

***Abdulvahed KHALEDI DARVISHAN, Morteza BEHZADFAR,
Velibor SPALEVIC, Patrick KALONDE, Abdessalam OUALLALI,
Sabri el MOUATASSIME¹***

CALCULATION OF SEDIMENT YIELD IN THE S2-1 WATERSHED OF THE SHIRINDAREH RIVER BASIN, IRAN

SUMMARY

Soil erosion by water as a natural process can occur in all climates and zones and change all landforms. As the measuring of soil erosion is costly and time consuming process, dozens of erosion prediction models have been developed and the aim of the majority of all of them is to predict average rates (often an annual average rate) of soil loss from an area such as a plot, a field or a catchment/watershed under various land management techniques. On the other hand, outflow is the most important element of the hydrological cycle and that is why it is important to determine it as accurately as possible by measuring and predicting. Therefore, the IntErO (Intensity of Erosion and Outflow) model based on the EPM (Erosion Potential Method) method was used for calculation of outflow and sediment yield in the S2-1 watershed of Shirindareh River Basin in the Northeast Iran with the area of 46.77 km². According to the results, the predicted peak discharge was 101 m³ s⁻¹ for the incidence of 100 years and the specific sediment yield was 267 m³ km⁻² year⁻¹. According to the previous studies and topographic characteristics, the river basin watershed belongs to the V category and has very weak erosion. The results of the present study and previous experiences of the other researchers revealed that the IntErO model can be used to estimate soil loss in the other regions similar to Shirindareh River Basin.

Keywords: IntErO, Runoff, Specific sediment yield, Shirindareh Watershed, Soil erosion

INTRODUCTION

Watersheds are in fact often affected by natural disasters, above all floods, overflows, inundations, erosion problems, landslides and pollution (Tazioli et al.

¹Abdulvahed Khaledi Darvishan (corresponding author: a.khaledi@modares.ac.ir), Department of Watershed Management Engineering, Faculty of Natural Resources, Tarbiat Modares University, Noor, IRAN, Morteza Behzadfar, Faculty of Natural Resources, Tarbiat Modares University, Noor, IRAN, Velibor Spalevic Department of Geography, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Montenegro, Niksic, MONTENEGRO, Patrick Kalonde Environmental Science and Management Department, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Faculty of Natural Resources, Lilongwe, MALAWI, Abdessalam Ouallali Department of geology, Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Faculty of Science, Tetouan, MOROCCO, Sabri el Mouatassime Faculty of Technical Sciences, University Soltane Moulay Slimane, Béni Mellal, MOROCCO.

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2015). There are several stages/types of water erosion, including splash, sheet, interrill, rill, gully and stream bank erosion (Khaledi Darvishan *et al.* 2012; Khaledi Darvishan *et al.* 2014 and 2015, Gholami *et al.* 2016). Soil erosion and sediment yield studies are therefore of great interest in Asia (especially in arid and semi-arid regions), because of their effects on soil thickness and fertility, plant cover, runoff coefficient and flood risk. The widespread environmental impacts of soil erosion and loss are often not enough faced by the governments (Behzadfar *et al.* 2014). The problem of soil loss and land degradation, with their huge impact on the environment is a key point for agriculture, ecology, hydrology and hydrogeology studies.

Knowing or estimating the accurate quantity of soil erosion in a watershed is therefore essential and one of the basic steps of all studies to encompass lots of environmental problems and to evaluate the amount of sediment moved, transported and deposited in and out of the basin. On the other hand, direct measurements of erosion in a watershed are possible with multi-years measurement of solid transport in the closing-section (Tazioli, 2009).

The suspended load can be measured through different techniques (Edwards and Glysson 1999; IAEA; 2005), for instance tracing techniques, nuclear probes, optical and acoustic probes, digital imaging analysis and direct sampling (IAEA, 2005).

Sediment load measurements are useful to calibrate soil erosion models (Tazioli *et al.* 2005; Khaledi Darvishan *et al.* 2010; Tazioli, 2009; Spalevic, 2011; Sadeghi *et al.* 2013, 2014). Modelling, in fact, is a good, often necessary and proven tool useful to evaluate the amount of discharge and erosion in a watershed, especially when hydrometric and discharge data are not available (Behzadfar *et al.* 2014). Mathematical erosion models were therefore developed to predict soil erosion and sediment yield in a sub-catchment area, based on simple mathematical equations such as Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE), or based on some modified and updated versions (Wischmeier and Smith, 1965, 1978).

Evaluation of the applicability of soil erosion models to a watershed is not easy, as it is difficult to accurately measure soil erosion in the field (Conoscenti *et al.* 2008, Rawat *et al.* 2011). In contrast, sediment yield models are easier to apply, because the data for these models can be measured at the watershed outlet (Kinnell and Riss 1998; Erskine *et al.* 2002; Kinnell, 2010).

Among several models, Erosion Potential Method – EPM, originally developed for Yugoslavia by Gavrilovic (1972), was in recent times repeatedly applied in the watersheds of Apennine and in the Balkan Peninsula (Blinkov and Kostadinov, 2010; Kostadinov *et al.* 2006, 2014; Lenaerts, 2014; Milevski *et al.* 2008; Ristic *et al.* 2012; Sekularac, 2000, 2013; Spalevic *et al.* 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d, 2013e, 2013f, 2013g, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2014f; Stefanovic, 2004; Tazioli, 2009, Zorn and Komac, 2008), but also in the other regions in the world, for example in arid and semi-arid areas of the south-western USA (Gavrilovic *Z.*, 1988). The method is based on the factors affecting erosion in a catchment; its parameters dependent on the temperature,

the mean annual rainfall, the soil use, the geological properties and some other features of the catchment.

The Intensity of Erosion and Outflow - IntErO program package (Spalevic, 2011), developed to predict the intensity of soil erosion and the runoff peak discharge in a watershed, is a computer-graphic method based on the Erosion Potential Method - EPM, which is embedded in its algorithm.

In the present research, the IntErO model was verified and tested in a small sub-catchment of Shirindareh watershed in Iran, which is one of the main tributaries of the River Atrak.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study area

The present study was conducted in a small sub-catchment of Shirindareh watershed in north eastern part of Iran, which is mountainous, with the presence of deep incised valleys (in Limestone Mountains) but also hilly. Rivers in this region drain to the Caspian Sea (Behzadfar et al. 2014).

Shirindareh is one of the main tributaries of the river Atrak. Atrak originates from Hezar-Masjed Mountains in the region of Razavi Khorasan and lies between steep slopes and plains till to enter the territory of Turkmenistan on Chaat region and finally drain to Caspian Sea in the Gulf of Hasan Ghuly. Shirindareh river basin area has the important strategic values for North Khorasan province (Behzadfar et al. 2014; Gholami et al. 2016). A rock fill dam has been constructed on the main river of the basin, because of need to supply of drinking water and agriculture. So, the management of upland areas is very important to increase performance of the dam.

The studied sub-catchment (S2-1) encompasses an area of 46.77 km² and is categorized in the group of the small watersheds of the natural entity of the Shirindareh river basin (Figure 1).

The average slope gradient in the river basin, I_{sr} , is calculated on 28.46%, indicating that in the river basin prevail steep slopes. The average river basin altitude (H_{sr}), the average elevation difference of the river basin (D), the natural length of the main watercourse (L_v) and the shortest distance between the fountainhead and the mouth (L_m) are 1912.59 m, 441.59 m, 12.87 km, 10.59 km, respectively which were calculated by the IntErO program package (source: original).

Fieldwork & laboratory analysis

During the field work, using a morphometric methods, various data on intensity and forms of soil erosion, land use, and the measures taken to reduce or mitigate erosion were recorded. Different forms including the shape of the slope, the depth of the erosion base and the density of erosion rills were determined.

Pedological survey was based on the research of the National Geological Survey Organization (NGS) led by Bolourchi et al. (1987), who analyzed the physical and chemical properties of all geological formations of North Khorasan province, including those in the study area of the Shirindareh Basin and all its sub-catchments.

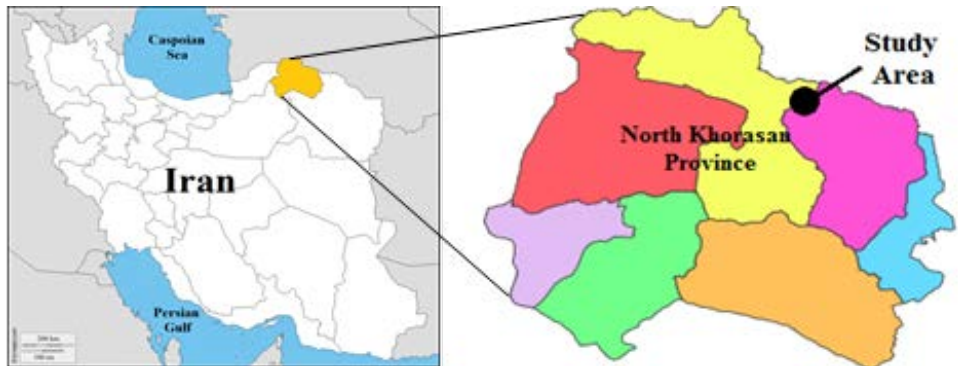


Figure 1. The location of the study area

IntERO model application

The Intensity of Erosion and Outflow - IntErO program package (Spalevic, 2011) was used to estimate maximum runoff discharge from the basin and the intensity of soil erosion, with the Erosion Potential Method – EPM (Gavrilovic, 1972) embedded in the algorithm of this computer-graphic method.

The above methodology was used in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Italy, Iran, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia (Kostadinov *et al.* 2014). In Iran, the IntERO have been successfully used previously in the Regions of Chamgardalan; Kasilian (Amiri, 2010; Zia Abadi & Ahmadi, 2011; Yousefi *et al.* 2014) and some other sub-catchments of Shirindareh River basin (Behzadfar *et al.* 2014 and 2015; Barovic *et al.* 2015; Gholami *et al.* 2016).

RESULTS

Climatic characteristics

The climate of the study area is a continental climate with cold winters and warm and dry summers. The absolute maximum air temperature is 34.6 °C and the negative temperatures can fall to a minimum of -24.4 °C. The average annual air temperature (t_0) and the average annual precipitation (H_{year}) are 8.7 °C and 352 mm, respectively, based on the data from the North Khorasan meteorological stations of Iran. The temperature coefficient of the region (T) and the amount of torrential rain (hb) were calculated equal to 0.98 and 37.57 mm respectively.

The geological structure and soil characteristics of the area

To calculate some inputs of IntERO, the geological data was extracting from the geological map of Iran (Bolourchi *et al.* 1987). The geological data showed that the structure of the river basin, according to bedrock permeability, is the following: poor water permeability rocks (f_0), medium permeable rocks (f_{pp}) and very permeable products from rocks (f_p) were 37%, 48% and 15%, respectively. The coefficient of the region's permeability, S_1 , was calculated about 0.77 (source: original). The most common soil type in the studied area is Inceptisols with Calcic horizon.

Vegetation and land use

The studied area is located in Middle-East of the Kope-Dagh geographical region. According to the analysis, the main portion of the river basin is totally under mountain pastures (55.78%). The coefficient of the river basin planning, (Xa) and the coefficient of the vegetation cover (S2) were calculated about 0.64 and 0.77, respectively.

Part of the detailed report for the S2-1 watershed is shown in Table 1

Table 1. Part of the IntErO report (inputs and outputs) for the S2-1 watershed

| INPUTS | | | |
|---|------|---------|-----------------|
| River basin area | F | 46.77 | km ² |
| The length of the watershed | O | 36.33 | km |
| Natural length of the main watercourse | Lv | 12.87 | km |
| The shortest distance between the fountainhead and mouth | Lm | 10.59 | km |
| The total length of the main watercourse with tributaries of I and II class | ΣL | 71.79 | km |
| River basin length measured by a series of parallel lines | Lb | 12.18 | km |
| The area of the bigger river basin part | Fv | 31.84 | km ² |
| The area of the smaller river basin part | Fm | 14.94 | km ² |
| Altitude of the first contour line | h0 | 1500 | m |
| The lowest river basin elevation | Hmin | 1471 | m |
| The highest river basin elevation | Hmax | 2514 | m |
| A part of the river basin consisted of a very permeable products from rocks | fp | 0.15 | |
| A part of the river basin area consisted of medium permeable rocks | fpp | 0.48 | |
| A part of the river basin consisted of poor water permeability rocks | fo | 0.37 | |
| A part of the river basin under the forests | fs | 0.30 | |
| A part of the river basin under grass, meadows, pastures and orchards | ft | 0.56 | |
| A part of the river basin under plough-land and without vegetation | fg | 0.14 | |
| The volume of the torrent rain | hb | 37.57 | mm |
| Average annual air temperature | t0 | 8.70 | °C |
| Average annual precipitation | Hyr | 352 | mm |
| Types of soil products and related types | Y | 1.10 | |
| River basin planning, coefficient of the river basin planning | Xa | 0.64 | |
| Numeral equivalents of visible and clearly exposed erosion process | φ | 0.57 | |
| OUTPUTS | | | |
| Coefficient of the river basin form | A | 0.55 | |
| Coefficient of the watershed development | m | 0.56 | |
| Average river basin width | B | 3.84 | km |
| (A)symmetry of the river basin | a | 0.72 | |
| Density of the river network of the basin | G | 1.53 | |
| Coefficient of the river basin tortuousness | K | 1.22 | |
| Average river basin altitude | Hsr | 1912.59 | m |
| Average elevation difference of the river basin | D | 441.59 | m |

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|----------|------------------------------------|
| Average river basin decline | Isr | 28.46 | % |
| The height of the local erosion base of the river basin | Hleb | 1043.00 | m |
| Coefficient of the erosion energy of the river basin's relief | Er | 126.95 | |
| Coefficient of the region's permeability | S1 | 0.77 | |
| Coefficient of the vegetation cover | S2 | 0.77 | |
| Analytical presentation of the water retention in inflow | W | 0.4921 | m |
| Energetic potential of water flow during torrent rains | $2gDF^{1/2}$ | 636.56 | m km s |
| Maximal outflow from the river basin | Qmax | 101.32 | m ³ /s |
| Temperature coefficient of the region | T | 0.98 | |
| Coefficient of the river basin erosion | Z | 0.789 | |
| Production of erosion material in the river basin | Wyr | 35667.74 | m ³ /yr |
| Coefficient of the deposit retention | Ru | 0.350 | |
| Real soil losses | Gyr | 12493.38 | m ³ /yr |
| Real soil losses per km ² | Gyr/km ² | 267.12 | m ³ /km ² yr |

DISCUSSION

According to the results, surface erosion has taken place in all the soils on the slopes as the dominant erosion form in the studied area which is the most pronounced on the steep slopes with scarce vegetation cover.

The coefficient of the river basin form, A, calculated as 0.55 using IntErO software. Coefficient of the watershed development, m, was 0.53 and the average river basin width, B, was 3.84 km. (A)symmetry of the river basin, a, which indicates that there is a possibility for large flood waves to appear in the river basin, was calculated as 0.72.

Drainage density, G, was calculated as 1.53 km km⁻² which corresponds to high density of the hydrographic network. The height of the local erosion base of the river basin, Hleb, was 1043 m and also the coefficient of the erosion energy of the river basin's relief, Er, was calculated as 126.95.

The value of Z coefficient as 0.789 indicates that the river basin belongs to II destruction category. The strength of the erosion process is high, and according to the erosion type, it is surface erosion, the second destruction category out of five.

For the current state of land use, calculated peak flow is 101.32 m³s⁻¹ for a return period of 100 years.

The production of sediments in the basin, Wyear, is calculated as 35667.7419 m³year⁻¹; and the Coefficient of the intra-basin deposition, Ru, at 0.350 which indicates that 35% of the eroded materials will deposit and remain in the watershed.

Sediment yield at catchment outlet (Gyear) was calculated as 12493.38 m³year⁻¹; and specific sediment yield at 267.12 m³km⁻²year⁻¹.

The study was conducted in the area of the S2-1 Basin of Shirindareh region, one of the main tributaries of the river Atrak in Iran. The soil erosion intensity and runoff were calculated using the IntErO model. According to the

findings, it can be concluded that there is a possibility for large flood waves to appear in the studied S2-1 river basin.

Calculated peak flow is $101.32 \text{ m}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ for a return period of 100 years. The value of Z coefficient of 0.789 indicates that the river basin belongs to the second destruction category out of five. The calculated net soil loss from the river basin was 12493 m^3 per year, specific $267 \text{ m}^3\text{km}^{-2}$ per year. The strength of the erosion process is strong, and according to the erosion type, it is surface erosion.

CONCLUSION

This study further confirmed the findings of Amiri (2010), Zia Abadi & Ahmadi, (2011), Yousefi et al. (2014), Behzadfar et al. (2014 and 2015) as well as Gholami et al. (2016) in successful implementation of the Erosion Potential Method – EPM and/or IntERO model in Iran, what leads to the conclusion that the IntErO model may be a useful tool for researchers in calculation of runoff and sediment yield at the level of the river basins draining to the Caspian Sea.

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