cycling
  - Runoff
  - Erosion
  - Nutrient losses

Novelty Watersheds
Greenley, MO
APEX Evaluation Objectives

- Can APEX predict Q, Sed and P loss without calibration?
  - Best professional parameterization

- How well can APEX predict Q, Sed and P with calibration?
  - Full calibration

- Can we develop a regional calibration for APEX?
Evaluation Datasets

Diverse data set:
4 states
5 soil regions
5 agricultural systems
4 tillage systems
18 P source scenarios
5 soil test P levels

- Tier 1 sites
- Tier 2 sites
- Tier 2 MRBI sites (7 sites in 3 counties)
Tier 1 Evaluation Datasets

- **Size**: 1 – 5 ha.
- **Crops**
  - Corn / Soybean / Sorghum
  - Pasture
- **Tillage**
  - No-till / Reduced till
- **Fertility**
  - Fertilizer
  - Poultry litter
- **Structures**
  - Grassed waterway
  - Buffers
Best professional judgment parameterization

- Options selected through best professional judgment
- SSURGO soils data (from web soil survey)
- Management data from the site
- Measured soil test P, total C, and total N.
- Parameter file based on best professional judgment, recommendations from model developers, and published reports.
Full Model calibration

- Start with the best professional judgment parameterization
- Add site-specific soils data
  - Site-specific soil investigation, measured horizon depths
  - Measured soil test P, total C, total N, and total P by horizon
  - Measured texture
  - Measured bulk density and hydraulic properties if possible
- Sensitivity analysis based on model performance
  - $r^2$, Nash-Sutcliffe, percent bias, regression slope, minimum square error
- Manual calibration followed by automated parameter optimization.
Autocalibration

• PAROPT
• Stepwise
• Multi-variable
• Multi-objective
• Parm file parameters

Published June 30, 2014

Evaluation of a Stepwise, Multiobjective, Multivariable Parameter Optimization Method for the APEX Model

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Abstract

Hydrologic models are essential tools for environmental assessment of agricultural nonpoint-source pollution. The automatic calibration of hydrologic models, though efficient, demands significant computational power limiting their application. PHYSICALLY BASED distributed hydrologic models have become useful and efficient alternatives to in situ experiments at the watershed scale for environmental assessments. However, hydrologic models often contain parameters that cannot be measured directly due to limitations in mea-
Event-based Model Calibration - Runoff

Franklin County KS, Field 7

- Observed
- Best Professional Judgement ($r^2 = 0.31; \text{NSE} = -0.31$)
- Calibrated ($r^2 = 0.84; \text{NSE} = 0.73$)

Runoff (mm)
Event-based Model Calibration – P Loss

Franklin County KS, Field 7

- Observed
- Best Professional Judgement ($r^2 = 0.26; NSE = -12$)
- Calibrated ($r^2 = 0.64; NSE = 0.40$)
“Annual” Comparisons

- Event-based calibration is complete for 18 watersheds at 5 locations
  - Close communication with model developers to improve APEX

- Data were summed at each location by year
  - 80 site years of data

- Evaluate accuracy of APEX predictions across multiple sites and management
BPJ: Best Professional Judgment

Runoff

The graph shows a scatter plot comparing predicted runoff (BPJ and Calibrated) against measured runoff (mm). The data points are plotted with a blue dot for BPJ and an orange dot for Calibrated. Two regression lines are fitted to the data:

- **BPJ**:
  - Regression equation: \( y = 0.72x + 27 \) (\( r^2 = 0.65 \))
  - Nash-Sutcliffe Efficiency (NSE): 0.61

- **Calibrated**:
  - Regression equation: \( y = 0.59x + 36 \) (\( r^2 = 0.57 \))
  - NSE: 0.51

The graph indicates a positive correlation between predicted and measured runoff, with BPJ showing a slightly better fit than the Calibrated method.
Erosion

BPJ: Best Professional Judgment

Predicted Sediment Loss (Mg/ha) vs. Measured Sediment Loss (Mg/ha)

- **BPJ:**
  - Equation: $y = 0.74x + 0.27$ (r² = 0.68)
  - NSE = 0.67

- **Calibrated:**
  - Equation: $y = 0.57x + 4.14$ (r² = 0.19)
  - NSE = -0.92
P Loss

BPJ: Best Professional Judgment

\[ y = 0.47x + 2.8 \quad (r^2 = 0.37) \]

\[ NSE = 0.34 \]

\[ y = 0.45x + 1.1 \quad (r^2 = 0.66) \]

\[ NSE = 0.59 \]
Conclusions

- Best professional judgment parameterization provided satisfactory runoff estimates.
- Best professional judgment parameterization did not provide satisfactory sediment loss or P loss estimates:
  - Over-prediction of low sediment and P loss.
- Calibrated APEX greatly improved sediment and P loss estimates.
Future Work

- Finalize a regional calibration
  - 6 control parameters
  - 7 parameters of the parm file
  - Still 8 parameters undefined

- Evaluate regional calibration on all the sites: Tier 1 and 2
The Team

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