Determining the Local Implications of Global Warming Using a High-Resolution Mesoscale Model

Clifford Mass, Eric Salathe, Richard Steed, Patrick Zahn
University of Washington
Goals

• To develop a system for high-resolution, extended-period regional climate prediction using the combination of a mesoscale model (MM5 now-later WRF) and a GCM
• Using this system to determine regional implications over the Northwest (and eventually elsewhere) of global climate change. Are there any mesoscale surprises?
• In the Pacific Northwest, the complex terrain and land-water contrasts have a large impact on mesoscale circulations.

• Comprehensive experiments and real-time simulations show that 15-km or smaller grid spacing is required.
MM5 Model Nesting

- 135, 45, 15 km MM5 domains
- 135 km nested within ECHAM-5 GCM output
Problems

MM5 does not conserve mass over extended periods.

Experiment Using the NCAR-NCEP Reanalysis (NNRP)
Problems

• Global model output is only available with coarse time resolution (6-hr at best), thus a problem getting features realistically through the boundaries.

• MM5 synoptic solution tends to drift from parent GCM.

• Would prefer to have continuous runs rather than with frequent restarts.
The Solution

Analysis nudging!
Nudging

- We ran analysis nudging on the outer (135 km) domain, pushing the solution towards the GCM.
- Stopped mass loss problem
- Solved boundary problem (if features don’t get through boundary well, nudging fixes them)
- Allows long-term runs with no restarts.
Deep Soil Temperature

• One cannot use default deep soil temperature in extended climate change simulations for obvious reasons.

• To better represent the soil temperature profile in the MM5, we have implemented a parameterization to specify the 3-m depth lower boundary soil temperature for the NOAH LSM.
Deep Soil Temperature

• The soil temperature at depth follows the variations in the surface skin temperature, but with a phase lag and attenuation that depends on depth.

• Our method takes simple weighted average of the skin temperature over a previous period, with the weighting adjusted to yield the desired attenuation and phase lag.
The soil temperature at any depth is then the weighted average of these two values,

\[ T_{soil} = \alpha \langle T_{skin} \rangle_{365} + (1 - \alpha) \langle T_{skin} \rangle_{n}, \]

where \( \alpha \) and \( n \) are a function of depth and tuned to produce the desired attenuation and phase lag for the depth of interest. For 3-m depth, we use the published observed values of 30% attenuation and 70 days lag (Baxter, 1997) to obtain \( \alpha = 0.6 \) and \( n = 140 \) days.

- Red—our estimate
- Black—observed
Other Issue: Crazy Cold Waves Over Western North America

- The ECHAM-5 and other GCMs produce excessive cold waves west of the Rockies.
- In fact, the ECHAM-5 appears to be one of the better ones in this regard.
- A possible cause is lack of resolution that prevents sufficient blocking by the Rockies, so cold continental air from the interior washes over the West Coast.
Fig 6. Cold outbreak in ECHAM5 global climate simulation for 12 UTC 21 Feb 1999. Shading indicates 2-m air temperature; white contour lines indicate sea-level pressure in mb.
Fixing this Problem

- Nudging actually works against the regional model fixing this problem since 135 km domain is nudged.
- Some improvement made by un-nudged 45-km domain.
- Experimenting with larger 45-km domain to address this.
- Bottom line: The driving GCM can have significant problems that must be addressed to secure useful regional simulations.
Other MM5 Model Details

- CCM2 radiation scheme
- Kain-Fritsch convective parameterization
- Simple-ice cloud microphysics
- NOAH Land Surface Model
Regional Modeling

• Ran this configuration over several ten-year periods:
• 1990-2000—to see how well the system is working
• 2020-2030, 2045-2055, 2090-2100
• Completed on Linux clusters—took several weeks each.
Used the ECHAM-5 GCM

- European ECHAM model with resolution roughly equivalent to having grid points spaced ~ 150 km apart.
- IPCC climate change scenario A2 -- aggressive CO$_2$ increase (doubling by 2050)
Some Results
Why banded warming structures?
Snow and Ice Reflect Much of The Incoming Solar Radiation
Global Warming Causes Snow level to Rise Resulting In Absorption of Solar Energy on Melted Slopes

Future = WARMING
More Low Clouds West of Cascades in Spring Under Global Warming

- Low clouds due to more onshore flow from off the cool, cloud Pacific.
- More low clouds over ocean..why?
- The Montereyization of the western lowlands!
Percent Change 1990s to 2090s MAM Cloud Water
Change in Water Of Snowpack (%)
Summary

- The viability of the approach...using high resolution numerical prediction models forced by large-scale general circulation climate models (GCMs)... has been demonstrated.
- Careful evaluation of the GCM output is required...there are deficiencies.
- Although there is general warming over the region for all seasons, the terrain and land water contrasts of the region enhance or weaken the warming in certain areas.
Summary

• Warming is enhanced on the upper windward slopes due to snow melt.
• Springtime warming is lessened west of the Cascade crest due to more low clouds.
• Many more hot days during the summer.
• Precipitation changes are more modest then temperature changes.
• There will be a substantial loss of snowpack, reaching catastrophic decreases by 2090.
The END
Issues

• How can one efficiently complete high-resolution mesoscale runs nested with a global GCM?
• How does one deal with deep soil temperature?
• When we started the project WRF was not ready (lack of nudging, physics inadequacies). WRF 2.2 solves these problems and a next step is to move from MM5 to WRF.