

Effectiveness of erosion mitigation measures to prevent muddy floods: A case study in the Belgian loam belt

O. Evrard, Etienne Persoons, Karel Vandaele, Bas van Wesemael

► **To cite this version:**

O. Evrard, Etienne Persoons, Karel Vandaele, Bas van Wesemael. Effectiveness of erosion mitigation measures to prevent muddy floods: A case study in the Belgian loam belt. *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment*, Elsevier Masson, 2007, 118 (1-4), pp.149-158. 10.1016/j.agee.2006.02.019 . cea-02511855

HAL Id: cea-02511855

<https://hal-cea.archives-ouvertes.fr/cea-02511855>

Submitted on 10 May 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

Effectiveness of erosion mitigation measures to prevent muddy floods:
A case study in the Belgian loam belt

Olivier Evrard ^a [◇]*, Etienne Persoons ^b, Karel Vandaele ^c, Bas van Wesemael ^a

^a Département de Géographie, Université catholique de Louvain, Place Louis Pasteur, 3,
B-1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

^b Département des Sciences du Milieu et de l'Aménagement du Territoire, Université
catholique de Louvain, Croix du Sud, 2, Bte 2, B-1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

^c Watering van Sint-Truiden, Interbestuurlijke samenwerking Land en Water,
Minderbroedersstraat, 16, B-3800 Sint-Truiden, Belgium

[◇] Fonds pour la formation à la Recherche dans l'Industrie et l'Agriculture (F.R.I.A.), Belgium

* Corresponding author. Tel. : +32-10-47-29-91; fax: +32-10-47-28-77.
E-mail address : evrard@geog.ucl.ac.be (Olivier Evrard).

1 **Abstract**

2
3 During the previous decade, 68 per cent of the municipalities in the Belgian loam belt have
4 been confronted with muddy floods from agricultural catchments after intense rainfall. Runoff
5 concentrates in dry valleys and causes damage to infrastructure and housing property
6 downstream. A typical problem area is the village of Velm where a permanent river is
7 constrained by a culvert designed to accommodate its peak discharge. However, the design of
8 the culvert does not take the local flooding from seven dry valleys just upstream into account.
9 This study focuses peak discharge from one of these agricultural catchments (c. 300 ha). The
10 Meshed Hydrological Model (MHM) is used to evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation
11 measures to reduce flooding under seasonal variation of soil cover in cropland and difference
12 in land use patterns i.e. before and after land consolidation. The land cover spatial pattern was
13 mapped at regular intervals during 2003. The largest potential of runoff generation occurs in
14 December, and therefore represents a worst-case scenario. Mitigation measures implemented
15 after the extreme event of August, 2002 (a 12 ha grassed waterway and a retention dam in the
16 thalweg) alleviate the flooding risk in Velm. The model simulates a peak discharge and a
17 runoff volume reduction of more than 40%. The retention pond would buffer all the generated
18 runoff volume for the selected worst-case scenario. Land consolidation carried out in the
19 1970s has led to a 33 per cent rise of peak discharge and to a 19 per cent increase of runoff
20 volume. The major role played by a new consolidation road built in the thalweg on runoff
21 concentration is highlighted. Implementation of additional soil conservation measures is
22 therefore needed to limit runoff generation within the catchment.

23

24 **Keywords :** muddy floods; agricultural catchment; grassed waterway (GWW); modelling;
25 Belgian loam belt

26

27

28

29

1 **1. Introduction**

2
3 Many villages of the Belgian loam belt (Fig. 1) are confronted with muddy floods from small
4 agricultural catchments (c. 100 ha – 1000 ha). These floods occur after intense rainfall, mainly
5 at the end of spring or early in the summer, and cause important damage to infrastructure and
6 housing property in the villages located downstream (Verstraeten and Poesen, 1999;
7 Verstraeten et al., 2003). A survey undertaken in the Walloon Region (Fig. 1a) shows that
8 muddy floods have affected 68 % of the municipalities of the loam belt from 1990 to 2000.
9 Furthermore, 80 % of these municipalities were flooded at least twice during this period
10 (Bielders et al., 2003). Other regions in the north-western European loam belt experience
11 similar flooding : the South Downs, UK (Boardman et al., 2003); and northern France
12 (Souchère et al., 2003). Previous studies focused on erosion phenomena at the small
13 catchment scale (Vandaele and Poesen, 1995; Beuselinck et al., 2000; Chaplot and Le
14 Bissonnais, 2000; Steegen et al., 2000; Cerdan et al., 2002), but nearly none investigated the
15 flood risk issue and the effectiveness of erosion control measures for villages located
16 downstream of one or several small cultivated catchments (< 500 ha). Since discharges are
17 not normally measured in the thalweg of these small catchments, expert-based models can
18 offer a solution (Cerdan et al., 2001).

19
20 The impact of muddy floods on infrastructure has increased in the last 30 years for several
21 reasons (Boardman et al., 1994; Boardman et al., 2003). Grassland has progressively been
22 converted into cropland while summer crops (maize, sugar beets, potatoes, oilseed rape)
23 increased at the expense of winter cereals. These summer crops provide a low soil cover
24 during the intense storms of May and June. Furthermore, they require a fine seedbed that is
25 very sensitive to surface sealing. Moreover, increase in farm size, agricultural intensification
26 as well as inefficiency of land planning that led to housing construction in critical zones are

1 frequently mentioned as causes for increased flooding (Poiret, 1999; Bielders et al., 2003;
2 Souchère et al., 2003).

3 Several types of measures can be implemented to mitigate muddy floods. A first type of
4 actions aims at preventing runoff generation. Cover crops during the dormant period and
5 alternative agricultural practices, such as “no-till”, aim to prevent the generation of runoff.
6 Grassed buffer strips or grassed waterways (GWW) slow runoff down and in some cases
7 enhance reinfiltration. Grassed buffer strips along field borders are up to 6m-wide and 200m-
8 long. They increase infiltration and decrease net soil loss (Le Bissonnais et al., 2004). In
9 contrast, GWW are larger (min. 10m-wide) and installed in the thalweg (Fiener and
10 Auerswald, 2003). They have a potential to reduce runoff volume and peak discharge rate,
11 especially in small watersheds, up to 15 ha (Fiener and Auerswald, 2005). Finally, water
12 retention structures can be built in order to buffer runoff and reduce peak discharges in the
13 villages downstream.

14
15 Although mitigation measures are currently being installed in several catchments in Flanders
16 (Fig.1), there is no consistent monitoring of the effects of these measures on reducing flood
17 risk. Such assessment is urgently needed, given the farmers’ and the local inhabitants’
18 confidence would be durably damaged if the measures were revealed inefficient during heavy
19 rainfall.

20
21 This study aims to assess the effectiveness of erosion control measures to reduce the
22 downstream impacts of muddy floods from a catchment without permanent stream (hereafter
23 referred to as a “dry valley”). A spatially-distributed hydrological model designed to simulate
24 heavy rainfall events and based on expert-judgement is used to assess flooding under different
25 patterns of seasonal crop cover. Furthermore, the influence of the land consolidation operation
26 carried out in 1977 on runoff will also be addressed.

1 **2. Materials and methods**

2

3 2.1. Study area

4

5 During the last decade, the village of Velm, located South of Sint-Truiden (Flanders,
6 Belgium), has been confronted at least 10 times with muddy floods from agricultural
7 catchments. In total, seven agricultural catchments with a “dry valley” morphology and
8 covering all together an area of 930 ha drain into the Molenbeek river directly upstream of its
9 passage through Velm village (Fig. 1a). In the 1980s, a culvert with a capacity of $4 \text{ m}^3 \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$ was
10 built to canalize the river across the village. This culvert was designed on bankfull discharge
11 of the Molenbeek draining the large catchment upstream of Gingelom (Fig. 1). However, the
12 additional runoff from the seven dry valleys was not taken into account, and consequently the
13 village is flooded when an additional large amount of muddy water from these dry valleys
14 drains into the river.

15 This study focuses on one of these dry valley systems with an altitude between 67 and 106
16 meters and an area of 300 ha (Fig. 1). The soils within the catchment are loess-derived
17 luvisols. A topsoil sample typically contains $100 \text{ g} \cdot \text{kg}^{-1}$ clay, $800 \text{ g} \cdot \text{kg}^{-1}$ silt and $100 \text{ g} \cdot \text{kg}^{-1}$
18 sand (Baeyens, 1958). Central Belgium has a temperate climate with evenly distributed
19 rainfall and a mean annual temperature of $9.9 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. Mean annual precipitation reaches 817 mm
20 (Hufty, 2001). After repeated floods, it was finally decided in 2002 to construct an earthen
21 retention dam with a capacity of 2000 m^3 and a grassed buffer strip of 12 ha in the lower part
22 of the thalweg.

23

24 2.2. Field surveys

25

26 Several land cover classes are permanent throughout the year in the study area (Fig. 1).
27 However, for cropland, four field surveys were carried out in 2003 to document the seasonal
28 variability of the soil cover by vegetation (Fig. 2). The April and December surveys followed
29 the spring and fall sowings, respectively. The June survey corresponds to the situation before

1 the harvest of both winter and summer crops, when the crop cover is well developed. Finally,
2 the September survey outlines the intermediary situation occurring just between the harvest of
3 winter wheat (*Triticum aestivum L.*) and flax (*Linum usitatissimum L.*) when fields are not yet
4 ploughed, and potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum L.*) and sugar beets (*Beta vulgaris L.*) are not yet
5 harvested.

6

7 2.3. The hydrological model

8

9 The “Meshed Hydrological Model” (MHM) is used in this study (Randriamaherisoa, 1993; El
10 Idrissi and Persoons, 1997; Hang, 2002). This model, coupled with geographical information
11 systems (GIS) functionalities, is able to simulate the discharge at every point in the
12 catchment, from slope, flow direction and land cover. This deterministic spatially-distributed
13 model is based upon several hypotheses that are only valid in the case of a heavy rainfall
14 event. It subdivides the catchment into regular grid cells whose physical properties are
15 supposed to be uniform. For this study, two-meters-cells were used, in order to account for the
16 road network and to obtain a trade-off between precision of the results and computing time. A
17 hydrological class ij is assigned to each cell, from its land cover i and slope j . A runoff
18 coefficient and a runoff velocity are attributed to each hydrological class. The model relies on
19 two different functions. A runoff production function determines the transformation of total
20 rainfall into net runoff (eq. 1).

$$21 \quad C_{ij} = \frac{R_{ij}}{P} \quad (1)$$

22 where C_{ij} is the runoff coefficient for hydrological class ij [dimensionless]; R_{ij} is the runoff for
23 the class ij [mm]; P is the total rainfall [mm].

24

25 Runoff coefficients evolve asymptotically towards a constant value during rainfall, while soil
26 saturation is progressively reached. The MHM model, however, is based on linearity and

1 permanence of the production function through an event. This is an acceptable hypothesis in
2 the case of intense rainfall, when rainfall intensity rapidly exceeds the infiltration capacity of
3 the soil. The production function determines the proportion of rainfall that runs off from each
4 cell. A transfer function determines the flow of runoff between the cells to the outlet. This
5 function is based on the runoff velocities given for each hydrological class ij . Transfer
6 velocities are considered constant during an event and the transferred volume cannot
7 infiltrate in gridcells downstream. This is acceptable in case of heavy rainfall when
8 infiltration capacity is exceeded all over the catchment. In the absence of a hydrographical
9 network, the Linsley method is used to represent the rainfall-runoff relationship (Linsley et
10 al., 1992). This method subdivides the catchment in n areas (A_n) of equal transfer time to the
11 outlet. Isochrones represent the contour lines $n\Delta t$ between such areas, where Δt is the time
12 interval between two isochrones. This subdivision is made on the basis of the velocity matrix,
13 as well as on the flow directions. The hydrograph at the outlet consists of runoff from
14 successive isochrone areas located each a temporal lag Δt further upstream. The transfer
15 function needs to be associated with the production function to determine rainfall that runs off
16 for each isochrone area (eq. 2).

$$17 \quad Q(t) = \sum_{k=1}^n A_k \times C_k \times I(t - k + 1) \quad \text{for } (t - k + 1) > 0 \quad (2)$$

18 where $Q(t)$ is the discharge at the outlet at time t [$\text{m}^3 \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$]; A_k is the area of the isochrone k ;

19 $C_k = \sum_{ij} C_{ij} \times \frac{A_{ij}}{A_k}$ is the runoff coefficient for each isochrone area k ; $I(t)$ is the rainfall intensity

20 at time t . The final result is a surface runoff hydrograph (Randriamaherisoa, 1993; El Idrissi
21 and Persoons, 1997; Hang, 2002).

22

23 2.4. The model input dataset

24

1 Five data layers are needed to compute runoff at the catchment outlet. First, a land cover
2 dataset is created assigning a cover class at each field of the catchment field pattern dataset
3 (see section 3.1). Then, the slope and flow direction spatial datasets are calculated from the
4 digital elevation model (DEM), with 2m size grid cells. The DEM is obtained by digitising
5 the contour lines (equidistance 2.50m) of the 1:10,000 topographical map (National
6 Geographical Institute of Belgium). The “inverse distance weighted” (IDW) method is used
7 for interpolation. An intense storm is then simulated, with a 10 year return period. Finally, a
8 configuration dataset containing runoff coefficients and velocities for each hydrological class
9 is built. For grassed areas, road network and woodland, the coefficients were taken from
10 previous studies carried out in the Belgian loam belt (Ministère de l’Équipement et des
11 Transports, 2002; Rapport final de la Convention ADALI, 2002). Unfortunately, croplands
12 were only characterized by a global runoff coefficient and velocity in these studies. In order to
13 study the temporal variability of these parameters for croplands, the field survey method
14 developed by Cerdan et al. (2002) for the STREAM model was combined with the
15 experimental data for other types of land use from the studies mentioned above. The
16 STREAM model takes surface crusting, soil roughness and vegetation cover into account to
17 determine a relative category of runoff sensitivity. These categories were determined by field
18 surveys (Table 1). Runoff coefficients and velocities were then attributed to these relative
19 categories, in such a way that cropland values fall within the range of values for the other
20 types of land use from previous experimental studies carried out in the Belgian loam belt
21 (Table 2). The following sequence of increasing probability to generate runoff was used (e.g.
22 Musy and Higy, 2004):

23 Woodlands < Grassland < Dense crops < Sparse crops < Bare soils < Roads

24

25 2.5. Simulations

26

1 In order to select a worst-case scenario, four seasons are simulated, to evaluate the most
2 sensitive period for flooding. The land cover spatial datasets for each season are transformed
3 into two-meter gridcells. The model is run with the same rainfall event for the four different
4 land cover datasets. Furthermore, the impact of the land consolidation of 1977 is investigated
5 for this specific catchment. The former field pattern is mapped from digitised aerial
6 photographs of 1957. A visual observation of the photographs allowed the recognition of most
7 types of cover within the catchment. For the remaining 7% of the fields, the land cover from
8 agricultural statistics for the loam belt were used (Institut National de Statistiques, 1957). A
9 land cover class was randomly assigned to each field for which the cover was impossible to
10 distinguish on the photograph, according to these statistics. The impact of the GWW installed
11 in the thalweg in 2002 is analysed. For this purpose, the worst-case scenario is simulated.
12 Finally, the effect of the retention dam is also addressed.

13

14 2.6 Strengthening confidence in the model for extreme events

15

16 A validation of the MHM model has already been successfully implemented in catchments
17 under temperate and semi-arid climates (El Idrissi, 1996; Ntaguzwa, 1999; Hang, 2002). The
18 model is also used by the hydrological service (SETHY, Service d'ETudes HYdrologiques) of
19 the Walloon Region of Belgium. As the model does not simulate water reinfiltration, the
20 topographic index (eq. 3) has been computed at both extremities of the GWW to check its
21 topographic sensitivity to surface saturation (Beven and Kirkby, 1979; Moore et al., 1988).

$$22 \quad I = \ln\left(\frac{\alpha}{\tan \beta}\right) \quad (3)$$

23 where I is the topographic index; α is the local catchment area per unit contour length and is
24 expressed in meters ; β is the slope of the ground surface (in degrees). Typically, a large local
25 catchment area and a small slope result in a high value of the index, meaning that the

1 groundwater table is located at a low depth and that wetter soil can be expected (Rodhe and
2 Seibert, 1999).

3

4 Furthermore, to increase the confidence in the model for this specific application, several
5 events were used for comparison of simulated discharges with the observed ones at the
6 catchment outlet. Water level measurements behind a dam are used. Water is temporally
7 stored in a retention pond and drains through two pipes of 0.25m and 0.2m diameter in the
8 bottom of the dam. Few runoff events have been recorded since 2003. A crest stage recorder
9 was installed behind the dam to measure water level when runoff to the outlet occurred. Such
10 a recorder consists of a plastic tube with a length of water-sensitive tape which changes
11 colour on contact with water (Hooke and Mant, 2000). Water levels were then converted to
12 outflow discharge of the pipes in the dam by eq. 4 (Ilaco, 1985).

$$13 \quad Q = m \times A \times \sqrt{2 \times g \times h} \quad (4)$$

14 where Q is the discharge ($\text{m}^3 \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$); m is the discharge coefficient (here equal to 0.62); A is the
15 cross-section of the drain (m^2); g is the gravity acceleration ($9.81 \text{ m}^2 \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$) and h is the
16 hydraulic head (m). A tipping bucket raingauge was installed 500 meters north of the outlet.

17

18 **3. Results and discussion**

19

20 3.1. Strengthening confidence in the model

21

22 According to the litterature, we obtained very high values of the topographic index at the
23 GWW upstream extremity ($I=16.1$) and the catchment outlet ($I=16.7$). By comparison,
24 Beven and Wood (1983) found that the first saturated areas of a catchment had a topographic
25 index value close to 15. Rodhe and Steibert (1999) found maximal I values of ~ 17 in Swedish
26 catchments. This means that the GWW will be very quickly saturated during a storm.

1 Reinfiltration is hence highly unlikely in that place, and the hypothesis of the model is hence
2 acceptable.

3
4 Runoff occurred three times in 2004 (Table 3). The occurrence of runoff is correctly predicted
5 even if the peak discharge is overestimated by ~50%. It remains hence in the same order of
6 magnitude. Other recorded rainfall events that did not lead to runoff at the outlet were
7 simulated with the model. Simulated runoff during these events was very low and completely
8 buffered by the retention dam.

9 10 3.2. Selection of a worst-case scenario

11
12 The simulation of the event with a 10 year return period shows that highest peak discharges
13 and runoff volumes are reached in December ($1.0 \text{ m}^3 \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$; 4586 m^3), while they are lowest in
14 September ($0.3 \text{ m}^3 \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$; 1715 m^3 ; Fig. 3; Table 4). These results are explained by the higher
15 proportion of bare soil (35 %) and sparsely covered soil (43 %) at the beginning of winter
16 (Fig. 2d). The December situation is hence chosen as a worst-case scenario. June is the second
17 highest risk period, because crop cover is quite low and crusts develop on these sparsely
18 covered soils (Fig.2b; Table 1).

19

20 3.3. Potential effect of land consolidation on runoff

21

22 After the 1977 consolidation, the mean size of the fields in the study area increased about
23 four-fold from 1.02 ha in 1957 to 4.34 ha in 2003. This is in agreement with Verstraeten and
24 Poesen (1999) and Beuselinck et al. (2000) who studied land consolidation in an area of
25 central Belgium. The land cover before the consolidation in the 1970s (Fig. 4a) is compared
26 to that of April 2003 (Fig. 4b). For an event with a 10 year return period, runoff volume
27 increased by 19 per cent following the land consolidation operation (from 1443 m^3 in 1957 to

1 1715 m³ in 2003), while peak discharge rose by 33 per cent (Fig. 5), reaching 0.3 m³.s⁻¹ for
2 the 1957 simulation, against 0.4 m³.s⁻¹ in April 2003. The lag time is similar in both situations
3 and is close to 75 minutes (Fig. 5). However, the hydrograph shape is different. The rising
4 limb is more gradual before the land consolidation scheme. After land consolidation, the first
5 peak in the hydrograph, corresponds to the sudden arrival of water that concentrates on the
6 road in the thalweg.

7
8 In comparison with other studies, land consolidation does not lead to a sharp rise of runoff
9 volume (e.g. more than 75 % rise according to Souchère et al., 2003). Two reasons can be put
10 forward. First, the Belgian openfield context is different from that of bocage landscapes. In
11 the study area, no grassland or hedgerows were present before 1977. Consequently, there was
12 no ploughing up of grassed areas, which resulted in an important increase of runoff volume in
13 other European regions. Second, the model does not take into account the ditch network of the
14 catchment, where water can be temporally buffered. This impact is hence underestimated in
15 this study, which highlights the major role played by a consolidation road constructed in the
16 thalweg and leading to an increase of the runoff transfer velocity to the outlet (10 minutes-
17 long sharp rising limb in 2003 instead of a more gradual rising limb lasting for 30 minutes in
18 1977).

19 3.4. Impact of the mitigation measures

20

21 The impact of the GWW (12 ha) installed in 2002 is simulated for the worst-case scenario
22 (Fig. 6). Peak discharge is reduced by 50 % when the GWW is taken into account (0.5 m³.s⁻¹
23 instead of 1.0 m³.s⁻¹; Fig. 7; Table 4). Runoff volume transferred to the outlet decreased by 40
24 per cent (2651 m³ instead of 4586 m³; Table 4). Another very interesting effect of GWW is
25 the lag time increase (+ 16%; Table 4). The rising limb is also more gradual when the GWW

1 is considered (Fig. 7). Results are difficult to compare with the ones obtained in other studies,
2 given the much smaller size of the studied catchments (15 ha in Fiener and Auerswald, 2003)
3 or a too different landscape context (GWW and terraces in the USA e.g. Chow et al., 1999).
4 However, these studies observe the same trends (decrease of both peak discharge and total
5 runoff volume).

6
7 The decrease in total runoff volume (1935 m³) when the GWW is considered can be explained
8 by two reasons. First, less runoff has been produced in the GWW due to its lower runoff
9 coefficient (680 m³). Second, a reduction in runoff velocity (0.1 m.s⁻¹ instead of 0.27m.s⁻¹)
10 upon replacing sparsely covered cropland with a GWW has resulted in a long-tail of runoff.
11 Remaining runoff volume at the outlet (1255 m³) is spread over a longer period. The model
12 does not simulate the whole recession limb in this case, given it is limited to a 180-minutes
13 simulation.

14
15 In relation to the flood risk in Velm village, the maximal observed outflow peak discharge
16 reached 0.47 m³.s⁻¹ in 2004, which is very close to the one simulated by the model taking the
17 GWW into account (0.50 m².s⁻¹; Table 4). No flooding of the village resulted in 2004. Given
18 the model overestimates the discharge by ~50% (Table 3), any new flooding of Velm is
19 highly unlikely for the selected worst-case scenario. As the retention pond buffers all the
20 incoming runoff, the diameter of the outflow pipes could be narrowed (with metal plates e.g.)
21 to limit runoff discharge towards the village.

22

23 **4. Conclusions**

24 This case study in a small agricultural catchment (c. 300 ha) of central Belgium shows that a
25 GWW and a retention dam alleviate the muddy floods risk for Velm village. Peak discharge
26 and total runoff volume are reduced by 50% and 40% respectively, while the lag time

1 increases by 16%. However, land consolidation carried out in the 1970s led to an increase of
2 peak discharge (33%) and total runoff volume (19%). It is explained by a rise in field sizes
3 (from 1.02 ha in 1977 to 4.34 ha in 2003) but also and mainly by the construction of a road in
4 the thalweg of the catchment leading to runoff concentration. Consequently, on-site soil
5 conservation measures are to be installed within the catchment to prevent runoff generation
6 and mitigate its concentration in the catchment thalweg. Furthermore, as generated runoff
7 volume is buffered in the retention pond for the selected worst-case scenario, a reduction of
8 the outflow pipes diameter could be envisaged in order to limit the discharge towards the
9 village.

10

11 **Acknowledgements**

12

13 We are grateful to Matthieu Kervyn for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

1 **References**

2

3 Ilaco, 1985. Agricultural Compendium for rural development. Elsevier, Amsterdam, 738 p.

4

5 Baeyens, L., 1958. Carte des sols de la Belgique. Texte explicatif de la planchette de Sint-

6 Truiden 105 E. (In Dutch and French). Institut pour l'encouragement de la Recherche

7 Scientifique dans l'Industrie et l'Agriculture, Brussels.

8

9 Beuselinck, L., Steegen, A., Govers, G., Nachtergaele, J., Takken, I., Poesen, J., 2000.

10 Characteristic of sediment deposits formed by intense rainfall events in small catchments in

11 the Belgian Loam Belt. *Geomorphology* 32, 69 – 82.

12

13 Beven, K.J., Kirkby, M.J., 1979. A physically based, variable contributing area model of

14 basin hydrology. *Hydrolog. Sci. – Bulletin des Sciences Hydrologiques* 24, 43-69.

15

16 Biielders, C.L., Ramelot, C., Persoons, E., 2003. Farmer perception of runoff and erosion and

17 extent of flooding in the silt-loam belt of the Belgian Walloon Region. *Environmental Science*

18 *and Policy* 6, 85 – 93.

19

20 Boardman, J., Ligneau, L., De Roo, A., Vandaele, K., 1994. Flooding of property by runoff

21 from agricultural land in northwestern Europe. *Geomorphology* 10, 183-196.

22

23 Boardman, J., Evans, R., Ford, J., 2003. Muddy floods on the South downs, southern

24 England: problem and responses. *Environmental Science and Policy* 6, 69-83.

25

1 Cerdan, O., Couturier, A., Le Bissonnais, Y., Lecomte, V., Souchère, V., 2001. Incorporating
2 soil surface crusting processes in an expert-based runoff model: Sealing and Transfer by
3 Runoff and Erosion related to Agricultural Management. *Catena* 46, 189-205.
4
5 Cerdan, O., Le Bissonnais, Y., Souchère, V., Martin, P., Lecomte, V., 2002. Sediment
6 concentration in interrill flow : Interactions between soil surface conditions, vegetation and
7 rainfall. *Earth Surf. Process. Landforms* 27, 193-205.
8
9 Chaplot, V., Le Bissonnais, Y., 2000. Field measurements of interrill erosion under different
10 slopes and plot sizes. *Earth Surf. Process. Landforms* 25, 145-153.
11
12 Chow, T.L., Rees, H.W., Daigle, J.L., 1999. Effectiveness of terraces/grassed waterway
13 systems for soil and water conservation: A field evaluation. *J. Soil Water Conserv.* 3, 577-
14 583.
15
16 Delbeke, L., 2001. Extreme neerslag in Vlaanderen. (In Dutch). AMINAL, Afdeling Water.
17 Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.
18
19 El Idrissi, A., 1996. Effet de l'humidité initiale du sol sur le processus de ruissellement à
20 l'échelle de la parcelle et du bassin versant. (In French). Unpublished PhD thesis. Agricultural
21 Engineering Unit, Université Catholique de Louvain.
22
23 El Idrissi, A., Persoons, E., 1997. MHM : le Modèle Hydrologique Maillé. (In French). In :
24 FAO : "Remote Sensing and Water Resources". Proceedings of the international workshop,
25 Montpellier (France).

1 World Wide Web Address :
2 http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/W7320B/w7320b37.htm
3
4 Fiener, P., Auerswald, K., 2003. Concepts and effects of a multi-purpose grassed waterway.
5 Soil Use and Management 19, 65 – 72.
6 Fiener, P., Auerswald, K., 2005. Seasonal variation of grassed waterway effectiveness in
7 reducing runoff and sediment delivery from agricultural watersheds in temperate Europe. Soil
8 and Tillage Research, in press.
9
10 Hang, P., 2002. Conception et développement du modèle OGIVE et application à des micro-
11 bassins versants belges. (In French). Unpublished PhD thesis, Faculty of Biological,
12 Agronomical and Environmental Engineering, Université Catholique de Louvain.
13
14 Hooke, J.M., Mant, J.M., 2000. Geomorphological impacts of a flood event on ephemeral
15 channels in SE Spain. Geomorphology 34, 163-180.
16
17 Hufty, A., 2001. Introduction à la climatologie. (In French). Ed. De Boeck Université,
18 Brussels, 542 p.
19
20 Institut National de Statistiques, 1957. Recensement agricole et horticole au 15 mai 1957. (In
21 French). Brussels, Ministère des Affaires économiques.
22
23 Le Bissonnais, Y., Lecomte, V., Cerdan, O., 2004. Grass strip effects on runoff and soil loss.
24 Agronomie 24, 129-136.
25

1 Linsley, R.K., Franzini, J.B., Freyberg, D.L., Tchobanoglous, G., 1992. Water Resources
2 Engineering. 4th edition. Ed. Mac Graw-Hill, 841 p.
3
4 Ministère de l'Équipement et des Transports. Direction des Routes de Liège, 2002. Bilan de
5 fonctionnement hydraulique et écologique des bassins d'orage de l'autoroute E40. Rapport
6 final. (In French). Groupe Interuniversitaire de Recherches en Ecologie Appliquée (GIREA)
7 and Agricultural Engineering Unit, Faculty of Biological, Agronomical and Environmental
8 Engineering, Université Catholique de Louvain.
9
10 Moore, I.D., Burch, G.J., Mackenzie, D.H., 1988. Topographic effects on the distribution of
11 surface soil water and the location of ephemeral gullies. Transactions of the ASAE 31(4),
12 1098-1107.
13
14 Musy, A., Higy, C., 2004. Hydrologie. Une science de la nature. (In French). Presses
15 Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 314 p.
16
17 Ntaguzwa, D., 1999. La relation pluie-débit et l'incertitude en modélisation hydrologique.
18 Application aux bassins versants du complexe des barrages de l'Eau d'Heure (Belgique). (In
19 French). Unpublished PhD thesis. Agricultural Engineering Unit, Université Catholique de
20 Louvain.
21
22 Randriamaherisoa, A., 1993. Modèle Hydrologique Maillé et Système d'Information
23 Géographique. L'impact de la déforestation sur le régime hydrologique de la Lokoho
24 (Madagascar). (In French). Unpublished PhD thesis. Agricultural Engineering Unit,
25 Université Catholique de Louvain.

1

2 Rapport final de la Convention ADALI (Adaptation des Aménagements hydrauliques à la
3 Lutte contre les Inondations), 2002. (In French). Agricultural Engineering Unit, Faculty of
4 Biological, Agronomical and Environmental Engineering, Université Catholique de Louvain.
5

6 Rodhe, A., Seibert, J., 1999. Wetland occurrence in relation to topography: a test of
7 topographic indices as moisture indicators. *Agricultural and Forest Meteorology* 98-99, 325-
8 340.

9 Souchère, V., King, C., Dubreuil, N., Lecomte-Morel, V., Le Bissonnais, Y., Chalat, M.,
10 2003. Grassland and crop trends: role of the European Union Common Agricultural Policy
11 and consequences for runoff and soil erosion. *Environmental Science and Policy* 6, 7 – 16.
12

13 Steegen, A., Govers, G., Nachtergaele, J., Takken, I., Beuselinck, L., Poesen, J., 2000.
14 Sediment export by water from an agricultural catchment in the Loam Belt of central
15 Belgium. *Geomorphology* 33, 25-36.
16

17 Vandaele, K., Poesen, J., 1995. Spatial and temporal patterns of soil erosion rates in an
18 agricultural catchment, central Belgium. *Catena* 25, 213 – 226.
19

20 Verstraeten, G., Poesen, J., 1999. The nature of small-scale flooding, muddy floods and
21 retention pond sedimentation in central Belgium. *Geomorphology* 29, 275-292.
22

23 Verstraeten, G., Poesen, J., Govers, G., Gillijns, K., Van Rompaey, A., Van Oost, K., 2003.
24 Integrating science, policy and farmers to reduce soil loss and sediment delivery in Flanders,
25 Belgium. *Environmental Science and Policy* 6, 95 – 103.

1 **Tables**

2
3 **Table 1.** Runoff sensitivity relative categories for the different crop cover classes and survey
4 periods (after Cerdan et al., 2002)

5
6

7 Crop cover	8 April	9 June	10 September	11 December
12 Dense crops (class 3) ; more than 50 % of soil cover by vegetation				
13 Roughness	R3 ¹	R3	R3	R3
14 Surface state	F0 ²	F0	F0	F0
15 Runoff sensitivity category	0 ³	0	0	0
16				
17 Sparse crops (class 2); less than 50 % of soil cover by vegetation				
18				
19 Roughness	R3	R2	R2	R1
20 Surface state	F0	F11	F11	F12
21 Runoff sensitivity category	0	1	1	2
22				
23 Bare soils (class 1); no soil cover by vegetation				
24				
25 Roughness	R2	R1	R2	R1
26 Surface state	F11	F12	F11	F12
27 Runoff sensitivity category	1	2	1	2
28				

29
30 ¹ R : soil surface roughness state (height difference between the deepest part of
31 microdepressions and the lowest point of their divide). R0 : 0-1 cm; R1 : 1-2 cm; R2 : 2-5 cm;
32 R3 : 5-10 cm.

33
34 ² F: soil surface crusting stage. F0 : initial fragmentary structure; F11 : altered fragmentary
35 state with structural crusts; F12 : local appearance of depositional crusts; F2 : continuous
36 crusts.

37
38 ³ :The runoff sensitivity category range from 0 to 2. The greater the value of the category, the
39 greatest potential to generate runoff.

Table 2. Runoff coefficients and velocities for different months and different land cover classes in the study area

Land cover	Study area covered (%)	Runoff coefficient	Runoff velocity (m/s)
APRIL			
woods	0.28	0.015	0.06
road network	3.50	0.5	0.4
orchards	13.33	0.02	0.1
grassed areas	4.89	0.02	0.1
dense crops	36.35	0.03	0.1
sparse crops	21.67	0.1	0.5
bare soil	21.48	0.15	0.13
JUNE			
woods	0.28	0.015	0.06
road network	3.50	0.5	0.4
orchards	13.33	0.02	0.1
grassed areas	4.89	0.02	0.1
dense crops	74.20	0.03	0.08
sparse crops	2.45	0.3	0.28
bare soil	0.89	0.3	0.28
SEPTEMBER			
woods	0.28	0.015	0.06
road network	3.50	0.5	0.4
orchards	13.33	0.02	0.1
grassed areas	4.89	0.02	0.1
dense crops	40.89	0.03	0.1
sparse crops	8.98	0.15	0.13
bare soil	11.44	0.15	0.13
DECEMBER			
woods	0.28	0.015	0.06
road network	3.50	0.5	0.4
orchards	13.33	0.02	0.1
grassed areas	4.89	0.02	0.1
dense crops	0	0.03	0.1
sparse crops	42.97	0.3	0.27
bare soil	34.90	0.3	0.27

Table 3. Rainfall and discharge in 2003 and 2004

Event date	Rainfall ¹ (mm)	Return period ² (years)	Q out obs. ³ (m ³ .s ⁻¹)	Q out sim. ⁴ (m ³ .s ⁻¹)
8/07/2004	14.2	5	0	0
17/07/2004	12.2	2 - 5	0	0
21/07/2004	20 (*)	25	0.47	0.70
23/07/2004	23.2 (*)	10	0.47	0.70
8/08/2004	11	2	0	0
13/08/2004	11.2	2 - 5	0	0
14/08/2004	20.6 (*)	2	0.45	0.70

¹Discharge at the outlet was recorded for the events with (*).

²Return periods after Delbeke (2001). They are computed for the rainfall duration considered.

³Q out obs. is the outflow discharge calculated from H obs. with eq. (3).

⁴Q out sim. is the simulated outflow discharge after introduction in the MHM model.

Table 4. Peak discharge, total runoff volume and lag time at the catchment outlet for the different situations simulated with the MHM model

Situation	Peak discharge (m ³ .s ⁻¹)	Total runoff volume (m ³)	Lag time (minutes)
April 2003	0.37	1715	70
June 2003	0.50	2365	73
September 2003	0.29	1326	90
December 2003	1.01	4586	75
Before LC ¹	0.30	1443	73
After LC	0.40	1715	71
Comparison	+ 33 %	+ 19 %	- 3 %
Without GWW ²	1.01	4586	74
With GWW	0.51	2652	86
Comparison	- 49 %	- 42 %	+ 16 %

¹ LC : land consolidation (April situation)

² GWW: grassed waterway

1 **Captions of figures**

2
3 Figure 1. Location map of Velm village, the upstream agricultural catchments and land use of
4 the study area.

5
6 Figure 2. Seasonal evolution of land cover in the study area
7 (a) April; (b) June; (c) September; (d) December

8
9 Figure 3. Discharge at the catchment outlet in different seasons according to land cover in
10 2003 (see the corresponding land cover maps on Fig. 2)

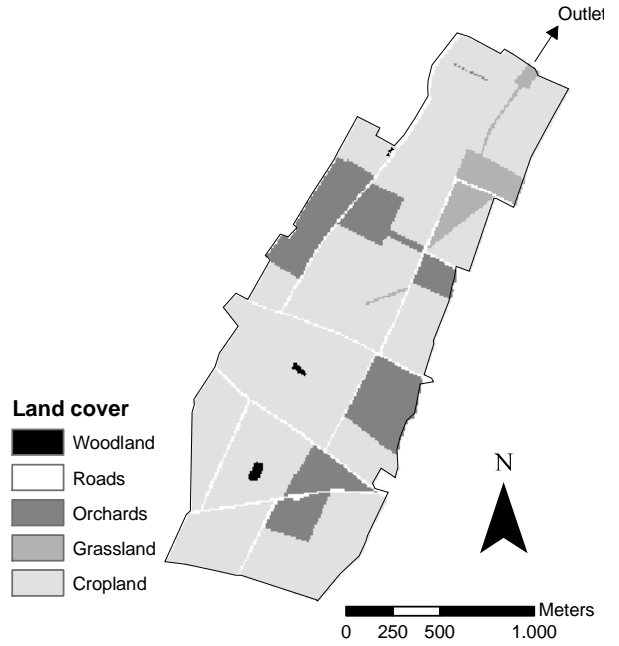
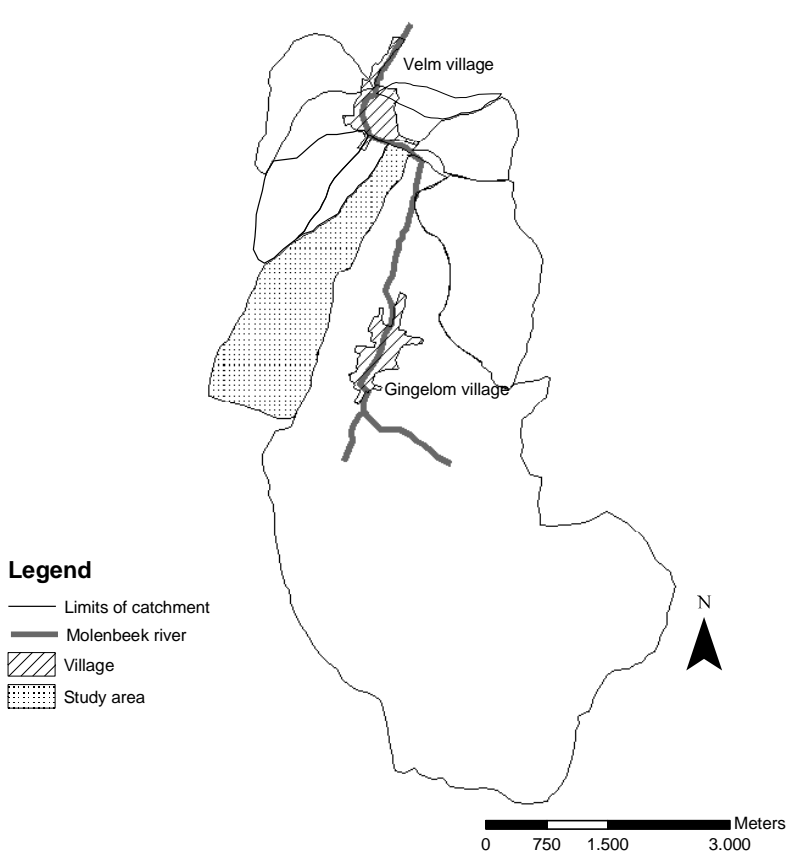
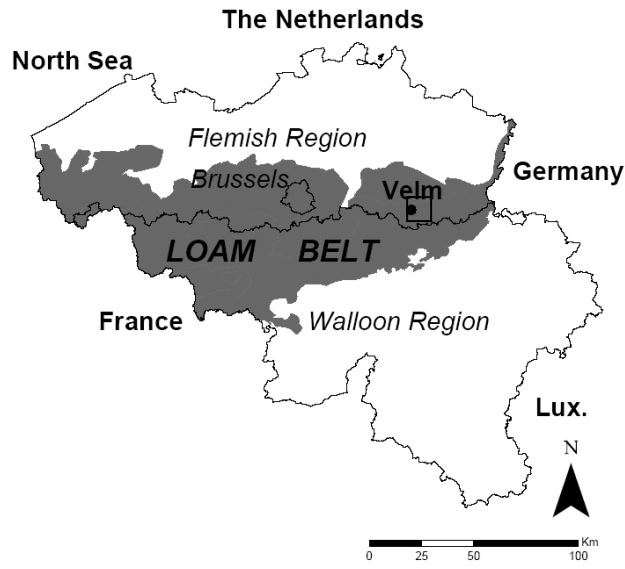
11
12 Figure 4. Land use and land cover before (a) and after (b) land consolidation

13
14 Figure 5. Simulated hydrographs at the catchment outlet for the situation before and after
15 the land consolidation

16
17 Figure 6. Grassed waterway and other land covers in December 2003

18
19 Figure 7. Hydrograph at the catchment outlet for the December situation, with and without
20 grassed waterway

21
22
23



(a)

(b)

Figure 1



Figure 2

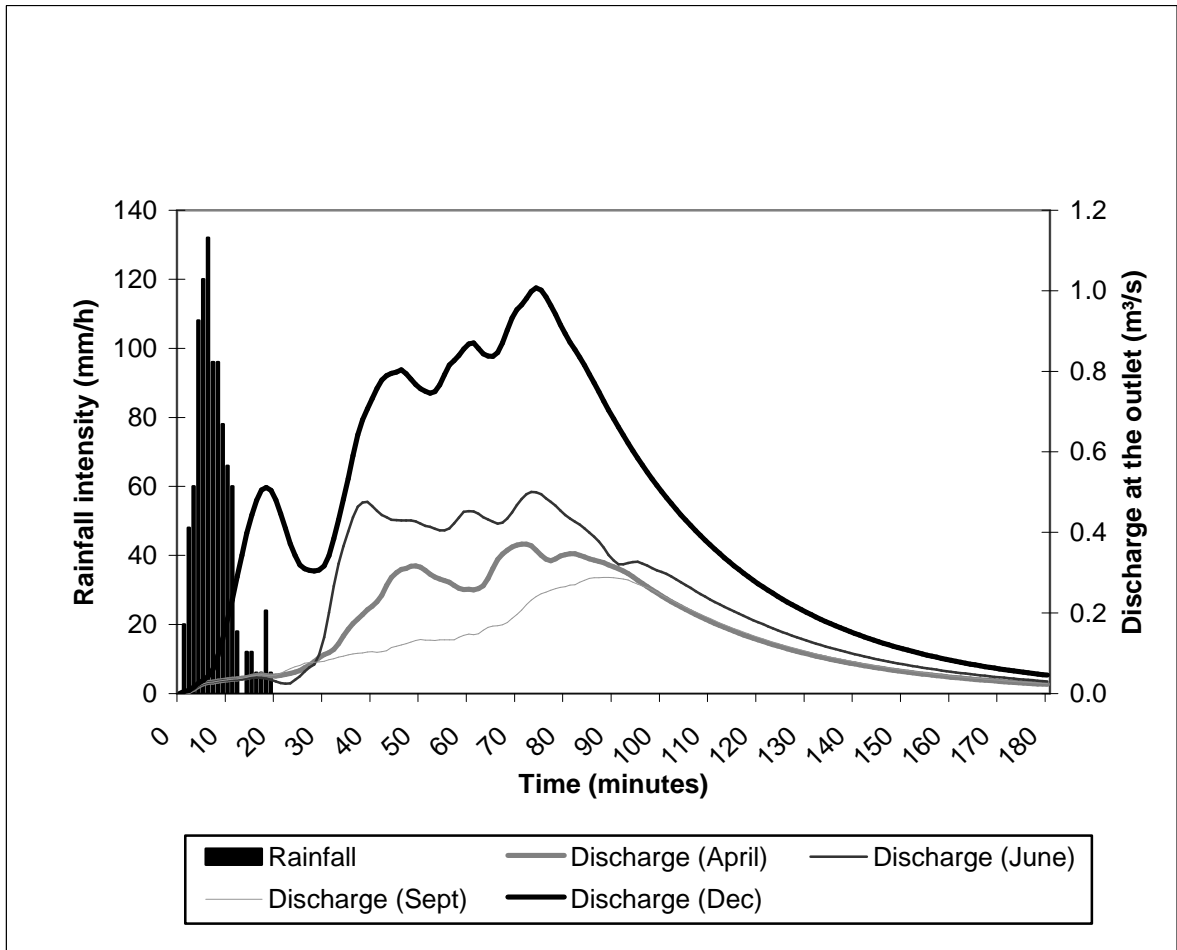
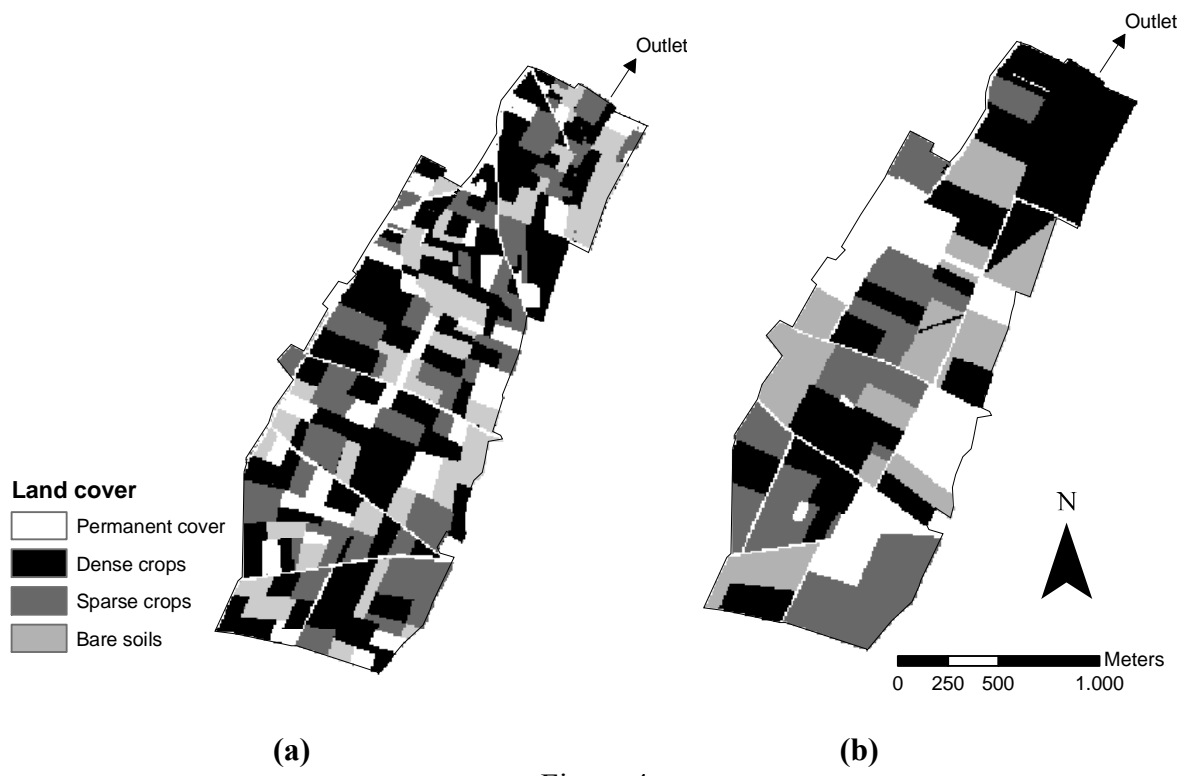


Figure 3



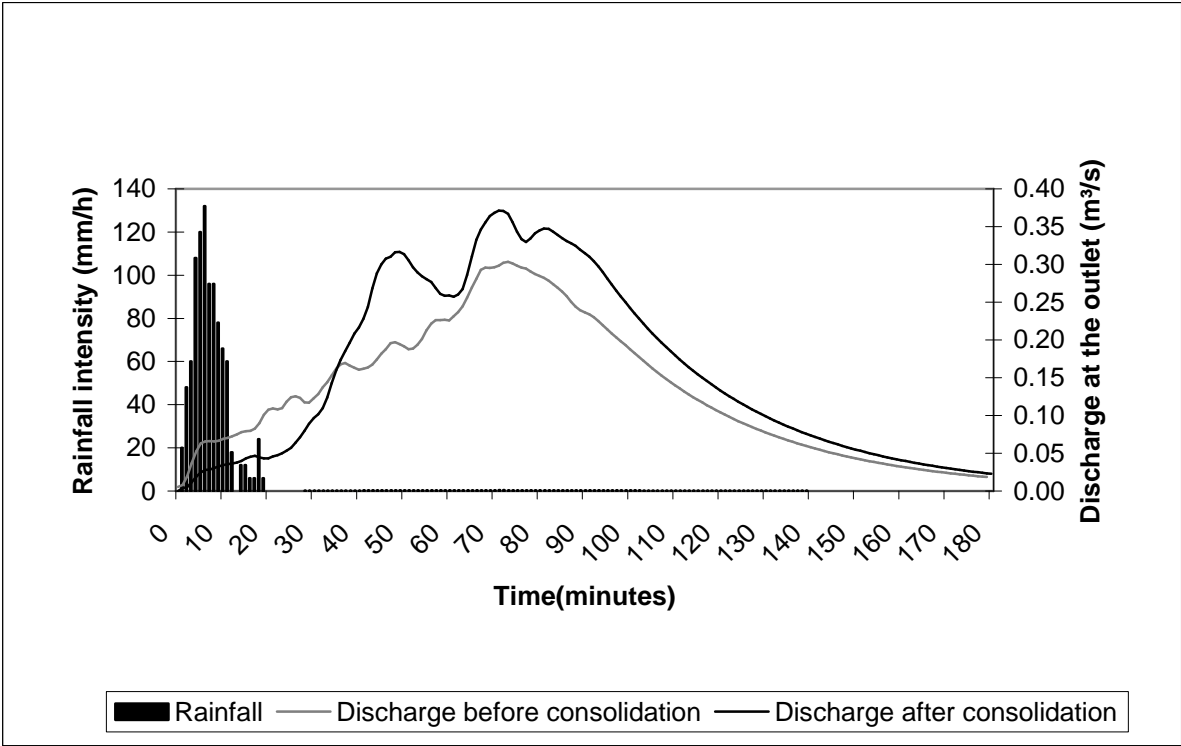


Figure 5

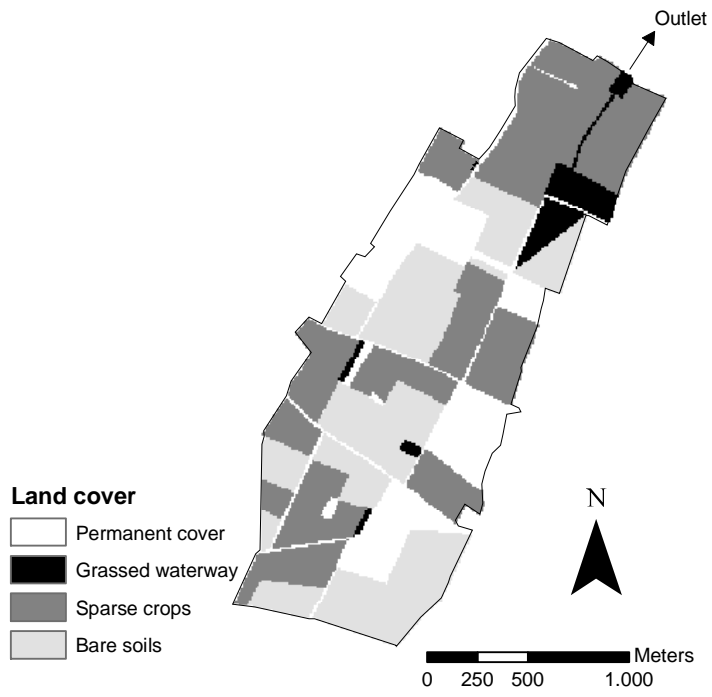


Figure 6

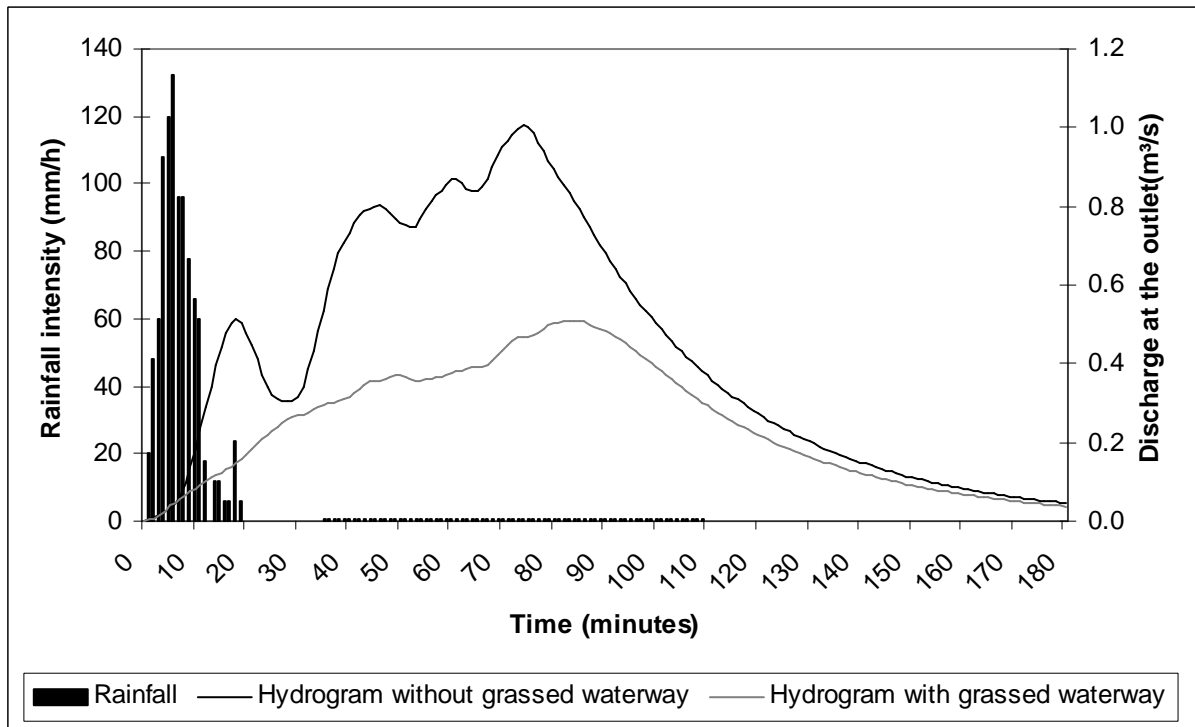


Figure 7