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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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The Hydrological Ensemble Prediction Experiment (HEPEX) has been initiated in 2003 and has developed into one of the leading initiatives in hydrology related to ensemble prediction system (EPS) forecasts. The aim of HEPEX is to foster the use of EPS to develop and test procedures for reliable hydrological ensemble forecasts, and to demonstrate that their application leads to better decision making related to the water, environmental, and emergency management sectors.

Thus, the emphasis is on BETTER decision making based on ensembles – a very steep goal and only achievable if decision makers enter in dialogue with the scientific community and scientists obtain in depth knowledge what decision makers understand, need

and can cope with. The importance of addressing real end user needs was also one of the main results of the 3rd international HEPEX workshop (Thielen et al., 2008)and has become a driving factor in HEPEX activities since. Also in other networks and research calls we see increasingly the demand for integrating end-users into scientific projects, but in reality, very often, this is then limited to inviting decision makers to workshops and conferences with high-level scientific presentations and posters. Research tools are mostly tested by decision makers towards the end of the projects and without a vision for operational funding to continue and therefore real feedback and interest are limited.

Experience such as with MAP-D-Phase (Rotach et al, 2012) are unfortunately the exception rather than the rule. There is clearly a need to make decision makers 'actors' rather than 'spectators' in the scientific world. End users and decision makers need to be able to voice their needs and wishes also in a non-scientific way. Only then effective dialogue can start. Do end-users speak in one voice? Do all agree what is needed? This opinion paper shows that this is not the case, but that consensus can be found towards priorities that can then be converted into feasible goals.

The authors have described how the EFAS team is trying out new avenues of engaging in dialogue while providing both developers and endusers the opportunity for taking ownership for the final product. Asking first what is needed and then work towards it seems to me a fundamentally scientific approach that will certainly contribute to the goals of HEPEX – contribute to better decisions, reduce impacts from hydrological extremes - and have fun while doing it.

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