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DETENTION BASIN SIZING FOR SMALL URBAN CATCHMENTS

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Abstract
The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) method for sizing small detention and retention basins is a volume-based approach that is sensitive to the release rate. In practice, such a release rate is often approximated by open channel hydraulics or culvert hydraulics. Without a consistent guideline, this practice of approximation can result in significant discrepancy or violation of the volume balance between the inflow and outflow hydrographs. In this study, a consistent procedure was developed to derive the average release from the allowable peak outflow. The required parameters for this method include peak inflow, design storm duration, and the time of concentration of the watershed. With this modification, the detention storage volume maximized by the FAA method can satisfy the volume conservation between hydrographs.

Key Words: Detention, Rational, FAA

INTRODUCTION

Urban stormwater facilities are designed to pass the peak flow through conveyance systems or to store a portion of the runoff volume in detention systems. For a small urban catchment with a tributary area less than 100 acres, the rational method is suitable for peak runoff predictions and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) method is recommended for detention storage volume predictions. The FAA's procedure is to maximize the required storage volume by the volume difference between the inflow and outflow volumes produced by a series of rain storms on the watershed. During the optimization process, the outflow volumes are calculated by an approximate average release from the detention basin. In current practice, there is not any guidance as to how to estimate the average release.

As a volume-based method, the FAA procedure has been widely used for small urban catchments in spite of its ambiguity in estimating the average release from the basin. For instance, the average release may be calculated by open channel flow, orifice formula, or culvert hydraulics. These hydraulic approaches result in violation of the hydrologic principle of volume conservation between the inflow and outflow hydrographs and inaccurate calculations on the required detention storage volume. To improve the current practice, this study suggests that the average release be a fraction of the allowable release rate. This fraction can be further derived by the volume conservation principle between inflow and outflow hydrographs during the maximization process. In this study, this ratio was found to vary with respect to storm duration, and is not a constant as recommended in many design criteria such as the Denver Design Criteria Manuals, and FAA Airfield and Heliports Design Criteria. The revised procedure can also be applied to other volume-based methods such as the capture runoff volume method (Guo and Urbonas, 1996) for sizing storm water quality control ponds. It provides a consistent guideline to the estimation of the average release from a basin, and warrants volume conservation between the inflow and outflow hydrographs.

DETENTION STORAGE VOLUME BY THE FAA METHOD

The volume-based approach such as the FAA method is applicable to urban catchments with a tributary area less than 150 acres. To predict the peak runoff from such a small urban watershed, the Rational method states:

$$Q_d = \alpha C I_d A \tag{1}$$

The rainfall intensity in Eq 1 can be described as:

$$I_d = \frac{aP}{(b+T_d)^n} \tag{2}$$

in which α = unit conversion factor, equal to 1 for English units, and 1/360 for SI units, C = runoff coefficient, A= watershed area in acres (hectare), I_d = rainfall intensity in inch/hr (mm/hr), T_d = rainfall duration in minutes, Q_d= peak runoff rate in cfs (cms) and a, b, and n= constants on the Intensity- Duration- Frequency (IDF) formula.

Storm water detention process is to reduce the peak runoff and to delay the time to peak as well. In practice, the allowable release rate from a basin is defined by the downstream critical capacity, or the pre-development condition.
In this study, the average release is suggested to be a fraction of the allowable peak runoff, Q_a. Therefore, we have:

$$Q_m = mQ_a \tag{4}$$

in which Q_a = the allowable release which occurs at time T_a in Figure 1, Q_m = average release rate, and m = ratio of the average release to the allowable peak runoff rate. For a storm event, the detention storage volume is equal to the volume difference of the inflow and outflow as:

$$V_i = \alpha C I_d A T_d \tag{5}$$

$$V_o = Q_m T_d = mQ_a T_d \tag{6}$$

$$V_d = 60\left[\alpha C I_d A T_d - Q_m T_d\right] = 60\left[Q_d T_d - Q_m T_d\right] \tag{7}$$

in which V_i = inflow volume, V_o = outflow volume, and V_d = the required storage volume in cubic feet or cubic meter. The factor of 60 is to convert seconds to minutes. The reliability of Eq 7 depends on the specified average outflow in Eq 4. Without an adequate guidance, Eq 7 may lead to any result based on engineer's best estimation. Although an adjustment factor have been recommended to avoid underestimation of the detention volume by Urbonas and Stahle (1991) and Guo (1990), it is necessary to develop a consistent guideline for Eq 4.

MAXIMIZATION OF DETENTION STORAGE VOLUME

The peak runoff flow that occurs at the time of concentration, T_c is recommended for conveyance designs. It is well understood that the design storm duration for a detention basin is usually longer that T_c. As illustrated in Figure 1, the peak flow, Q_d , is produced by the design storm for the detention design. To estimate the required storage volume with no prior knowledge of the outlet hydraulics, it is suggested that the storage volume be calculated using the linear rising outflow hydrograph, i.e. line OB in Figure 1 (Malcom 1982) (Guo 1997). Based on the volume difference between the inflow and outflow hydrographs in Figure 1, the detention storage volume, i.e. the shaded area, is:

$$V_d = 60\left[Q_d T_d - \frac{Q_a}{2}(T_d + T_c)\right] \tag{8}$$

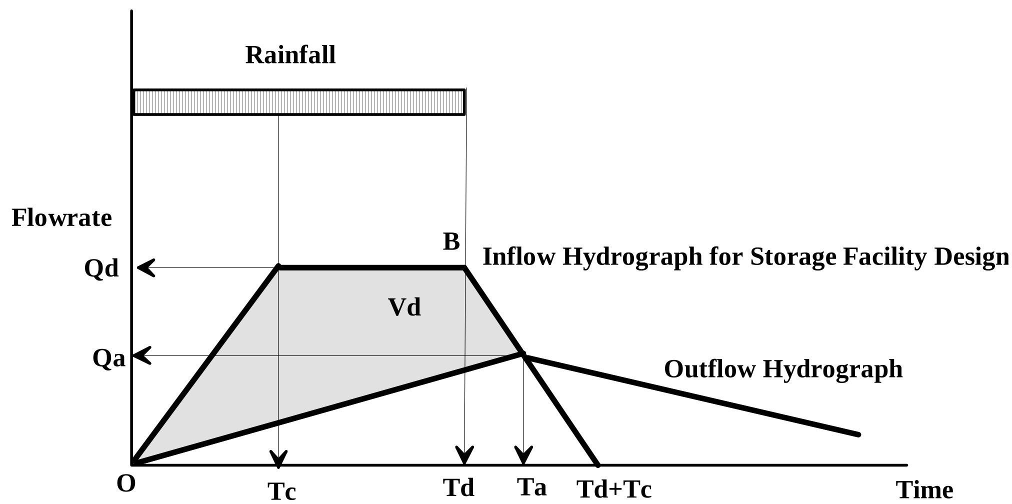

Figure 1. Detention Storage Volume Estimated by Hydrographs

Equating Eq 7 to Eq 8, the value of m is derived as:

$$m = \frac{1}{2}(1 + \frac{T_c}{T_d}) \quad \text{for } 0.5<m<1 \text{ and } T_d > T_c \tag{9}$$

Often the value of m is recommended to be a constant between 0.80 and 0.90 for all storm events (Urbanos and Stahre in 1991). Eq 19 indicates that the value of m varies with respect to the rain storm duration and can not be applied to a storm with duration less than T_c because the maximized operation of a detention basin requires the entire catchment to be tributary. The current practice does not have any limitation on storm duration and results in a maximization procedure starting from 5-minute rainfall. Eq. 9 begins with a value equal to unity when the storm duration is equal to T_c and then reduces to 0.5 when T_d is much longer than T_c. In comparison, the current practice of applying a constant value of m to all storm events can lead to significant mistake. Substituting Eq 9 into Eq. 5 with the aid of Eq 3, the FAA method is modified to:

$$V_d = 60\left[\alpha C I_d A - \frac{Q_a}{2}(1+\frac{T_c}{T_d})\right]T_d \qquad (10)$$

The basic concept in the FAA method is to find the maximum volume difference between the inflow and outflow volumes under a series of storm events with different durations. Eq 10 shall be tested for a range of T_d until Eq 10 is maximized as:

$$V_m = 60\left[\alpha C I_m A - \frac{Q_a}{2}(1+\frac{T_c}{T_m})\right]T_m \quad \text{at } T_d = T_m \qquad (11)$$

where the subscript m represents the maximized solution.

DESIGN SCHEMATICS AND EXAMPLES

The example watershed used in this study is located in the City of Denver, Colorado. The 100-year IDF in Denver is specified by a = 74.1, b = 10, and n = 0.786. The developed watershed of 100 acres has a time of concentration of 25 minutes and runoff coefficient of 0.65. It produces a 100-year developed peak runoff of 296.86 cfs. The allowable release is 33% of the developed peak runoff. As a result, the allowable release rate is

$$Q_a = 0.33 Q_p = 97.96 \quad cfs \qquad (12)$$

The detention volumes for various periods of storm duration are calculated in Table 1. The maximized volume is found to be 8.52 acre-ft for this example.

Duration	Rainfall Intensity	Inflow Volume	Average Parameter	Average Outflow	Outflow Volume	Storage Volume
minutes	inch/hr	acre-ft	M	cfs	acre-ft	acre-ft
		Eq5	Eq 9	Eq 4	Eq 6	Eq 10
50.00	2.97	13.28	0.75	72.36	4.98	8.30
60.00	2.63	14.12	0.71	68.34	5.65	8.47
70.00	**2.37**	**14.83**	**0.68**	**65.47**	**6.31**	**8.52**
80.00	2.16	15.45	0.66	63.32	6.98	8.47
90.00	1.99	16.00	0.64	61.64	7.64	8.36

Table 1. Example for Maximization of Detention Volume.

CONCLUSIONS

Different hydrologic methods were developed for different hydrologic conditions. In the development of technical design criteria, it is a continual effort to maintain consistency among various design methods. The FAA method intends to be a simplified volume-based approach.

However, the current practice falls short in the estimation of the average outflow. This study presents a modification to the volume-based approach such as the FAA method so that the estimated detention volume can be consistent with the hydrograph method. Modifications to the FAA procedures shall not change its original intention as a simplified approach. As a result, this study applies the volume conservation principle between the simplified hydrographs to relate the average outflow as a fraction of the allowable release rate.

In this study, it was found that the average outflow can be determined by the allowable release from the basin, design storm duration, and the time of concentration of the watershed. In practice, the average release was often considered to be the average flow rate over the base time of the outflow hydrograph. This study indicates that this average outflow in fact is the equivalent average release rate that drains the basin storage volume over the storm duration time. Secondly, the ratio of average release to allowable release was not so constant as recommended by the current practice. Instead, it varies between one and 0.5, depending on storm duration. Applying a constant ratio to all storm events may result in a significant discrepancy against the volume conservation between the inflow and outflow hydrographs. Eq 9 provides a consistent guideline that modifies the current FAA procedures to satisfy the hydrograph volume balance.

APPENDIX I. REFERENCES

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