Chapter 5 Tabular Hydrograph Method

This chapter presents the Tabular Hydrograph method of computing peak discharges from rural and urban areas, using time of concentration (T_c) and travel time (T_t) from a subarea as inputs. This method approximates TR-20, a more detailed hydrograph procedure (SCS 1983).

The Tabular method can develop partial composite flood hydrographs at any point in a watershed by dividing the watershed into homogeneous subareas. In this manner, the method can estimate runoff from nonhomogeneous watersheds. The method is especially applicable for estimating the effects of land use change in a portion of a watershed. It can also be used to estimate the effects of proposed structures.

Input data needed to develop a partial composite flood hydrograph include (1) 24-hour rainfall (in), (2) appropriate rainfall distribution (I, IA, II, or III), (3) CN, (4) T_c (hr), (5) T_t (hr), and (6) drainage area (mi^2).

Tabular Hydrograph method exhibits

Exhibit 5 (5-I, 5-IA, 5-II, and 5-III) shows tabular discharge values for the various rainfall distributions. Tabular discharges expressed in csm/in (cubic feet of discharge per second per square mile of watershed per inch of runoff) are given for a range of subarea T_c's from 0.1 to 2 hours and reach T_t's from 0 to 3 hours.

The exhibit was developed by computing hydrographs for 1 square mile of drainage area for selected T_c's and routing them through stream reaches with the range of T_t's indicated. The Modified Att-Kin method for reach routing, formulated by SCS in the late 1970's, was used to compute the tabular hydrographs (Comer et al., 1981). A CN of 75 and rainfall amounts generating appropriate I_a/P ratios were used. The resulting runoff estimate was used to convert the hydrographs in exhibits 5-I through 5-III to cubic feet of discharge per second per square mile of watershed per inch of runoff.

An assumption in development of the tabular hydrographs is that all discharges for a stream reach flow at the same velocity. By this assumption, the subarea flood hydrographs may be routed separately and added at the reference point. The tabular hydrographs in exhibit 5 are prerouted hydrographs. For T_t's other than zero, the tabular discharge values represent the contribution from a single subarea to the composite hydrograph at T_t downstream.

Information required for Tabular Hydrograph method

The following information is required for the Tabular method:

1. Subdivision of the watershed into areas that are relatively homogeneous and have convenient routing reaches.

2. Drainage area of each subarea in square miles.

3. T_c for each subarea in hours. The procedure for estimating T_c is outlined in chapter 3. Worksheet 3 (appendix D) can be used to calculate T_c.

4. T_t for each routing reach in hours. The procedure for estimating T_t is outlined in chapter 3. Worksheet 3 can be used to calculate T_t through a subarea for shallow concentrated and open channel flow.

5. Weighted CN for each subarea. Table 2-2 shows CN's for individual hydrologic soil cover combinations. Worksheet 2 can be used to calculate the weighted runoff curve number.

6. Appropriate rainfall distribution according to figure B-2 (appendix B).

7. The 24-hour rainfall for the selected frequency. Appendix B contains rainfall maps for various frequencies (figures B-3 to B-8).

8. Total runoff (Q) in inches computed from CN and rainfall.

9. I_a for each subarea from table 5-1, which is the same as table 4-1.

10. Ratio of I_a/P for each subarea. If the ratio for the rainfall distribution of interest is outside the range shown in exhibit 5, use the limiting value.

Development of composite flood hydrograph

This section describes the procedure for developing the peak discharge and selected discharge values of a composite flood hydrograph.

Selecting T_c and T_t

First, use worksheet 5a to develop a summary of basic watershed data by subarea. Then use worksheet 5b to develop a tabular hydrograph discharge summary; this summary displays the effect of individual subarea hydrographs as routed to the watershed point of interest. Use ΣT_t for each subarea as the total reach travel time from that subarea through the watershed to the point of interest. Compute the hydrograph coordinates for selected ΣT_t's using the appropriate sheets in exhibit 5. The flow at any time is:

$$q = q_t A_m Q \qquad \text{[eq. 5-1]}$$

where:

- q = hydrograph coordinate (cfs) at hydrograph time t
- q_t = tabular hydrograph unit discharge from exhibit 5 (csm/in)
- A_m = drainage area of individual subarea (mi^2)
- Q = runoff (in)

Since the timing of peak discharge changes with T_c and T_t, interpolation of peak discharge for T_c and T_t values for use in exhibit 5 is not recommended. Interpolation may result in an estimate of peak discharge that would be invalid because it would be lower than either of the hydrographs. Therefore, round the actual values of T_c and T_t to values presented in exhibit 5. Perform this rounding so that the sum of the selected table values is close to the sum of actual T_c and T_t. An acceptable procedure is to select the results of one of three rounding operations:

1. Round T_c and T_t separately to the nearest table value and sum,
2. Round T_c down and T_t up to nearest table value and sum,
3. Round T_c up and T_t down to nearest table value and sum.

From these three alternatives, choose the pair of rounded T_c and T_t values whose sum is closest to the sum of the actual T_c and T_t. If two rounding methods produce sums equally close to the actual sum, use the combination in which rounded T_c is closest to actual T_c. An illustration of the rounding procedure is as follows:

Table 5-1 I_a values for runoff curve numbers

Curve number	I_a (in)	Curve number	I_a (in)
40	3.000	70	0.857
41	2.878	71	0.817
42	2.762	72	0.778
43	2.651	73	0.740
44	2.545	74	0.703
45	2.444	75	0.667
46	2.348	76	0.632
47	2.255	77	0.597
48	2.167	78	0.564
49	2.082	79	0.532
50	2.000	80	0.500
51	1.922	81	0.469
52	1.846	82	0.439
53	1.774	83	0.410
54	1.704	84	0.381
55	1.636	85	0.353
56	1.571	86	0.326
57	1.509	87	0.299
58	1.448	88	0.273
59	1.390	89	0.247
60	1.333	90	0.222
61	1.279	91	0.198
62	1.226	92	0.174
63	1.175	93	0.151
64	1.125	94	0.128
65	1.077	95	0.105
66	1.030	96	0.083
67	0.985	97	0.062
68	0.941	98	0.041
69	0.899		

	Actual values	Table values by rounding method		
		1	2	3
T_c	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.25
T_t	1.7	1.5	2.0	1.5
Sum	2.8	2.5	3.0	2.75

In this instance, the results from method 3 would be selected because the sum 2.75 is closest to the actual sum of 2.8.

Selecting I_a / P

The computed I_a / P value can be rounded to the nearest I_a / P value in exhibits 5-I through 5-III, or the hydrograph values (csm/in) can be linearly interpolated because I_a / P interpolation generally involves peaks that occur at the same time.

Summing for the composite hydrograph

The composite hydrograph is the summation of prerouted individual subarea hydrographs at each time shown on worksheet 5b. Only the times encompassing the expected maximum composite discharge are summed to define a portion of the composite hydrograph.

If desired, the entire composite hydrograph can be approximated by linear extrapolation as follows:

1. Set up a table similar to worksheet 5b. Include on this table the full range of hydrograph times displayed in exhibit 5.
2. Compute the subarea discharge values for those times and insert them in the table.
3. Sum the values to obtain the composite hydrograph.
4. Apply linear extrapolation to the first two points and the last two points of the composite hydrograph. The volume under this approximation of the entire composite hydrograph may differ from the computed runoff volume.

Limitations

The Tabular method is used to determine peak flows and hydrographs within a watershed. However, its accuracy decreases as the complexity of the watershed increases. If you want to compare present and developed conditions of a watershed, use the same procedure for estimating T_c for both conditions.

Use the TR-20 computer program (SCS 1983) instead of the Tabular method if any of the following conditions applies:

- T_t is greater than 3 hours (largest T_t in exhibit 5).
- T_c is greater than 2 hours (largest T_c in exhibit 5).
- Drainage areas of individual subareas differ by a factor of 5 or more.
- The entire composite flood hydrograph or entire runoff volume is required for detailed flood routings. The hydrograph based on extrapolation is only an approximation of the entire hydrograph.
- The time of peak discharge must be more accurate than that obtained through the Tabular method.

The composite flood hydrograph should be compared with actual stream gage data where possible. The instantaneous peak flow value from the composite flood hydrograph can be compared with data from USGS curves of peak flow versus drainage area.

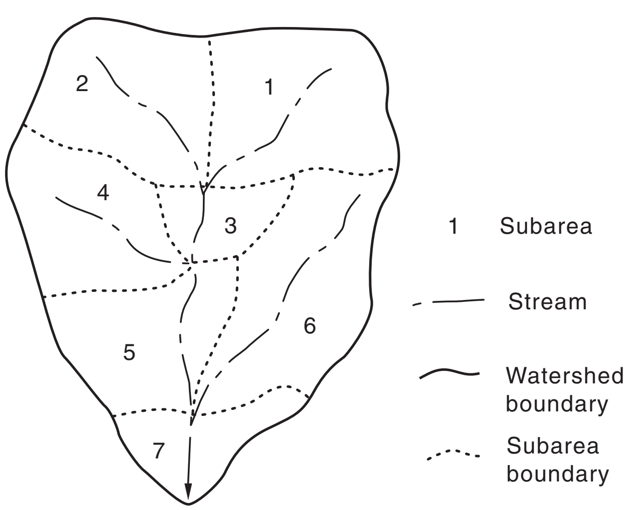
Examples

A developer proposes to put a subdivision, Fallswood, in subareas 5, 6, and 7 of a watershed in Dyer County, northwestern Tennessee (see sketch below). Before approving the developer's proposal, the planning board wants to know how the development would affect the 25-year peak discharge at the downstream end of subarea 7. The rainfall distribution is type II (figure B-2), and the 24-hour rainfall (P) is 6.0 inches (figure B-6).

Example 5-1

Compute the 25-year frequency peak discharge at the downstream end of subarea 7 for present conditions, using worksheets 5a and 5b. To do this, first calculate the present condition CN, T_c, and T_t for each subarea, using the procedures in chapters 2 and 3. Enter the values on worksheet 5a (figure 5-1).

Next, compute the prerouted hydrograph points for each subarea hydrograph over a range of time near the peak discharge using worksheet 5b (figure 5-2) and the appropriate exhibit 5. For example, for subarea 4, in which T_c= 0.75 hr, refer to sheet 6 of exhibit 5-II. With ΣT_t of 2.00 hr (the sum of downstream travel time through subareas 5 and 7 to the outlet) and Ia / P of 0.1, the routed peak discharge of subarea 4 at the outlet of subarea 7 occurs at 14.6 hr and is 274 csm/in.



Solving equation 5-1 with appropriate values provides the peak discharge (q) for subarea 4 at 14.6 hr:

$$q = qt(A_mQ) = (274)(0.70) = 192 \text{ cfs.}$$

Once all the prerouted subarea hydrographs have been tabulated on worksheet 5b, sum each of the time columns to obtain the composite hydrograph. The resulting 25-year frequency peak discharge is 720 cfs at 14.3 hr (figure 5-2).

Example 5-2

Compute the 25-year frequency peak discharge at the downstream end of subarea 7 for the developed conditions, using worksheets 5a and 5b.

First, calculate the developed condition CN, T_c, and T_t for each subarea, using the procedures in chapters 2 and 3. Enter the values on worksheet 5a (figure 5-3).

Next, compute the prerouted hydrograph points for each subarea hydrograph over a range of time near the peak discharge using worksheet 5b (figure 5-4) and the appropriate exhibit 5. For example, for subarea 6, in which T_c= 1.0 hr, refer to sheet 7 of exhibit 5-II. With ΣT_t of 0.5 hr (downstream travel time through subarea 7 to the outlet) and I_a / P of 0.1, the peak discharge of subarea 6 at the outlet of the watershed occurs at 13.2 hr and is 311 csm/in. Solving equation 5-1 provides the peak discharge (q):

$$q = q_t (A_mQ) = (311)(1.31) = 407 \text{ cfs}$$

Once all the prerouted subarea hydrographs have been tabulated on worksheet 5b, sum each of the time columns to obtain the composite hydrograph. The resulting 25-year frequency peak discharge is 872 cfs

Comparison

According to the results of the two examples, the proposed subdivision at the downstream end of subarea 7 is expected to increase peak discharge from 720 to 872 cfs and to decrease the time to peak from 14.3 to 13.6 hr.