

Interactive comment on “Effects of shrub cover increase on the near surface atmosphere in northern Fennoscandia” by Johanne H. Rydsaa et al.

Anonymous Referee #2

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This paper extends prior research into the potential climatic effects of a hypothetical increase in shrub and tree cover (in this case, shrub and tree height) in a region in northern Fennoscandia. My overall impression is that this is a solid paper that provides some interesting new results on the topic of vegetation feedbacks onto climate in the Arctic region. This work does not represent a giant leap forward, but the study is sound and, in my opinion, the paper is worthy of publication.

The paper can be divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on the potential changes in vegetation distribution under a 1K temperature change. The second part focuses on an assessment of the impact of such a shift in vegetation on temperature.

From my perspective the first part is fine. One could quibble with aspects of the method

C1

and argue whether or not the projected changes in vegetation distribution are completely realistic or not, but I don't feel that the realism is really the point. The main goal is to generate vegetation distribution changes that are at least quasi-realistic and that can then be applied in the subsequent vegetation change experiment. Perhaps the only recommendation that I would have here is for the authors to be a bit more explicit about this with a statement to the effect that predicting vegetation change based primarily on a climatic envelope should just be treated as a first-order assessment of potential vegetation distribution change.

For the second part, my main recommendation to the authors is that they work to put this study into better context. Prior studies, cited in the paper have looked at the impacts of shrub and tree area expansion in models and concluded, mainly, that these vegetation changes can lead to warming. So, the authors need to clearly establish what is new from this study. I see two main areas where this is new. The first is that this is being done within a regional climate model, which allows a more detailed assessment of the response. The second new result relates to the variability in the impact across high and low snowfall years and warm and cool summers. The authors should strive to emphasize these points.

Minor points:

1. For the summer feedback, the authors note that the impact of shrubs on summer temperatures is less sensitive to the mean summer temperature (warm or cold summers) than spring temps are to high versus low snow years. That is not surprising. Nonetheless, it would be good to explain why one would think that the summer temperature sensitivity could be related to mean summer temps.
2. p. 12, line 26. 0.16K versus 0.15K is essentially the same. Shouldn't say that one season has a slightly larger response when they are effectively identical.
3. Figure 11 and other figures. It would be clearer to be specific that you are talking about warm summer seasons and cool summer seasons. Just writing cold seasons and warm seasons can lead to ambiguity about whether referring to different seasons (spring versus summer, for

C2

example).

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