

CHAPTER 5: CALIBRATING A SNOW GAUGE

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Introduction

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Background

Investigations

INTRODUCTION

- * Main source of Water for Northern California comes from the Sierra Nevada mountains.
- * To help monitor the water supply, the Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) operates a gamma transmission snow gauge in the Central Sierra Nevada near Soda Springs, CA. The gauge is used to determine a depth profile of snow density.

SNOW GAUGE

- * The snow gauge does not disturb the snow in the measurement process, which means the same snow-pack can be measured over and over again. With this replicate measurements on the same volume of snow, researchers can study snow-pack settlement over the course of the winter season and the dynamics of rain on snow.
- * When rain falls on snow, the snow absorbs the water up to a certain point, after which flooding occurs. The denser the snow pack the less water it can absorb.
- * Analysis the snow pack profile may help with monitoring the water supply and flood management.

SNOW GAUGE(CONT.)

- * The gauge does not directly measure snow density. The density reading is converted from a measurement of gamma ray emissions.
- * Due to instrument wear and radioactive source decay, there may be changes over the seasons in the functions used to cover the measured values into density readings.
- * To adjust the conversion method, a calibration run is made each year at the beginning of the winter season.
- * In this lab we will develop a procedure to calibrate the snow gauge.

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DESCRIPTION

- * The data are from a calibration run of the USDA Forest Service's snow gauge located in the Central Sierra Nevada mountain range near Soda Springs.
- * The run consists of placing polyethylene blocks of known densities between the two poles of the snow gauge and taking readings on the blocks. The polyethylene blocks are used to simulated snow.
- * For each polyethylene blocks, 30 measurements are taken. Only the middle 10 are reported here.
- * The measurement reported are amplified version of the gamma photon count made by the detector. We call the gauge measurement the "gain".
- * The data available here consists of 10 measurements for each of 9 densities in grams per cubic centimeter of polyethylene.

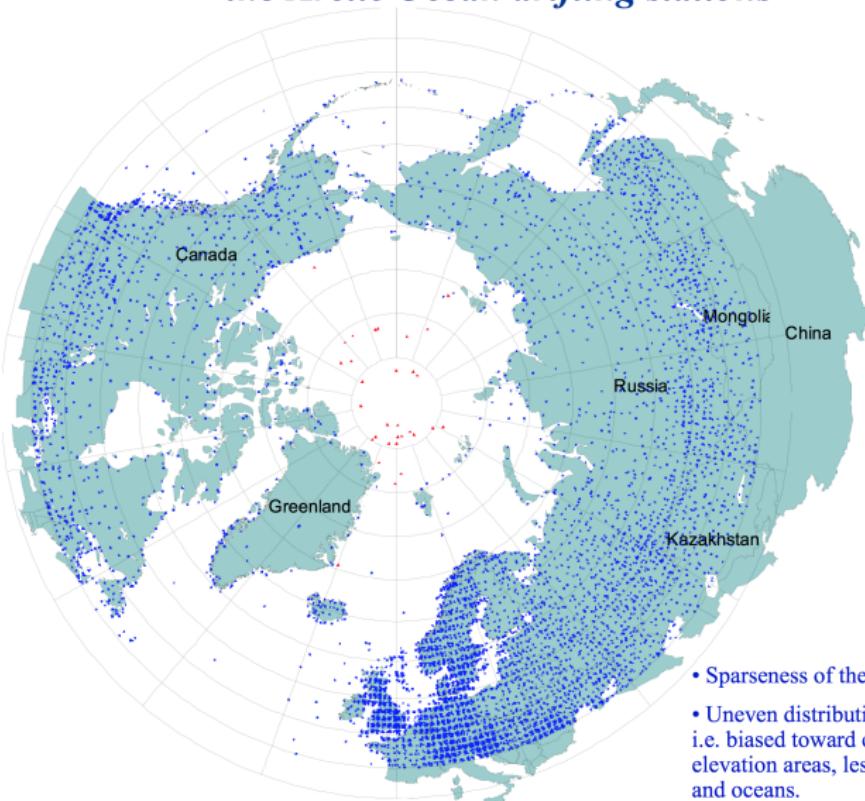
THE DATA

category	value
0.6860	17.60
0.6860	17.30
0.6860	16.90
0.6860	16.20
0.6860	17.10
0.6860	18.50
0.6860	18.70
0.6860	17.40
0.6860	18.60
0.6860	16.80
0.6040	24.80
0.6040	25.90
0.6040	26.30
0.6040	24.80
0.6040	24.80
0.6040	27.60
0.6040	28.50
0.6040	30.50
0.6040	28.40
0.6040	27.70
0.5080	39.40
0.5080	37.60
0.5080	38.10
0.5080	37.70
0.5080	36.30
0.5080	38.70
0.5080	39.40
0.5080	38.80
0.5080	39.20
0.5080	40.30
0.4120	60.00

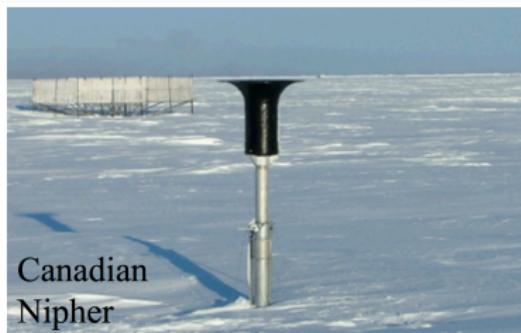
CHALLENGES WITH THE DATA

- * Operational networks - our knowledge base
 - Decline of the networks in the northern regions, including Siberia, Alaska and N. Canada
 - Few stations in the mountain regions
 - How to sustain and improve the operational networks
- * Data quality and compatibility across national boundaries
 - Large biases in gauge measurements of solid precipitation
 - Incompatibility of precipitation data due to difference in instruments and methods of data processing
 - Difficulties to determine precipitation changes in the arctic regions
- * Validation of precipitation data, including satellite and reanalysis products and fused products at high latitudes.

Synoptic/climate stations on land above 45 °N and the Arctic Ocean drifting stations



- Sparseness of the networks.
- Uneven distribution of measurement sites, i.e. biased toward coastal and the low-elevation areas, less stations over mountains and oceans.



Canadian
Nipher



Russian
Tretyakov



Hellmann



US 8"

Barrow, CRN- modified DFIR, at 2.5m, Mar 3/03



Barrow, CRN- DFIR, Mar 3/03



Barrow, UAF Wyoming snow fence, Mar/03



Barrow, UAF DFIR, Mar 03



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A Physical Model

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LOCATION

- The snow gauge is a complex and expensive instrument. It is not feasible to establish a broad network of gauges in the watershed area in order to monitor the water supply. Instead the gauge is primarily used as a research tool.
- The snow gauge has helped to study snow-pack settling, snow-melt runoff, avalanches and rain-on-snow dynamics.
- Gauges exist in Idaho, Colorado, Alaska, Russia, Mongolia, China, Japan
- Gauge in California is located in the center of a forest opening that is roughly 62 meters in diameter. The laboratory site is at 2099 meters elevation and is subject to all major high altitude storms which regularly deposit 5-20 cm of wet snow. The snow pack reaches an average depth of 4m each winter.

The snow gauge consists of a cesium-137 radioactive source and an anergy detector mounted on separate vertical poles approximately 70cm apart.

- The lift mechanism at the top of the poles raises and lowers the source and detector together. The radioactive source emits gamma photons also called gamma rays at 662 kilo-electron-volts (keV) in all directions. The detector contains a scintillation crystal which counts those photons eating through the 70-cm gap from the source to the detector crystal.
- The pulses generated by the photons that reach the detector crystal are transmitted by a cable to a preamplifier and then further amplified and transmitted via a buried coaxial cable to the lab. There the signal is stabilized, corrected for temperature drift, and converted to a measurement we have termed the "gain". It should be directly proportional to the emission rate.
- The snow pack density typically ranges between 0.1 and 0.6 g/cm³.

A PHYSICAL MODEL

- The gamma rays that are emitted from the radioactive source are sent out in all directions. Those that are sent in the direction of the detector may be scattered or absorbed by the polyethylene molecules between the source and the detector. With denser polyethelene, fewer gamma rats will reach the detector.
- There are complex physical models for the relationship between the polyethylene density and the detector readings.
- A simplified version of the model that may be workable for the calibration problem of interest is described here. A gamma ray on route to the detector passes a number of polyethylene molecules. The number of molecules depends on the density of the polyethylene. A molecule may either absorb the gamma photon bounce it out of the path to the detector or allow it to pass.

A PHYSICAL MODEL

- If each molecule, acts independently, then the chance that a gamma ray successfully arrives at the detector is p^m where p is the chance , a single molecule will neither absorb nor bounce the gamma ray, and m is the number of molecules in a straight line path from the source to the detector.
- This probability can be re-expressed as

$$e^{m \log p} = e^{bx}$$

where x the density, is proportional to m the number of molecules.

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The aim of this lab is to provide a simple procedure for converting gain into density when the gauge is in operation. Keep in mind that the experiment was conducted by varying density and measuring the response in gain, but when the gauge is ultimately in use, the snow-pack density is to be estimated from the measured gain.

- * [Fitting] Use the data to fit the gain, or a transformation of gain, to density. Try sketching the least squares line on a scatter plot.
 - ** Do the residuals indicate any problems with the fit ?
 - ** If the densities of the polyethylene blocks are not reported exactly, how might this affect the fit ?
- * [Predicting] Ultimately we are interested in answering questions such as: Given a gain reading of 38.6, what is the density of the snow-pack ? or Given a gain reading of 426.7, what is the density of snow-pack? These two numeric values, 38.6 and 426.7, were chosen because they are the average gains for the 0.508 and 0.001 densities, respectively.
 - ** Develop a procedure for adding CIs around your least squares line that can be used to make interval estimates for the snow-pack density from gain measurements. Keep in mind how the data were collected: several measurements of gain were taken for polyethylene blocks of known density.