

Interannual variability of evapotranspiration and energy exchange over an annual grassland in California

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[1] We report on the interannual variability of evapotranspiration (E) and energy exchange of an annual grassland in the Mediterranean climate zone of California. They were measured directly with the eddy covariance technique over a 6-year period that spanned between July 2001 and June 2007 and experienced a large range in precipitation (376 mm to 888 mm). Despite a two-fold range in precipitation, annual E ranged much less, between 266 mm and 391 mm. We found that pronounced energy-limited and water-limited periods occurred within the same year. In the water-limited period, monthly integrated E scaled negatively with solar radiation and was restrained by precipitation. In the energy-limited period, on the other hand, the majority of E scaled positively with solar radiation (R_g) and was confined by potential E (E_p). E was most sensitive to the availability of soil moisture during the transition to the senescence period rather than onset of the greenness period, causing annual E to be strongly modulated by growing season length. Bulk surface conductance scaled consistently with Priestley-Taylor α coefficient regardless of interannual and seasonal variability of precipitation, E , and solar radiation.

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1. Introduction

[2] Evidence of global climate change is well-documented, with long-term increases observed in average global surface temperature [Houghton *et al.*, 2001; Jones and Moberg, 2003], the atmosphere's carbon dioxide (CO_2) concentration [Keeling *et al.*, 1996], precipitation [Dai *et al.*, 1997; Hulme *et al.*, 1998], and runoff [Gedney *et al.*, 2006; Groisman *et al.*, 2004; Labat *et al.*, 2004]. However, there are still several unresolved critical issues relating to climate change. One issue is whether evapotranspiration (E) is increasing or decreasing. Even though there is general consensus that precipitation and runoff have increased [Dai *et al.*, 1997; Gedney *et al.*, 2006], the trend for E is still being debated. One may expect hydrological intensification and greater E with global warming [Huntington, 2006], but there are many positive and negative feedbacks in play.

[3] Some scientists argue that E has increased and has contributed to hydrological intensification [Brutsaert, 2006; Golubev *et al.*, 2001; Wetherald and Manabe, 2002], while others argue that global dimming, caused by anthropogenic pollutants, has caused E to decrease and such dimming has dampened the water cycle [Liepert *et al.*, 2004; Liu *et al.*, 2004; Ramanathan *et al.*, 2001; Roderick and Farquhar, 2002a; Wild *et al.*, 2004]. This lack of consensus stems in

part from a lacking of direct and long-term measurements of actual E . The majority of E measurements associated with this debate have been derived from pan E , which does not measure actual E [Morton, 1978].

[4] E is considered the most problematic term in the hydrological budget [Lettenmaier and Famiglietti, 2006]. It is generally evaluated as the residual between precipitation and runoff in the regional scale and as the residual between precipitation, runoff and interception at the catchment scale [Bosch and Hewlett, 1982; Jaeger and Kessler, 1997; Lewis *et al.*, 2000; Marc and Robinson, 2007]. It is also estimated by measuring pan E [Brutsaert and Parlange, 1998; Brutsaert, 2006; Ohmura and Wild, 2002; Peterson *et al.*, 1995; Roderick and Farquhar, 2002b]. Indirect measures of E lack mechanistic information on biophysical processes, which include stomatal and boundary layer conductances and leaf area index. Better and long-term information on E from direct measurements is needed to better understand complex feedbacks between the terrestrial biosphere and climate system, for managing water resources, monitoring floods and droughts, and estimating the land surface energy balance that controls the height of the planetary boundary layer, climate and land-atmosphere feedback [Brubaker and Entekhabi, 1996; Raupach, 1998].

[5] The eddy covariance method provides a direct means of measuring E [Wilson and Baldocchi, 2000]. Because of its relatively short history, long-term studies using the eddy covariance technique are relatively rare compared to pan E . Five or more years of data on CO_2 , water vapor, and energy exchange have been collected for the following

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ecosystems: boreal forests [Arain et al., 2002; Barr et al., 2007; Dunn et al., 2007], temperate deciduous forests [Barford et al., 2001; Carrara et al., 2003; Hanson et al., 2004; Wilson and Baldocchi, 2001], savannas [Berlinger et al., 2007; Ma et al., 2007], a steppe [Gilmanov et al., 2006], a subalpine forest [Monson et al., 2005], a shrub ecosystem [Luo et al., 2007], a northern peatland [Roulet et al., 2007], spruce forests [Grunwald and Bernhofer, 2007; Hollinger et al., 2004], and a mixture of agricultural fields and forested patches [Haszpra et al., 2005]. While all of the cited papers measure water vapor exchange, most focus on CO₂ exchange. To our knowledge, there are only a few publications covering more than five years for E measurement explicitly, namely in a temperate deciduous forest [Hanson et al., 2004], a spruce forest [Grunwald and Bernhofer, 2007], a bog [Lafleur et al., 2005], a chaparral [Luo et al., 2007], and boreal forests [Arain et al., 2002; Barr et al., 2007]. Another cohort of studies have reported interannual variability of ET for less than five years in temperate deciduous forests [Moore et al., 1996; Wilson and Baldocchi, 2000], boreal forests [Amiro et al., 2006; Arain et al., 2003], a cypress forest [Kosugi et al., 2007], a lake [Rouse et al., 2003], a tallgrass prairie [Burba and Verma, 2005], a grassland [Jacobs et al., 2007], an Amazonian rain forest [Hutyra et al., 2007], a maize-soybean agricultural system [Suyker and Verma, 2007], and a savanna [Baldocchi et al., 2004]. The eddy covariance method is susceptible to errors when the surface energy balance does not close and the flux tower is located on non-ideal terrain (e.g., rugged or heterogeneous landscapes) [Wilson et al., 2002]. Its strengths, however, are in measuring interannual variability because bias errors tend to be constant from year to year.

[6] Grasslands cover 20% of global land area [Wang et al., 2006a]. They are of particular interest because it is not certain how water yield changes under land conversion from grassland to forest and vice versa [Marc and Robinson, 2007], and their water vapor and CO₂ exchange is expected to respond to climate perturbations more sensitively (e.g., drought and extreme heavy rain event) [Knapp and Smith, 2001; Knapp et al., 2002; Parton et al., 1994]. Grassland E studies have been performed in the Great Plains of North America [Bremer et al., 2001; Burba and Verma, 2001, 2005; Ham and Knapp, 1998; Kim and Verma, 1990; Meyers, 2001; Verma et al., 1989, 1992], over a mixed grassland in Canada [Wever et al., 2002], a warm-temperate grassland in southeastern USA [Novick et al., 2004], a grass field [Saigusa et al., 1998] and a wet temperate grassland [Li et al., 2005] in Japan, a tussock grassland in New Zealand [Hunt et al., 2002], a C₄ pasture in Brazil [Grace et al., 1998], and a perennial grassland in Netherlands [Jacobs et al., 2007]. The majority of these studies were conducted over relatively short periods, such as one year or less. Only two studies exist on E from the annual grasslands in a Mediterranean-type climate. One was for four months near the Pacific coast range of California [Valentini et al., 1995] and the other was for two years on the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains at the present study site [Baldocchi et al., 2004].

[7] An annual grassland, growing in a Mediterranean-type climate in California, is unique from other grassland ecosystems because it has a different phenological cycles.

The grasses live from November to May, during the winter rainy season and are dead during the summer months [Biswell, 1956; Parton et al., 1994; Pitt and Heady, 1978]. Because the wet winter season receives the least solar radiation with the most rainfall, the water supply, precipitation, exceeds atmospheric demand for water, potential E (E_p). However, during the dry season, grasslands receive the highest solar radiation with least rainfall, causing the potential water demand to greatly exceed water supply. Budyko's aridity index (AI) is given as the ratio of precipitation to E_p and is widely used to determine whether a region is water-limited (AI < 1) or energy-limited (AI > 1) [Baldocchi and Xu, 2007; Budyko, 1974; Donohue et al., 2007; Farquhar and Roderick, 2007; Yang et al., 2006]. This ecosystem is relatively unique because it undergoes both pronounced water-limited and energy-limited periods in the same year. Consequently, the study of intraannual variability of E can help understand which period influences annual E most and how the timing of transition from energy-limited to water-limited modulates the annual E amount. Furthermore, because this ecosystem experiences large interannual variability in precipitation (376 mm to 888 mm per year during the study period), it is critical to understand how E is down-regulated with soil water deficits.

[8] Here, we report on six hydrological years of E and energy exchanges over an annual grassland growing in the Mediterranean-type climate of California. Direct measurements of E were made with the eddy covariance method between July 2001 to June 2007. The objectives of this study include: 1) to characterize E , energy fluxes and related bulk parameters (e.g., surface conductance, decoupling factor and Priestley-Taylor α coefficient) in monthly and annual timescales, and 2) to investigate which abiotic and biotic factors control the interannual variability of water and energy fluxes. Additionally, we will use our data to address questions related to E biogeography for classifying plant functional type (PFT). The scientific questions to be addressed in this study include: (1) how will growing season length influence annual E amount?; (2) How does the timing of transition from energy-limited to water-limited modulate annual ET amount?; (3) Which factors control E -atmospheric demand or stomatal regulation?; and (4) How does E respond to changes in solar radiation amounts in water-limited and energy-limited periods?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Site Description

[9] The study site is a member of the AmeriFlux network and is classified as a grazed annual grassland in central California, USA (Vaira Ranch, latitude: 38.4133°N; longitude: 120.9508°W; altitude: 129 m). It is located on the lower foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It experiences a Mediterranean-type climate with dry hot summers and wet mild winters. Rainfall is concentrated between November and May with little precipitation during the summer. Climate data show that the annual average temperature and annual precipitation amount are 16.9°C and 565 mm, respectively (1949 to 2005 data from the Camp Pardee, CA climate station, which is at a similar altitude and is 26 km south of the study site: <http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/cliMAIN.pl?cacamp+nca>). The soil is an Exchequer

Table 1. Annual Energy Balance Closure for Linear Regression Coefficients and the Ratio of $\lambda E + H + G$ to R_n

Year ^a	Slope	Intercept (W m ⁻²)	r ²	($\lambda E^b + H^c + G^d$)/ R_n^e
01–02	0.90	2.11	0.97	0.92
02–03	0.90	4.03	0.98	0.95
03–04	0.86	7.10	0.97	0.94
04–05	0.81	15.25	0.97	1.02
05–06	0.88	18.84	0.97	1.12
06–07	0.87	14.21	0.97	1.04

^aYear was defined as hydrological year (e.g., July to June). 01–02 indicates July 2001 to June 2002.

^b λE : latent heat flux.

^c H : sensible heat flux.

^d G : soil heat flux.

^e R_n : net radiation.

very rocky silt loam (Lithic xerorthents), which is composed of 30% sand, 57% silt and 13% clay. The bulk density at the surface layer (0–30 cm) is 1.43 ± 0.10 g cm⁻³. The soil profile is about 0.5 m depth with overlaying fractured rock. The site is dominated by the cool-season C₃ annual species, including *Brachypodium distachyon* L., *Hypochaeris glabra* L., *Trifolium dubium* Sibth., *Trifolium hirtum* All., *Dichelostemma volubile* A., and *Erodium botrys* Cav. More detailed site information may be found in previous studies [Baldocchi et al., 2004; Xu and Baldocchi, 2004].

2.2. Data Acquisition

[10] Water vapor, CO₂, energy fluxes and meteorological variables have been measured since November 2000. The eddy covariance system is composed of a triaxial sonic anemometer (Model 1352, Gill Instruments Ltd., Lymington, England) and an open-path fast response infrared gas analyzer (IRGA, Li 7500, Li-Cor Inc., Lincoln, NE, USA). The sensors were mounted at 2 m height above the ground. The fetch from all direction was over 200 m and only a few sparse oak trees were within the footprint area [Kim et al., 2006]. Radiation flux densities were measured at 2.5 m height with an upward and downward facing quantum sensor (PAR Like, Kipp and Zonen, Delft, Netherlands), a net radiometer (NR Lite, Kipp and Zonen, Delft, Netherlands) and a pyranometer (CM11, Kipp and Zonen, Delft, Netherlands). Air temperature and relative humidity were measured at 2.5 m height with a shielded and aspirated sensor (HMP-35 A, Vaisala, Helsinki, Finland). Soil volumetric water content was measured at the depths of 0.05, 0.1, and 0.2 m with frequency domain reflectometry sensor (ML2-X, Delta-T Devices, Cambridge, UK). Green leaf area index (L_G) was determined by harvesting four sample plots (0.25 m × 0.25 m) within the footprint of flux tower when the grass was living. The dates of grass germination and senescence were detected based on the extrapolation of data obtained during periodic field visits (weekly to bi-weekly). The growing season length was calculated from these values [Ma et al., 2007]. Additional details on the data acquisition are available in previous papers [Baldocchi et al., 2004; Xu and Baldocchi, 2004].

2.3. Gap Filling, Assessing Uncertainty, and Data Processing

[11] Data gaps are unavoidable in long-term and continuous measurements. We filled short data gaps (<3 h) with linear interpolation and we used the mean diurnal method

for filling longer gaps [Falge et al., 2001]. The diurnal means were calculated for 26 consecutive day windows, which correspond well with a spectral gap in energy fluxes in the site [Baldocchi et al., 2004]. For periods with missing solar radiation, air temperature and precipitation data, we used the measurements from the nearby companion site (Tonzi Ranch, 2 km away). We compared numerous meteorological variables between the two sites and found that they were interchangeable. For assessing the data quality, we analyzed the linear regressions of the sum of latent heat (λE), sensible heat (H) and soil heat flux densities (G) against the net radiation (R_n). The half hourly data, which excluded gap filled data, were used to perform the linear regression analysis. The annual sum of $\lambda E + H + G$ divided by annual sum of R_n is presented in Table 1. In general, energy balance closure on annual timescales ranged between 0.92 and 1.12 with an average of 1.00. Although not perfect, our ability to close the surface energy was better than the average energy closure across FLUXNET sites for shorter term periods (0.80) [Wilson et al., 2002] and was comparable to the comprehensive studies over short vegetation [Heusinkveld et al., 2004; Meyers and Hollinger, 2004].

[12] For quantifying uncertainties associated with the annual sum of E , we used the bootstrap technique with the Monte Carlo approach [Efron and Tibshirani, 1993]. It estimates bias, standard error, confidence interval or prediction intervals. In prior studies, it has been used to assess uncertainties of gross primary production [Hagen et al., 2006; Ma et al., 2007]. We assessed the uncertainty of each annual E sum at the 90% confidence interval. The confidence intervals for annual E are shown in Table 2.

[13] In order to distill and interpret the large amount of information collected over six years, we relied on and presented monthly averages of daily sums of solar radiation (R_g), R_n , λE , H , and G . Baldocchi et al. [2001b] reported that there is a pronounced spectral gap in E and CO₂ exchange at the monthly scale, making it an appropriate time step to capture seasonal and phenological change. This time step is also used in other interannual studies on E [Arain et al., 2002; Lafleur et al., 2005]. In analyzing annual sums of E and meteorology, we used the hydrological year, defined as the period from July of current year to June of next year (e.g., 03–04 is from July 2003 to June 2004). This is standard practice for hydrological analyzes in California because it was necessary to include the entire rainy season (November to May) into one year.

2.4. Calculations of Bulk Parameters

[14] To interpret the interannual variability of E and energy fluxes, we used three model parameters: bulk surface conductance [Monteith, 1965], decoupling factor [Jarvis and McNaughton, 1986], and the Priestley-Taylor α coefficient [Priestley and Taylor, 1972].

[15] The bulk surface conductance (G_s) is related to the weighted integration of individual leaf's conductance [Baldocchi and Meyers, 1998; Raupach, 1995] and it was computed by inverting from the Penman-Monteith equation:

$$\frac{1}{G_s} = \frac{1}{G_a} \left\{ \frac{\varepsilon(R_n - G) + \rho C_p G_a D / \gamma}{\lambda E} - \varepsilon \right\} - 1 \quad (1)$$

Table 2. Summary of Energy Fluxes, Climatology, and Bulk Parameters for the 6-Year

Variable	Year						Avg
	01–02	02–03	03–04	04–05	05–06	06–07	
Solar radiation (GJ m ⁻²)	6.69	6.55	6.70	6.40	6.50	6.89	6.62
Net radiation (GJ m ⁻²)	2.18	2.28	2.46	2.08	2.15	2.14	2.21
Latent heat flux (GJ m ⁻²)	0.72	0.79	0.66	0.96	0.85	0.75	0.79
Sensible heat flux (GJ m ⁻²)	1.34	1.39	1.66	1.33	1.60	1.55	1.48
Soil heat flux (GJ m ⁻²)	0.00	0.01	0.1	0.01	0.09	0.05	0.04
% flux data coverage	59	77	76	62	79	78	72
Temperature (°C)	15.5	15.6	16.3	15.3	16.1	15.8	15.8
Vapor pressure deficit (kPa)	0.99	1.03	1.10	0.88	1.01	1.09	1.02
Precipitation (mm)	500	491	407	704	888	376	561
Evapotranspiration (mm)	292 (±25) ^a	319 (±28)	266 (±25)	391 (±33)	343 (±29)	303 (±28)	319 (±28)
Potential evaporation (mm)	879	954	1049	950	977	959	961
α (year) ^b	0.47	0.48	0.34	0.53	0.44	0.42	0.45
α (growing season) ^c	0.89	0.87	0.67	0.87	0.82	0.79	0.82
G_s^d (mm sec ⁻¹) (year)	4.01	4.74	2.77	5.79	4.29	3.27	4.14
G_s (mm sec ⁻¹) (growing season)	9.01	10.08	5.95	11.02	8.89	6.96	8.65
Ω^e (year)	0.27	0.29	0.22	0.32	0.26	0.23	0.27
Ω (growing season)	0.55	0.57	0.46	0.57	0.50	0.44	0.51
Growing season length (days)	154	172	143	214	165	176	171
Max LAI	2.6	2.6	2.2	2.7	1.9	2.6	2.4

^aThe parenthesis indicates 90% of confidence interval estimated from bootstrap technique.

^bPriestley-Taylor α coefficient.

^cGrowing season indicates from January to April.

^dBulk surface conductance.

^eDecoupling factor.

where ρ is air density (kg m⁻³), C_p is specific heat capacity of air (J kg⁻¹ K⁻¹), ε is s/γ , s is the slope of relation between saturation vapor pressure and temperature, γ is psychrometric constant, D is vapor pressure deficit (kPa) and G_a is bulk aerodynamic conductance. G_a was calculated as follows:

$$R_a = R_{a,m} + R_b \quad (2)$$

$$R_{a,m} = u/u_*^2 \quad (3)$$

$$R_b = kB^{-1}/ku_* \quad (4)$$

where R_a (bulk aerodynamic resistance) is a reciprocal of G_a , $R_{a,m}$ is aerodynamic resistance for momentum transfer, R_b is quasi-laminar boundary layer resistance [Thom, 1972], k is von Karman constant (0.4), u_* is friction velocity, which was measured directly with the eddy covariance system. The structure of the land surface determines kB^{-1} . In this case, a value of 2 was used because it is a representative value for the dense grass canopies [Garratt and Hicks, 1973; Verma, 1989].

[16] The decoupling factor (Ω) explains the degree of coupling between vegetation and atmosphere. It ranges from 0 when E is controlled by G_s and vapor pressure deficit to 1 when E is controlled by the available energy [Jarvis and McNaughton, 1986]. It was calculated as follows:

$$\Omega = \frac{\varepsilon + 1}{\varepsilon + 1 + \frac{G_a}{G_s}} \quad (5)$$

The Priestley-Taylor α coefficient represents the ratio between measured λE and equilibrium evaporation (λE_{eq})

$$\alpha = \frac{\lambda E}{\lambda E_{eq}} \quad (6)$$

where λE_{eq} is equilibrium λE : $\frac{(R_n - G)s}{s + \gamma}$. It provides a comparison of measured λE to a climatologically expected

λE assuming a closed volume with constant net radiation over a wet surface [McNaughton and Spriggs, 1986]. Potential λE was calculated from $1.26 \times \lambda E_{eq}$ [Priestley and Taylor, 1972].

[17] To avoid the numerical instability that occurs when the denominator approaches zero, only daytime data of G_s , Ω and α (10:00 to 14:00) were used to calculate the monthly mean values.

3. Results

3.1. General Weather Conditions and Phenology

[18] The average annual air temperature during the 6-year period was 15.8°C with the minimum of 15.3°C in the 04–05 hydrological year and maximum of 16.3°C in the 03–04 hydrological year (Table 2). The monthly average of the daily maximum air temperature (T_x) ranged from 10°C to 20°C in the wet seasons and reached extreme levels ($\sim 35^\circ\text{C}$) in the dry seasons (Figure 1a). The monthly average of the daily minimum air temperature (T_n) remained positive, indicating that the site did not experience prolonged periods of freezing (Figure 1a). The ecosystem experienced a wide diurnal temperature difference (i.e., T_x minus T_n), which ranged from 20°C during the dry seasons when the grass was dead to 10°C in the wet seasons when the grass actively transpired. The annual precipitation showed large interannual variation. It ranged between 376 mm (06–07 hydrological year) and 888 mm (05–06 hydrological year), producing an average and standard deviation of 561 mm and 198 mm, respectively (Figure 1b). The monthly precipitation showed that the 04–05 hydrological year experienced the longest wet season ranging from October to June, whereas the 03–04 hydrological year underwent the shortest wet season from November to March (Figure 1b). Because of the Mediterranean-type climate, over 90% of annual precipitation fell during the November to April wet season. The soil profile experienced extremely dry conditions during the summer,

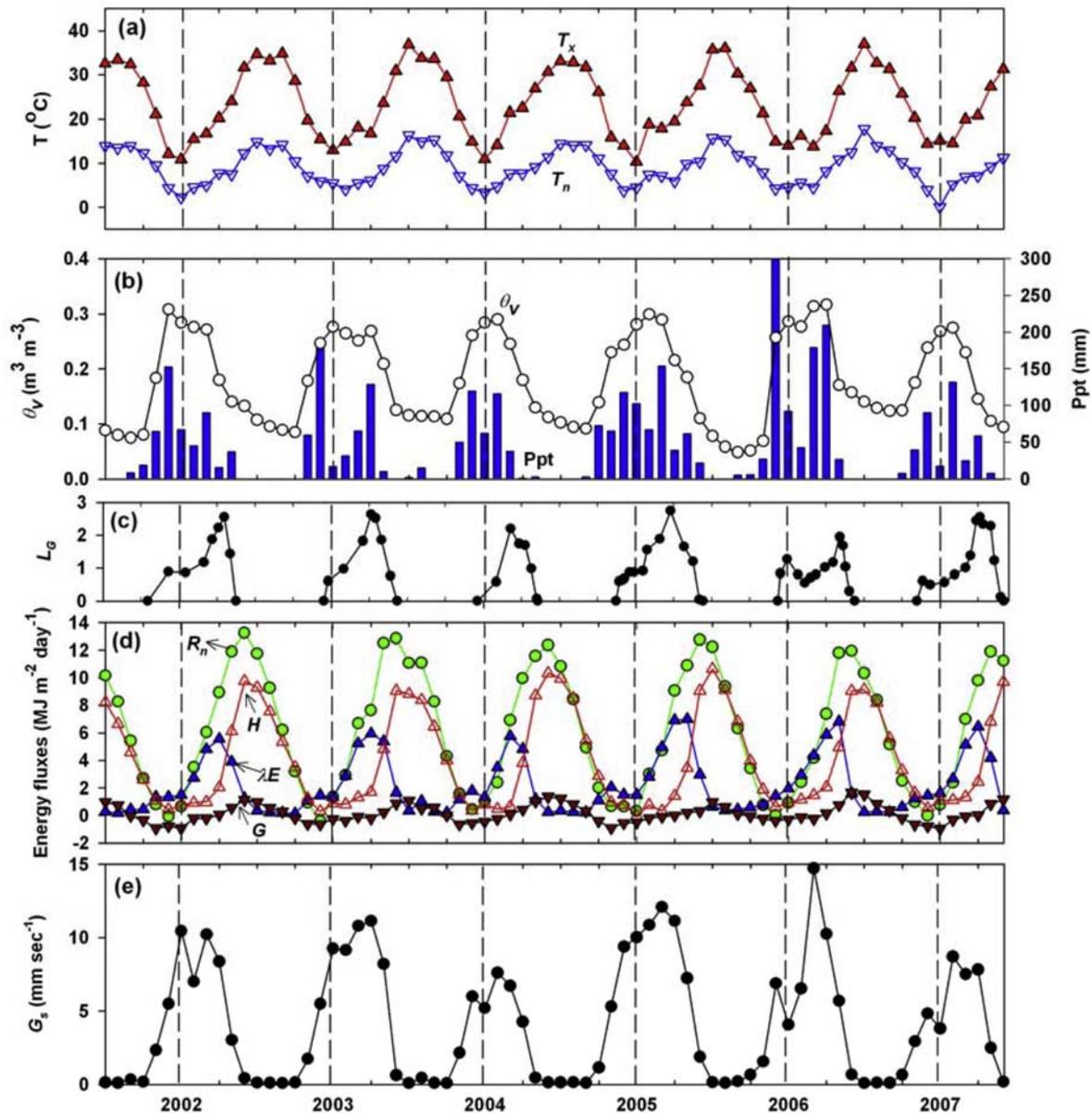


Figure 1. (a) Monthly average of daily maximum (T_x) and minimum (T_n) air temperature. (b) Monthly average of volumetric soil water content at 5-cm depth (θ_v), and monthly sum of precipitation (Ppt). (c) Green leaf area index (L_G). L_G was measured periodically so it is marked in daily scale on the graph. (d) Monthly average of daily integrated net radiation (R_n), latent heat flux (λE), sensible heat flux (H), and soil heat flux (G). (e) Monthly average of bulk surface conductance (G_s).

and soil moisture was recharged by the winter rainfall (Figure 1b). L_G showed that winter rainfall triggered slow vegetation growth, which accelerated in spring due to the availability of ample soil moisture and which reached maximum values in April or May (Figure 1c). The maximum growth period did not last very long, and the grass quickly senesced in response to the subsequent soil moisture deficits and high air temperatures.

3.2. PAR Albedo

[19] The monthly trends in the albedo of photosynthetically active radiation (PAR albedo) are shown in Figure 2a. The PAR albedo is related to plant greenness rather than

energy availability because reflected near infrared radiation is missing. The canopy growth is related to the radiation absorption, particularly PAR [Burba and Verma, 2001; Monteith and Unsworth, 1990; Song, 1999]. The monthly PAR albedos showed a clear seasonal pattern with the annual average ranging between 0.102 and 0.124. In general, PAR albedo decreased abruptly in November and December due to the start of rainfall and greenness. It reached its minimum values (between 0.05 and 0.08) in April. Afterward, PAR albedo quickly increased with the start of senescence. The PAR albedo showed the earliest onset of growing season (i.e., the lowest PAR albedo in November and December) and the latest senescence

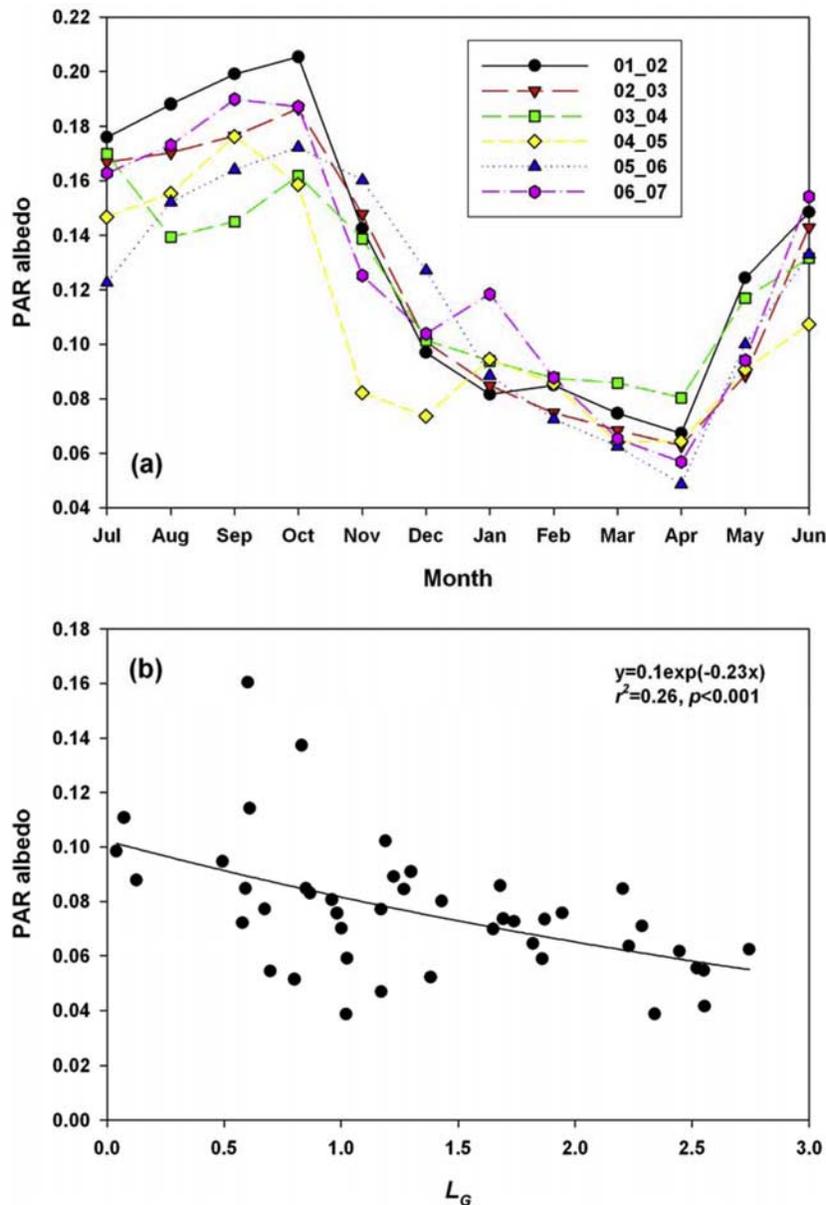


Figure 2. (a) Monthly average of daily PAR albedo for the 6-year period. Monthly average was calculated from the ratio of the sum of outgoing PAR to the sum of incoming PAR for each month. 01–02 indicates July 2001 to June 2002. (b) The relationships between green leaf area index (L_G) and PAR albedo during the growing seasons. PAR albedos are daily average values from 10:00 to 14:00.

(i.e., the lowest PAR albedo in June) in the 04–05 hydrological year. This observation is consistent with the fact that that year had the longest growing season. The PAR albedo scaled negatively with L_G , implying that PAR albedo can capture phenological events and canopy structure (Figure 2b) well. In August of the 03–04 hydrological year, the PAR albedo decreased abruptly in contrast to the other years because of an uncommon summer rainfall event (Figure 1).

3.3. Radiation and Energy Flux Densities

[20] The average annual integral of shortwave radiation, R_g , during the 6-year period was 6.62 GJ m^{-2} . During the dry season, R_g showed the similar pattern, year to

year, because the skies tend to be cloudless. High interannual variations are attributed to levels of cloudiness during in the wet seasons, which affects rainfall, too (Figure 3a).

[21] The averaged annually integrated net radiation balance, R_n , over 6-year was 2.21 GJ m^{-2} . This value is about 33% of annual R_g (6.62 GJ m^{-2}). Net radiation is relatively low because the annual grassland has bright reflective dead vegetation in summer. In addition, the surface is very hot in summer when the grass is dead and does not transpire. Therefore the outgoing longwave radiation is substantially greater than incoming longwave radiation, causing a net loss of longwave energy (Figure 4). On an annual timescale,

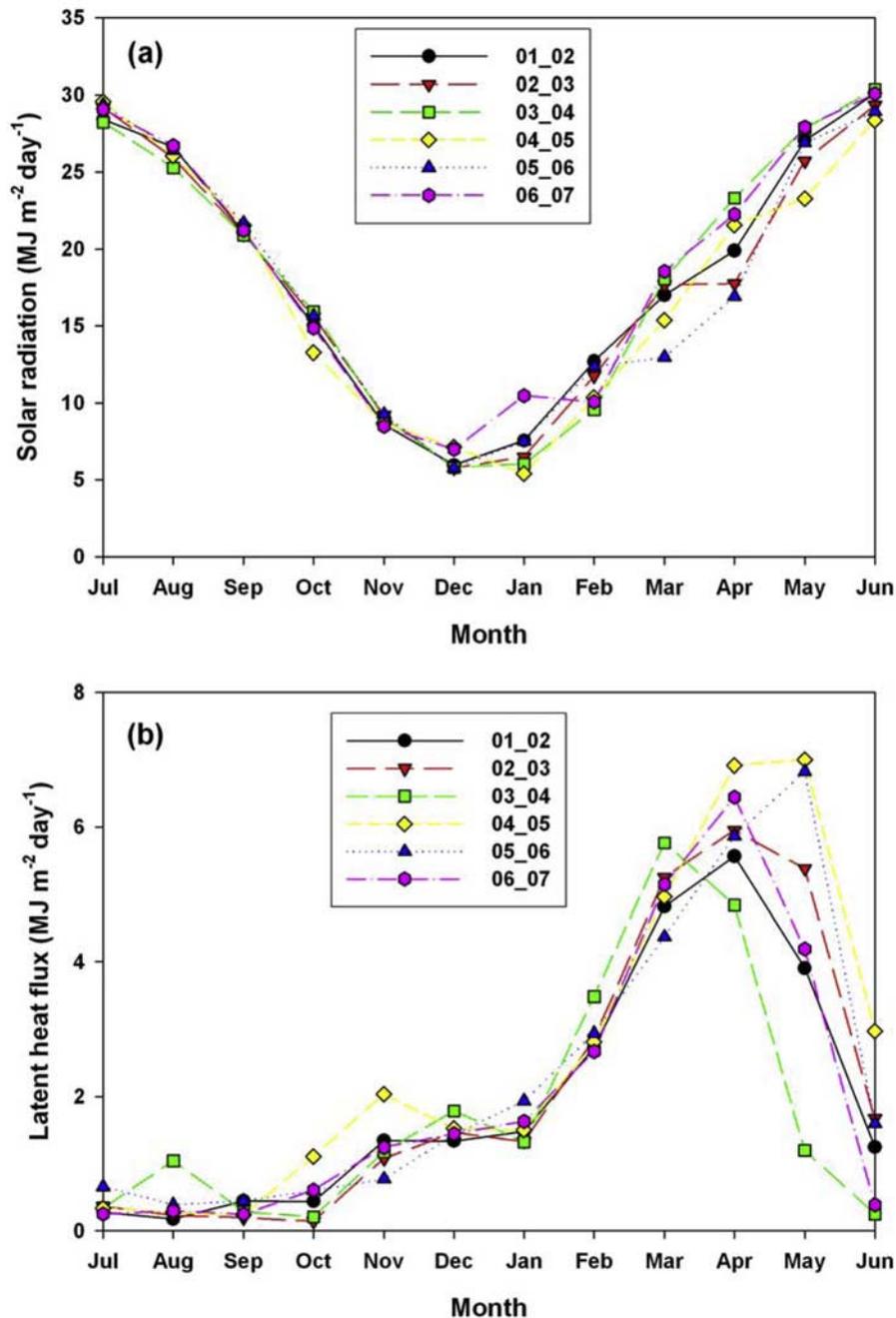


Figure 3. (a) Monthly average of daily integrated solar radiation for 6-year. (b) Monthly average of daily integrated latent heat flux for 6-year period. 01–02 indicates July 2001 to June 2002.

the main consumer of R_n in the annual grassland was sensible heat exchange, H , (67% of R_n). In comparison, λE is smaller because it only occurs in the wet seasons when the R_n is small (Figure 1). On a monthly timescale, 85% of R_n was used by λE in the growing season (January to April), whereas only 5% in the dry season (July to September). Annual sums of λE ranged from 0.66 to 0.99 GJ m^{-2} and showed a repeatable seasonal pattern from July to March during the 6-year under investigation. On the other hand, λE experienced high interannual variability between May and June, which in turn controlled the interannual

variability in annual sums of λE (Figure 3b). On an annual basis, the ratio of E to precipitation ranged from 0.39 (05–06 hydrological year) to 0.80 (06–07 hydrological year) with an average of 0.53. It is notable that the 06–07 hydrological year with the lowest rainfall (376 mm) evaporated 303 mm of water, whereas the 05–06 hydrological year had the highest rainfall (888 mm) with just 343 mm of evaporation. These data imply that the majority of rainfall either ran off or infiltrated into the unsaturated zone of the subsurface and recharged the groundwater. A large transition in λE and H occurred

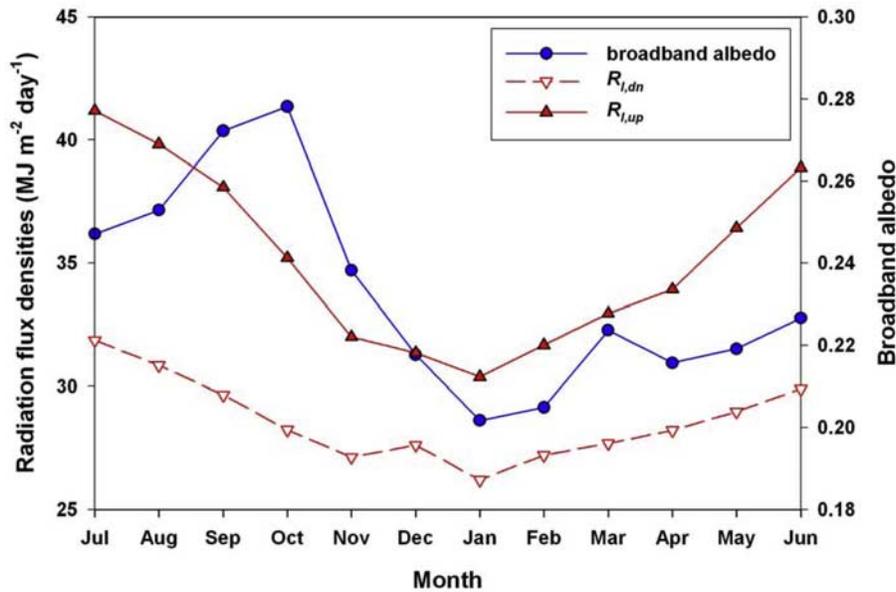


Figure 4. Mean multiyear record (03–04 to 06–07 year) of monthly average of daily integrated outgoing ($R_{l,up}$) and incoming ($R_{l,dn}$) longwave radiation, and monthly average of shortwave broadband albedo. Albedo was calculated from integrated outgoing shortwave radiation divided by integrated incoming shortwave radiation during each month.

during the senescence periods, which is in agreement with observations over a tallgrass prairie [Ham and Knapp, 1998] (Figure 3b). On an annual scale, G was negligible and nearly zero during the 6-year period.

3.4. Bulk Parameters

[22] On an annual timescale, average surface conductance, G_s , ranged between 2.8 mm s⁻¹ (03–04 hydrological year) and 5.8 mm s⁻¹ (04–05 hydrological year) (Table 2).

Monthly G_s in that year showed the lowest maximum G_s value (around 7 mm s⁻¹) during the 6-year and approached zero in May (Figure 1e). In contrast, the hydrological year, 04–05, showed higher maximum G_s value (around 13 mm s⁻¹) and maintained 3 mm s⁻¹ by June (Figure 1e). Among the 6-year data record, only the hydrological year, 04–05, received rainfall (22 mm) in June and this rainfall extended growing season length, causing higher G_s in June than the

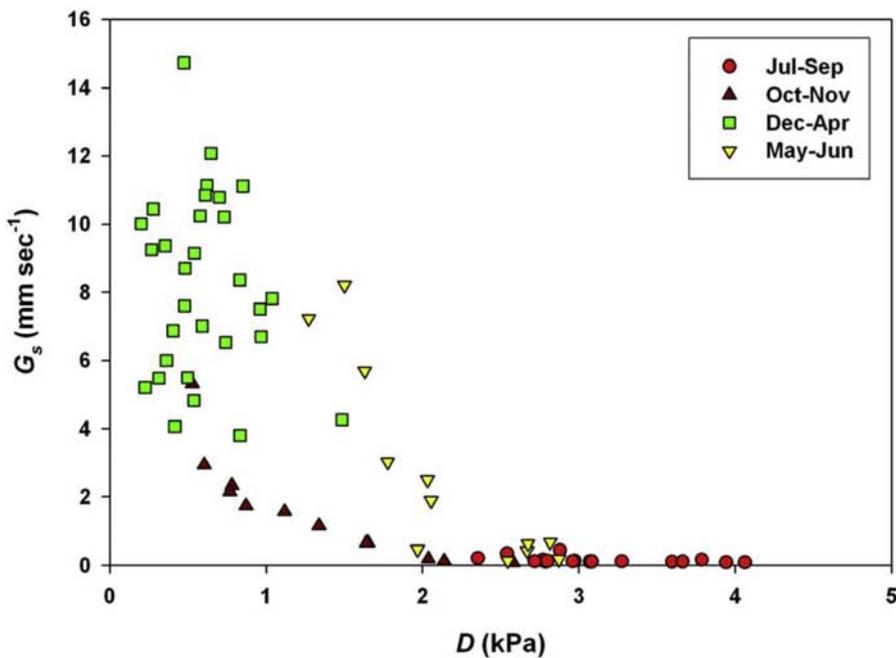


Figure 5. The relationships between monthly average vapor pressure deficit (D) and G_s during the 6-year period. Monthly G_s and D were averaged from daytime values (10:00 to 14:00).

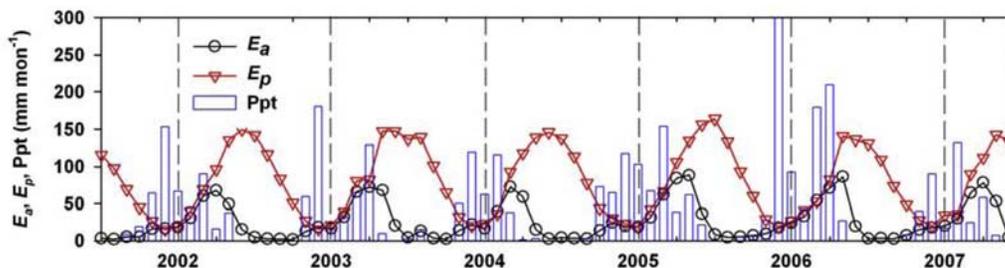


Figure 6. Time series of monthly sum of actual E (E_a), potential E (E_p) and precipitation (Ppt) from July 2001 to June 2007. Vertically dashed lines indicate January for each calendar year.

other years. Overall, G_s decreased exponentially with D (Figure 5). In the dry season (July and September), D ranged from 2.3 to 4.1 kPa and G_s was nearly zero, whereas in wet season (December to April), D was less than 1.5 kPa and G_s ranged from 4 to 15 mm sec⁻¹. G_s in two transitional periods (i.e., October to November and May to June) responded differently to similar D values (~ 1.5 kPa). In October to November, the grass started to germinate so that L_G is very low, less than 0.5 (Figure 1c), causing low values of G_s (~ 1 mm sec⁻¹) too. In contrast, G_s in May and June reached 8 mm sec⁻¹ because several years maintained the high L_G with ample soil moisture in this period (e.g., 04–05 year). Consequently, G_s was more sensitive to D in May and June. The average coupling coefficient, Ω , during the 6-year period was 0.27, indicating that E is tightly controlled by its surface conductance (Table 2). On an annual timescale, the average α was 0.45, roughly half of λE_{eq} . On a monthly scale, the maximum α reached 0.97 in March of the 05–06 and 06–07 hydrological years (not shown in this paper). It indicates that maximum λE was comparable to the equilibrium λE over a wet vegetated surface.

4. Discussion

4.1. Comparison of Energy Fluxes With Other Studies

[23] The average annual R_g during the 6-year period was 6.62 GJ m⁻². This is higher than the tallgrass site (5.8 GJ m⁻²) whose latitude is lower than this study site by two degrees [Burba and Verma, 2005] and it is among the highest values observed in North and South America [Ohmura and Gilgen, 1993]. The high annual energy flux of R_g is due to the clear skies in the summer. The averaged annually integrated R_n balance during the 6-year period was 2.21 GJ m⁻². The annual R_n is lower than the reports of 3.03 GJ m⁻² [Wilson and Baldocchi, 2000] and 2.55 GJ m⁻² [Oliphant et al., 2004] over temperate deciduous forests, 2.68 GJ m⁻² over a cypress forest in Japan [Kosugi et al., 2007], 3.15 GJ m⁻² over a woody savanna ecosystem in western US [Baldocchi et al., 2004], 2.82 GJ m⁻² over a temperate pine plantation forest in Canada [Restrepo and Arain, 2005], 4.09 GJ m⁻² [Malhi et al., 2002], 3.89 GJ m⁻² [da Rocha et al., 2004] and 3.82 GJ m⁻² [Vourlitis et al., 2002] over Amazonian rain forests in Brazil, 3.02 GJ m⁻² [Burba and Verma, 2005] and 2.56 GJ m⁻² [Li et al., 2005] over grasslands. Only a woody savanna site after harvest in France [Kowalski et al., 2003] and a Douglas fir forest in Canada [Humphreys et al., 2003] experienced lower R_n values than this study, e.g.,

1.96 GJ m⁻² and 2.13 GJ m⁻², respectively. It is notable that all the cited sites received less R_g than the study site, indicating that the annual grassland site received the highest energy but was least efficient in converting it to the available energy for work.

[24] Average annual E (319 mm) was comparable to many other studies in other climates and over different plant functional types. It is comparable to 320 mm [Kljun et al., 2006] and 321 mm [Lee et al., 1999] over Boreal mixed forests in Canada, 303 mm [Kljun et al., 2006] and 320 mm [Owen et al., 2007] over Boreal evergreen needleleaf forests in Canada and Finland, and 321 mm over a mixed forest in Italy [Owen et al., 2007]. A few sites reported less annual E than this study site, namely 126 mm over a broadleaf deciduous forest in Finland [Aurela et al., 2001], 146 mm over a deciduous needleleaf forest in Russia [Dolman et al., 2004], 180 mm over an open shrubland in Israel [Grunzweig et al., 2003], 220 mm over a deciduous broadleaf forest in Denmark [Owen et al., 2007], and 255 mm [Wever et al., 2002], 225 mm [Amiro et al., 2006], 237 mm [Kljun et al., 2006] over a Boreal grassland, a mixed forest, and a evergreen deciduous forest in Canada.

4.2. Constraints on E

4.2.1. Water and Energy

[25] From the standpoint of climatology, the annual grasslands of Mediterranean-type climate zones are classified as a semi-arid region, indicating that they are water-limited [Biswell, 1956]. On an annual timescale, the Budyko's AI (i.e., precipitation/ E_p) of the study site ranged from 0.39 (03–04 year) to 0.91 (05–06 year) with the average equaling 0.59 (Table 2), confirming that this ecosystem is water-limited. Examining data on the monthly timescale, however, indicates that each year experienced both pronounced water-limited (dry season) and energy-limited (wet season) periods (Figure 6). During the dry season, E_p (i.e., water demand) was much higher than precipitation (i.e., water supply), causing AI to approach zero. Therefore actual E (E_a) in the dry season is restrained by precipitation (i.e., water-limited). During August 2003, there was an uncommon summer rainfall event, and all rainfall evaporated (Figure 6). In contrast, during the wet season, precipitation is higher than E_p , forcing AI to exceed 1 (i.e., energy-limited). Regardless of the precipitation amount, E_a was tightly controlled by E_p in the wet season. For example, there was heavy rainfall reaching 300 mm in December 2005; however, E_a was only 18 mm because E_p was just 19 mm and E_a was confined by E_p . Theoretically, E_a should be less than

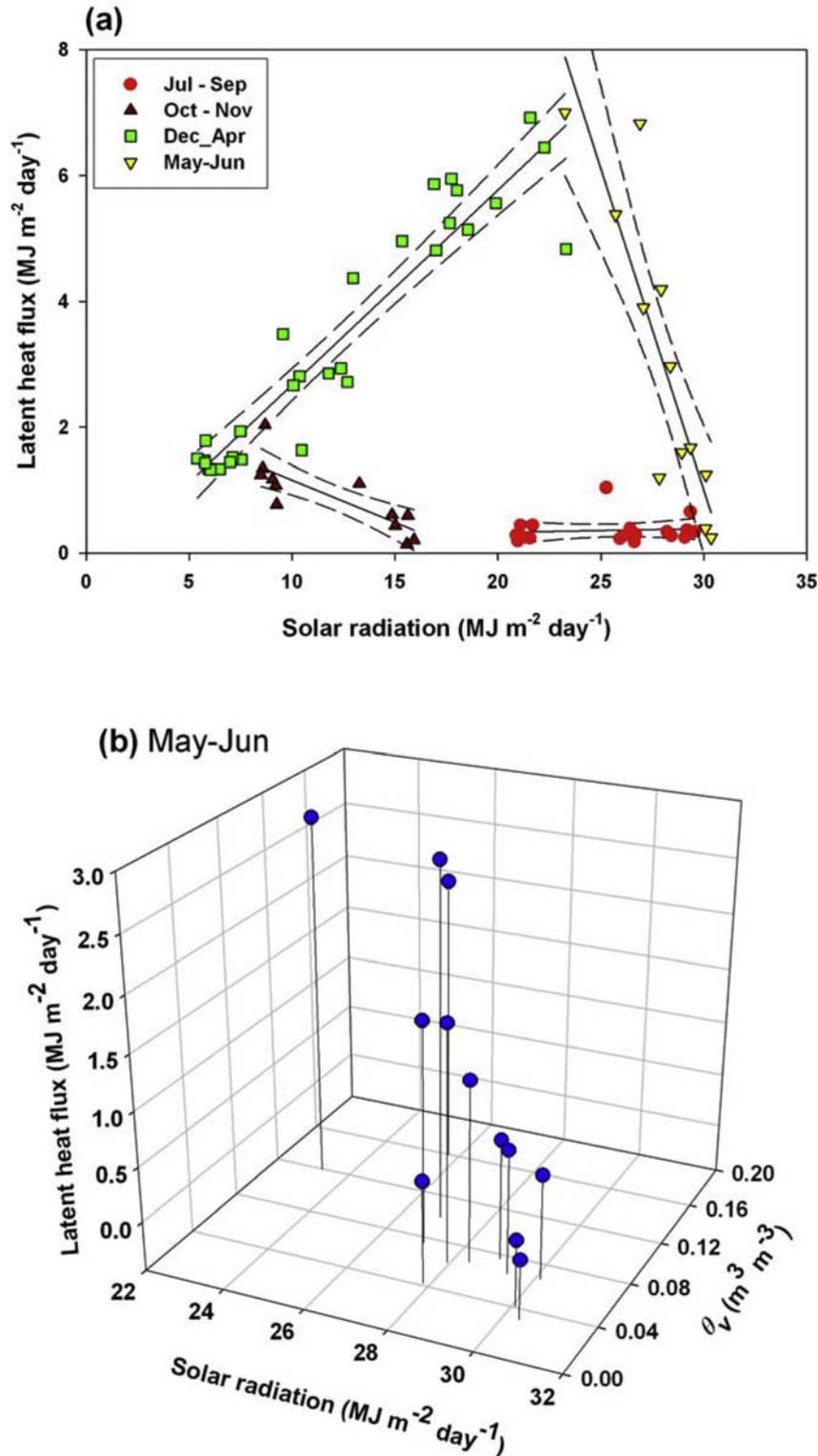


Figure 7. (a) The relationships between monthly average daily solar radiation and monthly average daily latent heat flux during the 6-year period. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence interval of the linear regressions. (b) The relationship among monthly average daily solar radiation, monthly average volumetric soil water content at 5-cm depth (θ_v), and monthly average daily latent heat flux in May and June during the 6-year period. The points indicate the green upside-down triangles in (a).

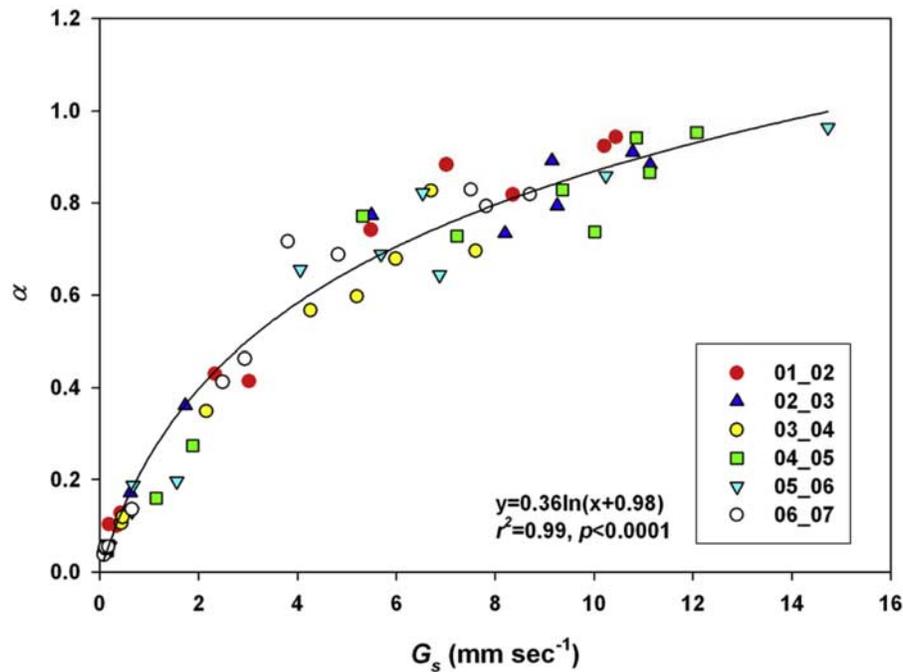


Figure 8. The relationships between monthly average bulk surface conductance (G_s) and Priestly-Taylor α coefficient. Monthly G_s and α were averaged from daytime values (10:00 to 14:00).

the minimum of E_p and precipitation [Farquhar and Roderick, 2007]. However, we found that E_a was higher than precipitation but lower than E_p in April or May (e.g., 2005 May). It was reported that the soil water holding capacity of the root zone is about 132 mm at this study site [Baldocchi et al., 2004]. Therefore some portion of precipitation in the previous month can be stored in the soil and used in the next month, causing E_a to be higher than precipitation. Also, it should be noted that the majority of heavy precipitation (e.g., 300 mm in 2005 December) will runoff or infiltrate into groundwater considering the nearly saturated state of the subsurface and shallow rooting depth [Aanderud et al., 2003; Joffre and Rambal, 1993]. Because Budyko's framework assumes that soil water storage and the macro-climate are at steady state and does not consider the role of vegetation, one should be cautious about interpreting Budyko's AI on short spatial and temporal scales [Donohue et al., 2007].

[26] The relationship between monthly R_g and λE helps us interpret how E is modulated by the energy- and water-limited periods (Figure 7a). From July to September, λE was nearly zero and was not influenced by R_g amount because this is the dry season and there is nearly no water in the soil. In October and November, λE was negatively correlated to R_g . Precipitation in this period is critical to grass germination and growth [Pitt and Heady, 1978]. So E favors less R_g , more clouds and more frequent wet surface conditions. In December to April, λE scaled positively with R_g amount because there is ample water supply but paucity of available energy (i.e., energy-limited period). In May to June, λE showed remarkably negative correlation to R_g . In this water-limited period, R_g was negatively correlated to soil water content. Therefore less R_g with higher soil water

content could increase λE under higher water demand (Figure 7b). A companion study also reported that precipitation in this period was critical for extending the growing season length and increasing carbon uptake [Ma et al., 2007].

4.2.2. Physiological Control via Surface Conductance

[27] Maximum daily G_s values reached 25 mm s⁻¹ (not shown in the graph), which is comparable values reported for tallgrass prairie of the Great Plains; 25 mm s⁻¹ [Kim and Verma, 1990] and 20 mm s⁻¹ [Stewart and Verma, 1992]. It is lower than the canopy conductances for cultivated crops of the Great Plains; 29 mm s⁻¹ for maize and 38 mm s⁻¹ for soybean [Suyker and Verma, 2007]. The maximum G_s value at our study site is one of the highest values reported across diverse ecosystems [Kelliher et al., 1995]. This was possible due to ample water in the growing season and high leaf nitrogen values ranging between 2 and 4% (not published), comparable to cultivated crops ranging between 1 and 5% [Suyker and Verma, 2007].

[28] On an annual timescale, average α was 0.45. This is lower than the report of 0.8 for a Douglas fir forest in Canada [Humphreys et al., 2003] and the report of 0.72 for a temperate deciduous forest in south-eastern US [Wilson and Baldocchi, 2000]. It has been reported that the relation between G_s and α can represent the interactive effects of L_G , soil water status and photosynthetic capacity of any PFTs [Baldocchi et al., 1997; Baldocchi and Xu, 2007; deBruin, 1983; McNaughton and Spriggs, 1989]. In our 6-year study, the monthly G_s scaled with α regardless of interannual and seasonal variation of precipitation and E , supporting previous studies (Figure 8). On the monthly scale, α did not exceed one, indicating E_{eq} approximately establishes the upper limit of E_a of annual grassland. Under dry canopies with well watered soil and high available energy, α of crops

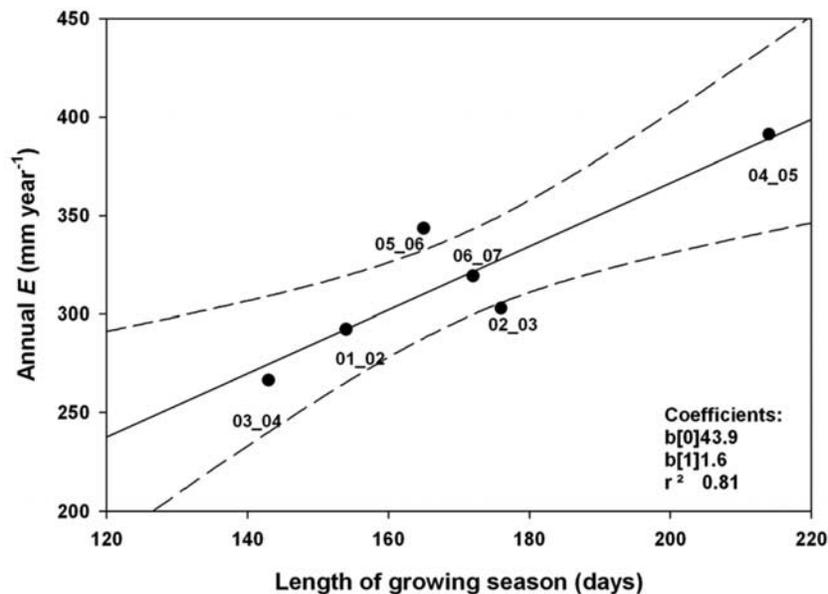


Figure 9. The relationships between growing season lengths and annual E during the 6-year period. $b[0]$ and $b[1]$ indicate intercept and slope, respectively. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence interval for linear regression lines.

approaches 1.26 (i.e., E_p) [deBruin, 1983; McNaughton and Spriggs, 1989; Priestley and Taylor, 1972]. It is notable that the annual grassland grows in winter when R_g is the least, so it does not readily reach the E_p even though it has ample soil water. A theoretical study showed that α is insensitive to G_s when G_s exceeds about 16 mm sec^{-1} [McNaughton and Spriggs, 1986]. Our result showed that two variables have logarithmic relation and that α is insensitive to G_s over 12 mm sec^{-1} , supporting the theoretical study.

4.2.3. Main Determinant on Annual ET Amount: Growing Season Length

[29] Many studies have reported that longer growing seasons enhance annual carbon uptake [Baldocchi et al., 2001a; Churkina et al., 2005]. However, there are few studies that have investigated the effect of growing season length on annual E . In annual grassland, we observed a tight correlation between the hydrological growing season length and annual E amount (Figure 9). This ecosystem showed the distinct transition of λE in senescent period rather than the onset of a greenness period, contrary to observations in deciduous forests [Moore et al., 1996; Wilson and Baldocchi, 2000] (Figure 3b). Therefore the timing of the onset of the senescence period is more critical to the annual E amount than the earlier onset of greenness period. It was reported that an earlier spring uses the soil water reservoir sooner and leads to summer drought in Northern Hemisphere [Angert et al., 2005]. An analysis on NDVI, precipitation and surface temperature data in North American grasslands reported that lengthening growing season does not necessarily lead to more E [Wang et al., 2006b]. These arguments are not applicable to the annual grassland because it has a different phenological pattern (i.e., dead in summer and active in winter). Therefore annual E scaled with the hydrological growing season length rather than the frost free growing season. These results are consistent with reports in our companion paper that annual gross primary

productivity scaled with the length of the growing season at the site [Ma et al., 2007].

4.3. Application of Long-Term Flux Measurements to Testing a Plant Functional Type Scheme

[30] Understanding the biophysical behavior of plant function is important for upscaling flux measurements to regional and continental level. Also, the mechanistic determination of PFTs is of particular importance for predicting the distribution of vegetation under climate change because PFTs are central to global dynamic vegetation models [Cramer et al., 2001]. The PFTs are categorized using climate and vegetation information [Bonan et al., 2002; Holdridge, 1947; Stephenson, 1990; Woodward and Lomas, 2004]. One widely used scheme for PFTs classification is the water balance approach. Traditionally, E_a was estimated as a function of air temperature [Thornthwaite, 1948] or as the residual between precipitation and runoff [Eagleman, 1976]. The long-term measurement of E_a from flux towers provides an excellent opportunity to revise and refine the water balance driven PFTs classification. Stephenson [1990] proposed a vegetation distribution map based on the relation between annual E_a and water deficit (i.e., E_p -precipitation) over North America. However, it evaluated E_a indirectly using the water balance method [Eagleman, 1976]. We compiled E_a and water deficit data across several ecosystems from the published data (Figure 10). Overall, annual E_a scaled negatively with annual water deficit, implying that biological stress (i.e., water deficit) may control annual E_a . Our 6-year direct E_a measurement over the annual grassland showed that the water deficit and E_a ranged from 100 to 650 mm and from 270 to 390 mm, respectively. We found that the ranges belong to the grassland of California in Stephenson's PFT scheme. However, annual E_a of a temperate deciduous forest in south-western US [Wilson and Baldocchi, 2000] ranged from 537 to 611 mm, which is

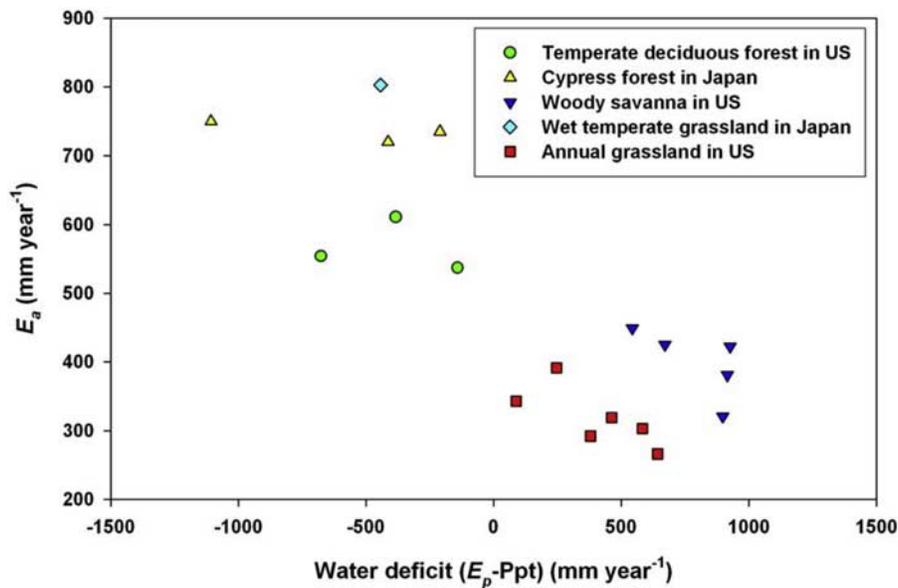


Figure 10. The relationships between annual water deficit ($E_p - Ppt$) and annual actual E . E_p and Ppt are potential E and precipitation. Data for a temperate deciduous forest from *Wilson and Baldocchi* [2000], a cypress forest from *Kosugi et al.* [2007], woody savanna from *Baldocchi et al.* [2004] with unpublished data, a wet temperate grassland from *Li et al.* [2005], and an annual grassland from this study. E_p was calculated from E_{eq} times 1.24.

slightly lower than Stephenson's guideline of E_a (600 to 1400 mm) for this ecosystem. Also, Stephenson's classification only covered positive water deficit, but the graph showed that there was a broad range in water deficit from -1300 mm to 1000 mm. Furthermore, ecosystems outside US showed different E_a and water deficit compared to Stephenson's diagram. For example, E_a of a cypress forest in Japan ranged from 720 to 750 mm, which is higher than Stephenson's guideline (240 to 600 mm) (Figure 10) [*Kosugi et al.*, 2007]. For a wet temperate grassland in Japan, annual E_a reached 800 mm, which is much higher than the annual grassland of this study and cannot be classified within Stephenson's framework. It should be noted that Stephenson's classification is for North America, so it may not be applicable outside North America. It is expected that the growing FLUXNET database across diverse ecosystems can contribute to revising and refining the PFTs schemes, and it will clearly help to scale-up flux data into regional and continental scales.

5. Summary and Conclusions

[31] In this study, we reported on the interannual variability of E and energy fluxes over an annual grassland growing in the Mediterranean-type climate in California using a 6-year flux measurement. The Mediterranean climate system of the study site has two distinct seasons. One is a wet period during winter with ample water and low solar radiation. The other is a dry period in summer with scarce soil water and high levels of solar radiation. Consequently, ecosystem E experiences both water-limited and energy-limited periods during the year. In the energy-limited period, the majority of E scaled positively with R_g and was confined by E_p . In the water-limited period, however, most

E was down-regulated by stomatal closure and scaled negatively with R_g . In general, high rainfall in wet season did not lead to high E because of the marginal available energy. Therefore the annual E amount of this ecosystem was not sensitive to annual precipitation amount. Rather, the lifespan of the annual grassland that was coincident with the timing of rainfall was critical in determining the hydrological growing season length and the amount of annual E . Rainfall in May and June was especially critical in extending the growing season and E . We expect that the cloud cover and precipitation regime in May and June will play a key role in modulating annual E amount in this ecosystem in future years. G_s scaled tightly with α regardless of interannual and seasonal variability of precipitation, E , and R_g , implying that this relationship may be used to discern PFTs. Additionally, we showed that long-term flux measurement can be used to test classification of PFTs, which is critical to upscale flux measurements into regional and continental scales.

[32] **Acknowledgments.** This research was conducted at the sites that are members of the AmeriFlux and Fluxnet networks. It was supported in part by the Office of Science (BER), U.S. Department of Energy, Grant No. DE-FG02-03ER63638 and through the Western Regional Center of the National Institute for Global Environmental Change under Cooperative Agreement No. DE-FC02-03ER63613. Other sources of support included the the National Science Foundation and the Californian Agricultural Experiment Station. We thank Nancy Kiang, Liukang Xu, and Qi Chen for their contributions to the field measurement and site characterization. We thank Rodrigo Vargas and Gretchen Miller for internal review and Jason Morris for proofreading this manuscript. We also thank Russell Tonzi and Fran Vaira for access and use of their ranches for scientific research.

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