

# ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS OF LAND USE SCENARIOS ON WATERSHED SURFACE RUNOFF USING HYDROLOGICAL MODELLING

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**Abstract.** To manage watersheds, simulations of hydrological phenomena are very important. This paper investigates hydrological modelling of Taleqan basin in Iran, and studies the effects of land use scenarios on the model runoff using Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT). For this purpose, hydro-meteorological data, soil map, land use maps, and digital elevation model of the area were prepared and used for model parameters' sensitivity analysis, model calibration, and validation. Sensitivity analysis was performed using SUFI-2 algorithm. Model performance was evaluated by using time series visual comparison plots and statistical indicators of Nash-Sutcliffe (NS) and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ). It was shown that the model has high potential to predict monthly runoff. Then, the effects of land use changes on surface runoff in the basin were studied. For this purpose, practicable land use options in the watershed such as agroforestry, afforestation, expansion of agricultural land, and agriculture on terrace were considered. Hence, various management scenarios resulted from combinations of land use activities. They were applied to the calibrated model, and their effects on surface runoff were studied. The results show that management scenarios may have significant effects on runoff control.

**Keywords:** *hydrological simulation, land use change, management scenario, model calibration, sensitivity analysis, SWAT*

## Introduction

Surface runoff in a watershed is a major issue in hydrological watershed studies, because most hydrological processes are associated with it directly or indirectly and are somehow affected by it. Understanding hydrological processes and their simulations in a watershed scale and predicting changes of these processes in the future have been perpetual challenges for hydrologists.

Thus, hydrological models are widely used by managers and hydrologists as a tool for understanding natural and human activities affecting watershed hydrology and its planning and management in recent years (Ouyang et al., 2014). These models can provide a precise scientific framework for analysing the water movement in the watershed, and can create a reliable database on the system behaviour. Developments of hydrological models largely depend on geographic information system that made it possible to simulate large areas (Afzal et al., 2015; Jung and Kim, 2017).

Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) is commonly used for watershed modelling. The good performance of this model to assess the effects of land management practices on water, sediment, and agricultural products in large and complex watersheds with varying soils, land use, various management conditions during different periods of time and topography has been proved (Kim, 2015).

However, along with successful applications of the mentioned models due to some shortcomings, some numerical processing such as parameters calibration and sensitivity analysis are also essential (Romagnoli et al., 2017). Through sensitivity analysis of model parameters, identifying sensitive parameters based on their effects on the output of the model is possible. Identifying sensitive parameters lead to uncertainty reduction and better simulation (Shahoei et al., 2017).

Ghoraba (2015) conducted a study with the aim of watershed modelling in Simly dam, Pakistan. He used SWAT to estimate monthly volume of water entering the reservoir and determined the water balance to help administrators to plan and manage these important water reservoirs.

Vilaysane et al. (2015) studied the feasibility and performance of the SWAT model to predict river flow in the Xedone river basin, in the southern part of Laos.

Gosain et al. (2006) successfully used the SWAT model to predict the impacts of climate changes on river basin hydrology in 12 areas in India.

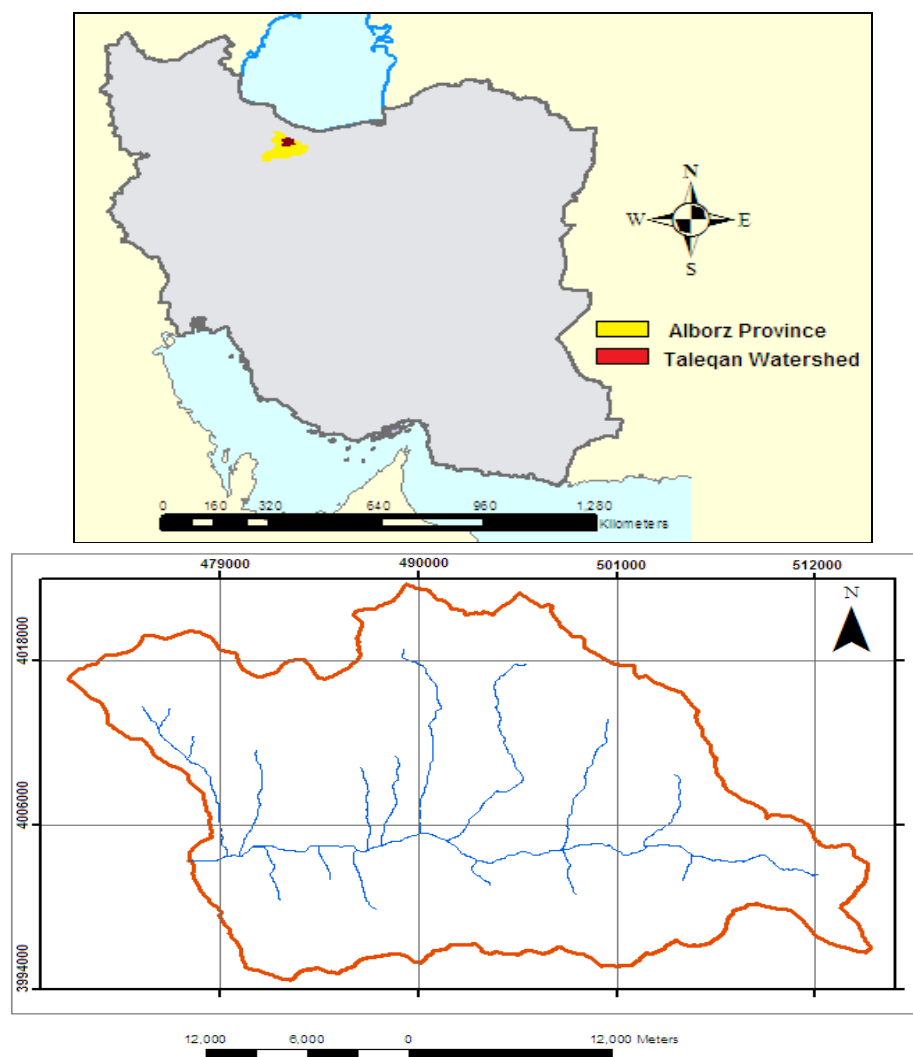
Setegn et al. (2008) conducted hydrologic modelling of Lake Tana basin and Pereira et al. (2014) studied the effects of deforestation on water balance components in the watershed located in the eastern coast of Brazil using SWAT model. Li et al. (2014) introduced some approaches for evaluating the effects of land use changes and biophysical conditions on the discharge. Santos et al. (2014) conducted a study on the effects of climate change, human interventions, and modelling uncertainties on the estimation of river basin and its components' characteristics.

In this paper, SWAT was used for modelling the basin that is located in the Northwest of Karaj, Alborz Province, Iran. This watershed is one of the most important sources of water supply for the province of Tehran. The main objectives of this study are to simulate surface runoff and identify sensitive hydrological parameters associated with it, and study the effects of different management scenarios on watershed stream flow. Sensitive parameters were determined by applying sensitivity analysis tool using SWAT-CUP software. More sensitivity analysis of the three most sensitive parameters and their effects on the normalized surface runoff changes is performed. The SWAT model was calibrated according to the changes in the values of the sensitive parameters within authorized ranges. Model calibration and validation were done by using SWAT-CUP software and SUFI2 algorithm. Then, simulation results with measured values of runoff in watershed outlets were compared. Then, the effects of applying different management scenarios on surface runoff were investigated. For this purpose, possible land use options in the watershed such as agroforestry, afforestation, expansion of agricultural land, and agriculture on terrace and their combinations were considered. Therefore, sixteen management scenarios were created. They were applied to the calibrated model, and the results were studied. Considering all possible combinations of management options to obtain all practical solutions could be very interesting not only for experts and decision makers but also for the general public who are following these issues seriously. Modelling these scenarios helps local and national managers to make the best decisions considering efficiency, condition, time, and cost. This may prevent environmental and social impacts, and waste of time and money.

## Study area

The Taleqan watershed is located on the southern slopes of the Alborz Mountains, at 120 km northwest of Tehran, Iran. Most of the area is mountainous with steep slopes with annual average precipitation of 632 mm. Annual average temperature is 10.5 °C and due to Meteorological Organization reports the area prevailing climate type is cold semi-wet. The study area average elevation above sea level is 2735 m. The most precipitation in the region is in the form of snow. Prevailing watershed hydrology system is based on high volume of runoff in the spring due to melting snow and considerable spring rains. *Figure 1* shows the location of studied area located in the upstream of Taleqan dam basin, which is located at 36° 04' to 36° 21' of northern latitude and 50° 38' to 51° 12' eastern longitude. Most land use in this area is pasture. Part of the land is used by irrigated and rain-fed agriculture. Soil of the basin is mainly loamy and silt loamy.

The main gauging station is Gelinak Station. Two other gauging stations, Joestan (middle of the basin) and Gatehdeh (beginning of the basin) stations, were selected to compare the results with the results of the Gelinak findings.



**Figure 1.** The study area in Alborz Province in Northern Iran and the watershed geographical location

## Materials and methods

### *SWAT model and performance evaluation*

In this study, the SWAT model was used to simulate Taleqan watershed hydrological response. SWAT is a semi-distributed and continuous mathematical model that needs various information to run. This model first used in Agricultural Research Service of United States of America, in order to simulate the hydrological processes and predict the impact of management practices on water, sediment and agricultural chemical balance in the large and complex basins. (Azzellino et al., 2015; Bonansea et al., 2015).

In the SWAT model, watershed is divided into subbasins according to DEM input map, which are linked with each other through a network of streams. Then, on the basis of soil and land use in the subbasin, they are divided into smaller units known as HRUs. For each hydrological unit, water and sediment and nutrient and losses cycles are determined and weighted average is calculated for each subbasin. Then, after the accumulation of these quantities of the river network to the basin outlet, the final amount is determined for the basin (Neitsch et al., 2011).

This model allows the modelling of the basin without monitoring data, as well as providing predictive scenarios based on input changes such as land cover, land use operations, climate on nutrient cycling, water quality and quantity for users.

To assess the qualitative and quantitative performance of the model, visual comparison of the time series plots, and statistical indicators such as Nash–Sutcliffe index (NS) and coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) are addressed (Rahman et al., 2013).

The coefficient of determination  $R^2$  is defined as the squared value of the coefficient of correlation. It is calculated as (Eq. 1):

$$R^2 = \left( \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (O_i - \bar{O})(P_i - \bar{P})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (O_i - \bar{O})^2} \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (P_i - \bar{P})^2}} \right)^2 \quad (\text{Eq.1})$$

with O and P indicate observed and predicted values, respectively.  $R^2$  can also be expressed as the squared ratio between the covariance and the multiplied standard deviations of the observed and predicted values. (Krause et al., 2005)

The efficiency index NS proposed by Nash and Sutcliffe (1970) is defined as one minus the sum of the absolute squared differences between the predicted and observed values normalized by the variance of the observed values during the period under investigation. It is calculated as (Eq. 2):

$$NS = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (O_i - P_i)^2}{\sum_{i=1}^n (O_i - \bar{O})^2} \quad (\text{Eq.2})$$

According to performance rating (Cho and Olivera, 2009), Nash–Sutcliffe Efficiency values greater than 0.75 are very good and greater than 0.65 are good. Moreover, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) should be greater than 0.60 (Santhi et al., 2001).

### Model input data

The input required for the SWAT model includes digital elevation maps, soil data, precipitation data, temperature, meteorology, soil map, and land use map (Arnold et al., 1998; Neitsch et al., 2011).

*-Meteorological data:* In this study, monthly and daily meteorological data for the 15-year period from 2000 to 2014 were received from the Meteorological Organization and Iran Water Resources Management Company. Daily data include maximum and minimum daily temperature and precipitation. The climatologic stations are listed in *Table 1*. Moreover, monthly data such as average solar radiation, dew point temperature, and average wind speed of the study area were introduced to the model.

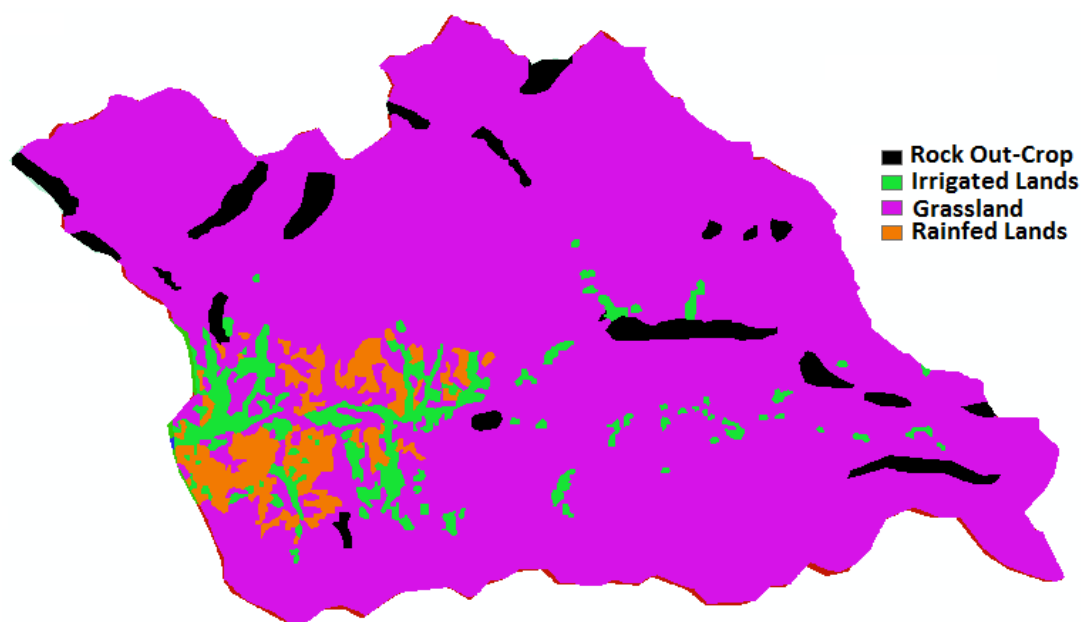
**Table 1.** Rainfall and temperature stations

Station name	X (UTM)	Y (UTM)	Elevation (m)
Hasanjun	477266	4009639	1990
Joestan	490956	4004551	2220
Nesa	4900835	3998736	2310
Dehdar	505796	4004490	2400

*-Digital Elevation Map (DEM):* To prepare basin DEM map, digital topographic map of 2013 with a scale of 1:25000, provided by the National Cartographic Centre, was used.

*-Soil map:* In order to provide digital soil map and soil information of the basin, soil maps and reports of the Institute of Soil and Water Research (2001) was used.

*-Land use map:* To prepare the land use map (*Fig. 2*), interpretation of aerial photographs, updated digital maps of land use by satellite images ETM, and written reports related to Taleqan Basin, provided by Soil and Water Conservation Research Centre, were used.

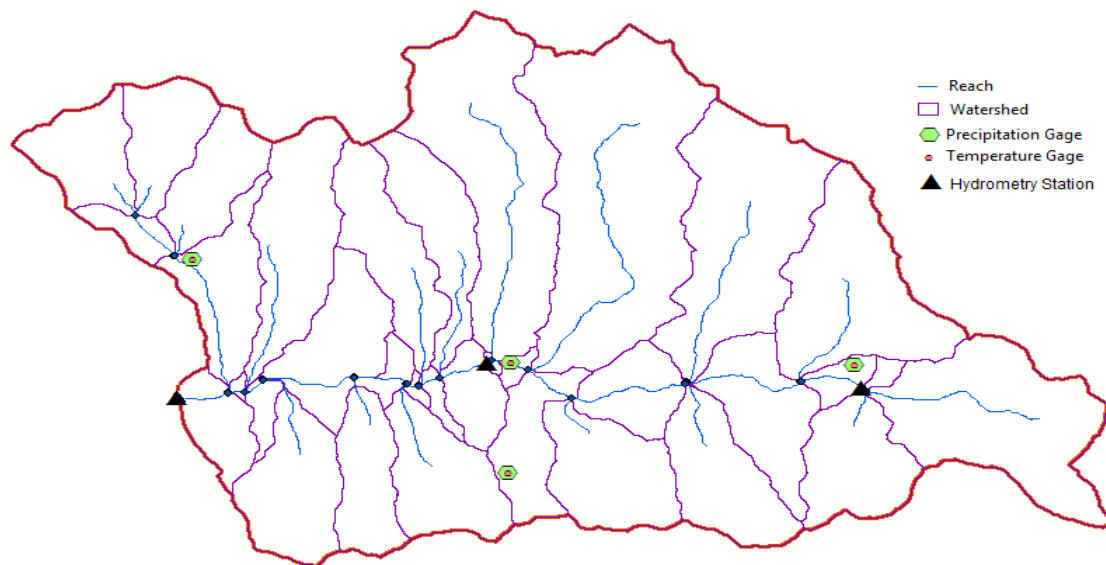


**Figure 2.** Watershed land use map

## Results and discussion

### Model implementation

Hence, to run the model, the data layers described in previous sections are presented as input to the model and the basin is divided into 35 subbasins and each subbasin is divided into hydrological response units (HRU). *Figure 3* shows the study area subbasins, stream flow, weather stations, and hydrometric stations.



*Figure 3. Taleqan watershed, stream flow, weather stations and hydrometric stations*

### Sensitivity analysis

The relative importance of input parameters with respect to its output is evaluated typically by using a sensitivity analysis. Parameters represent processes, and sensitivity analysis provides information on the most important processes in the study region. Many parameters are involved in the SWAT model to simulate rainfall-runoff. Thus, reducing the number of parameters by neglecting less effective parameters seems necessary (Zhang et al., 2009; Malago et al., 2017). The sensitivity analysis is performed by means of SWATCUP software, SUFI-2 algorithm. In this algorithm, parameters are changed, and a large number of runs are performed in order to see the impact of each parameter on the objective function. The advantage is that this produces more reliable results. This method uses a multiple regression approach to quantify sensitivity of each parameter (Eq. 3):

$$g = \alpha + \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_i b_i \quad (\text{Eq.3})$$

Where  $g$  is the objective function value,  $\alpha$  is the regression constant,  $\beta$  is the coefficient of parameters, and  $b$  is the relative significance of each parameter (Abbaspour et al., 2018).

After sensitivity analysis, 18 parameters were determined as parameters to which the model is more sensitive. Sensitivity analysis showed that the parameters of the curve

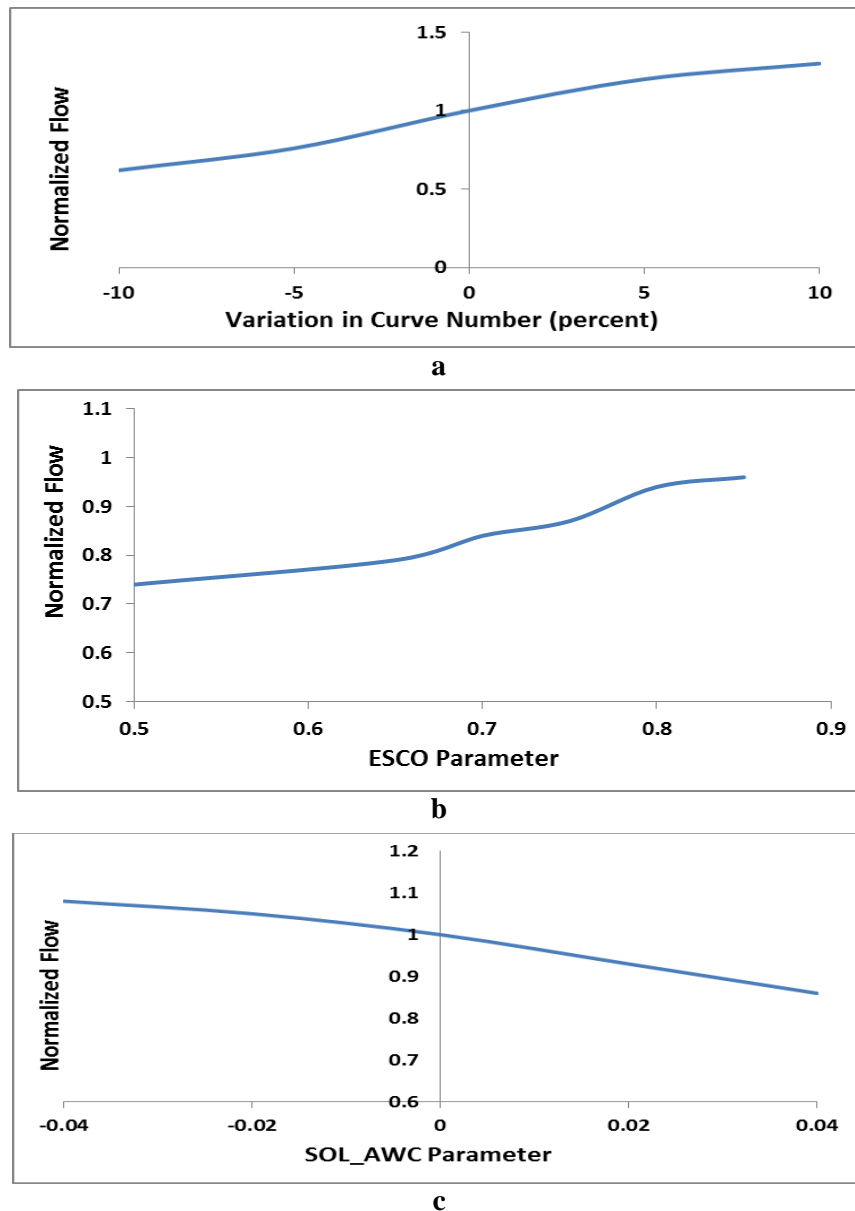
number (CN) is the most important factor, and soil evaporation compensation factor (ESCO) and soil available water capacity (SOL\_AWC) are among the most important factors controlling the flow in the basin, respectively. The parameters' sensitivity ranking is given in *Table 2*.

*Table 2. Sensitive parameters description and ranking*

Sensitivity order	Parameter	Description	Domain	Fitted value
1	CN2	Curve number	.mgt	-0.291
2	ESCO	Soil evaporation compensation factor	.hru	0.965
3	SOL_AWC	Available soil water capacity	.sol	0.379
4	GW_DELAY	Time required for water leaving the bottom of the root zone to reach the shallow aquifer	.gw	56.213
5	SNO50COV		.bsn	0.578
6	ALPHA_BF	Baseflow alpha factor, lower number means a slower response	.gw	0.142
7	SNOCVMX	Minimum snow water content that corresponds to 100% snow cover	.bsn	446.116
8	SMTMP	Snow melt base temperature	.bsn	-6.297
9	SNO_SUB	Initial snow water content	.sub	96.040
10	SFTMP	Snowfall temperature	.bsn	2.902
11	ALPHA_BNK	Baseflow alpha factor for bank storage	.rte	0.078
12	GWQMN	Threshold depth of water in the shallow aquifer required for return flow to occur	.gw	0.451
13	EPCO	Plant uptake compensation factor	.hru	0.387
14	SOL_CBN	Organic carbon content (% soil weight)	.sol	13.160
15	SURLAG	Surface lag coefficient; controls fraction of water entering reach in one day	.bsn	16.062
16	SOL_BD	Soil bulk density	.sol	0.879
17	GW_REVAP	Rate of transfer from shallow aquifer to root zone	.gw	0.317
18	SOL_K	Saturated hydraulic conductivity	.sol	0.376

More sensitivity analysis of the three most sensitive parameters and their effects on the normalized surface runoff changes is done. The results are shown in *Figure 4*. The runoff shows the greatest sensitivity to CN parameter. CN is a dimensionless parameter, which is linked to land use and soil type. Hence, by 10% positive and negative changes, runoff changes become very significant.

The second parameter in terms of sensitivity is ESCO. ESCO value reduction causes more water transfer to the upper layers of the soil, leading to an increase in the surface runoff. The third sensitive parameter is SOL\_AWC. By reducing the amount of this parameter, surface runoff increases. As the empty spaces to hold water decrease, the amount of surface runoff increases.



**Figure 4.** Normalized flow changes due to (a) curve number changes; (b) ESCO parameter changes; (c) SOL\_AWC parameter changes

### Calibration and validation

After determining the most sensitive model parameters, the model was calibrated using SUFI-2 algorithm (Abbaspour, 2008) for the years 2000 to 2010, using observed flow data by three hydrometric stations in which characteristics are shown in *Table 3*. Daily runoff data from these three stations in Iran is collected by the Water Research Institute of Iran. The optimal values of the parameters after calibration are presented in *Table 2*.

Runoff calibration results in these three stations are shown in the *Figure 5*. As can be seen, simulated runoff follows observed runoff curve in terms of both the values and the peak values occurrence time. Nash–Sutcliffe coefficient values of statistical indicators (NS) and  $R^2$  before and after calibration are shown in *Table 4*. The values of these



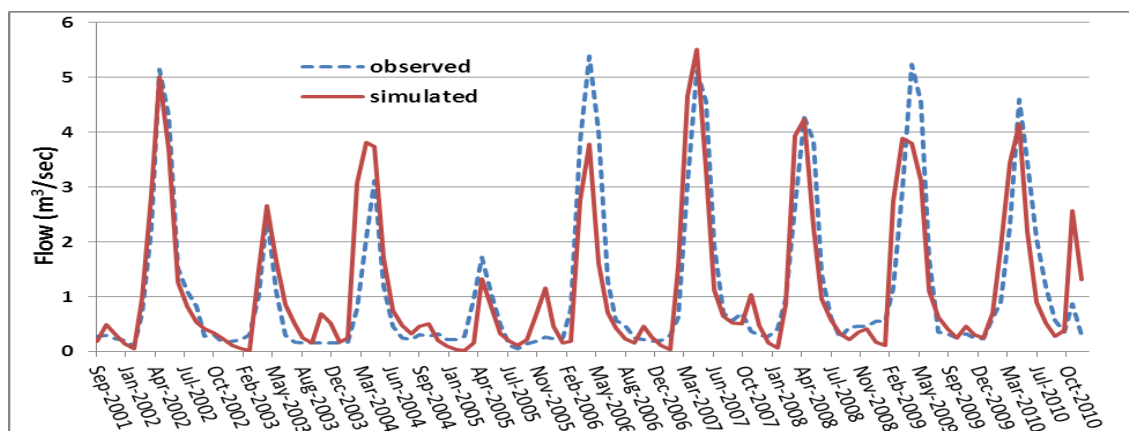
coefficients after calibration compared to the pre-calibration values are very different. NS coefficients in Gatehdeh, Joestan, and Gelinak are respectively, 0.8, 0.78 and 0.84 and  $R^2$  values for these three stations had been estimated 0.86, 0.81 and 0.87, respectively. The values of these coefficients indicate that the simulation of basin is of good quality. In *Figure 6*, scatter chart of observed runoff due to simulated runoff values for Gelinak station is shown. It shows high correlation between the observed and simulation values.

**Table 3.** Watershed hydrometric stations

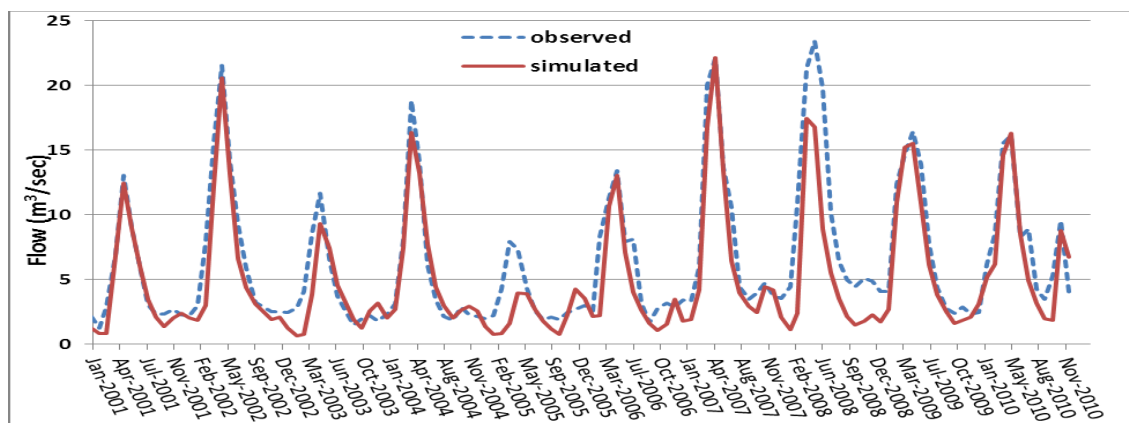
Station name	X (UTM)	Y (UTM)	Elevation (m)
Gatehdeh	506183	4003119	2320
Joestan	489962	4004430	1930
Gelinak	476567	4002534	1780

**Table 4.** Nash–Sutcliffe and  $R^2$  statistical indexes before and after calibration interval

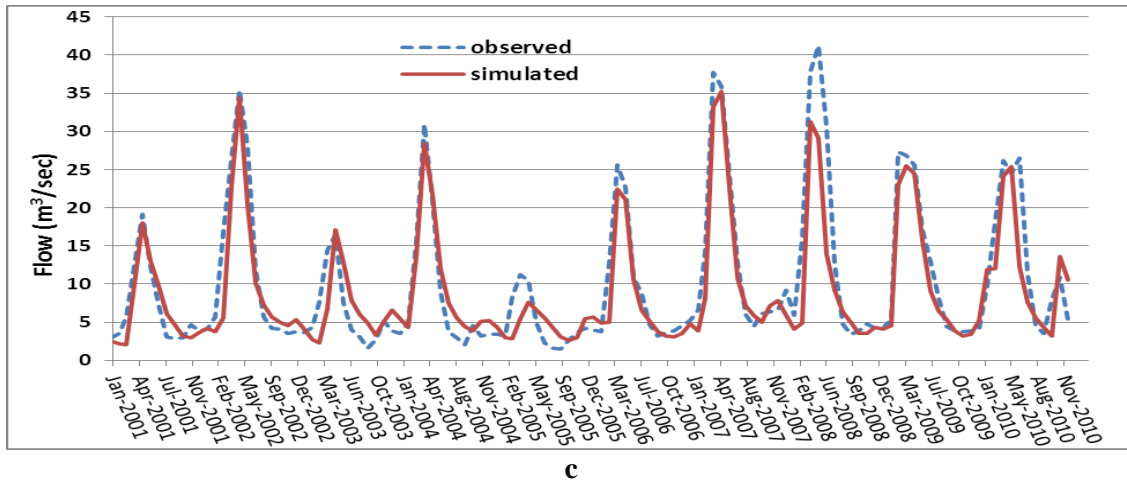
Station name	Before calibration		After calibration	
	NS	$R^2$	NS	$R^2$
Gatehdeh	0.13	0.25	0.8	0.86
Joestan	0.27	0.46	0.78	0.81
Gelinak	0.46	0.54	0.84	0.87



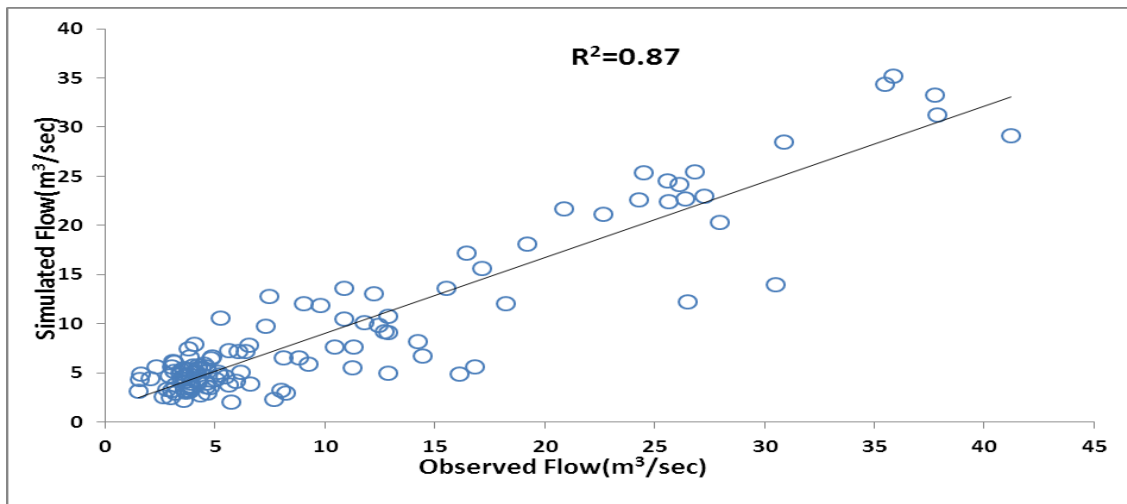
**a**



**b**



**Figure 5.** Monthly observed and simulated surface runoff in calibration period in (a) Gatehdeh station; (b) Joestan station; (c) Gelinak station

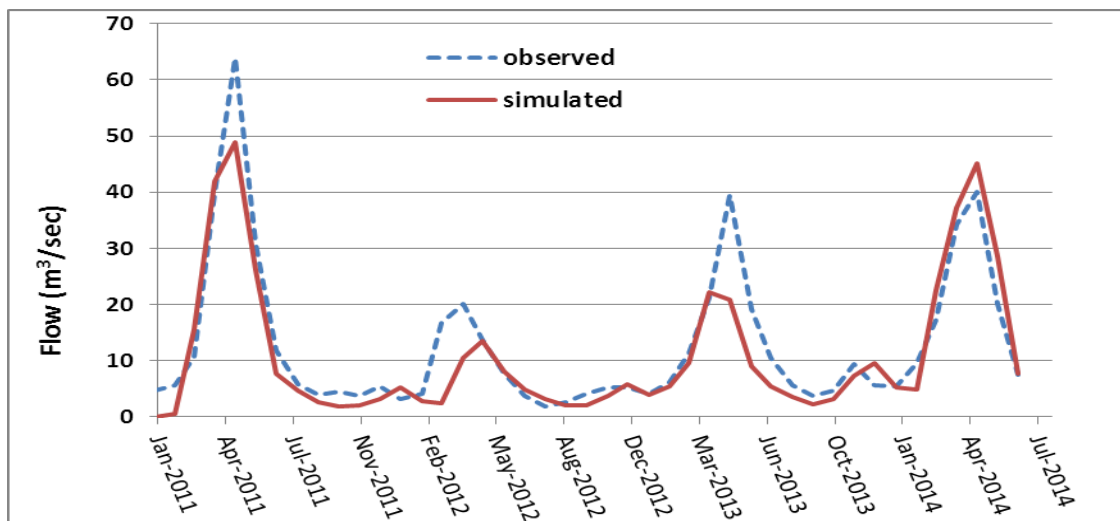


**Figure 6.** Observed runoff due to simulated runoff values in calibration period for Gelinak station

After model calibration, validation of the model is done using observed data from 2011 to 2014. The results of the model validation in Gelinak station is shown in *Figure 7*. The values of statistical indicators of Nash–Sutcliffe (NS) and  $R^2$  coefficients during this period for three stations are shown in *Table 5*. Regarding the values of statistical indicators, it shows goodness of fit of the model.

**Table 5.** Nash–Sutcliffe and  $R^2$  statistical indexes for validation interval

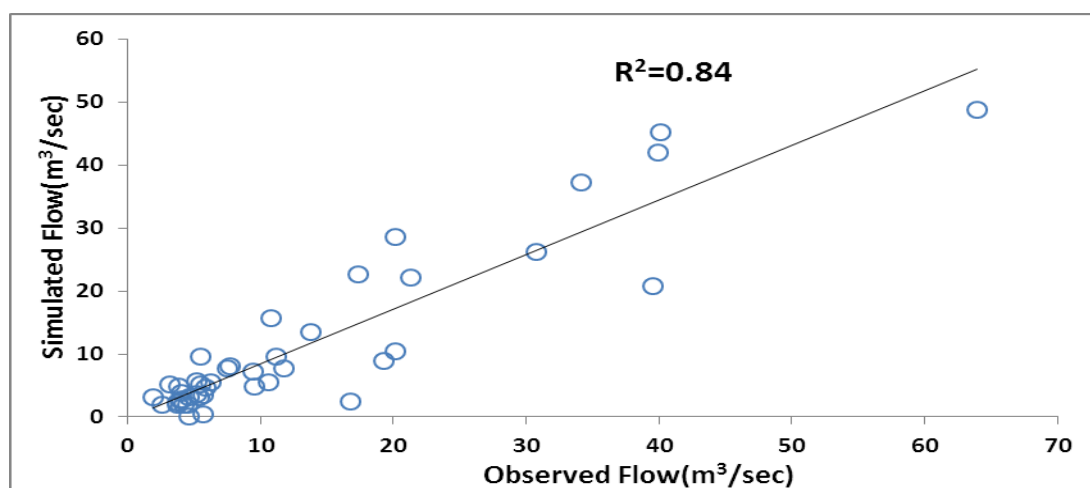
Station name	Validation period	
	NS	$R^2$
Gatehdeh	0.76	0.85
Joestan	0.73	0.75
Gelinak	0.79	0.84



**Figure 7.** Monthly observed and simulated surface runoff in validation period in Gelinak station

For example, for Gelinak station which is the main basin outlet, the coefficients are 0.79 and 0.84 respectively, which shows the quality of modelling and suitable parameters setting in calibration period.

In *Figure 8*, a scatter chart of simulated and observed runoff values for the Gelinak station is shown during validation, which indicates acceptable correlation between observed and simulated values



**Figure 8.** Scatter chart of observed runoff due to simulated runoff values in validation period in Gelinak station

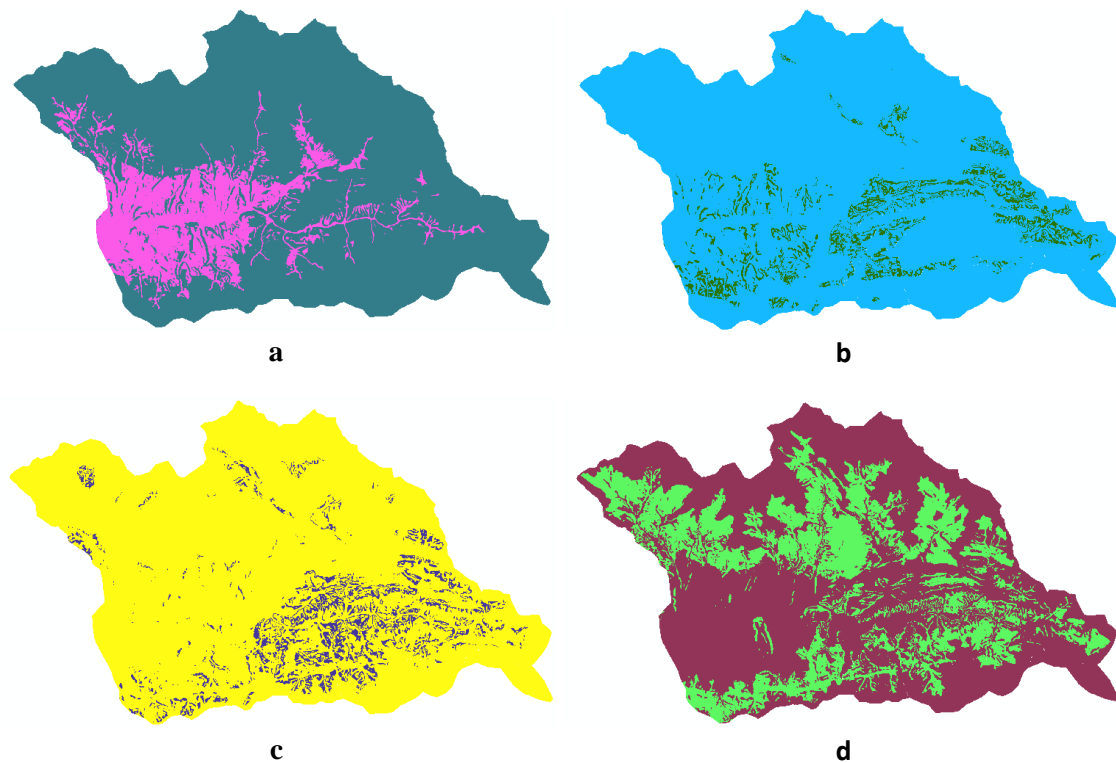
### **Effects of land use scenarios on surface runoff**

After watershed modelling, the effects of land use changes on surface runoff are investigated. For this purpose, practicable management activities in the watershed are listed in *Table 6* by considering existing restrictions. These management options and the

required conditions are based on the studies performed in Agriculture Office of Alborz Province. The areas in which each management activity can be applied, considering *Table 6* conditions, are specified in *Figure 9*.

**Table 6.** Management activities and specifications

Management activity	Executable areas specifications
Afforestation	Lands with semi-deep or deep soil, low density land cover, max. slope 45% and max. elevation 2600 m
Agroforestry	Agricultural lands with slope of 15% to 30% with semi-deep or deep soil
Expansion of agricultural land	Agricultural lands with max. slope of 12% with deep soil and max. elevation 2400 m
Agriculture on terrace	Agricultural lands with slope of 12% to 15% with deep soil



**Figure 9.** Regions in which each management activity can be applied (a) agricultural land; (b) agriculture on terrace lands; (c) agroforestry lands; (d) forest lands

So, combinations of  $2^n$  possible management activities are obtained. Where  $n$  is the number of distinct management activities. These management scenarios are shown in *Table 7*, where scenario sn1 represents the current land use. *Table 8* expresses each scenario land use details in percent. *Figure 10* shows each scenario information, including different types of land uses and corresponding areas.

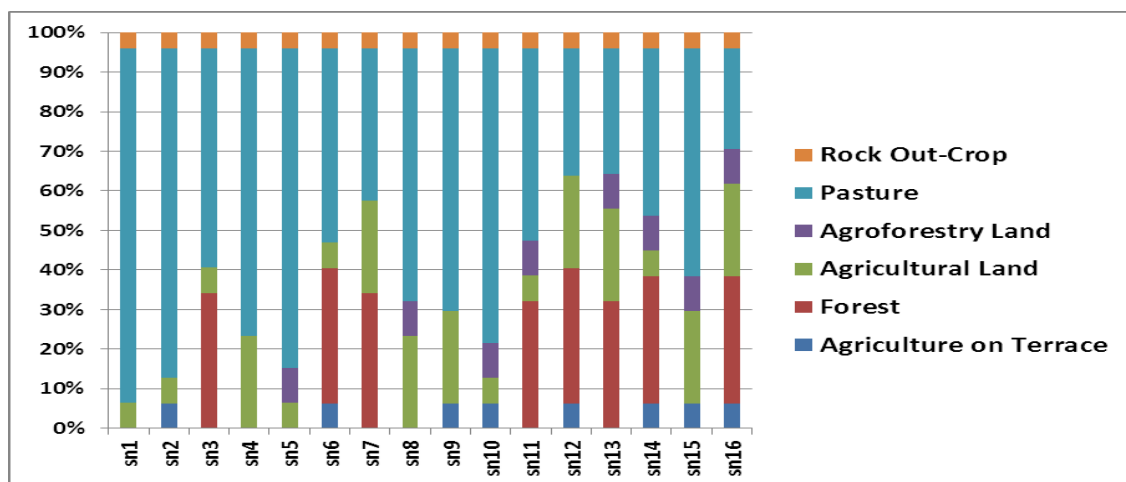
**Table 7. Possible management scenarios**

Management activity	sn1	sn2	sn3	sn4	sn5	sn6	sn7	sn8	sn9	sn10	sn11	sn12	sn13	sn14	sn15	sn16
Agriculture on terrace	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Afforestation	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
Expansion of agricultural land	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
Agroforestry	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1

'1' represents for application of the activity  
 '0' represents for not applying the activity

**Table 8. Each scenario land use details (in percent)**

Land use	sn1	sn2	sn3	sn4	sn5	sn6	sn7	sn8	sn9	sn10	sn11	sn12	sn13	sn14	sn15	sn16
Agriculture on terrace	0	6.3	0	0	0	6.3	0	0	6.3	6.3	0	6.3	0	6.3	6.3	6.3
Forest	0	0	34.2	0	0	34.2	34.2	0	0	0	32.1	34.2	32.1	32.1	0	32.1
Agricultural land	6.5	6.5	6.5	23.4	6.5	6.5	23.4	23.4	23.4	6.5	6.5	23.4	23.4	6.5	23.4	23.4
Agroforestry land	0	0	0	0	8.7	0	0	8.7	0	8.7	8.7	0	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7
Pasture	89.4	83.1	55.2	72.5	80.7	48.9	38.3	63.8	66.2	74.4	48.6	32	31.7	42.3	57.5	25.4
Rock out-crop	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1



**Figure 10. Types of land uses and corresponding areas for each scenario (in percent)**

To estimate surface runoff from changes in land use scenarios, the SWAT model was run in the range of calibrated parameters. *Table 9* shows changes in average seasonal and annual surface runoff (in percent) for each management scenario. According to the results, applying management scenarios to the watershed leads to changes in runoff compared to current condition. It can be seen that applying scenario sn2 (agriculture on

terrace) reduces average annual surface runoff less than 2%. However, sn3 (afforestation) decreases average annual runoff about 5%. Expansion of agricultural lands and agroforestry activities change runoff by 3.15% and 3.62%, respectively. Among individual scenarios, sn3 is the most effective management activity for runoff control due to good potential of this watershed for afforestation.

Each of scenarios sn6 to sn11 is obtained by combining two management activities. Application of sn6 (combination of agriculture on terrace and afforestation) reduces average runoff by 8%. Scenario sn7 (combination of expansion of agricultural land and afforestation) affects average annual runoff about 10%. Scenarios sn8 (combination of expansion of agricultural land and agroforestry), sn9 (combination of expansion of agricultural land and agriculture on terrace) and sn10 (combination of agroforestry and agriculture on terrace) reduce surface runoff less than 7%. However, by applying sn11 (combination of agroforestry and afforestation activities), the average runoff is decreased more than 12% compared to current land use condition. Considering combinations of two management options (scenario sn6 to scenario sn11), it can be observed that the most effective scenario for runoff management is sn11.

Considering combinations of three management options (scenario sn12 to scenario sn15), sn13 (combination of afforestation, expansion of agricultural land and agroforestry activities) have the greatest impact on reducing runoff. By applying scenario sn13, average annual surface runoff is reduced by 19%. The second effective scenario in this category is sn14, which reduces runoff more than 16%. This scenario is the combination of afforestation, agriculture on terrace and agroforestry activities. Sn12 (combination of afforestation, agriculture on terrace and expansion of agricultural land activities) and sn15 (combination of expansion of agricultural land, agriculture on terrace and agroforestry activities) affects watershed average runoff by 14.43% and 13.48%, respectively.

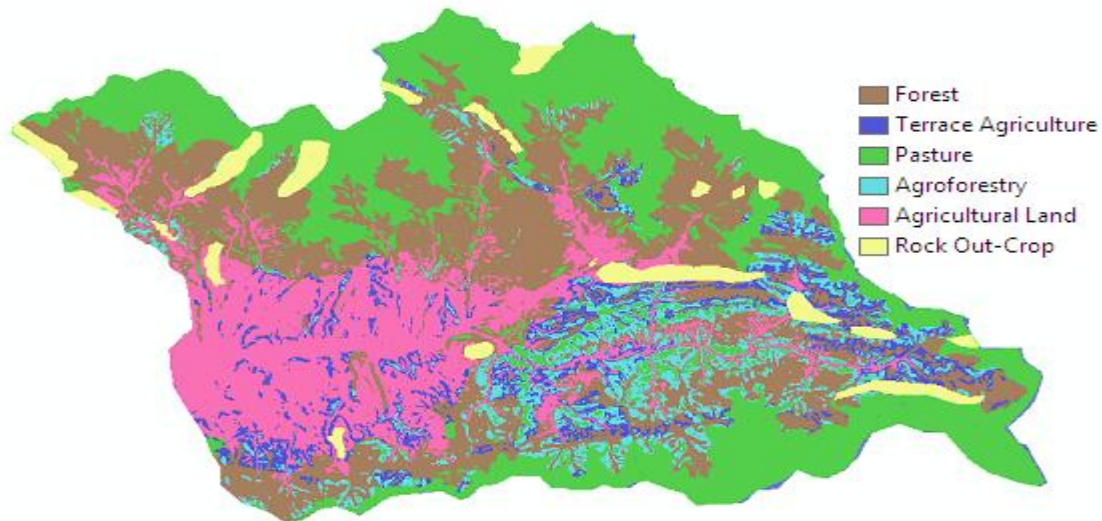
**Table 9.** Average seasonal and annual runoff changes (in percent) for each management scenario

Seasonal/ annual interval	Management scenarios															
	sn1	sn2	sn3	sn4	sn5	sn6	sn7	sn8	sn9	sn10	sn11	sn12	sn13	sn14	sn15	sn16
Spring	0	-1.64	-4.71	-3.14	-3.32	-7.44	-8.66	-6.53	-5.81	-6.61	-12.02	-14.06	-18.29	-16.18	-13.12	-21.88
Summer	0	-1.86	-5.10	-3.40	-4.17	-9.83	-11.34	-7.84	-6.72	-7.11	-13.33	-15.22	-19.85	-17.47	-14.24	-23.52
Autumn	0	-1.78	-4.92	-3.28	-3.87	-8.12	-10.08	-7.21	-6.36	-6.89	-12.55	-14.71	-18.94	-16.88	-13.75	-22.69
Winter	0	-1.70	-4.17	-2.78	-3.12	-6.93	-9.58	-6.21	-5.44	-6.73	-11.68	-13.73	-18.68	-15.55	-12.82	-21.16
Annual	0	-1.75	-4.68	-3.15	-3.62	-8.08	-9.92	-6.95	-6.08	-6.84	-12.40	-14.43	-18.94	-16.52	-13.48	-22.31

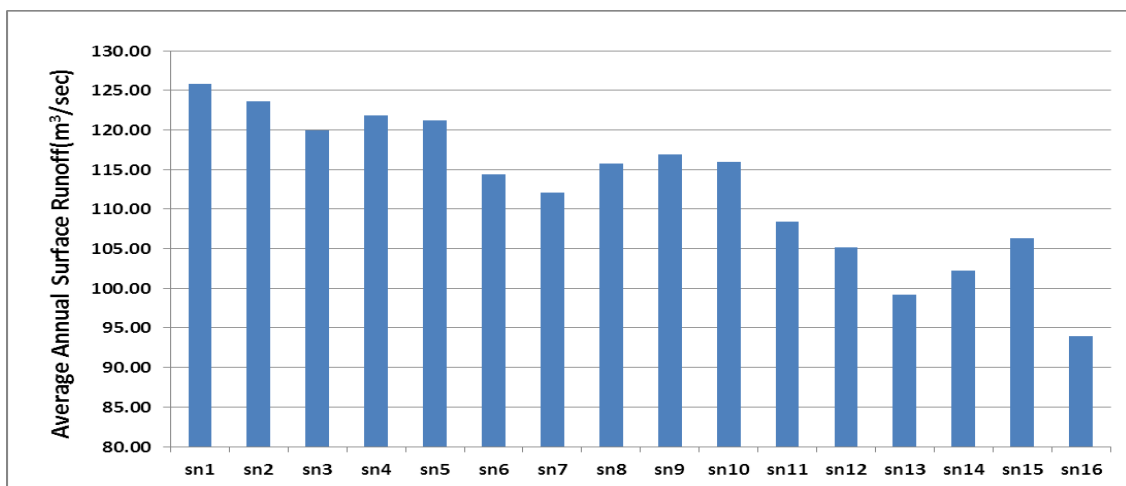
The last management scenario is the combination of all land use options. Scenario sn16 land use map is shown in *Figure 11*. It can be observed that by applying this scenario, surface runoff decreases more than 22% compared to the current condition. This scenario makes the most significant effect on the average runoff compared to the other management scenarios. Moreover, by considering average seasonal runoff changes, it can be seen that the most decrease in surface runoff occurs in summer in each scenario. On the other hand, the least changes occur in winter.

*Figure 12* shows average annual surface runoff resulted from each scenario application. Terrace agriculture (sn2) does not affect surface runoff considerably. However, from scenario sn6 (combination of management options) onwards, decrease

in surface runoff is noticeable. It can be seen that average annual runoff is  $126 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$  considering current land use. However, it is reduced to  $108 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$  by applying sn11 (combination of agroforestry and afforestation activities) and to  $100 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$  by applying sn13 (combination of afforestation, expansion of agricultural land and agroforestry activities). The main change occurs when sn16 land use scenario is applied to the model and the average annual runoff is reduced to about  $95 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$ .



**Figure 11.** Scenario sn16 land use map



**Figure 12.** Average annual surface runoff resulted from each scenario application

In recent years, some researches were performed to study the impacts of land use changes on the study area flow. In a study by Kazemi and Bayat (2017), by using topographical maps and aerial photographs, land use maps of 1971, 1988 and 2003 were prepared. Then land use change was calculated. Then relationship between low flow indices and land use in the period of study were investigated. The results showed that the low flow indices have experienced an upward trend. Increasing rangeland coverage during these years was in accordance with the increasing of indices in the period



studied. It was concluded that land use changes due to human intervention has a direct impact on the trend of low flow indices.

Hosseini et al. (2012) studied the effects of land use changes on water balance of the Taleqan catchment before and after the dam construction by using SWAT. The results indicated progressive increase in surface runoff and decline in interflow and groundwater flow. Therefore, one of the main challenges facing development planners is the control of the accelerated degradation of the natural resources.

In these researches, the impacts of land use changes on the watershed in the past time periods were studied. However, in the current work all possible land use scenarios were introduced to the model to study the corresponding future land use scenarios effects on the watershed. Since, decision makers can make the best decisions due to environmental consequences by assessing the results of each land use scenario simulation before implementation.

## Conclusions

In this study, Taleqan watershed modelling was done using the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT). In order to do this, different kinds of information such as digital elevation model (DEM), soil data, temperature and precipitation data, and soil and land use maps in standard formats were provided as inputs for the model.

The relative importance of input parameters with respect to its output was evaluated using sensitivity analysis. Sensitivity analysis showed that the curve number (CN) parameter is the most important factor and Soil Evaporation Compensation Factor (ESCO) and soil available water capacity (SOL\_AWC) are among the most important factors affecting the flow in the basin, respectively.

Calibration was performed by SUFI-2 algorithm, using river flow observation of three hydrometric stations within the basin.

It was observed that simulated values follow observed values of both the amplitude and the time of couriers. Nash-Sutcliffe coefficients in Gatehdeh, Joestan, and Gelinak stations are respectively 0.8, 0.78, and 0.84 and the  $R^2$  values for these three stations were 0.86, 0.81, and 0.87, respectively. It was shown that the values of these statistical indicators after calibration compared to the pre-calibration values are very different. The statistical indicators values indicate that the basin modelling and simulations were performed with good quality.

After model calibration, it is necessary to ensure the quality of the modelling by means of validation process. Validation results in hydrometric stations show watershed modelling quality and suitable parameter settings in calibration period. NS and  $R^2$  coefficients values were convenient. For example, in Gelinak station, which is the main outlet of the watershed, these indexes are 0.79 and 0.84. Moreover, scatter charts of observed and simulated surface runoff showed good correlation between these values in both calibration and validation intervals.

The effects of land use changes on the basin surface runoff were studied. It was seen that by applying scenario sn16, the most reduction in surface runoff was obtained compared to the other scenarios. Application of this scenario leads to 22.31% reduction in runoff compared to current condition. Moreover, in all scenarios, effects of management activities in the summer are the most. This can be due to the evolution of land cover and canopy, which in addition to significant evapotranspiration, makes runoff to decrease. According to results, management options combinations reduce



surface runoff considerably compared to individual activities. Afforestation is the most effective activity among single options. Considering combinations of two management options, the most effective scenario is sn11 (a combination of afforestation and agroforestry activities), which changes surface runoff about 12.4% compared to current land use condition. On the other hand, sn9 has the least impact on runoff (about 6% reduction). However, in this condition, runoff decreases more than scenario sn5 (the most effective singular activity).

Considering combinations of three management options, sn13 (a combination of afforestation, expansion of agricultural land, and agroforestry activities) have the greatest impact on reducing runoff. By applying scenario sn13, surface runoff is reduced by 18.94% compared to the current condition, which is considered a significant change. Moreover, scenario sn14 reduces surface runoff by 16.52%. This scenario applies a combination of afforestation, agriculture on terrace, and agroforestry activities.

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## APPENDIX

### *Appendix 1. The study area summarised data used for modelling*

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Value</b>
TMPMX1	Average daily maximum air temperature for January (°C)	2.58
TMPMX2	Average daily maximum air temperature for February (°C)	4.45
TMPMX3	Average daily maximum air temperature for March (°C)	11.12
TMPMX4	Average daily maximum air temperature for April (°C)	17.94
TMPMX5	Average daily maximum air temperature for May (°C)	24.43
TMPMX6	Average daily maximum air temperature for June (°C)	30.52
TMPMX7	Average daily maximum air temperature for July (°C)	33.66
TMPMX8	Average daily maximum air temperature for August (°C)	32.29
TMPMX9	Average daily maximum air temperature for September (°C)	27.37
TMPMX10	Average daily maximum air temperature for October (°C)	20.22
TMPMX11	Average daily maximum air temperature for November (°C)	10.51
TMPMX12	Average daily maximum air temperature for December (°C)	4.75
TMPMN1	Average daily minimum air temperature for January (°C)	-9.20
TMPMN2	Average daily minimum air temperature for February (°C)	-6.52
TMPMN3	Average daily minimum air temperature for March (°C)	-1.62
TMPMN4	Average daily minimum air temperature for April (°C)	3.06
TMPMN5	Average daily minimum air temperature for May (°C)	7.32
TMPMN6	Average daily minimum air temperature for June (°C)	12.00
TMPMN7	Average daily minimum air temperature for July (°C)	15.47
TMPMN8	Average daily minimum air temperature for August (°C)	14.59
TMPMN9	Average daily minimum air temperature for September (°C)	10.74
TMPMN10	Average daily minimum air temperature for October (°C)	5.41
TMPMN11	Average daily minimum air temperature for November (°C)	-0.07
TMPMN12	Average daily minimum air temperature for December (°C)	-4.68
TMPSTDMX1	Average total monthly precipitation in January (°C)	3.54
TMPSTDMX2	Average total monthly precipitation in February (°C)	3.81
TMPSTDMX3	Average total monthly precipitation in March (°C)	4.99
TMPSTDMX4	Average total monthly precipitation in April (°C)	4.58
TMPSTDMX5	Average total monthly precipitation in May (°C)	3.59
TMPSTDMX6	Average total monthly precipitation in June (°C)	3.31
TMPSTDMX7	Average total monthly precipitation in July (°C)	2.45
TMPSTDMX8	Average total monthly precipitation in August (°C)	2.51
TMPSTDMX9	Average total monthly precipitation in September (°C)	3.10
TMPSTDMX10	Average total monthly precipitation in October (°C)	3.77
TMPSTDMX11	Average total monthly precipitation in November (°C)	3.93
TMPSTDMX12	Average total monthly precipitation in December (°C)	3.40
TMPSTDMN1	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in January (°C)	6.68
TMPSTDMN2	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in February (°C)	5.71
TMPSTDMN3	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in March (°C)	4.27
TMPSTDMN4	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in April (°C)	3.51

TMPSTDMN5	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in May (°C)	3.01
TMPSTDMN6	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in June (°C)	2.76
TMPSTDMN7	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in July (°C)	2.23
TMPSTDMN8	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in August (°C)	2.23
TMPSTDMN9	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in September (°C)	2.73
TMPSTDMN10	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in October (°C)	2.87
TMPSTDMN11	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in November (°C)	2.87
TMPSTDMN12	Standard deviation for daily minimum air temperature in December (°C)	4.50
PCPMM1	Average total monthly precipitation in January (mm)	210.50
PCPMM2	Average total monthly precipitation in February (mm)	268.54
PCPMM3	Average total monthly precipitation in March (mm)	328.70
PCPMM4	Average total monthly precipitation in April (mm)	357.50
PCPMM5	Average total monthly precipitation in May (mm)	201.30
PCPMM6	Average total monthly precipitation in June (mm)	54.20
PCPMM7	Average total monthly precipitation in July (mm)	33.04
PCPMM8	Average total monthly precipitation in August (mm)	29.25
PCPMM9	Average total monthly precipitation in September (mm)	35.14
PCPMM10	Average total monthly precipitation in October (mm)	141.43
PCPMM11	Average total monthly precipitation in November (mm)	243.96
PCPMM12	Average total monthly precipitation in December (mm)	210.32
PCPD1	Average number of days of precipitation in January	20.80
PCPD2	Average number of days of precipitation in February	19.41
PCPD3	Average number of days of precipitation in March	18.89
PCPD4	Average number of days of precipitation in April	17.07
PCPD5	Average number of days of precipitation in May	13.69
PCPD6	Average number of days of precipitation in June	5.98
PCPD7	Average number of days of precipitation in July	4.07
PCPD8	Average number of days of precipitation in August	4.36
PCPD9	Average number of days of precipitation in September	4.83
PCPD10	Average number of days of precipitation in October	9.56
PCPD11	Average number of days of precipitation in November	15.60
PCPD12	Average number of days of precipitation in December	19.87
SOLARAV1	Average daily solar radiation for January (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	11.50
SOLARAV2	Average daily solar radiation for February (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	15.42
SOLARAV3	Average daily solar radiation for March (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	20.83
SOLARAV4	Average daily solar radiation for April (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	25.04
SOLARAV5	Average daily solar radiation for May (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	28.95
SOLARAV6	Average daily solar radiation for June (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	32.08
SOLARAV7	Average daily solar radiation for July (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	30.93
SOLARAV8	Average daily solar radiation for August (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	28.12
SOLARAV9	Average daily solar radiation for September (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	23.99
SOLARAV10	Average daily solar radiation for October (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	17.73
SOLARAV11	Average daily solar radiation for November (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	12.37
SOLARAV12	Average daily solar radiation for December (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	10.14
DEWPT1	Average daily dew point temperature for January (°C)	-8.69

DEWPT2	Average daily dew point temperature for February (°C)	-6.53
DEWPT3	Average daily dew point temperature for March (°C)	-5.16
DEWPT4	Average daily dew point temperature for April (°C)	-2.08
DEWPT5	Average daily dew point temperature for May (°C)	-0.60
DEWPT6	Average daily dew point temperature for June (°C)	0.65
DEWPT7	Average daily dew point temperature for July (°C)	4.47
DEWPT8	Average daily dew point temperature for August (°C)	3.64
DEWPT9	Average daily dew point temperature for September (°C)	-0.09
DEWPT10	Average daily dew point temperature for October (°C)	-1.68
DEWPT11	Average daily dew point temperature for November (°C)	-3.92
DEWPT12	Average daily dew point temperature for December (°C)	-6.88
WNDV1	Average daily wind speed in January (m/s)	2.30
WNDV2	Average daily wind speed in February (m/s)	2.65
WNDV3	Average daily wind speed in March (m/s)	3.01
WNDV4	Average daily wind speed in April (m/s)	3.23
WNDV5	Average daily wind speed in May (m/s)	3.31
WNDV6	Average daily wind speed in June (m/s)	3.22
WNDV7	Average daily wind speed in July (m/s)	2.98
WNDV8	Average daily wind speed in August (m/s)	2.74
WNDV9	Average daily wind speed in September (m/s)	2.70
WNDV10	Average daily wind speed in October (m/s)	2.57
WNDV11	Average daily wind speed in November (m/s)	2.31
WNDV12	Average daily wind speed in December (m/s)	2.33