Building Resilience to a Changing Climate:

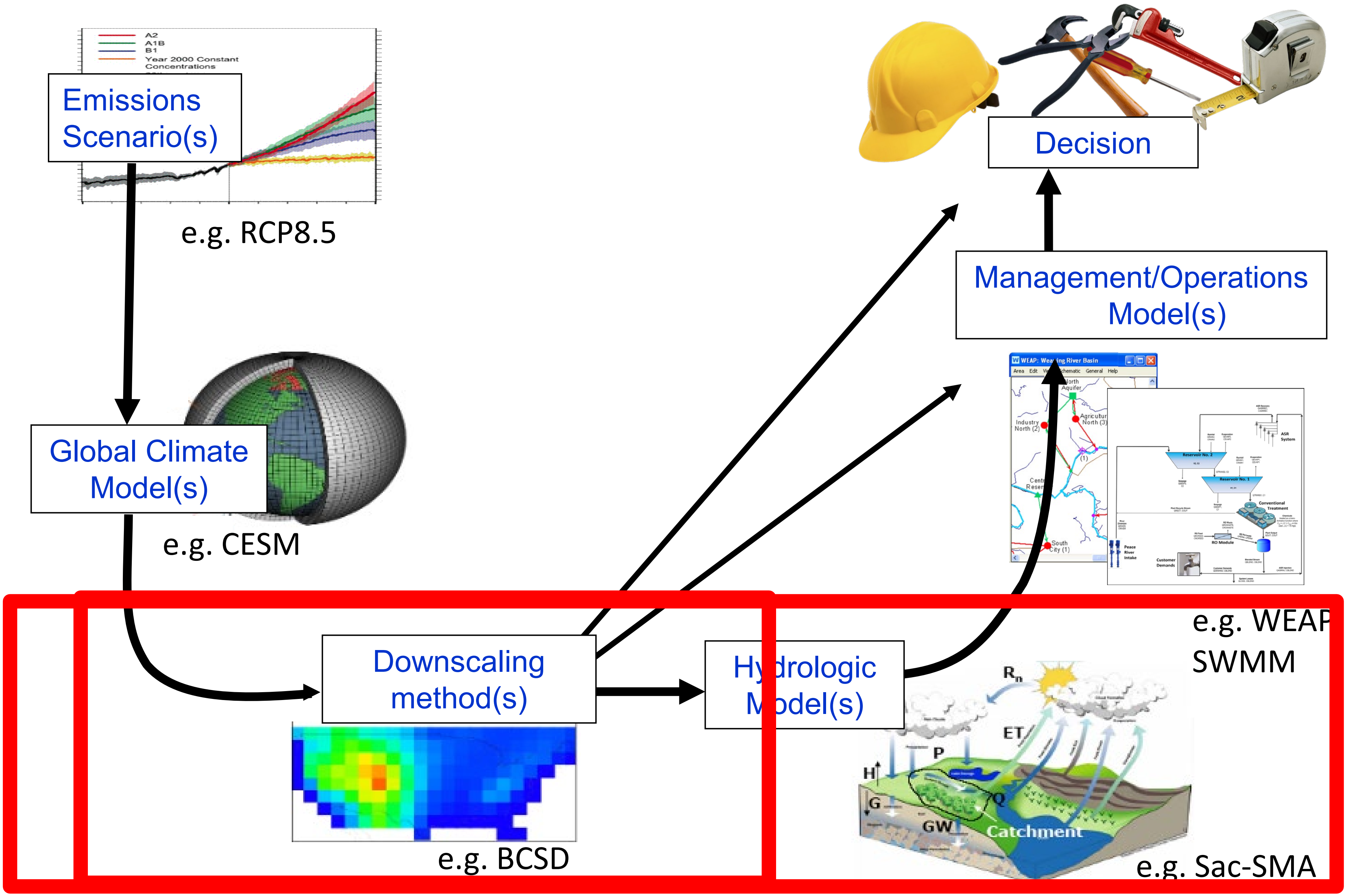
A Technical Training in Water Sector Utility Decision Support

WUCA
Water Utility Climate Alliance

A Practical Look at Downscaling, Bias Correction, and Translating Climate Science into Hydrology

Julie Vano, National Center for Atmospheric Research

Classic “Top-down” Impacts Modeling Chain



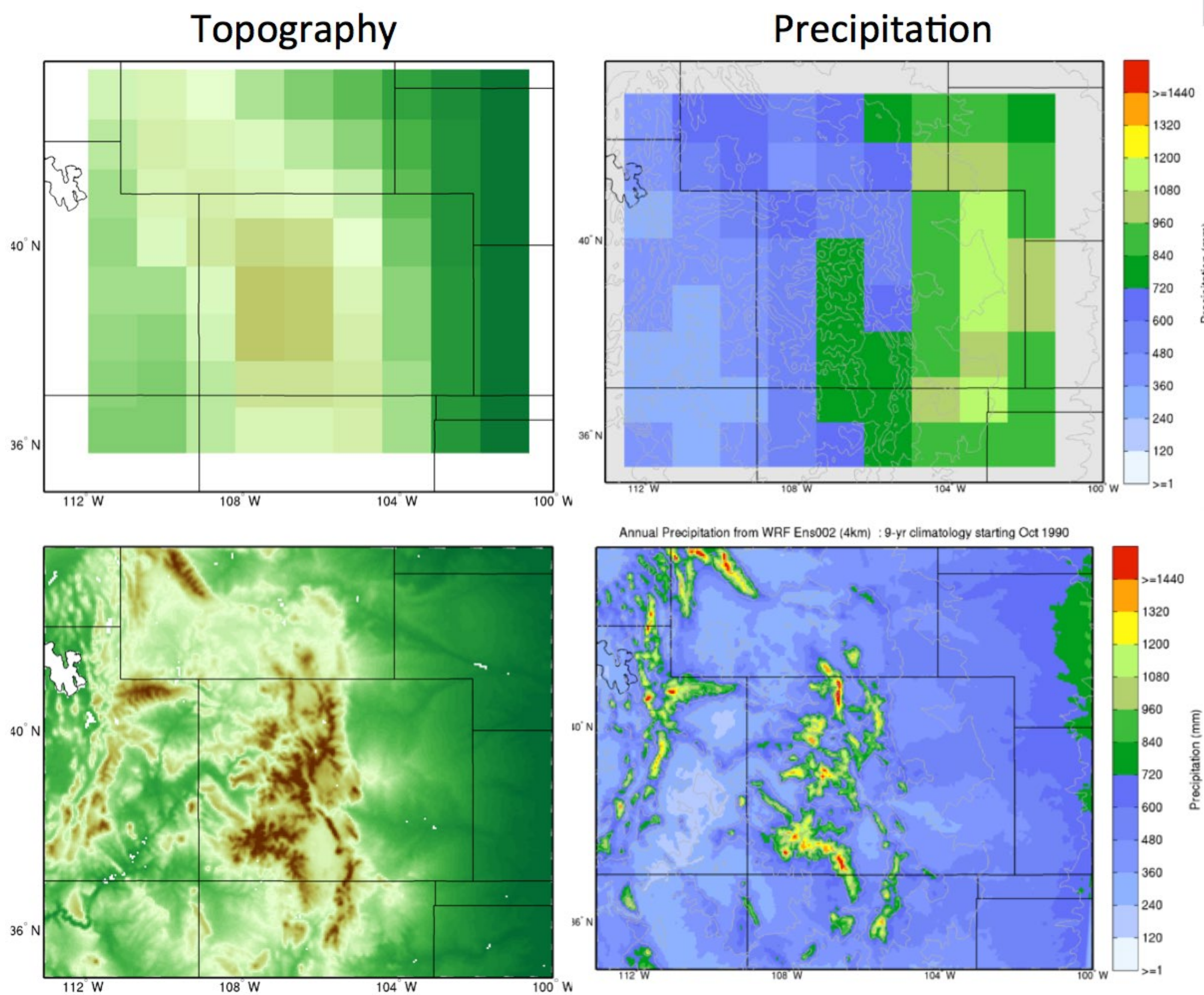
Why Do We Need to Downscale?

Global climate models:

- Coarse resolution of topography
- Inaccurate simulation of orographic precipitation, temperature gradients, cloud, snow, etc.

Regional climate models:

- High resolution of topography
- More accurate simulation of local physics and dynamics

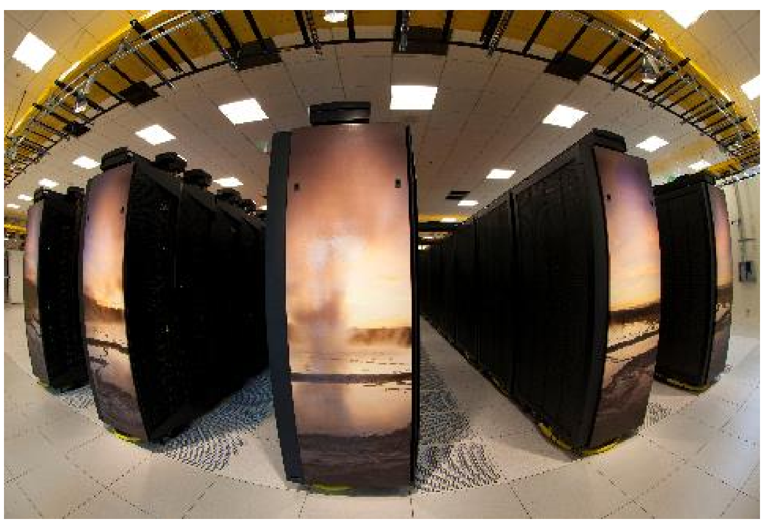


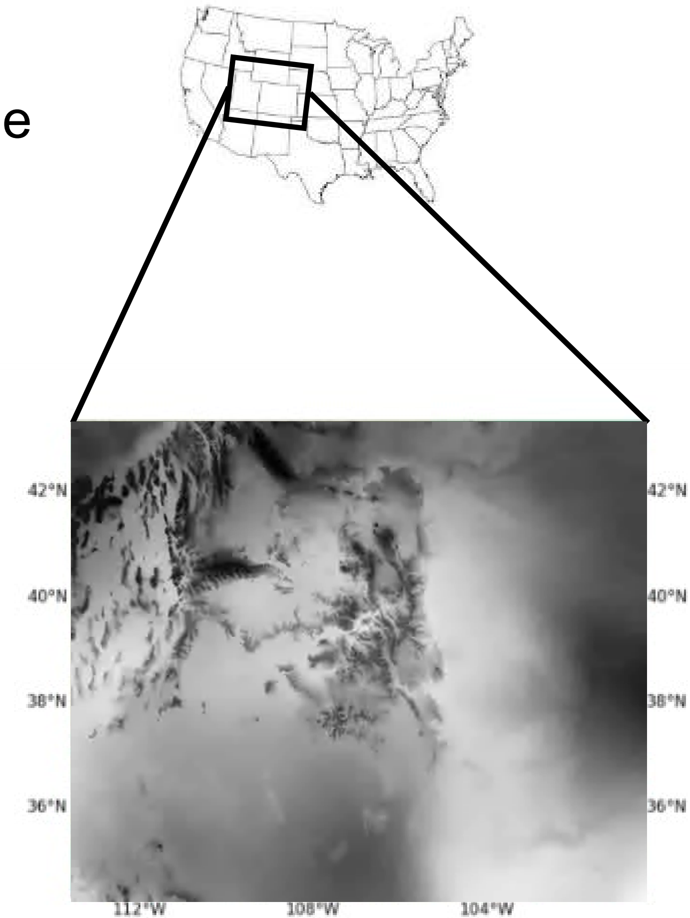
Benefits of Downscaling

- Downscaling provides **local-scale insight**
- Impacts models need **fine-scale and high-temporal resolution climate inputs** (e.g., precipitation, temperature, winds, radiation, moisture)
- Downscaling can **correct for certain biases** of global climate models

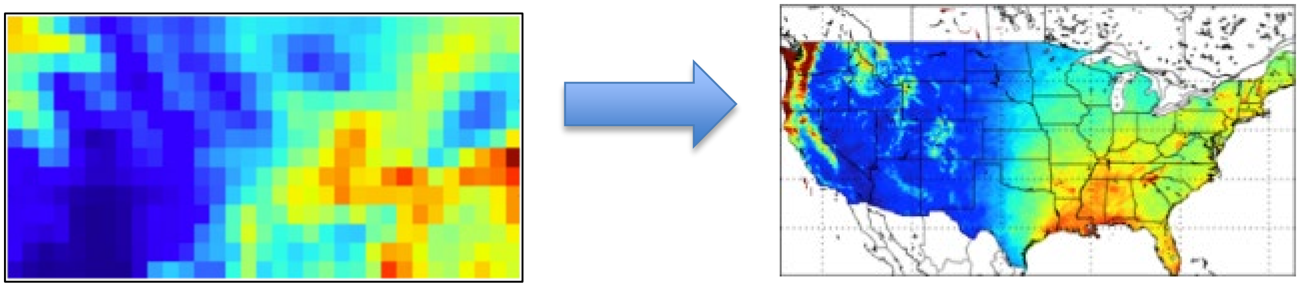
Types of Downscaling: Dynamical

- Uses a high-resolution regional climate model (e.g., WRF) to simulate local dynamics over the area of interest
- Global model output is applied along the boundaries and as initial conditions
- Computationally expensive, time and supercomputers (usually) required

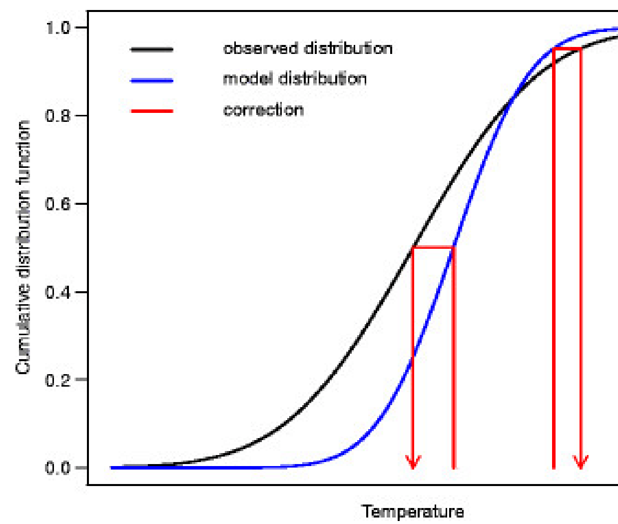


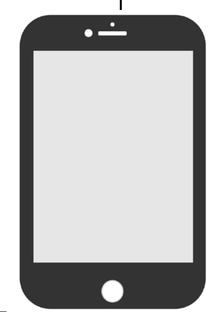


Types of Downscaling: Statistical



- Uses statistical relationships that relate coarse to fine resolution from historical record
- Stationary statistical relationships then applied to future global model output
- Output usually for subset variables (temperature, precipitation)
- Computationally cheap, quick and can be done anywhere
- Statistical relationships do an excellent job reproducing historical data





Example: Bias correction with spatial disaggregation (BCSD)

Tradeoffs Between Dynamical and Statistical Downscaling

Dynamical

Pros

- **Represents physical processes**
- No stationarity assumptions
- Physically consistent across variables

Cons

- **Computationally expensive**
- Data set availability is limited
- Introduces need for additional ensembles
- Produces climate change signals that still must analyzed for credibility

Statistical

Pros

- **Computationally tractable for large GCM ensembles**
- Large high-resolution data sets publicly available
- Consistent with observations

Cons

- **May not represent climate change signal correctly** (often is effectively just interpolated GCM signal)
- Statistical nature often introduces artifacts

A Continuum of Downscaling Options

increasing physical representation

- Dynamical downscaling using state-of-the-art RCMs
  e.g., RSM-ROMS, Water Research and Forecasting (WRF) model,

- "Hybrid" (dynamical + statistical) downscaling
  e.g., build statistical emulator using limited set of dynamical runs

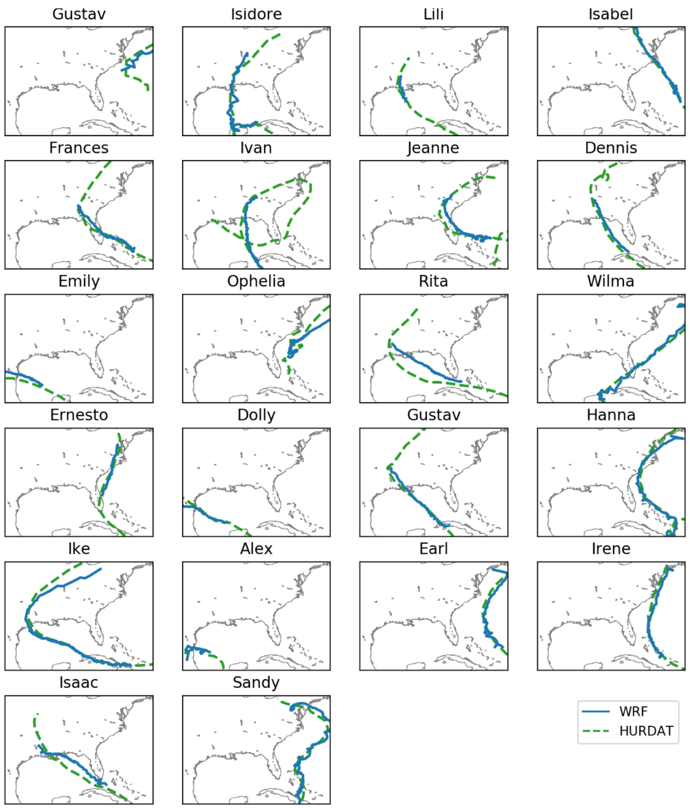
- Physically-based intermediate-complexity atmospheric models
  e.g., Linear Orographic Precipitation model

- Statistical downscaling based on GCM dynamics (water vapor, wind, convective potential, etc.)
  e.g., regression-based, analog, pattern scaling

- Methods to relate downscaled fields to synoptic scale atmospheric predictors
  e.g., self-organized maps, weather typing

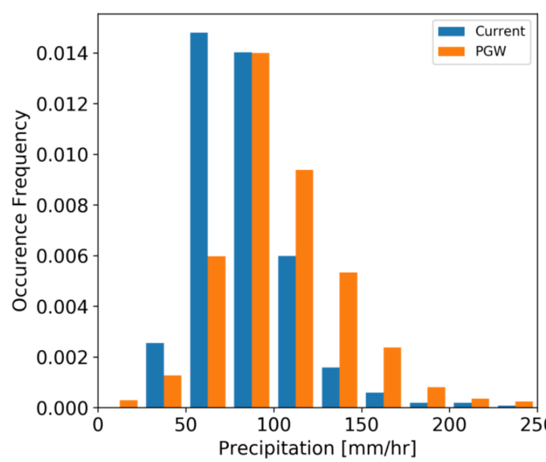
- Statistical downscaling based on rescaling GCM outputs
  e.g., BCSD, BCSA, LOCA, BCCA, linear regression, and more

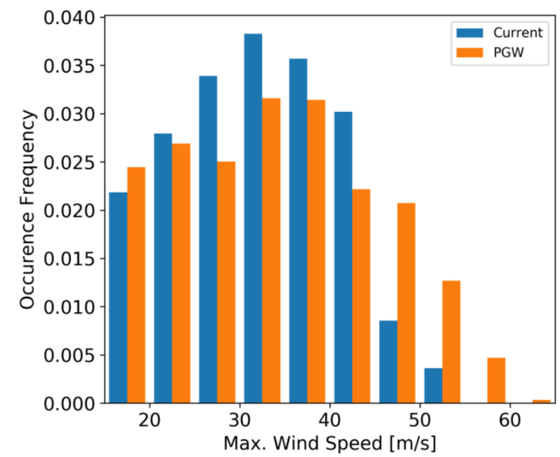
Simulations in the Southeast



- Hurricanes in 2001-2013
- WRF model with a 4 km grid
- Pseudo-Global Warming Simulation, can compare modeled and observed characteristics
- higher precipitation rates (maximum rates by ~24%), faster maximum winds, slower storm translation speeds, and lower central pressures

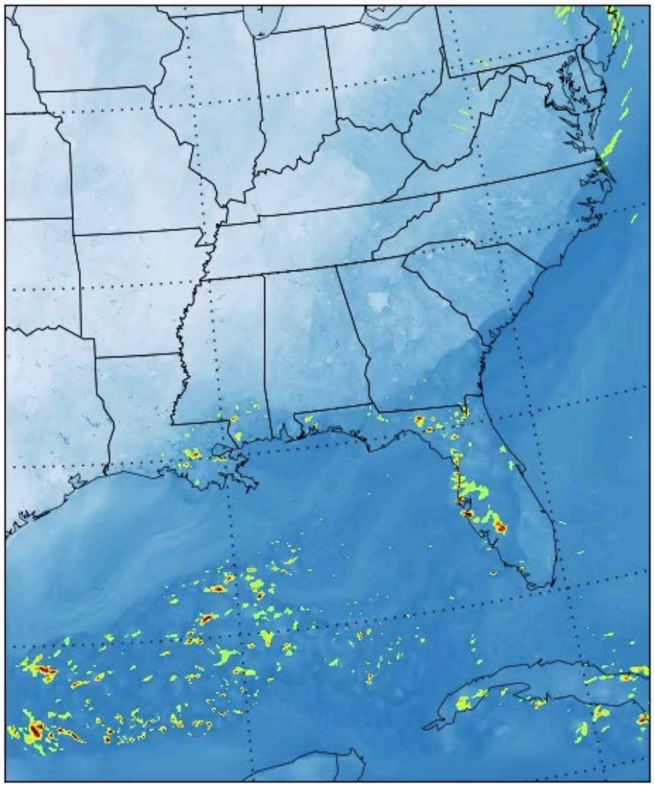
Gutmann et al. 2018
National Center for Atmospheric Research



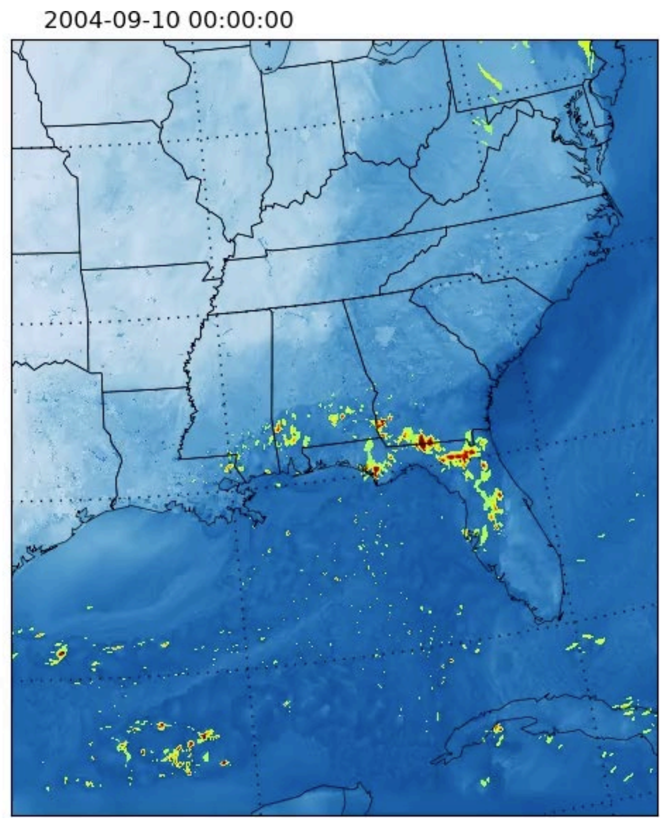


Changes in Hurricanes in a Warmer Climate

Hurricane Ivan (historical)
Current climate



Hurricane Ivan (future climate)
Pseudo Global Warming, warmer and moister



Water Vapor (Blues); Precipitation (Green to Red)

NCAR

Changes in Hurricanes from a 13 Year Convection Permitting Pseudo-Global Warming Simulation, Gutmann et al., Journal of Climate, 2018, Ethan Gutmann, gutmann@ucar.edu

Analysis funded by Det Norske Veritas (DNV) and CONUS simulation by NSF under NCAR Water System Program

Climate Attribution Studies

Demonstrating a climate change signal using quantitative assessments of model ensembles to uncover whether and by how much climate change has influenced a particular event.

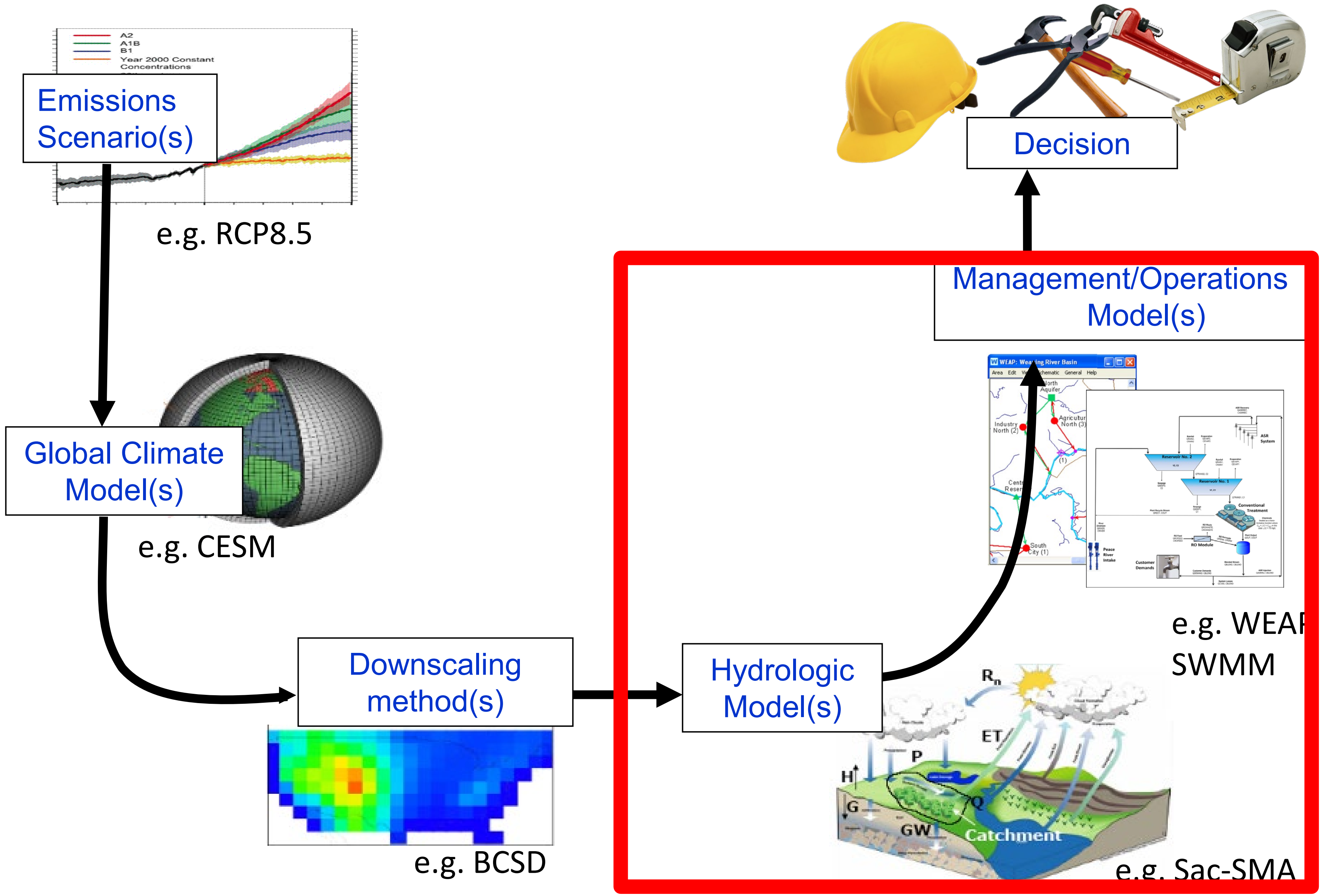
How much have we loaded the weather dice?

For example, Hurricane Harvey: 4 attribution studies to date indicate increased precipitation intensity; e.g., Emanuel (2017) found storms already increased 6% compared to late 20th century.

Questions to Help Determine an Appropriate Downscaling Technique

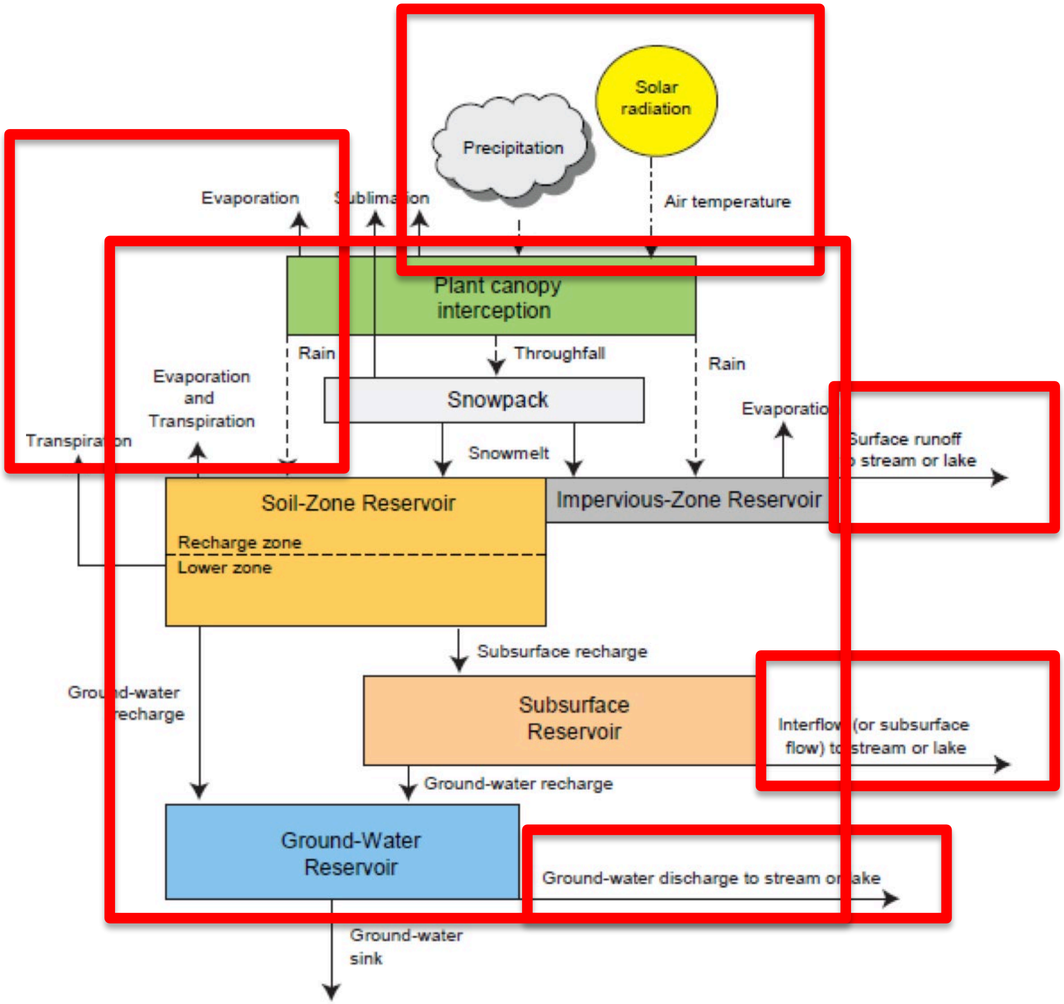
- How large is the area of interest?
- Where is it?
- What is the impact of interest?
- When in the future?
- Does the sequencing of events matter?
- What type of climate change uncertainty is important?
- What is available?

Classic "Top-down" Impacts Modeling Chain



What type of models do you use to track water in your system?

Why Do We Need Hydrology Models?



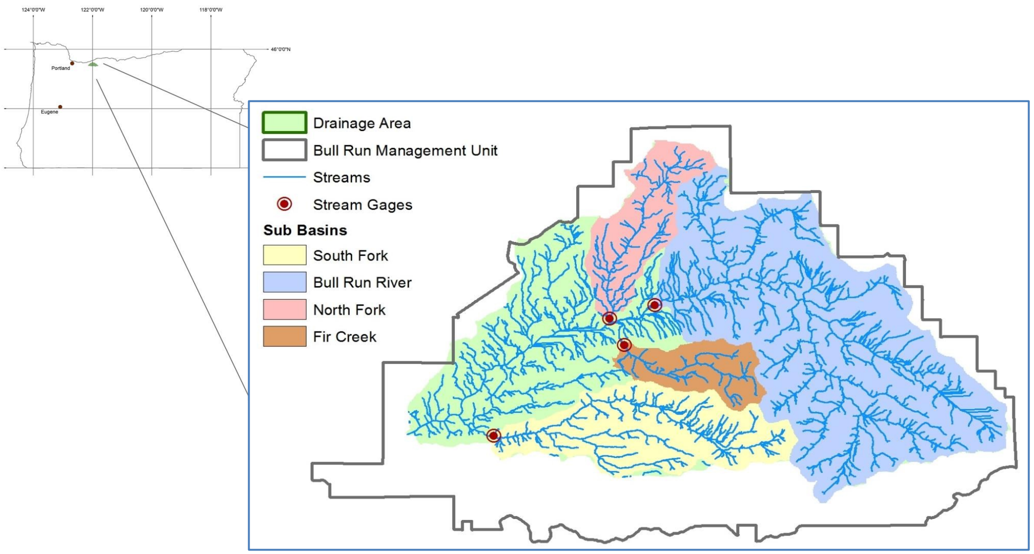
What we have: precipitation, temperature, other atmospheric values

What we would like: streamflow (highs, lows), water demand from vegetation, water temperature

Hydrology models represent energy and water fluxes in watersheds, combine measurements and physical processes to encapsulate our understanding.

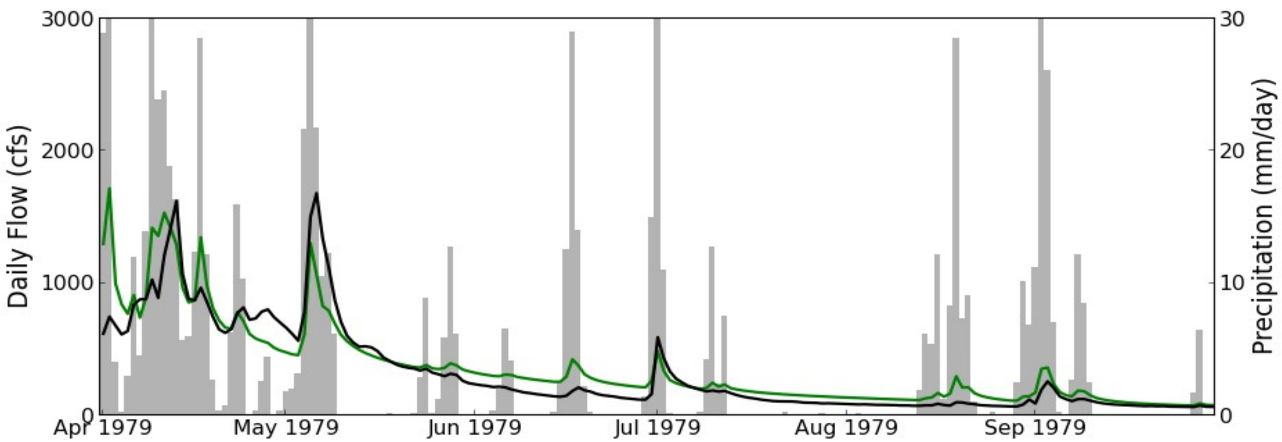
Important in filling gaps since measurements are not available in most places.

Modeling Benefits



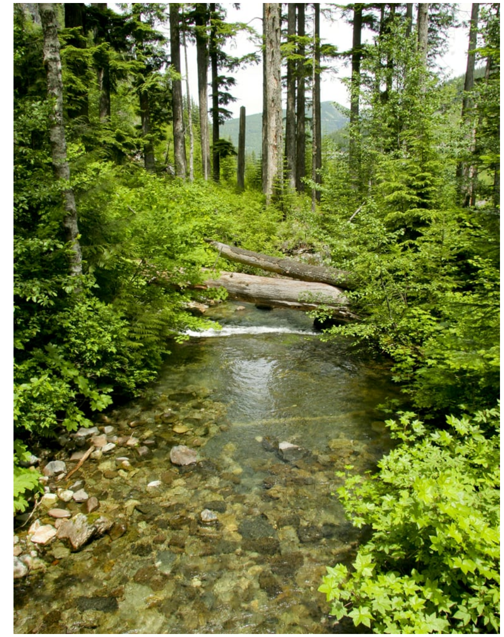
Portland Water Bureau

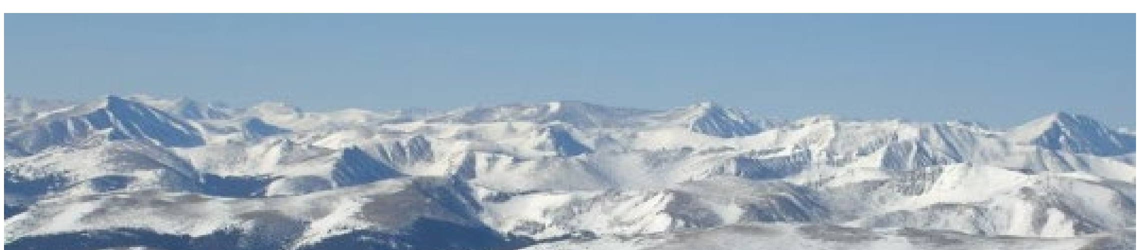
- Land surface values from GCMs measures not helpful
- Worked with University of Washington to select and set up in-house hydrologic model
- Model allows PWB to understand how changes in streamflow affect future supply conditions
- Included in Supply System Master Plan

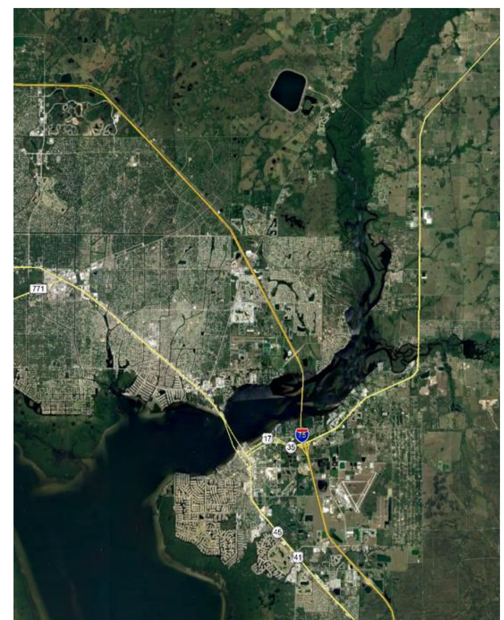


Modeling Cautions

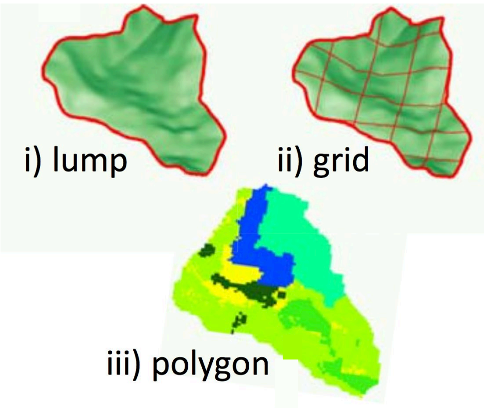
- Models built to represent many landscapes, processes, spatial configurations+
- May miss key elements
  - Groundwater interactions
  - Salt water intrusion
- Important to be a savvy user





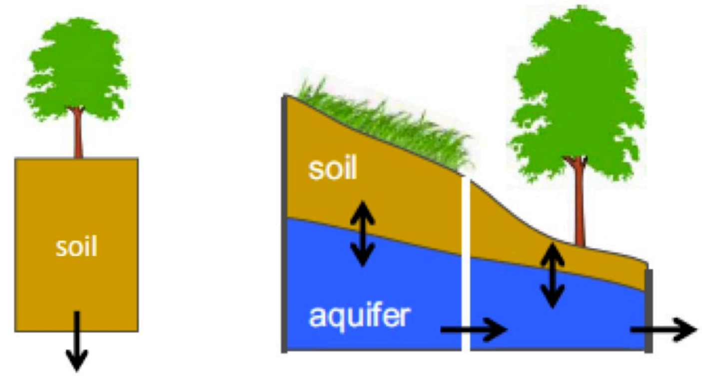


Model Spatial Structures



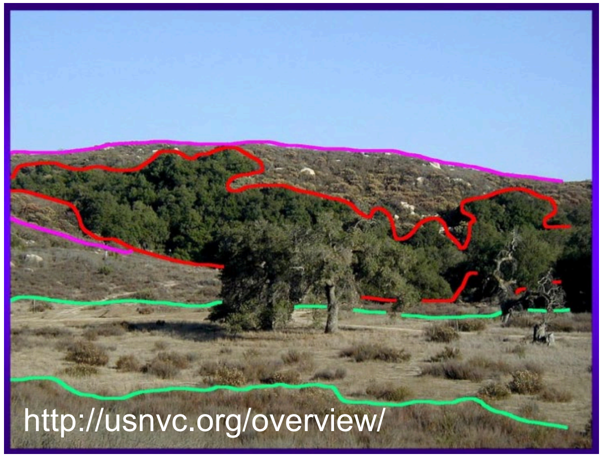
Figures from Clark et al., WRR, 2015

Lumped, gridded or hydrologically similar areas

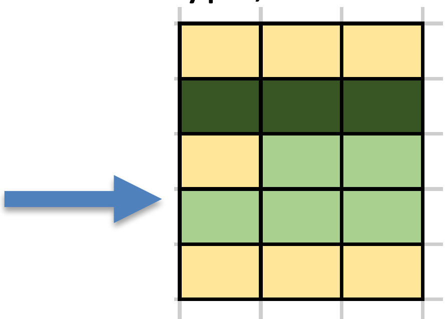


Connections between soil and aquifer

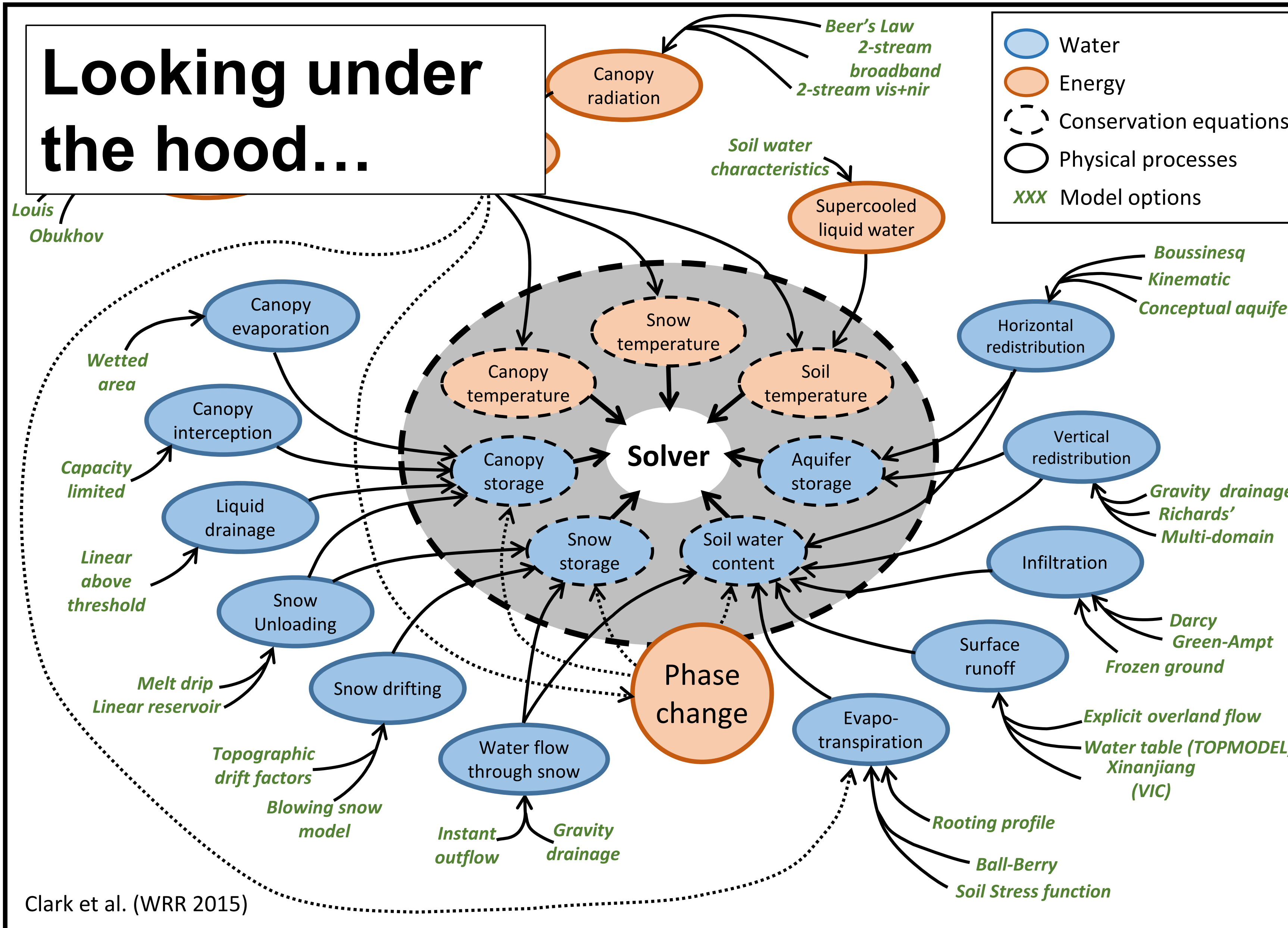
Model Parameters



Vegetation, Soil type, …

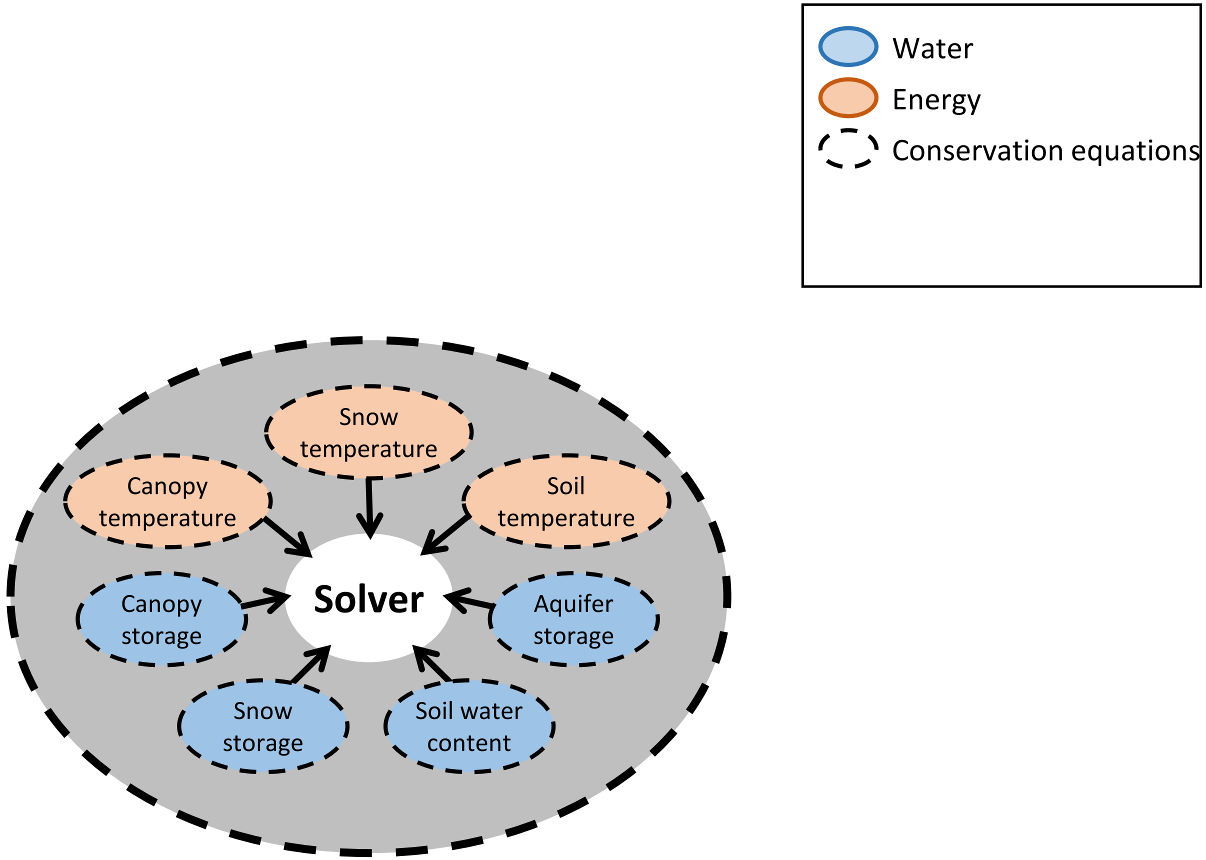


Hydrologic Model Process Structure



Clark et al. (WRR 2015)

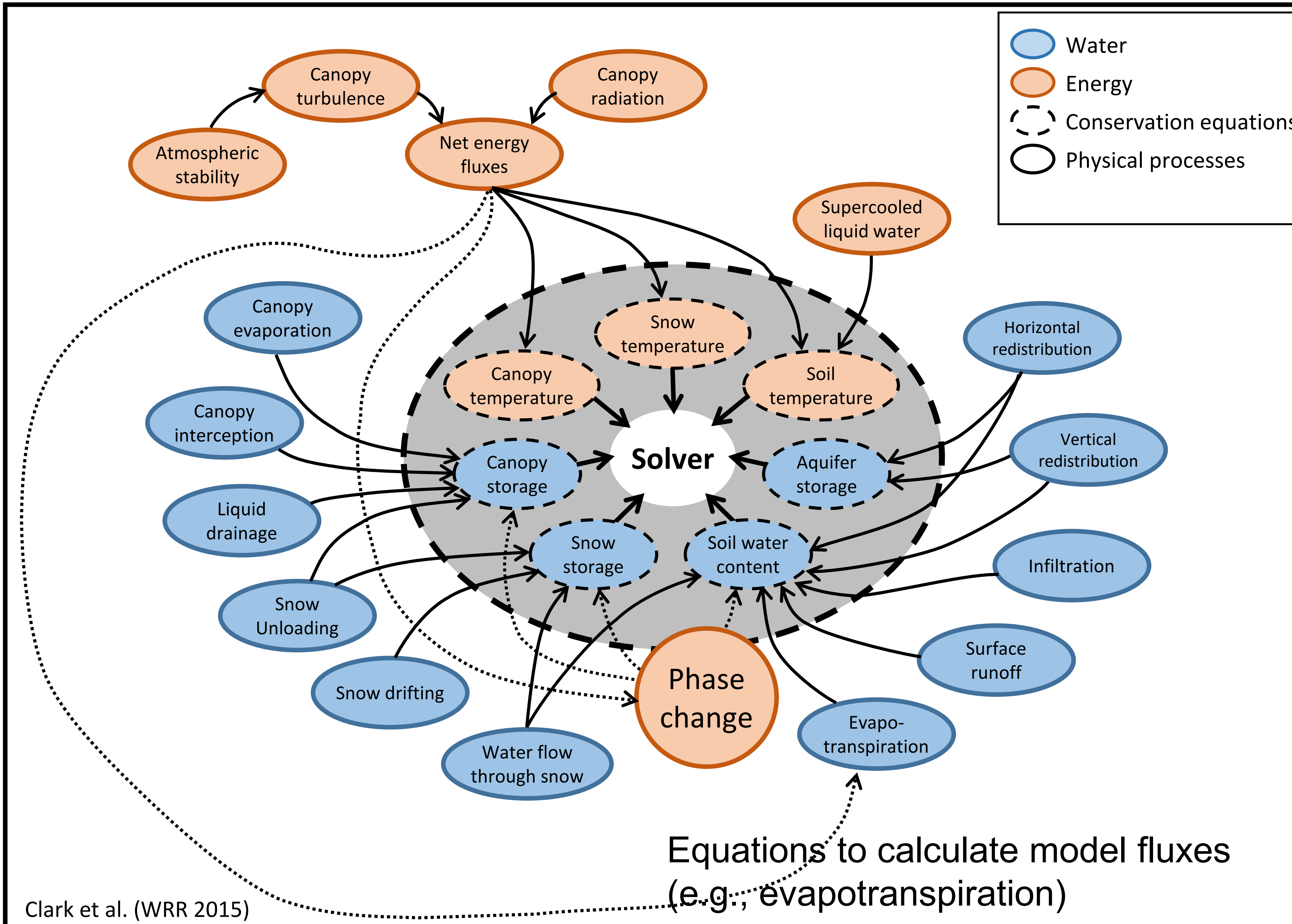
Hydrologic Model Construction



Conservation equations, the order they are solved and time step matter

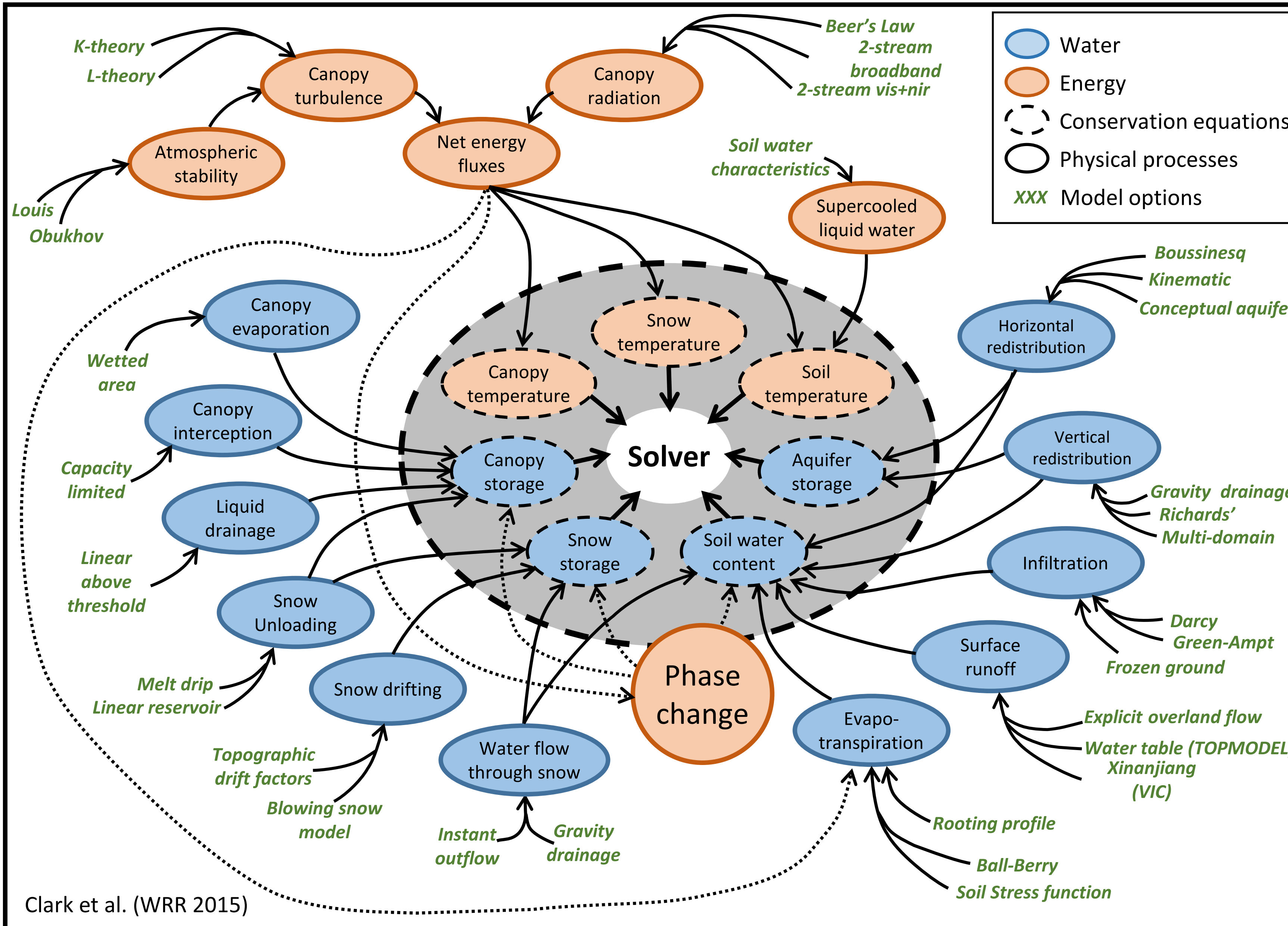
Clark et al. (WRR 2015)

Hydrologic Model Construction



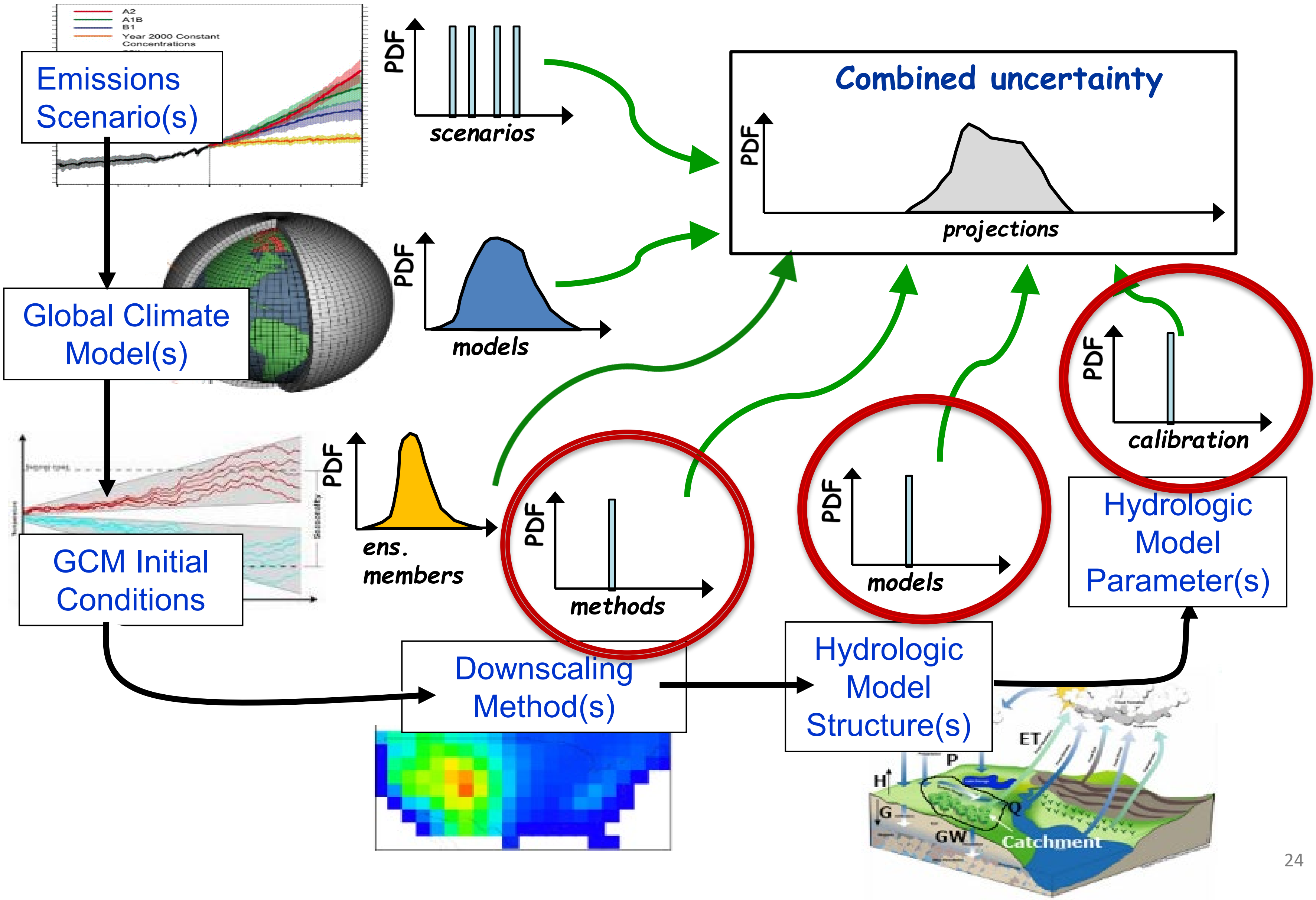
Clark et al. (WRR 2015)

Hydrologic Process Selection

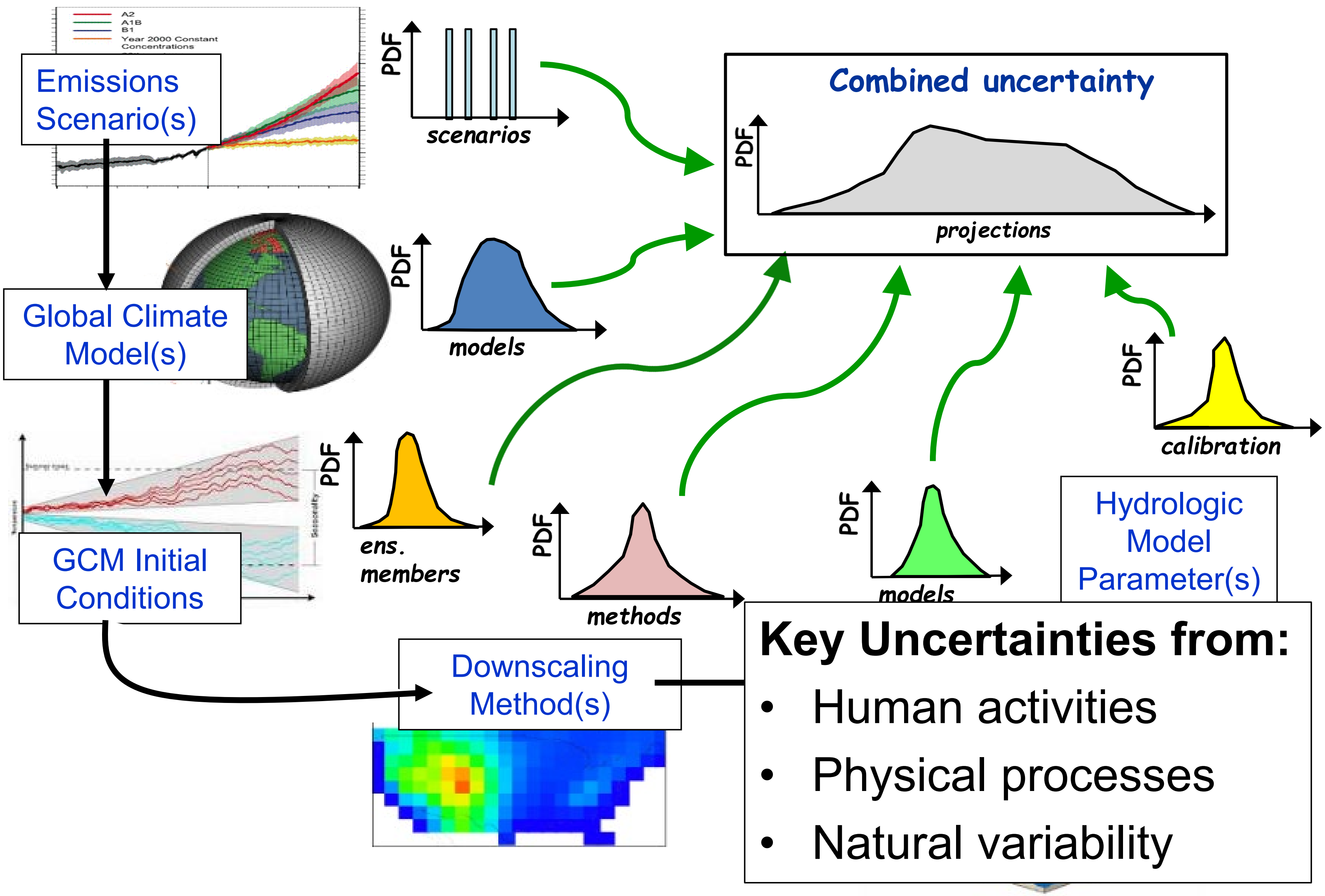


Clark et al. (WRR 2015)

Revealing Uncertainties



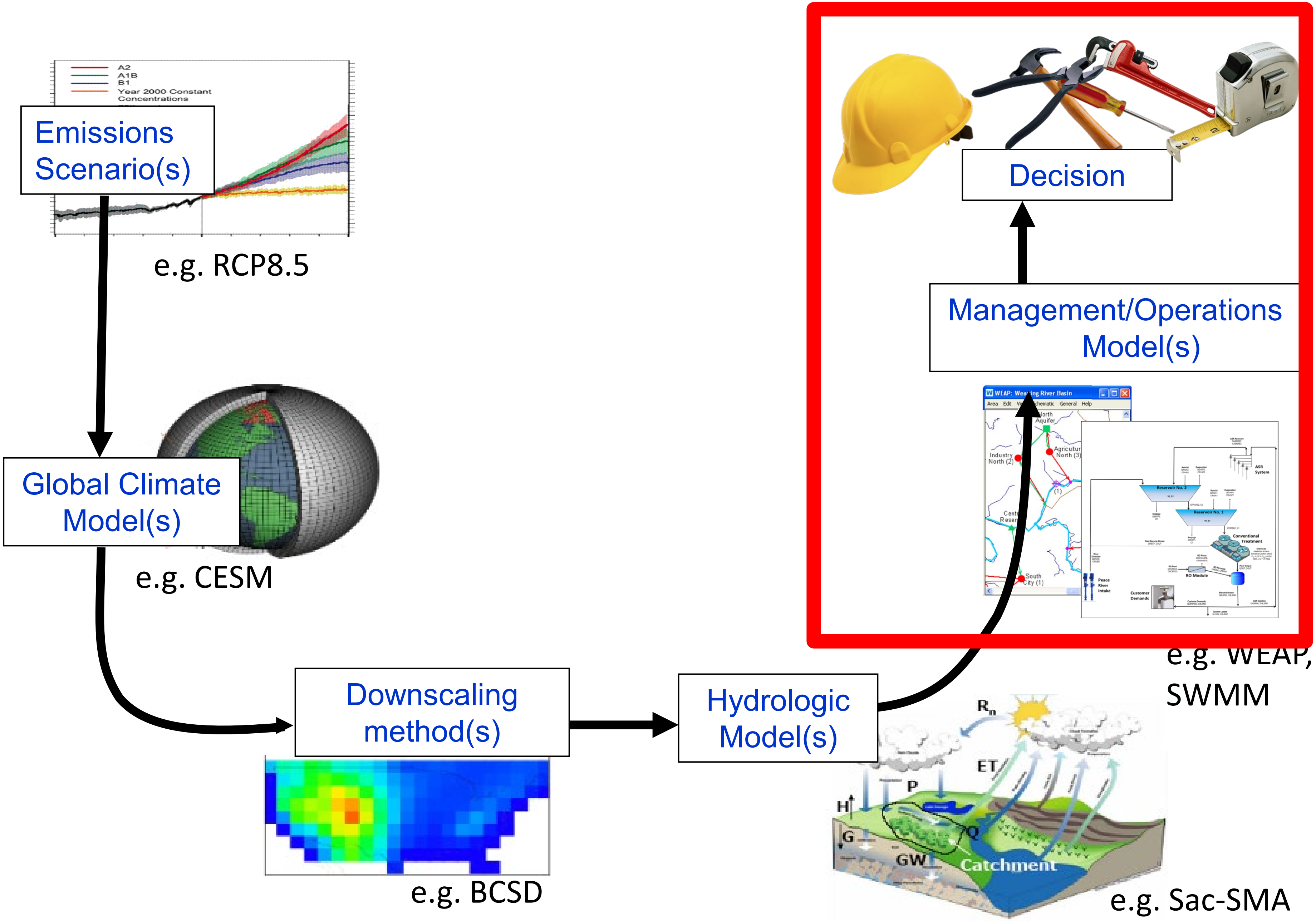
Revealing Uncertainties



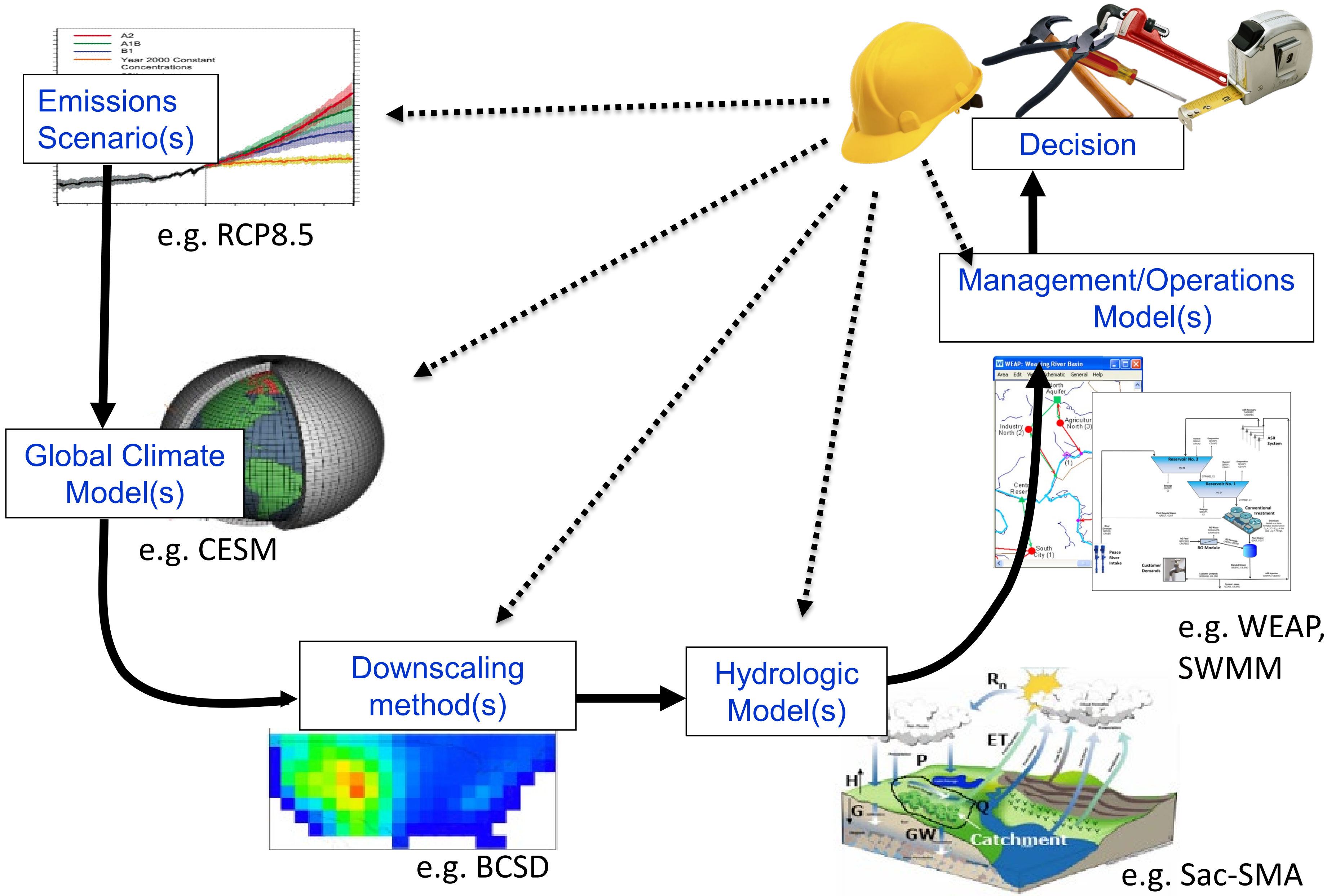
Key Uncertainties from:

- Human activities
- Physical processes
- Natural variability

Classic “Top-down” Impacts Modeling Chain

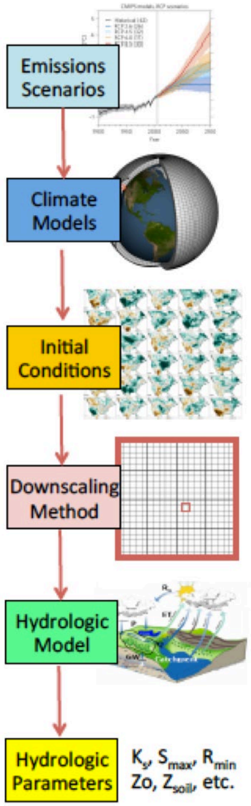


Revised "Top-down" Impacts Modeling Chain



Do Be Aware of Multiple Ways to Evaluate Future Changes

Scenario studies



Clark et al. 2016; connect models in a chain

Stochastic hydrology

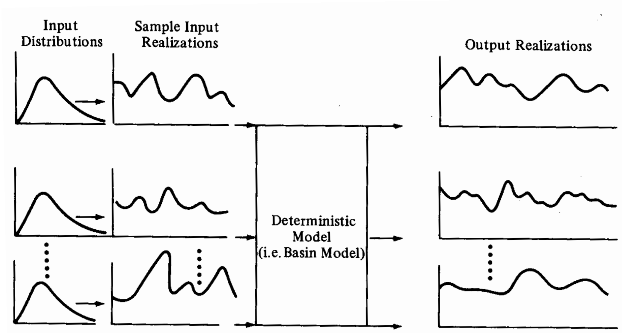
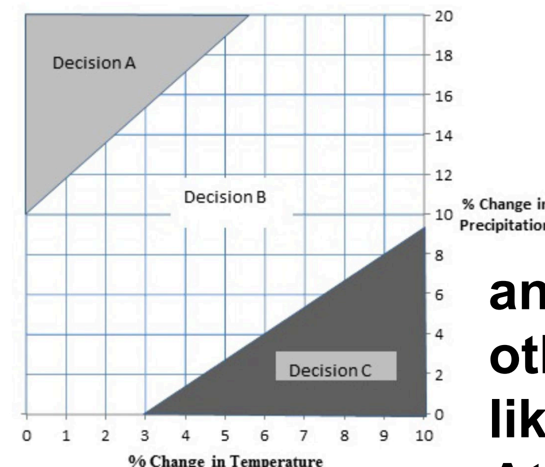


Figure 1.3 Concept of Monte Carlo experiments.

Bras and Rodriguez-Iturbe, 1985; generate synthetic timeseries using statics from the past

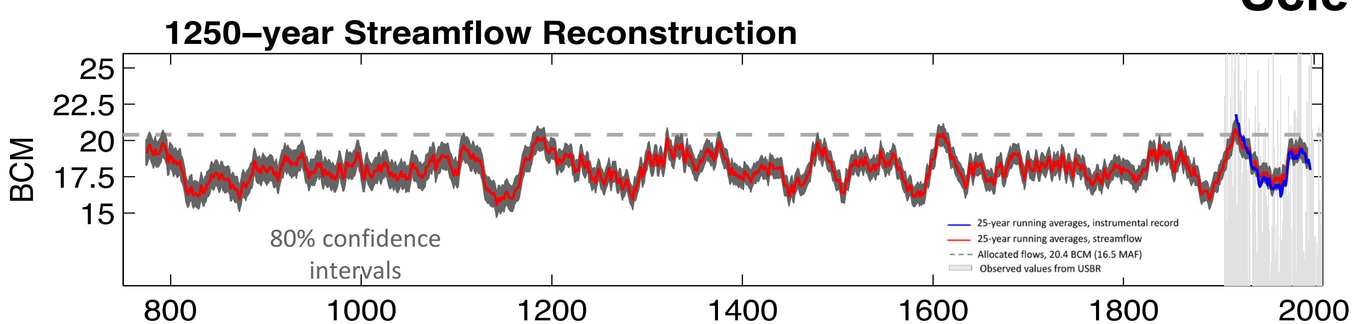
Climate-informed vulnerability analysis



Brown et al., WRR, 2016; explore sy vulnerabilities with perturbations

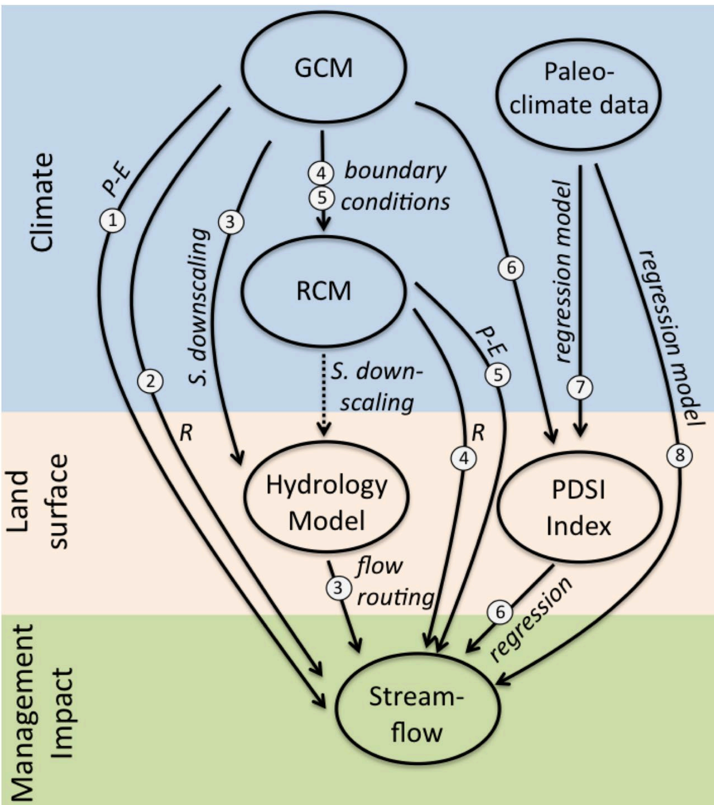
and others… like Attribution Science

Paleoclimate studies



Vano et al., BAMS, 2016; generate timeseries using reconstructions of the distant past

Don’t Treat All Future Projections or Methods Equally



Different: GCMs, emission scenarios, spatial resolution, hydrology, +

- Certain models and methods are more appropriate
- Certain spatial and temporal scales are more appropriate for certain questions
- Realize some questions may not be possible to answer with current knowledge
- Finer resolution in space and time is not necessarily better
  - Higher Resolution ≠ Higher Accuracy

Be a savvy consumer and remember…

Figure from Vano et al., BAMS, January 2014

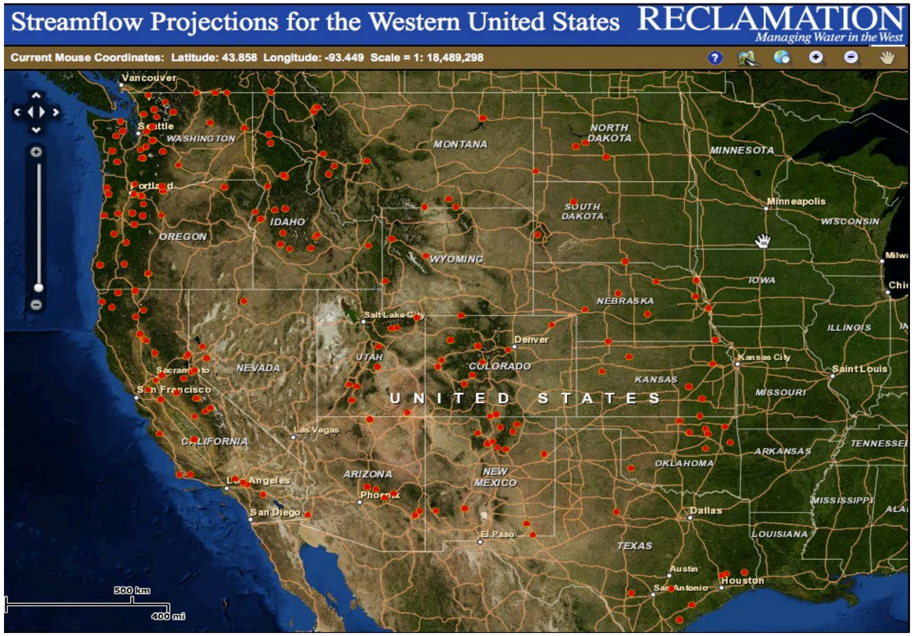
No Model is Perfect

"The accuracy of streamflow simulations in natural catchments will always be limited by simplified model representations of the real world as well as the availability and quality of hydrologic measurements." (Clark et al., WRR, 2008)

- **Don't expect perfect results,**
  - Not prediction, but a tool to test how system responds (what if scenarios)
- **BUT we can make better choices…**
  - Seek simple yet defensible (don't need a Cadillac)
  - Be aware of models shortcomings (know the warts)

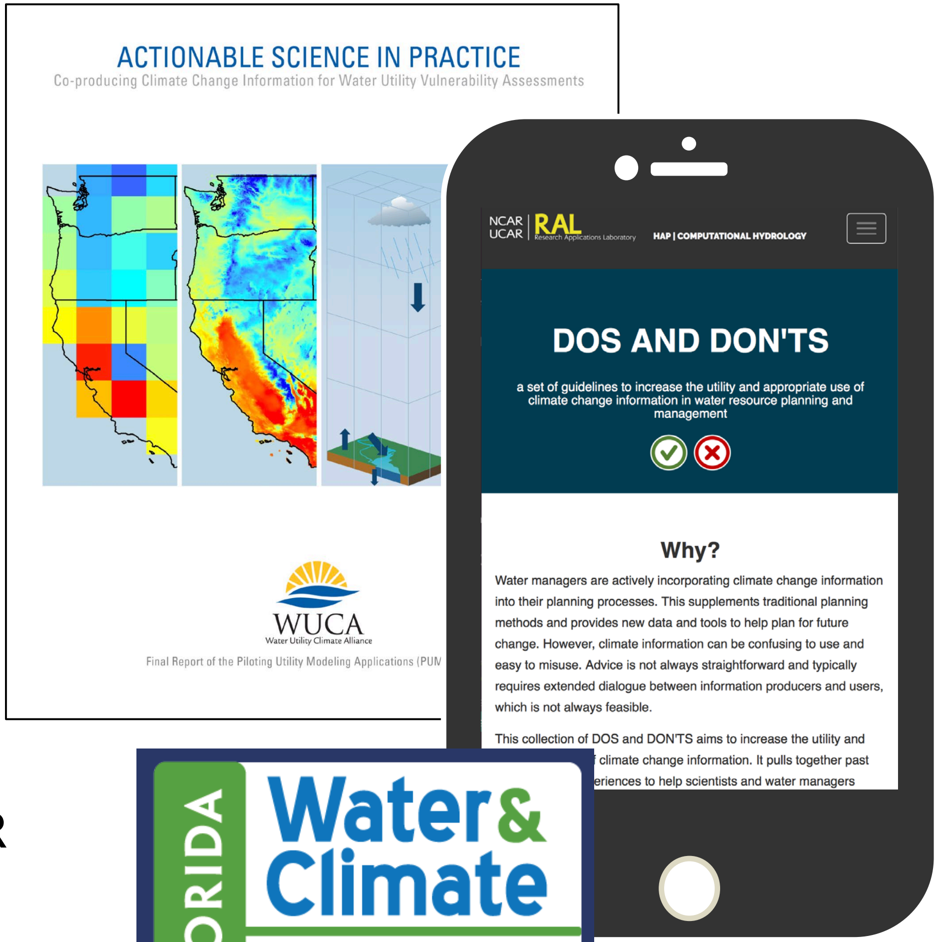
What Data are Available Now?

- Hydrology focused Green Data Oasis (GDO) portal
  - BCSD (12km), LOCA (6km)
  - VIC streamflow
- Dynamical
  - NARCCAP (50km),
  - CORDEX (limited 25km)
  - Others over regional domains or limited time periods
- USGS GeoDataPortal
  - Collection of different archives
- Many others (NASA NEX, ARRM)



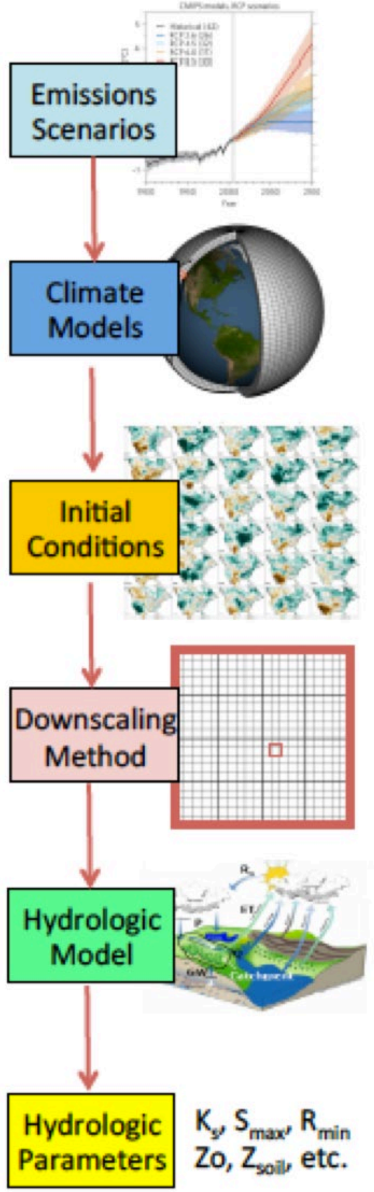
What Resources are Available?

- WUCA products
  - PUMA project examples
  - www.wucaonline.org
- Federal Agency Guidance
  - Bureau of Reclamation
  - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
  - Environmental Protection Agency
  - U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit
- Professional Societies
  - American Society of Civil Engineers
- Regional Boundary Organizations
  - Florida Water & Climate Alliance
- Dos and Don'ts Guidelines from NCAR
  - Reviews other guidance
  - www.ncar.github.io/dos_and_donts
- Many others, including each other



FLORIDA Water & Climate Alliance

Climate Change Study Choices



- Approach type (e.g. scenarios, paleo, vulnerability analysis):
- Emission scenarios used:
- GCMs used:
- Number of initial conditions for each GCM used:
- Downscaling methods used:
- Hydrologic models and parameter sets used:
- Time period of interest (transient or delta):
- Project timeline:
- Impacts evaluated:
- Results reported (ensembles, individual simulations):

Clark et al. 2016

Key Takeaways

- Downscaling and hydrology modeling provide **local-scale insights** into possibilities projected by GCMs.
- There is a continuum of downscaling approaches that span tradeoffs between computational efficiency and methodological complexity.
- Some change signals are more certain than others.
- Some uncertainty is unavoidable.
  - Representation of uncertainties is hard but necessary.
  - Uncertainties have always been there; just understanding them now.
  - Previous studies may be over-confident.

Key Takeaways

- Research underway to develop ways to select representative set of scenarios useful for water resources planning.
- It is critical to understand important processes and uncertainties in **your** system.
- Models are tools that can be useful, if used appropriately. **Be a savvy consumer.**
- Consult local experts and national resources, e.g., Florida Water & Climate Alliance, NCAR https://ncar.github.io/dos_and_donts

EXTRA SLIDES

Do Understand How the Decision Being Evaluated is Important to Model Selection

What are the questions we are trying to answer?

How will flows in April-September change in the future?

How should facilities be sized to prevent sewer overflows?

How will the magnitude, duration, and frequency of drought change?

How much warmer will streams be in 20 years?

water supply, streamflow timing, drought, stormwater, wastewater

FIT FOR PURPOSE

Do Start by Determining the Level of Details that Fits Your Need and Resources

Additional Considerations:

- How much will it cost?
- How long will it take?
- To what extent will the analysis improve the decision?
- Can appropriate data and information be obtained?
- Who will undertake the analysis?
- How much information can you manage?

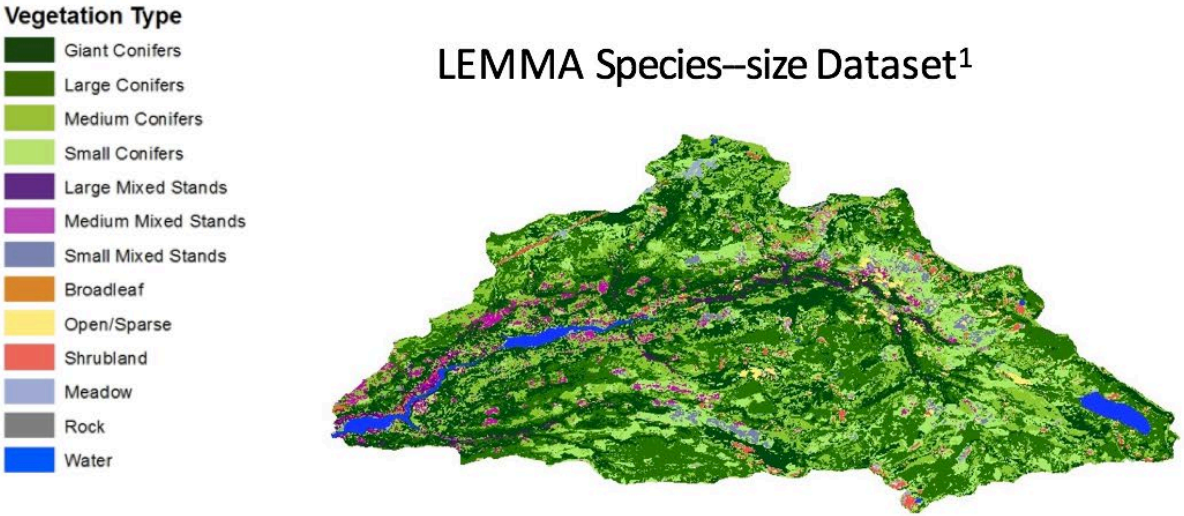



List from UK Climate Impacts Programme’s report Climate adaptation: Risk, uncertainty and decision-making (+ one from WUCA)

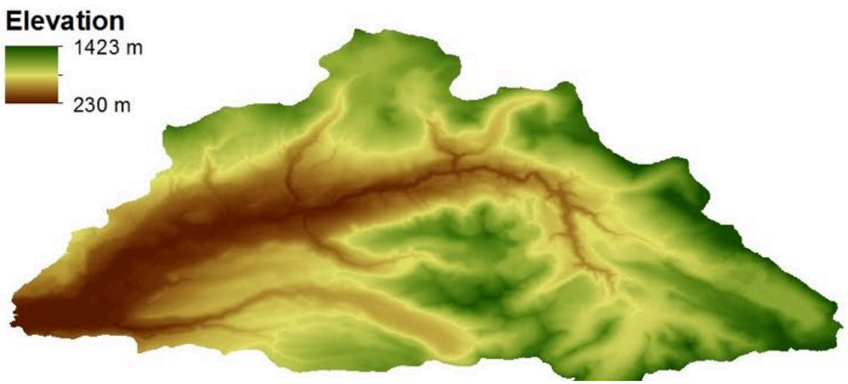
Model Set Up

GIS data = soil, vegetation, elevation maps

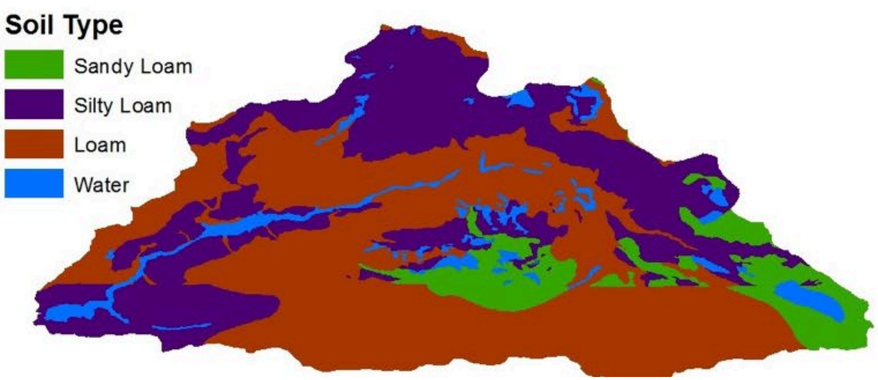
LEMMA Species–size Dataset[1]



Portland Water Bureau



NRCS STATSGO2 and SSURGO[2,3]



Models are improving

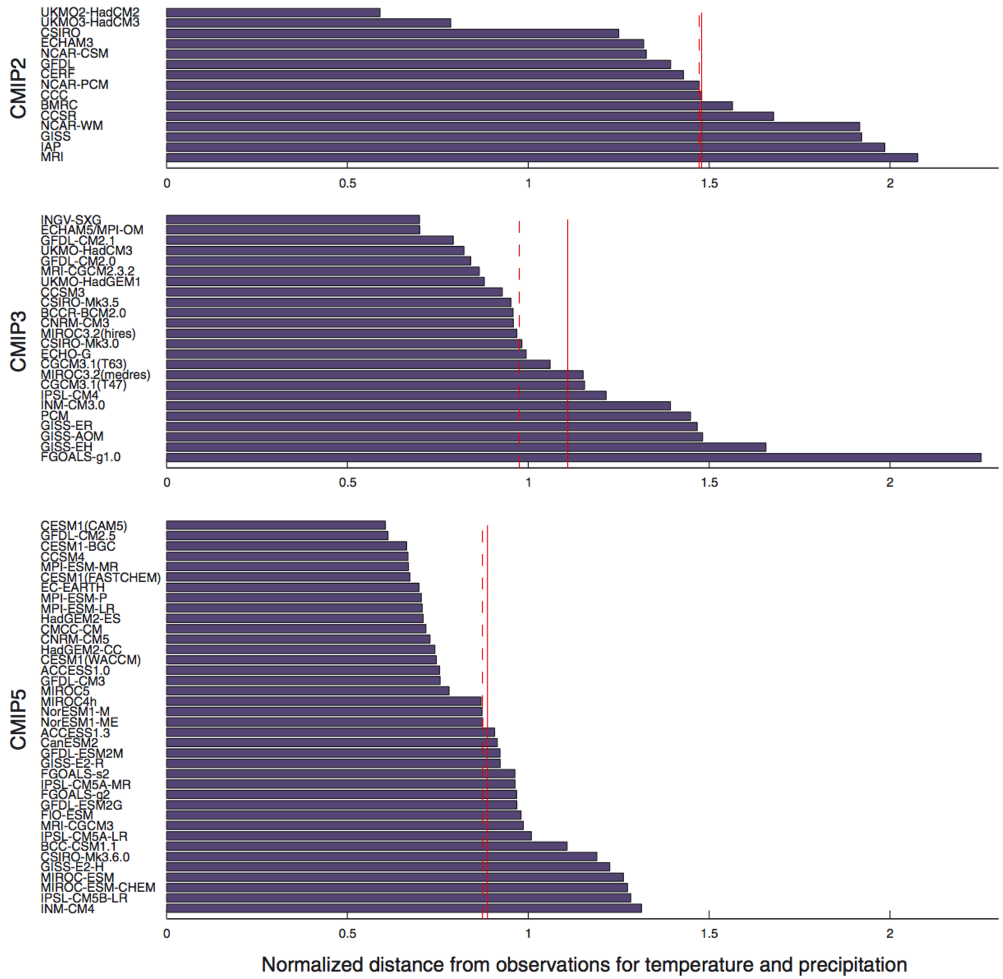


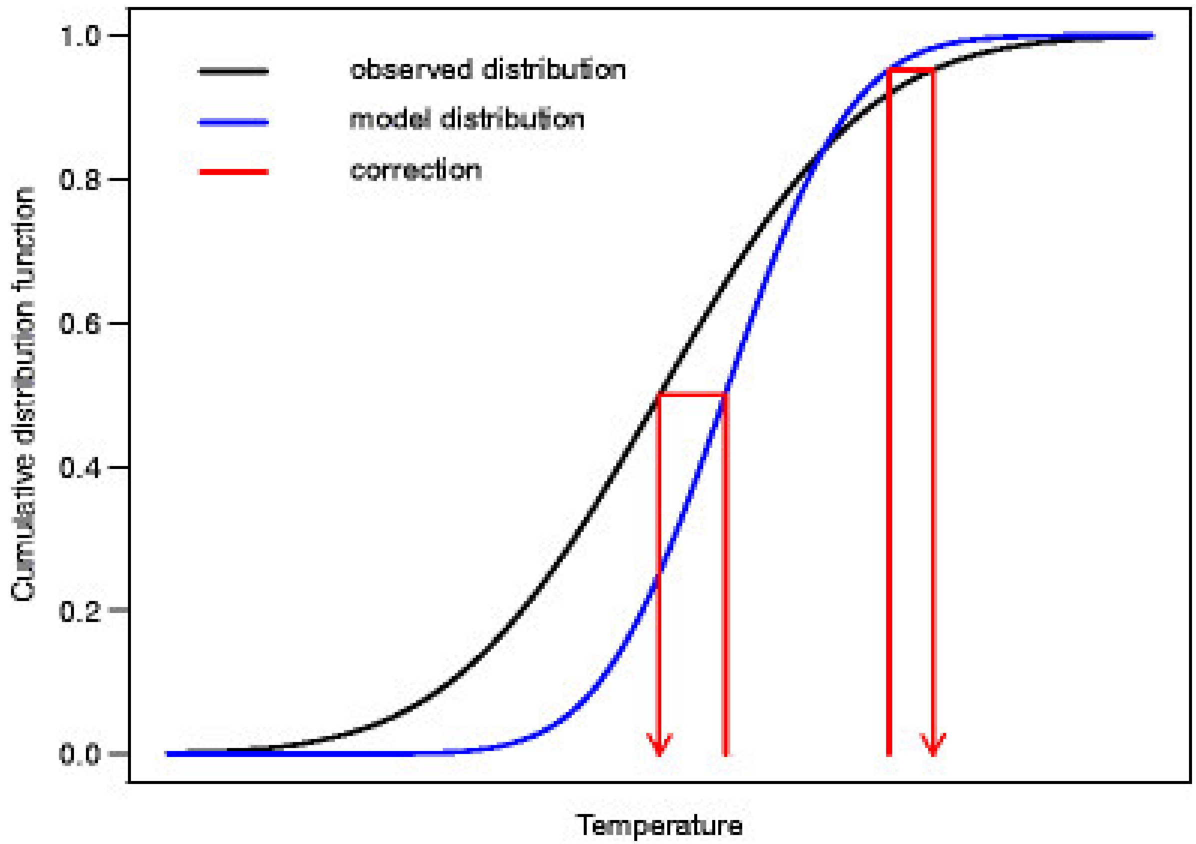
Figure 3. Normalized distance from observations in the CMIP2, CMIP3, and CMIP5 models. The distance metric is calculated as the root mean square of the surface temperature and precipitation distance as in Figure 1 but relative to observations (NCEP, ERA40, and MERRA for temperature; GPCP and CMAP for precipitation, see MK11). Mean and medians for the different ensembles are indicated by red solid and dashed lines, respectively. Note that most models in CMIP2 (including HadCM2, but not HadCM3) used flux corrections.

Knutti et al., Geophysical Research Letters 2013

Common Statistical Downscaling Methods

1. Bias correction with spatial disaggregation (BCSD)

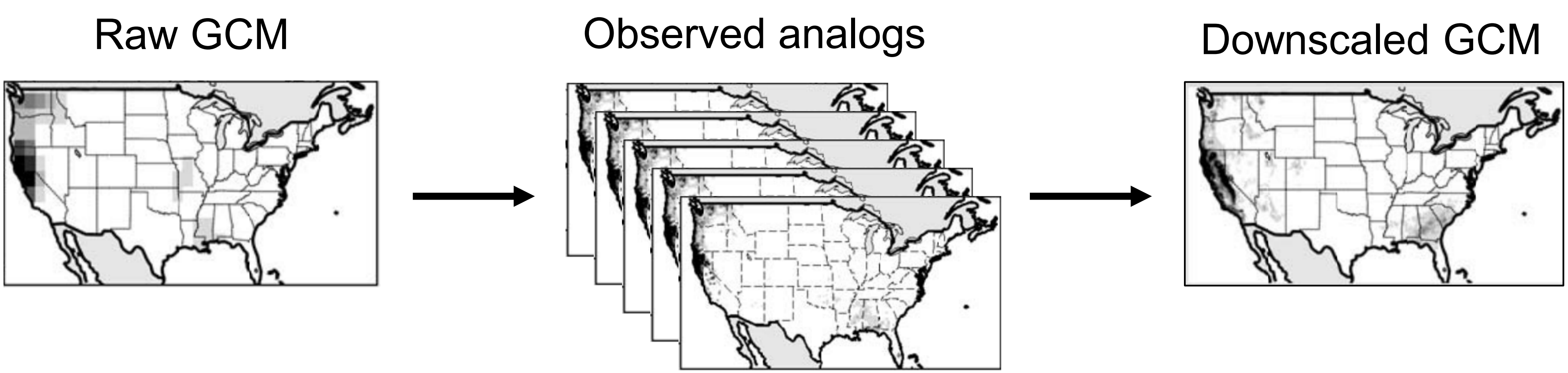
- Used on CMIP3 and CMIP5 GCMs
- Point-by-point quantile mapping on monthly data (temp/precip distributions are bias corrected and transformed from the coarse resolution data to finer resolutions)
- Spatial patterns may not be dynamically consistent



Common Statistical Downscaling Methods

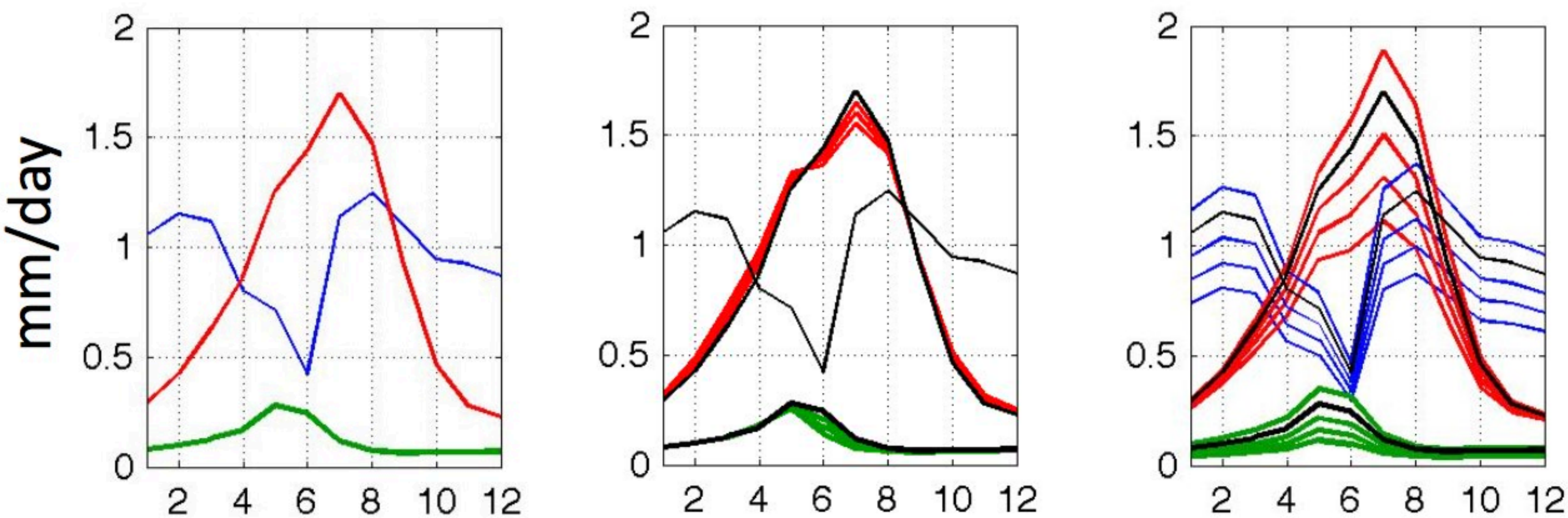
2. Localized Constructed Analogs (LOCA)

- Used on CMIP5 GCMs (and in the 4th National Climate Assessment)
- Given coarse resolution data, find analogous days in the historical period and uses the associated fine-resolution historical data to produce fine-resolution output
- Statistical corrections to frequency and quantiles
- Improved representation of extremes and spatial patterns



Hydrologic Modeling in the Colorado River

Variable Infiltration Capacity (VIC) model

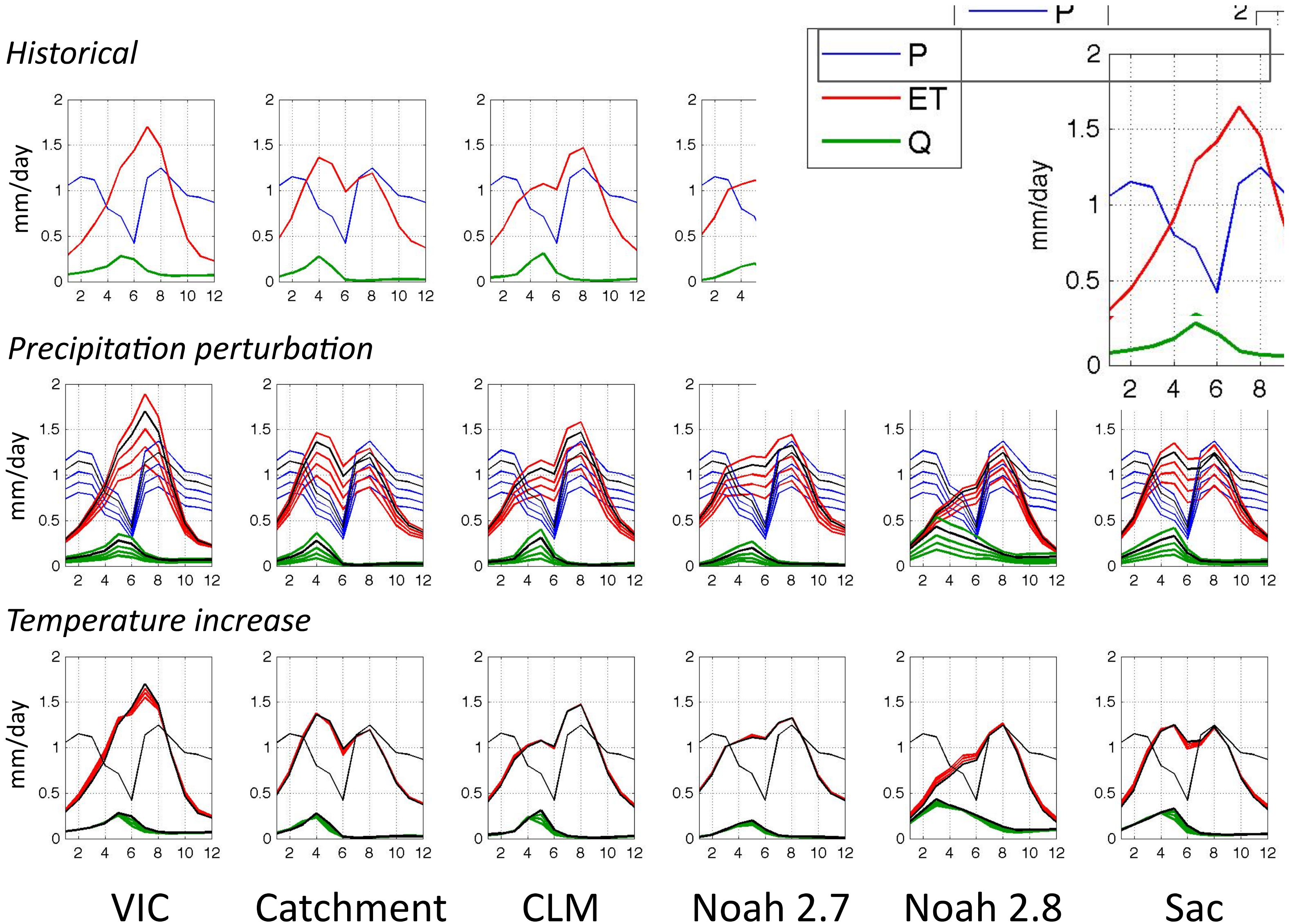


Historical

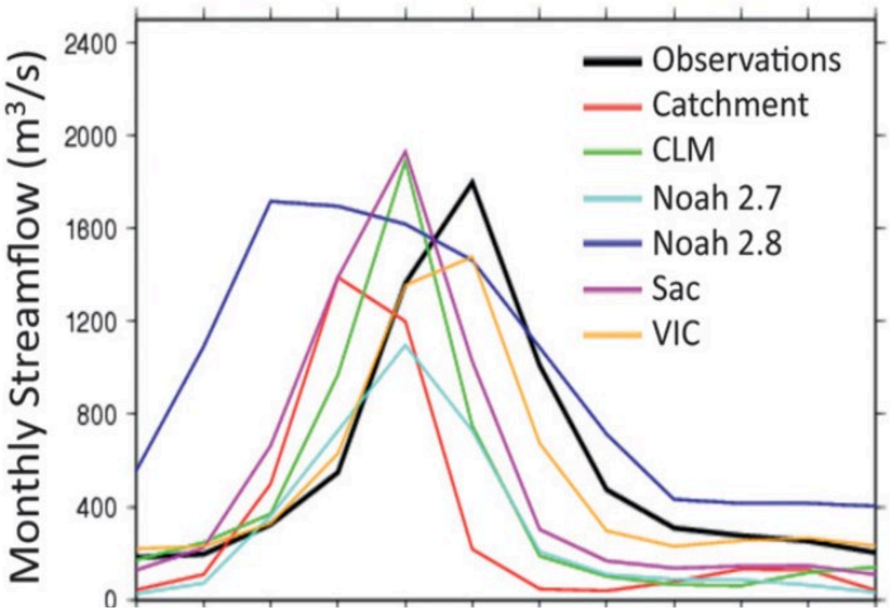
Temperature perturbations

Precipitation perturbations

Hydrologic Modeling in the Colorado River



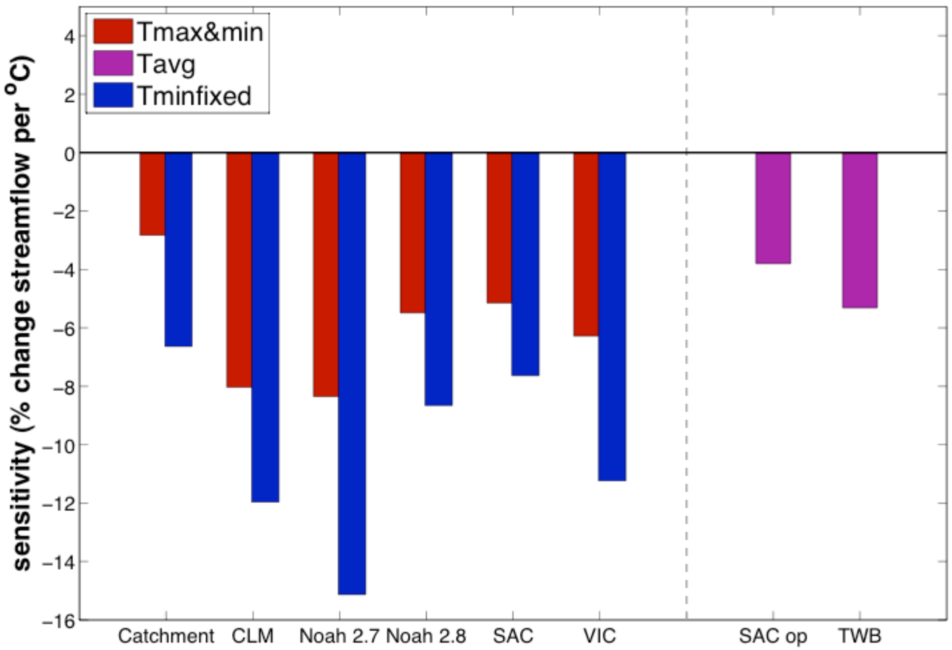
Hydrologic Model Choice



Flows at Lees Ferry using six different Hydrologic Models

- Hydrologic models provide a range of results

Hydrologic Model Choice



$$\text{Temperature Sensitivity} = \frac{\dfrac{Q_{ref+0.1°C} - Q_{ref}}{Q_{ref}}}{0.1\ °C}$$

- Hydrologic models provide a range of results
- Change signal across hydrologic models also differs
- How sensitive a model is depends on hydrologic model choice!
- Some signals are less sensitive to model choice than others

What Do Models Tell Us?

- Many responses to climate change are “obvious” but some are not
- Hydrology-climate interactions not always linear
  - Rain-on-snow events
  - Slower snow melt in a warmer world
- Tipping points can be hard to detect
- Models encapsulate our understanding of the system, but far from perfect