

WRF sensitivity to infiltration using urban parametrizations and LCZs

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April 23, 2024

1 Introduction

We would like to test the sensitivity of the WRF (v4.3.1) model to the infiltration in the urban environment. For that reason, we set-up an experiment over the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA, in Spanish) at 1 km horizontal resolution with the representation of the ‘*Local Climate Zones*’ (LCZs [Stewart and Oke, 2012](#)) and the use of the BEP ([Martilli et al., 2002](#)) + BEM ([Salamanca and Martilli, 2010](#)) urban canopy schemes.

We are interested in the sensitivity to infiltration within the urban environment. So, we need to find how land moisture is simulated within the urban scheme.

2 Land representation and dynamics in WRF

WRF model uses a series of tables to infer the type of use at each grid cell. There are multiple potential different classifications to be used. The parameters of the ‘*landuse*’ categories are provided in a static table called `LANDUSE.TBL` which is read at the beginning of the simulation by `phys/module_physics_init.F`. See an example of values in [table 1](#). The different values correspond to different global datasets (OLD, USGS, MODIFIED_IGBP_MODIS_NOAH, SiB, MODIS, SSIB, NLCD40) each one with different amount of available categories. However all of them provide the same parameters for each category (with values for winter and summer) being provided in [table 3](#).

The values of this table and the ones from `SOILPARM.TBL` (read by each land scheme, see its content in [4](#)), `VEGPARM.TBL` (read by each land scheme, see its content in [5](#)) and `GENPARM.TBL` (read by each land scheme, see its content in [6](#)) are read and their values are used to compute the dynamics of the soil.

3 urban representation in WRF

Since WRF v4.3, urban representation in WRF adds extra complexity by the use of LCZs, taken values from the ‘*The World Urban Database and Access Portal Tools*’ (WUDAPT, <https://www.wudapt.org/> [Ching et al., 2018](#)). This added 11 new landuse types and it was prepared only for the Noah land schemes. There is a python-based tool to prepare urban LCZs classifications to be directly ingested into the `geo_em.d[nn].nc` domain files called `w2w` prepared by Matthias Demuzere (Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany). Since WRF v4.3.1 WRF provides pre-processed global data that can be directly be used without the need of the `w2w` tool. For the use of the LCZs a new file with multiple parameters is added to the WRF suite called `URBPARM_LCZ.TBL`. Exists a previous version for the representation of the urban environment called `URBPARM.TBL`.

`URBPARM_LCZ.TBL` file has more than 135 values specific for the morphological representation of the urban environment. When using the WUDAPT data into the generation of the domains (`geogrid.exe`), in the files `geo_em.d[nn].nc` appears a new variable with 131 values at each grid point called `URB_PARAM` (the unique documentation of all the values seems to be [this document](#) from the WUDAPT data-base, see [table ??](#)). These variable gets its values from the WUDAPT data-base, but it only has values for Northamerica. Therefore is left empty (zero). When the model runs, if a certain parameter of the variable `URB_PARAM` has zero value, it takes the value from `URBPARM_LCZ.TBL`. From all these values the 6 most important ones are: ‘LP_URB2D’ (90), ‘MH_URB2D’ (91), ‘STDH_URB2D’ (92), ‘HGT_URB2D’ (93),

Table 1: Summer values for MODIFIED_IGBP_MODIS_NOAH landuse categories

number	ALBD	SLMO	SFEM	SFZO	THERIN	SCFX	SFHC	description
1	12.	.30	.95	50.	4.	3.33	29.2e5	Evergreen Needleleaf Forest
2	12.	.50	.95	50.	5.	1.67	29.2e5	Evergreen Broadleaf Forest
3	14.	.30	.94	50.	4.	2.86	25.0e5	Deciduous Needleleaf Forest
4	16.	.30	.93	50.	4.	2.63	25.0e5	Deciduous Broadleaf Forest
5	13.	.30	.97	50.	4.	2.11	41.8e5	Mixed Forests
6	22.	.10	.93	5.	3.	1.56	20.8e5	Closed Shrublands
7	20.	.15	.95	6.	3.	2.14	20.8e5	Open Shrublands
8	22.	.10	.93	5.	3.	1.56	20.8e5	Woody Savannas
9	20.	.15	.92	15.	3.	2.00	25.0e5	Savannas
10	19.	.15	.96	12.	3.	2.37	20.8e5	Grasslands
11	14.	.42	.95	30.	5.5	1.32	35.5e5	Permanent wetlands
12	17.	.30	.985	15.	4.	2.71	25.0e5	Croplands
13	15.	.10	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Urban and Built-Up
14	18.	.25	.98	14.	4.	2.56	25.0e5	cropland/natural vegetation mosaic
15	55.	.95	.95	0.1	5.	0.	9.0e25	Snow and Ice
16	25.	.02	.90	1.	2.	0.81	12.0e5	Barren or Sparsely Vegetated
17	8.	1.0	.98	0.01	6.	0.	9.0e25	Water
18	15.	.50	.93	30.	5.	2.67	9.0e25	Wooded Tundra
19	15.	.50	.92	15.	5.	2.67	9.0e25	Mixed Tundra
20	25.	.02	.90	10.	2.	1.60	12.0e5	Barren Tundra
21	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
22	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
23	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
24	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
25	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
26	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
27	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
28	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
29	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
30	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
31	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
32	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
33	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
34	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
35	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
36	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
37	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
38	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
39	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
40	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
41	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
42	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
43	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
44	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
45	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
46	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
47	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
48	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
49	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned
50	15.	.02	.88	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	Unassigned

Table 2: Continuation of [1](#)

number	ALBD	SLMO	SFEM	SFZO	THERIN	SCFX	SFHC	description
51	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_1
52	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_2
53	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_3
54	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_4
55	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_5
56	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_6
57	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_7
58	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_8
59	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_9
60	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_10
61	10.	.10	.97	80.	3.	1.67	18.9e5	LCZ_11

Table 3: Description (as from `phys/module_physics_init.F`) of the variables provided within `LANDUSE.TBL`

Acronym	meaning
ALBD	Surface albedo
SLMO	Moisture availability
SFEM	Emissivity
SFZO	Roughness length
THERIN	Thermal inertia (only used in SLAB)
SFHC	Soil heat capacity (not used)
SCFX	Snow cover effect (dependent on SNOWC)

Table 4: Meaning of the entries in the `SOILPARM.TBL` as are provided from [NoahMP web page](#)

Acronym	meaning
BB	B parameter [units??] (Any more descriptive documentation?)
DRYSMC	Dry soil moisture threshold at which direct evaporation from top soil layer ends [volumetric fraction]
F11	Soil thermal diffusivity/conductivity coefficient [units??] (Unused in Noah LSM?)
MAXSMC	Saturation soil moisture content (i.e., porosity) [volumetric fraction]
REFSMC	Reference soil moisture (field capacity), where transpiration begins to stress [volumetric fraction]
SATPSI	Saturation soil matric potential [units??]
SATDK	Saturation soil conductivity [units??]
SATDW	Saturation soil diffusivity [units??]
WLTSMC	Wilting point soil moisture [volumetric fraction]
QTZ	Soil quartz content [units??]
BVIC	
AXAJ	
BXAJ	
XXAJ	
BDVIC	
BBVIC	
GDVIC	

Table 5: Description of the content of `VEGPARM.TBL` as it is commented in `phys/module_sf_rucslm.F`

Acronym	meaning
ALBBCK	SFC albedo (in percentage)
Z0	Roughness length (m)
LEMI	Emissivity
PC	Plant coefficient for transpiration function
SHDFAC	Green vegetation fraction (in percentage)
CMXTBL	MAX CNPY Capacity (m)
RSMIN	Minimum stomatal resistance (s m-1)
RSMAX	Max. stomatal resistance (s m-1)
RGL	Parameters used in radiation stress function
HS	Parameter used in vapor pressure deficit function
TOPT	Optimum transpiration air temperature. (K)
CMCMAX	Maximum canopy water capacity
CFACTR	Parameter used in the canopy inteception calculation
SNUP	Threshold snow depth (in water equivalent m) that implies 100% snow cover
LAI	Leaf area index (dimensionless)
MAXALB	Upper bound on maximum albedo over deep snow

Table 6: Meaning of the content of `GENPARM.TBL` as it is provided in [NoahMP web page](#)

Acronym	meaning
SLOPE_DATA	Linear reservoir coefficient (function of slope type?) [units??]
SBETA_DATA	Parameter used to calculate vegetation effect on soil heat [units??]
FXEXP_DAT	Soil evaporation exponent used in DEVAP [units??]
CSOIL_DATA	Soil heat capacity [J m-3 K-1]
SALP_DATA	Shape parameter of distribution function of snow cover[units??]
REFDK_DATA	Parameter in the surface runoff parameterization [units??]
REFKDT_DATA	Parameter in the surface runoff parameterization [units??]
FRZK_DATA	Frozen ground parameter [units??]
ZBOT_DATA	Depth [m] of lower boundary soil temperature
CZIL_DATA	Parameter used in the calculation of the roughness length for heat [units??]
SMLW_DATA	Soil moisture wilt, soil moisture reference parameter [units??]
SMHIGH_DATA	Soil moisture wilt, soil moisture reference parameter [units??]

Table 7: Description of the content of the URB_PARAM 3-dimensional variable as it appears in NUDAPT_44_Documentation

description	Acronym	indices
Frontal Area Density at 0°	FAD0_URB2D	1-15
Frontal Area Density at 135°	FAD135_URB2D	16-30
Frontal Area Density at 45°	FAD45_URB2D	31-45
Frontal Area Density at 90°	FAD90_URB2D	46-60
Plan Area Density	PAD_URB2D	61-75
Roof Area Density	RAD_URB2D	76-90
Plan Area Fraction	LF_URB2D	91
Mean Building Height	MH_URB2D	92
Standard Deviation of Building Height	STDH_URB2D	93
Area Weighted Mean Building Height	HGT_URB2D	94
Building Surface to Plan Area Ratio	LF_URB2D	95
Frontal Area Index	LF_URB2D	96-99
Complete Aspect Ratio	CAR_URB2D	100
Height to Width Ratio	H2W_URB2D	101
Sky View Factor	SVF_URB2D	102
Grimmond and Oke (1999) Roughness Length	ZOS_URB2D	103
Grimmond and Oke (1999) Displacement Height	ZDS_URB2D	104
Raupach (1994) Roughness Length	ZOR_URB2D	105,107,109,111
Raupach (1994) Displacement Height	ZDR_URB2D	106,108,110,112
Macdonald et al. (1998) Roughness Length	ZOM_URB2D	113-116
Macdonald et al. (1998) Displacement Height	ZDM_URB2D	117
Distribution of Building Heights	HI_URB2D	118-132

'LB_URB2D' (94), 'LF_URB2D' (95), (# 97, 98, 99, for all 4 directions -> Can only extract one if perpendicular E/N orientation) and 'HI_URB2D' (117)

3.1 NoahMP

The '*Noah-Multiparameterization Land Surface Model*' (<https://ral.ucar.edu/model/noah-multiparameterization-land-surface-model-noah-mp-lsm#noah-mp%C2%AE2> Niu et al., 2011) is a highly complex land scheme with multiple capabilities one of each, to be coupled to WRF's urban schemes.

Since WRF v4.3 Noah-MP code is provided separately from WRF's code. Also it is using its own parameter tables located at specific folder `phys/noamp/` (when it is downloaded properly). Now, Noah-MP is using new file called `MPTABLE.TBL` which is being read as a namelist.

3.2 urban schemes

WRF has 4 different ways to take into account the representation of the urban grid-cell. Accordingly to the value of the `namelst.input` parameter `urban_scheme`:

- `urban_scheme=0`: The most simple one, when no specific urban scheme is activated Noah and Noah-MP land models use a bulk scheme to represent impact of the urban grid point into the atmosphere.
- `urban_scheme=1`: The first urban scheme is a bulk approximation (Chen et al., 2011). It does not vertically split the urban canopy in multiple layers. Because of that, one needs to locate the first vertical layer of the atmosphere above the urban canopy.
- `urban_scheme=2`: This uses the 3-dimensional representation of the urban canopy known as BEP (Martilli et al., 2002)

Table 8: Hard coded morphological values for soil moisture, specific for urban grid points found in `phys/module_sf_noahlsn.F`. NOTE: there are some discrepancies regarding hard coded values for urban grid points found in `phys/module_sf_urban.F` module (see table 9) used only for the 'green roof'

Acronym	value	description
SHDFAC	0.05	Vegetated area fraction
RSMIN	400	Minimum stomatal resistance (<code>VEGPARM.TBL</code>)
SMCMAX	0.45	Saturated soil moisture (seems to be MAXSMC from <code>SOILPARM.TBL</code>)
SMCREf	0.42	Reference soil moisture (seems to be REFSMC from <code>SOILPARM.TBL</code>)
SMCWLT	0.40	Wilting point (seems to be WLTSMC from <code>SOILPARM.TBL</code>)
SMCDRY	0.40	Residual soil moisture (seems to be DRYSMC from <code>SOILPARM.TBL</code>)
DF1	3.24	thermal diffusivity
CSOIL ^a	3.0E6	soil heat capacity (from <code>GENPARM.TBL</code>)

^ain subroutine `HRT`, `NOPAC`

- `urban_scheme=3`: This introduces the anthropogenic effects in the urban grid cell being called BEM ([Salamanca and Martilli, 2010](#))

Each one provides different accuracies and complexities with a variety of impacts in the evolution of the atmosphere (see for example [Luque et al., 2023](#))

4 Sensitivity to infiltration

Moisture land fluxes are computed in `phys/module_sf_noahlsn.F` by subroutine `SFLX`. At the beginning of this subroutine (line #433), one encounters a hard coded declaration of some parameters (see table 8) for the urban grid points (by the value `VEGTYP==is_urban`). The calculation in soil of the 'soil water diffusivity' (WDF) and the 'soil hydraulic conductivity' (WCND) is computed by subroutine `WDFCND` and the driven equations are provided in 1 (for simplification the part taking into account frozen soil is removed)

$$\begin{cases}
 FACTR1 = 0.05/SMC_{max} \\
 FACTR2 = \frac{SMC}{SMC_{max}} \\
 FACTR1 = MIN(FACTR1, FACTR2)
 \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 WDF &= DW_{sat} FACTR2^{\beta+2} \\
 WCND &= DK_{sat} FACTR2^{2\beta+3}
 \end{aligned}$$

SMC : water content of the soil layer, SMC_{max} (`SMCMAX`), DW_{sat} (`DWSAT`), DK_{sat} (`DKSAT`), β (`BEXP`) are different parameters depending on `VEGPARM.TBL`, `SOILPARM.TBL` and `GENPARM.TBL` tables

Runoff is computed in subroutine `SRT` from `phys/module_sf_noahlsn.F` as shown in equation 2

$$\begin{cases}
 RHSCT = SHDFACpr - EC \\
 EXCESS = CMC + TRHSCT \\
 EXCESS > CMC_{max} \rightarrow drip = EXCESS - CMC_{max}
 \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

$$PC_{drp} = (1. - SHDFAC)pr + drip/\delta t$$

$$\begin{aligned}
& \left\{ \begin{array}{l}
SMC_{av} = SMC_{max} - SMC_{wlt} \\
D_{max}(1) = -Z_{soil}(1)SMC_{av} \\
D_{ice} = -Z_{soil}(1)S_{ice}(1) \\
D_{max}(1) = D_{max}(1) \left(1.0 - \frac{S_{H_2O}A(1)+S_{ice}(1)-SMC_{wlt}}{SMC_{ac}} \right) \\
VAL = (1. - e^{-K_{DT}\delta 1}) \\
DDT = DD * VAL \\
PX = PCP_{drp}\delta t \\
INF_{max} = \frac{PX * \frac{DDT}{PX+DDT}}{\delta t} \\
\mathcal{F}_{frz} = 1. \\
INF_{max} = INF_{max}\mathcal{F}_{frz} \\
MXSMC = S_{H_2O}A(1) \\
WDFCND(WDF, WCND, MXSMC, SMC_{max}, \beta, DK_{sat}, DW_{sat}, SICE_{max}) \\
INF_{max} = \max(INF_{max}, WCND) \\
INF_{max} = \min(INF_{max}, \frac{PX}{\delta t})
\end{array} \right. \\
& PC_{drp} \neq 0 \\
& PC_{drp} > INF_{max} \rightarrow runoff = PC_{drp} - INF_{max}
\end{aligned}$$

being *pr*: precipitation, *EXCESS*: increase of soil moisture content (*CMC*) by precipitation, *EC*: canopy evaporation, *PC_{drp}*: combination of precipitation and drip that goes into soil, *S_{H₂O}*: soil liquid content, *Z_{soil}*: depth of the soil layer, *S_{ICE}*: soil iced content, *F_{frz}*: fractional impermeable (frozen) area (see eq. 7 in [Niu and Yang, 2006](#)) is modified only by the ice content in the soil (not included to simplify).

So, the impact of the values in the urban soil type is double: in the water capacity of the grid cell and its runoff.

Whereas the specific urban dynamics is computed by `phys/module_sf_urban.F` and the subroutine `urban`. Within the subroutine `urban` in `phys/module_sf_urban.F`, there is also the use of `SMFLX` subroutine, but only for the green roof.

There are also different parameters that seem to control infiltration in the pavements directly from the tables.

- **PORIMP**: Porosity of pavement materials on impervious surface (roof, wall, road, in `URBPARM_LCZ.TBL`). Is being used only in `urban_scheme=1` and impervious scheme `IMP_SCHEME=2`
- **DENGIMP**: Maximum water-holding depth of pavement materials on impervious surface [m] (roof, wall, road, in `URBPARM_LCZ.TBL`). Is being used only in `urban_scheme=1`

In the light of all that has been described, it seems that to proceed with a sensitivity on infiltration within the urban grid cells, it is necessary to modify the hard coded values found in `phys/module_sf_noahlsn.F`. This could be done in a more complex way by incorporating some of these parameters in the `URBPARM_LCZ.TBL` file and be able to set them up for each LCZ without the need of extra compilation. In doing that we could perform sensitivity tests without recompilation and providing a different permeability for each LCZ.

5 Conclusion

It seems that the way to perform sensitivity tests in urban environment to infiltration is related to modify certain hard coded values specific for urban grid points (the same for all LCZs) which will directly affect the infiltration and the runoff. In the study of ([Alexander et al., 2024](#)) the saturated hydraulic conductivity (*SATDK* or *SATDW*?) to a $1.76 \times 10^{-4} ms^{-1}$, leaving the rest to the same as soil type 'sand'. One must keep in mind, that a too porous soil, will drain too fast the water and would produce at the end too dry and warm soils.

The infiltration computed in the urban scheme is only used for the *green roofs*.

Acknowledgements

To Luis Muñoz to incite this analysis and the discussions with Andrea A. Carril both from CIMA. Also, thanks to Anna A. Sörensson (CIMA) for the insightful discussions about infiltration and runoff.

Table 9: Hard coded parameters in the `phys/module_sf_urban.F` module

Acronym	value	description
SHDFAC	0.80	Vegetated area fraction of green roof vegetation
ALBV	0.20	green roof albedo
EPSV	0.93	green roof emissivity
LAI	1.50	leaf area index on green roof
CMCMAX	0.5e-3	Maximum canopy interception capacity (seems to be CMCMAx from VEGPARM.TBL)
SMCREf	0.329	Reference soil moisture (seems to be REFSMC from SOILPARM.TBL)
SMCDRY	0.066	Residual soil moisture (seems to be DRYSMC from SOILPARM.TBL)
SMCWLT	0.084	Wilting point (seems to be WLTSMC from SOILPARM.TBL)
SMCMAX	0.439	Saturated soil moisture (seems to be MAXSMC from SOILPARM.TBL)
RSMAX	5000	Maximum stomatal resistance (VEGPARM.TBL)
RSMIN	100	Minimum stomatal resistance (VEGPARM.TBL)
RGL	100	Radiation limit where photosynthesis begins (VEGPARM.TBL)
CFACTR	0.5	Parameter used in the canopy interception calculation (VEGPARM.TBL)
DWSAT	0.143e-4	Saturated soil conductivity (seems to be SATDK from SOILPARM.TBL)
DKSAT	3.38e-6	Saturated soil diffusivity (seems to be SATDW from SOILPARM.TBL)
BEXP	5.25	B parameter in soil hydraulic calculation
FXEXP	2.0	Parameter for computing direct soil evaporation (GENPARM.TBL)
ZBOT	-2.0	Depth [m] of lower boundary soil temperature
QUARTZ	0.40	As soil quartz content ? (SOILPARM.TBL)
CSOIL	2.0e+6	Soil heat capacity [J m-3 K-1] (GENPARM.TBL)
HS	36	parameter used in vapor pressure deficit function (VEGPARM.TBL)
NROOT	2	Root depth layer of green roof
NGR	4	Layer of green roof

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