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Hydrology and Earth System Sciences
Discussions

Interactive comment on "Forecasters priorities for improving probabilistic flood forecasts" *by* F. Wetterhall et al.

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"I believe voting is irrelevant in scientific affairs. Is it a matter of voting for, say, a priority to "Increase the average skill of the medium range forecast (> 3 days)" in order to materialize it? "

I strongly disagree with the comment - setting priorities in a research agenda is common may it be through funding mechanisms or through research programs. Naturally, this does not mean that the priority will materialize, but it allows to focus attention, in this case, on the end user needs. A 'pure' (does this really exist?) science driven agenda may develop a scientific more optimal solution (I question what optimal means and who has defined it). Fredrik already pointed out the resource limitation issues and

one should not forget that improvements in an operational forecasting system are aiming to increase the "value" of such a system- as defined by the user. Such a definition is not easy. Better numerical forecasts do not necessarily lead to better outcomes as this is influence by many other factors. Overemphasis on research for its own sake doesn't necessarily service the wider public interests which is at the heart of operational hydrological forecasting. The reader is referred to Marticle (2011) and Meyer (2011) for an excellent in depth discussions on this topic. Getting 'benefits' from science is not that straightforward and is a hotly contested (highlighted through this discussion), not at least because the USE to which forecasts are put are institutionally shaped. In the context of flood forecasting that point is well made in Demeritt and Nobert (2011).

Demeritt D, Nobert S. (2011) Responding to early flood warning in the European Union. In C.O. Meyer & C. De Franco (eds.) Forecasting, Warning, and Transnational Risks: Is Prevention Possible? London: Palgrave, pp. 127-47. Maricle, G.E., 2011, Prediction as an Impediment to Preparedness: Lessons from the US Hurricane and Earthquake Research Enterprises, Minerva ,49:87–111 DOI 10.1007/s11024-011-9166-2 Meyer, R., 2011, The Public Values Failures of Climate Science in the US, DOI 10.1007/s11024-011-9164-4

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