

Data from: Evapotranspiration is resilient in the face of land cover and climate change in a humid temperate catchment

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Date Published: January 26, 2018

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5061/dryad.6fm52

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water balance of the Augusta Creek catchment over a 50-vr period (1965-2014); including changes in land use, precipitation, stream discharge, and evapotranspiration at both the catchment scale (by inference from water balance) and from specific land cover types (by soil water content).

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Hamilton S, Hussain M, Lowrie C, Basso B, Robertson G (2018) Evapotranspiration is resilient in the face of land cover and climate change in a humid temperate catchment. Hydrological Processes, online in advance of print. https://doi.org/10.1002/hyp.11447

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Hamilton SK, Hussain MZ, Lowrie C, Basso B, Robertson GP (2018) Data from: Evapotranspiration is resilient in the face of land cover and climate change in a humid temperate catchment. Dryad Digital Repository. https://doi.org/10.5061/dryad.6fm52

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Keywords evapotranspiration, evaporation, crops, forest, land use, climate

change

Spatial Coverage USA, Michigan, Kalamazoo and Barry Counties

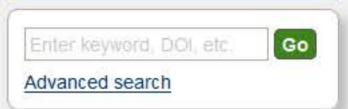
Abstract

In temperate humid catchments, evapotranspiration returns more than half of the annual precipitation to the atmosphere, thereby determining the balance available to recharge groundwaters and support stream flow and lake levels. Changes in evapotranspiration rates and therefore catchment hydrology could be driven by changes in land use or climate. Here we examine the catchment water balance over the past 50 y for a catchment in southwest Michigan covered by cropland, grassland, forest, and wetlands. Over the study period about 27% of the catchment has been abandoned from row-crop agriculture to perennial vegetation and about 20% of the catchment has reverted to deciduous forest, and the climate has warmed by 1.14°C. Despite these changes in land use, precipitation and stream discharge, and by inference catchment-scale evapotranspiration, have been stable over the study period. The remarkably stable rates of evapotranspirative water loss from the catchment across a period of significant land cover change suggest that rainfed annual crops and perennial vegetation do not differ greatly in evapotranspiration rates, and this is supported by measurements of evapotranspiration from various vegetation types based on soil water monitoring in the same catchment. Compensating changes in the other meteorological drivers of evaporative water demand besides air temperature—wind speed, atmospheric humidity, and net radiation—are also possible, but cannot be evaluated due to insufficient local data across the 50-y period. Regardless of the explanation, this study shows that the water balance of this landscape has been resilient in the face of both land cover and climate change over the past 50 y.

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