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A Theoretical Study of Infiltration into Range and Forest Soils

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A THEORETICAL STUDY OF INFILTRATION

INTO RANGE AND FOREST SOILS

A Final Technical Report

by

Joel E. Fletcher and Yehia Z. El-Shafei

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Utah Water Research Laboratory CoUege of Engineering Utah State University Logan, Utah 84321

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July 1970 PRWG60·1

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ABSTRACT

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More than 400 rainfall simulator experiments were examined to detect which soil properties could be used to compute infiltration time relationships. Three theoretical equations were tested to determine their efficacy for calculating infiltration time relationships from soil and site characteristics. It was shown that both the modified Green and Ampt and Fletcher equations could be successfully used.

Darcian type equations were developed on laboratory type samples which would show the relation between soil, solution and rainfall properties and infiltration. These latter equations have not been tested on undisturbed soils but give excellent agreement between measured and computed values for time before flooding and infiltration time relationships.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the recognition of the importance of the infIltration process to range and watershed management for many years, research has not completely solved the problems of infiltration under all environmental conditions nor has it solved all of the problems in its application to runoff forecasting even when inflltration is known. Hickok and Osborn (1969) outlined some of the problems and limitations in the use of inftltration in watershed estimates from the classic paper of Horton (1933) to the present.

..

In the laboratory, Green and Ampt (1911) considered the soil to be a bundle of cylindrical capillaries and developed equations for estimating infiltration from various parameters. Since the time of Green and Ampt (1911) literally thousands of papers on the subject of infiltration have been written. No attempt will be made at this time to review the extensive literature. The reader is referred to such reviews as those given by Keller (1967), Parr and Bertrand (1959), Richards (1952), Davidson (1940), Chow (1964), Muchler and Hermsmeier (1965), Chebotarev (1962), and Neyestani (1969) to note that the capillary theory, the diffusivity theory and the porous media flow theory are still with us. The problem still remains. "How do you actually estimate infIltration for a particular soil in the field?"

The theoretical studies made during the present investigation were directed toward shedding light on the answer to this problem with the development in two principal directions. The first of these two developments was through an extension of the capillary flow theory and the second development was through Darcian porous media flow theory.

Briefly, the soil and solution properties which were considered are grouped under the following headings for the theoretical study:

Gradient factors:

- 1. depth of water on the surface
- 2. depth of wetting
- 3. tortuosity .
- 4. capillary sorptivity
	- a. ·surface tension
		- b. wettability
- c. pore size distribution
- d. moisture content
- 5. stratification

Water supply factors:

- 1. particulates (clear water, silty water, etc.)
- 2. depth per unit area
- 3. intensity of supply (rain, snowmelt or sprinkler)
- 4. soil aggregate stability

Conduction factors:

- 1. viscosity
- 2. capillary conductivity
- 3. degree of saturation
- 4. dispersability of the soil

Most of the foregoing factors vary with time in any soil due to biological and climatic factors.

Objectives

The objectives of this investigation were as follows: 1. To develop theoretically sound relationships

between infiltration and physical factors such as hydraulic conductivity, soil porosity, soil waterholding capacity, antecedent soil moisture content, capillary potential and others.

2. To find the relation between infiltration and the derived infiltration relationships to actual physical and biological factors found in the field.

3. To find a relation between infiltration and watershed retention which can be used to forecast runoff relations of ungaged watersheds.

Briefly the plan of the investigation was as follows:

1. A survey of available inftltrometer data to ascertain how much of the data, if any, includes the necessary physical and biological data needed to compute infiltration by different equations in the literature or derived during the course of this investigation. Data needed consist of such items as temperature, hydraulic conductivity, wettability, soil porosity, soil moisture, soil moisture at saturation and capillary permeability.

2. Test existing or derived relationships utilizing the above data to test the validity of the relationships.

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 $\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{2} \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{1}{2} \sum_{j=$

 $\label{eq:2.1} \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{L}^{\text{max}}_{\text{max}}(\mathcal{L}^{\text{max}}_{\text{max}}))$

WORK ACCOMPLISHED AND FINDINGS

A survey was made of the available infiltrometer data. Generally data on soil and vegetation were lacking but some data taken by the Soil Conservation Service in Arizona and New Mexico had most of the needed parameters so they were processed for study.

The infiltrometer data contained the following information:

1. rainfall intensity

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- 2. plot size and slope
- 3. soil moisture content at the beginning and end of a run
- 4. depth of moisture penetration following the run
- 5. temperature of the water, air, and soil at the beginning and end of each run
- 6. soil porosity
- 7. mechanical analyses of the soil
- 8. organic matter content of the soil
- 9. times for unit volumes of runoff
10. time when first flooding occurred
- time when first flooding occurred
- 11. time when runoff started
- 12. times when depression storage was 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% filled
- 13. vegetation kind and density
- 14. soil classification and description
- 15. apparent specific gravity of soil by horizons
- 16. any other pertinent data observed

The infiltrometer data were punched, programs were written, and the log-log plots of mass infiltration against time in seconds were made. Data points for the runoff curves, depression storage curves. and the surface detention curves were tabulated. A typical example of the original field measurement data sheet can be seen in Figure 1, and a typical infiltration-time relation curve as plotted on the computer is shown in Figure 2. Table 1 shows the properties of the soils used.

From a study of the infiltration time curves, it appeared that they could be classified into three distinct categories. First, those completely linearized by the log-log plot: second. those which produced more than one linear portion and third. those which were linear only after the first 5 or 10 minutes of a run being convex upward during *tbe* first portion of a run. Examples of each of the three types of curves may be seen in Figure 3.

Utilizing the relation Q/S, wherein Q is the mass infiltration in inches and S is the fraction of the pore space not filled with water, to compute the depth to the wetting front, each break in the curve corresponds to either a new stratum in the soil in the case of abrupt breaks, or a sufficiently gradual change in the organic matter content to reflect a change in the wettability.

Capillary Flow Type Equations

Green and Ampt (1911)

The equation these authors suggested on the basis of their capillary tube theory was as follows:

$$
\frac{P}{S} t = Z - (2 + K_G) \ln (1 + Z/a + K_G)
$$

in which

a Z

c

t n g p

S

- = depth of water on the soil surface, L
- = depth from the soil surface to the wetting front, L
- a constant depending on the capillary K_G = forces on the moving water-soil boundary
- p = $constant = cp$

$$
c = \frac{\pi g \rho}{8n}
$$

$$
p = \frac{\sum r_i^4}{4}
$$

$$
= \frac{-p}{A}
$$

- pore or capillary radius, L = r_p
- area of soil surface, L^2 Ä =

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- = pore space available for infiltration or pore space not filled with water whiCh could be filled under flooded infiltration, $\theta_{\mathbf{m}} \cdot \theta_i$, dimensionless
	- = time, t
- = coefficient of viscosity, mL^{-1} t⁻¹
- = accelleration due to gravity, Lt⁻²
- = density of the water, mL⁻³

.. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROJECT ARIZ-R-1 Notes: RRG RAINFALL SIMULATOR EXPERIMENTS Runoff: DA Dry City Farm $11:00$ a.m. Run 50 Date Feb. 23, 1939 Site 10 Plot 2 Slope 2.00% Avg. Intensity Duration of Mass Mass Run-

Inches Per Hour 3.30 Application 30 min. Rain in, 1.650 off, in. 1.124

Soil Gila fine sandy loam. Moist to 6 inches from rains.

Figure 1. Typical field measurement data sheet summarizing the soil, vegetation, temperature, and rainfall simulator measurements.

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AT 195 SECONDS T#F# 0.17062

Figure 2b. Tabulated rainfall simulater data for the curve in Figure 2a.

Equation (I) was not suitable for use directly since the parameters, as needed to solve the equation, were not available. However, if a few assumptions are made the equation can be modified to accommodate the use of field measurement data on hand. These assumptions are as follows:

- 1. The cross section of a pore is a 3 cusped hypocycloid and the modular particle diameter represents all of the particles.
- 2. The depth of ponding on the surface to be negligibly small compared to the depth of wetting.
- 3. The soil is essentially saturated between the surface and the wetting front so that $d/S = Z$.
- 4. The parameters n , g, and v the surface tension, remain constant at .01 poises, 980 centimeters per second squared, and 72 dynes per centimeter throughout the estimation and that other temperature effects are negligible and the soil is vertically and horizontally homogeneous within each stratum.

Then

$$
h = Z = \frac{d}{S} \quad \text{as} \quad a \to 0
$$

$$
K_G = \pi r_p \quad \text{for } \alpha
$$

,jj

$$
P = \frac{\sum r \frac{4}{p}}{A} \times \frac{\pi g \rho}{8 \eta}
$$

 r_p^2 = .051 r^2

in which

 $r =$ particle radius Substituting back in Equation (1) yields

$$
t = \frac{8An}{\pi g \rho (051r^{2})^{2}} \left[d - \pi rS \vee \cos \alpha \ln \left(1 + \frac{d}{\pi rS \vee \cos \alpha} \right) \right] \dots (2)
$$

Figure 3. Types of relations between infiltration rate and time from 400 infiltrometer runs.

and

•

$$
t = \frac{10^{-2}}{sr^{4}} \left[d - 226.2rS \cos \alpha \ln (1 + \frac{d}{226.2rS \cos \alpha}) \right]
$$
 (3)

with d and r in centimeters. Converting d to inches yields

$$
t = \frac{3.93X10^{-3}}{Sr^{4}} \left[d - 574rS \cos \alpha \ln \left(1 + \frac{d}{574rS \cos \alpha} \right) \right]
$$
 (4)

Equation (4) was to compute the log mass infiltration-log time curves for the four soils in Table 1. The results may be seen in Figures $4, 5, 6,$ and 7 . The agreement may be considered to be reasonable.

Fletcher (1949)

Fletcher derived an equation for a single cylindrical capillary which would reflect the physical interactions between a soil and a solution. His equation was·as follows:

$$
q = \frac{r_p^3 (\rho g h r_p + \nu \cos \alpha)}{8 Z n} \dots (5)
$$

in which

q

r p g p h

 v

 α Z

- = = volume of flow per unit of time per pore or infiltration rate
- radius of the pore
- = = accelleration of gravity
- = density of the water solution depth from water surface to the wetting
- = front surface tension between water and solid
- phase
- = contact angle between water and solid
- = depth from soil surface to wetting front

n = coefficient of viscosity

Equation (5) was modified to a unit area of soil surface and to consider the pore cross section as a 3 cusped hypocycloid and to have the pore dimensions in terms of the particle radii, r.It was further assumed that the depth of the liquid on the surface was small so the difference between h and Z becomes negligible. Then if d is the total depth of infiltration in a unit of time and $0.577/r^2$ is the number of pores in a square centimeter

$$
r_p^2 = \frac{0.16 r^2}{\pi}
$$

and

$$
Z = h = \frac{d}{S}
$$

then

$$
\frac{d^{2}}{t} = \frac{0.577 \pi (051r^{2})^{2}}{8r^{2}n} (0.16r^{2}dg + \pi rs \vee cos \omega) \cdots (6)
$$

converting d to inches and substituting values for constants as follows: $c=1$, $g=980$, $v=72$, $\pi=3.1416$ and neglecting temperature, Equation (6) becomes

Figure 5. A comparison between the log mass infiltration-log time relations for Sonoita Gr SL soil as observed in the field and as computed from the soil properties using Green and Ampt Equation (4) as modified herein.

Figure 6. A comparison between the log mass infiltration-log time relations for Comoro Gr SL soil as observed in the field and as computed from soil properties using a modified Green and Ampt Equation (4).

time, t - seconds

Figure 7. A comparison between the log infiltration-log mass time relations for Whitehouse Gr SL No. 2 as observed in the field and as computed from the soil properties using a modified Green and Ampt Equation (4).

$$
\frac{d^{2}}{t} = 13.31 r^{3} S \cos \alpha + 9.24 d r^{4}
$$

$$
\cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (7)
$$

and

$$
t = \frac{d^2}{85.90 r^3 S \cos \alpha + 23.47 d r^4}
$$
 (8)

If the observed log mass infiltration-log time relationships for the soils in Table 1 are compared to the curves computed using Equation (8), the curves shown in Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11 are obtained. These computed points appear to adequately represent infiltration on the soils tested.

Fok and Hansen (1965)

Fok and Hansen applied the Darcy equation and continuity equation to obtain an equation for the accumulative-infiltration time relationship. Their equation may be termed a combination capillary and Darcian type equation, and may be expressed as

$$
\frac{d}{nsh_T} = \ln\left(1 + \frac{d}{nsh_T}\right) = \frac{Kt}{nsh_T} \cdot \cdot \cdot (9)
$$

in which

s

d n = = accumulative depth of infiltration $= Q$ porosity

- = net increment of the degree of saturation or the degree of saturation after wetting minus the degree of saturation before wetting as a fraction of the total porosity so $S = ns$
- = $h_{\rm T}$ the head loss in the transmission zone extrapolated to the wetting front $h_T =$ $h_0 + h_c - h_w$ with
	- h_{α} = depth of water on surface
	- h_c = capillary potential head
	- h_w = pressure potential loss in the wetting zone
- K = hydraulic conductivity of the transmission zone
- \ln = base of natural logarithms

If the terms given in Equation (9) are converted to the terms used earlier in this paper, the Fok and Hansen equation becomes

$$
t = \frac{ns}{K} \left(\frac{90.5d}{S} + \frac{130.5 \cos \alpha}{r} \right)
$$

$$
\left[\frac{d}{nS\left(\frac{90.5d}{S} + \frac{130.5 \cos \alpha}{r}\right)} - \ln\left(1\right)\right]
$$

$$
+\frac{d}{\mathrm{ns}\left(\frac{90.5d}{\mathrm{S}}+\frac{130.5\ \mathrm{cos}\ \alpha}{\mathrm{r}}\right)}\bigg)\bigg]\quad . \text{ (10)}
$$

with t in seconds and d in inches. Using the soils and soil properties tabulated in Table 1, the relations shown in Figures 12, 13, 14, and 15 are derived. The fit is apparently reasonable but less satisfactory than the other equations on these soils. It must be remembered, however, that this equation was intended to apply to vertically homogeneous soils and the four soils here are not only mechanically stratified, but the carbon content of the surface decreases almost exponentially with depth thus affecting the wettability and a single value represents K.

Darcian Type Equations

The processes taking place during infiltration may logically be divided into two groups, namely those going on before flooding of the soil surface takes place and those going on after flooding of the surface. These may be simply designated sprinkling and flooded infiltration respectively.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in developing the Darcian type equations dealing with infiltration into a vertical soil column:

- 1. The soil is a semi-infinite, homogeneous, isotropic body whose bulk density is uniform and remains so during watering.
- 2. One dimensional flow occurs in the system.
- 3. The initial moisture content is uniform throughout the profile.
- 4. The soil air is a continuous phase essentially at atmospheric pressure.
- 5. The water application rate is constant throughout Watering and at a rate high enough to eventually cause flooding.
- 6. The kinetic energy of the falling rain drops is sufficiently small that surface disturbance of the soil is negligible.

Figure 8. A comparison between the log mass infiltration-log time relationships for Whitehouse Gr SL No. 1 soil as observed in the field and as'computed from soil properties by Equation (8).

Figure 9. A comparison between the log mass infiltration-log time relations for Sonoita Gr SL soil as observed in the field and as computed from soil properties by Equation (8).

time, t - seconds

Figure 10. A comparison between the log mass infiltration-log time relations for Comoro Gr SL soil as observed in the field and as computed from soil properties by Equation (8).

Figure 11. A comparison between the log mass infiltration-log time relations for Whitehouse Gr SL No. 2 as observed in the field and as computed from Equation (8).

Figure 12. A comparison between the log mass infiltration-log time relationships for Whitehouse Gr SL soil No. 1 as observed in the field and as computed from soil properties by the Fok and Hansen Equation (10).

Figure 13. A comparison between the log mass infiltration-log time relationships on Sonoita Gr SL soil as observed in the field and as computed by Equation (10).

Figure 14. A comparison between the log mass infdtration-Iog time relationships of Comoro Gr SL soil as observed in the field and as computed from soil properties by Equation (10).

Figure 15. A comparison between the log mass infiltration-log time relationships for Whitehouse Gr SL No. 2 soil as **observed in the field and as computed from soil properties by Equation (l0).**

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 $226 SUMA=0.$ $227+$ DO 131 I=2.K $SUM1=UCI1+SUM1$ $228+$ SUM2=Y(I)+SUM2 $229+$ IF (ABS (SUM)-SUM2)-ABS(SUM3)) 131+131+130 230+ SUM 3= SUM1-SUM2 $231+$ 130 $232*$ 131 **CONTINUE** IF (ABS (SUM3) -ABS (CON0))134+134+132 $233*$ IF (DEL T-DE TT) 134 . 134 . 133 234* 132 235+ 133 **DEL T=DELT+0.5** 236+ GO TO 38 WFRD={B{1}+{{H{1}-H{2}+6{1}-6{2}} /2.0+GRAVY}}/DELX 237 134 $238*$ CWF=t SUM1-PIT I+DELX 239* WFRDD=CSUM1-SUM2) *DELX/DELT WFRU= (B (K)+ LLH(K) -H (KK) +G (K)- G(KK)) /2.0+GRAVY 31/DELX $24R+$ CUM S= UF RD +D EL T+ CUMS $241+$ $24.2*$ CUMB=WFRU .DEL T+CUMB $243+$ CUMM=WERDD+DELT+CUMM 244+ CWFLX=(SUM1-SUM2)+DELX $24.5*$ 700 **CONTINUE** IF(E0R-0.0)136.136.135 24 6* 706 $247+$ RUN OF #CEOR-WERD J+DELT+RUNOF 135 248* TIME=TIME+DELT 136 $249*$ IF (LL-MM) 138.137.137 $25n+$ 137 CALL PLOT (KK.WATH.W.DD) $251+$ WRITE (6.166) (H(I).I=1.KK) $252+$ $LL = n$ **WRITE (6.184)** $253+$ WRITE (6.166) TIME.CWF.EOR.DELT.RUNOF.WFRU 254+ 138 255* IF (SUM3-0.0) 139.141.139 TWE ABSCCONG *DEL T/SUM3) 256* 139 $257+$ IF (TW-CTM) 152.140.140 IF (TW-0.1*DETT) 141,142,142 258+ 140 $25.9*$ 141 TW= DETT *0.1 26 0* GO TO 144 IF (TH-100.0*DETT) 144.144.143 261* 142 262* 143 TW=100+0+DETT $263*$ 144 DEL T= TW -- EST TO SEE IF EVAP OR PAIN INTENSITY (EOR) HAS CHANGED $264+$ $c -$ 265* $I = 1$ 26.6* IF ITIME-VII+111 148,147,146 145 $267*$ 146 $I = I + 2$ 26.8* GO TO 145 26 9* 147 CALL PLOT (KK.WATH.W.DD) $270*$ WRITE (6+166) (H(I)+I=1+KK) $271+$ WRITE (6,16F) TIME, CWF. FOR. DELT. RUNOF. WFRU $27.2*$ DEL TEDETT $273+$ E OR UV (T+2) $27.4*$ $W(1) = W(2)$ $27.5*$ $H(1)=H(2)$ GO TO 151 $276*$ $27.7*$ **148** IF (TIME+DELT-V(I+1)) 150+150+149 $0.5L$ T=V($I+1$) -T IME $278*$ 149 $279*$ IF (DFLI-CIM) 147,147,150 280* 150 E $2P = V$ E E $281+$ 151 $LLEUL+1$ IF (TIME-CUMT) 153+152+152 $28.2*$ $283+$ 152 IF (ML-LMM) 162,162,1

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APPENDIX B

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Subroutine Program for Plotting

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 $\bar{\mathbf{y}}$