Coordination of rooting, xylem, and stomatal strategies explains the response of conifer forest stands to multi-year drought in the Southern Sierra Nevada of California

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Key Points:

- We perform a sensitivity analysis using the model FATES-Hydro to explore the ~~co-ordination~~coordination of leaf, xylem, and root hydraulic traits of pine in the Southern Sierra Nevada.
- We find that rooting depth is the major control on water and carbon fluxes~~,~~ and that deep-rooted pines with risky stomata have the highest GPP but also the highest drought mortality risk.
- Resolving both ~~the~~ plant water sourcing strategies and subsurface processes ~~are~~is critical to ~~represent~~representing drought impacts on conifer forests.

Abstract

Extreme droughts are a major determinant of ecosystem disturbance, which ~~impact~~impacts plant communities and ~~feed~~feeds back ~~to~~into climate change through changes in plant functioning. However, the complex relationships between above- and ~~belowground~~below-ground plant hydraulic traits~~,~~ and their role in governing plant responses to drought~~,~~ are not fully understood. In this study, we use a plant hydraulic model, FATES-Hydro, to investigate ecosystem responses to the 2012~~-~~–2015 California drought~~,~~ in comparison with observations~~,~~ ~~for~~ at a site in the southern Sierra Nevada that experienced widespread tree mortality during this drought.

We conduct a sensitivity analysis to explore how different plant water sourcing and hydraulic strategies lead to differential responses during normal and drought conditions.

The analysis shows that:

1. ~~deep~~Deep roots that sustain productivity through the dry season are needed for the model to capture observed seasonal cycles of ET and GPP in normal years, and ~~that~~ deep-rooted strategies are nonetheless subject to large reductions in ET and GPP when the deep soil reservoir is depleted during extreme droughts, in agreement with observations.

2. ~~risky~~Risky stomatal strategies lead to greater productivity during normal years as compared to safer stomatal control, but they also lead to a high risk of xylem embolism during the 2012~~-~~–2015 drought.

3. ~~for~~For a given stand density, ~~the~~ stomatal and xylem traits have a stronger impact on plant water status than on ecosystem~~-~~level fluxes.

Our study ~~reveals~~highlights the ~~importance~~significance of resolving plant water sourcing strategies ~~in order~~ to represent drought impacts on plants~~,~~ and consequent feedbacks~~,~~ in models.

1. Introduction

Understanding plant water use strategies and the resulting ecohydrologic processes in forests is critical for predicting surface water and energy exchange, carbon dynamics, and vegetation dynamics of water-constrained ecosystems in a changing climate. Mediterranean-type climates, as in California, are characterized by dry and hot summers and cool, wet winters, resulting in asynchronous supplies of energy and water. In addition to these climatic stresses, plants in California are further subject to high inter-annual variability in precipitation, and periodic severe drought events, such as the recent 2012–2015 drought, which led to widespread tree mortality (Fettig et al. 2019). Together, these two climatic constraints present a unique challenge to the success of forests in California, which is likely to be exacerbated by a warming climate.

On evolutionary timescales, natural selection has led to a wide array of strategies and functional traits that allow plants to both grow and survive under a range of environmental conditions (Grime 1977, 1979; Coley et al. 1985; Westoby et al. 2002; Craine 2002; Reich et al. 2003). Given the centrality of water sourcing to plant physiology, plant hydraulic traits play an important role in water-constrained ecosystems. Once absorbed by fine roots, water flows through the vascular system via coarse roots, stems, and branches, to leaves, where it evaporates through stomata. The rate of water flow through stems, and thus the supply to leaves, is determined by the hydraulic conductivity along this pathway. If the water potential of xylem tissue becomes too low, cavitation can occur and cause a loss of conductivity. Because this cavitation can damage the xylem network, trees have developed different strategies to mitigate this effect, all of which come at some cost. These strategies include 1) early stomatal closure or leaf deciduousness to reduce the flow of water, at the cost of reduced carbon intake; 2) building cavitation-resistant xylem, at the cost of increased hydraulic resistance; and 3) growing deep roots to access more moisture, at the cost of higher carbon investment. In this study, we focus on the potential hydraulic strategies that trees in Californian ecosystems use, with a particular emphasis on how the coordination of hydraulic functional traits at the leaf, stem, and root levels is critical to carbon assimilation, transpiration, and consequently, the productivity and response of trees to drought (Matheny, Mirfenderesgi, and Bohrer 2017; Matheny et al. 2017; Mursinna et al. 2018a).

The traits that regulate stomatal conductivity are the most important hydraulic traits of leaves and the primary ones through which photosynthesis and transpiration are coupled. Stomatal behavior falls along a gradient between two extremes: stomata may close early during water stress to avoid the risk of hydraulic failure~~,~~ or remain open to maximize carbon uptake while exposing xylem to a higher risk of embolism (Martínez-Vilalta, Sala, and Piñol, 2004; McDowell et al., 2008; Skelton, West, & Dawson, 2015~~;~~; Matheny et al~~.~~., 2017). The sensitivity of stomata to water stress determines where the stomata operate along the safety-~~risky~~risk gradient ~~,~~and thus the degree ~~that~~to which carbon intake is traded for preventing the cavitation of xylem. Where the best stomatal strategy sits along the safety-~~risky~~risk gradient would depend on the physical environment.

~~The maximum~~Maximum hydraulic conductivity and ~~the~~ vulnerability to cavitation are the two key xylem hydraulic traits. Differences in the anatomy and morphology of the conductive xylem cell structure and anatomy (Hacke et al. 2017) lead to differences in maximum conductivity and the water potential at which cavitation starts to occur (Pockman & Sperry, 2000; Sperry 2003). Within the conifers, there are at least three mechanisms that lead to a tradeoff between xylem safety and efficiency. ~~First~~The first is the morphology of the xylem conduit. It is widely acknowledged that narrow (or short) tracheid are safer than wider (or longer) tracheid but have lower conductance per sap area (Choat and Pittermann 2009). Second are the intervessel pit membranes. Thicker and less porous membranes prevent the spread of air but increase the hydraulic resistance of xylem (e.g~~.~~., Li et al., 2016; Pratt & Jacobsen, 2017). The third mechanism comes from the division of limited space (Pratt and Jacobsen 2017). With the same cross-sectional area of conduits, vessels with a thicker cell wall provide stronger mechanical support, so that the conduits are less likely to collapse when xylem water potential becomes more negative~~,~~; however, this reduces the area that can be used for conduits transporting water. While these physiological constraints require that the tradeoff ~~does exist~~exists to some extent, in many studies, this tradeoff appears to be weak, and there are certainly species that have both safe and efficient xylem. Further, there are many other plant traits that can affect ~~the~~ safety~~,~~, such as wood density (Pratt and Jacobsen 2017), pit anatomy (Sperry & Hacke 2004, Lens et al. 2011), and biochemistry (Gortan et al. 2011). These traits can have large ~~variation~~variations among different plant types. The tradeoff will be weakened when grouping plants at a coarse scale, e.g~~.,~~., by biomass, families, and/or across a range of geological and

climatic ~~region~~regions. But when focusing on certain species in a particular region, the tradeoff becomes stronger, as demonstrated by many local studies (e.g.., Barnard et al. 2011, Corcuera et al. 2011, Baker et al. 2019). For example, Kilgore et al. (2021) ~~shows~~show that there is a clear safety-efficiency tradeoff across pine trees in a specific location in the western US. Thus, while we acknowledge that there are many exceptions to the xylem safety-efficiency tradeoff, it is a useful framework for examining plant strategies for dealing with drought.

The traits that govern the hydraulic function of plant root systems are also critically important~~,~~, but they are the least understood~~,~~, studied, and quantified. These traits include the rooting depth, the root-to-shoot ratio, the vertical and lateral distribution of roots, and the fine root density and diameter, all of which are related to water uptake (Canadell et al., 2007~~,~~; Allen, 2009~~,~~; Reichstein et al., 2014~~,~~; Wullschleger et al~~.~~., 2014). In general, species with deeper roots can access water at greater depths~~, that~~, which is unavailable to more shallowly rooted species (Jackson et al., 1996; Canadell et al., 1996). The vertical root distribution can affect the water uptake and thus the evapotranspiration (ET) pattern during the dry-down period (Teuling, Uijlenhoet, and Troch 2006). This in turn affects the seasonal distribution of water over the soil depth~~,~~ and thereby the resilience of plants to seasonal droughts (Yu, Zhuang, and Nakayamma 2007). The vertical root distribution is also a means of belowground niche differentiation (Ivanov et al. 2012; Kulmatiski and Beard 2013), whereas the extent of the lateral root distribution dictates the competition for water (Agee et al. 2021). Whether a plant can benefit from having deep roots is related to the ~~plant's~~plant's leaf and xylem hydraulic traits (e.g~~.~~., Johnson et al. 2018, Mackay et al. 2020), thus requiring coordination of rooting and hydraulic traits.

Given the strength of the Mediterranean-type climate of California, the coordination of rooting and hydraulic strategies will play a critical role ~~for~~ in forest dynamics. However, the interplay of rooting and hydraulic strategies and their impact on ecosystem processes ~~haven't~~haven't been well understood. In this study, we address this question at the Soaproot site (CZ2) of the southern Sierra Nevada of California as the study area. The CZ2 site was strongly affected by the 2012~~–~~–2015 drought, with extremely high tree mortality rates ~~(~~(90% of the pine died) (Fettig et al. 2019). While the 2012~~–~~–2015 drought was widespread across California, the highest rates of tree mortality occurred in the southern Sierra Nevada, centered around an elevation similar to this site (1160 m to 2015 m, Asner et al. 2016, Goulden and Bales 2019).

This mid-elevation region is also characterized by the highest forest productivity along an elevation gradient from foothill woodlands to subalpine forest (Kelly and Goulden 2016). This leads us to ask whether strategies associated with high productivity have exposed trees to a high mortality risk under prolonged drought.

Specifically, here we use the Functionally Assembled Terrestrial Ecosystem Simulator, in a configuration that includes plant hydraulics (FATES-Hydro), to explore the tradeoffs associated with differing hydraulic strategies~~,~~ and, in particular, their implications for plant productivity and the risk of drought-induced mortality. We conduct a sensitivity analysis~~,~~ using FATES-Hydro in comparison with observations from the CZ2 eddy covariance site~~,~~ to investigate how stomatal, xylem, and rooting strategies affect the ecosystem and physiologic processes of the forest~~,~~ and whether that may explain the high rates of both productivity and drought-associated mortality of conifers at CZ2. We note that this is not ~~a~~an~~n~~ exhaustive model parameter sensitivity study. The~~The~~ main purpose is to use a sensitivity analysis to explore scientific questions around hydraulic trait tradeoffs~~.~~.

2. Methods

2.1 Study site

The Soaproot site is a 543-ha headwater catchment at 1100m elevation (37°2.4' N, 119°15.42' W), which is at the lower boundary of the rain–snow transition line with warm, dry summers and cool, wet winters (Geen et al. 2018). The mean annual temperature is about 13.8°C (Goulden et al., 2012). Under normal conditions, the annual precipitation is about 1300 mm, but during a dry year, the precipitation can drop to 300-600mm. (Bales et al. 2018). The site is a ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) dominated conifer ecosystem exhibiting high productivity (Kelly and Goulden (2016) reported 2.1 tC/ha/year average annual gross stem wood production averaged). Other species include California black oak (*Quercus kelloggii* Newberry), and incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*).

Soils at the Soaproot site are mainly of the Holland (fine-loamy, mesic Ultic Haploxeralfs) and Chaix (coarse-loamy, mesic Typic Dystroxerepts) series, which are representative of soils across a similar elevation band of the western Sierra Nevada (Mooney and Zavaleta 2003). Soils of the Holland series have sandy loam surface texture and underlying Bt horizons with sandy

clay loam textures, while soils of the Chaix series have sandy loam textures throughout the profile. The regolith depth is estimated to be 15m (Holbrook et al., 2014). The total porosity over the whole regolith depth of the site is estimated to be 1620 mm and the total available storage porosity (plant accessible water storage capacity), which is the difference in volumetric water content between field capacity and permanent wilting point (~ -6Mpa) to be 1400 mm (Klos et al. 2017). The available water storage capacity is approximately 0.20 $cm^3\ cm^{-3}$ in the upper regolith (0–5 m depth) which decreases to 0.05 $cm^3\ cm^{-3}$ or less in the lower regolith (below 5 m depth) (Holbrook et al., 2014).

An eddy-covariance flux tower was installed at this site in September 2010. The elevation of the tower is 1160 m above sea level. Instruments on the flux tower track changes in carbon dioxide, water vapor, air temperature, relative humidity, and other atmospheric properties. We compare the simulated gross primary productivity (GPP) and latent heat flux with the flux tower measurements over the period from 2011 to 2015 (Goulden and Bales 2019). We computed the Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) of the hourly mean diurnal cycle of each month. This allows us to examine the capacity of FATES-Hydro to predict the carbon and water fluxes. The transpiration at the site contributed to the majority of the ET as indicated by the measurements from an adjacent catchment, as well as the fact that the site is fully vegetated with an annual LAI around 3 to 4.

2.2 FATES-Hydro model and parameterization

2.2.1 The FATES-Hydro model

FATES is a cohort-based, size- and age-structured dynamic vegetation model, where long-term plant growth and mortality rates and plant competition emerge as a consequence of physiological processes. In the model, multiple cohorts grow on the same land unit, share the soil water, and interact with each other through light competition. FATES is coupled within both the CLM5 (Lawrence et al., 2019) and the ELM (Golaz et al., 2020) land surface models (LSMs). In this study, FATES is coupled with the CLM5. FATES-Hydro is a recent development of the FATES model (Fisher et al., 2015; Koven et al., 2020), in which a plant hydro-dynamic module, originally developed by Christoffersen et al. (2016), is coupled to the existing photosynthesis and

soil hydraulic modules. FATES-Hydro is described in more detail by Xu et al., (in review, ~~https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-2023-278~~https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-2023-278) and its supplementary material.

Conceptually, plant hydraulic models can be broadly grouped into two types. The first group represents the plant hydraulic system as analogous to an electrical circuit (e.g. Mackay et al. 2011, Huang et al. 2017, Eller et al. 2018, Kennedy et al. 2019). The total resistance of the plant is calculated from the resistance of each compartment using Ohm's law. There is no storage of water in the plants and the transpiration from plants at any given time step is considered to come directly from soil storage. The second group represents plant hydraulics by a series of connected porous media, corresponding to each plant compartment (e.g. Bohrer et al. 2005, Janott et al. 2011, Xu et al., 2016, Christoffersen et al., 2016). The porous media model takes into account the water storage in the plant. The flow between two adjacent compartments is driven by the difference in the water potential, mediated by the hydraulic conductivity. FATES-Hydro falls in the second group. The various models in the second group differ in the exact formulas used to describe the pressure-volume and pressure-conductivity relations, as well as different numbers and arrangement of nodes within the soil-plant-atmosphere system.

In FATES-Hydro, for each plant cohort, the hydraulic module tracks water flow along a soil–plant–atmosphere continuum of a representative individual tree based on hydraulic laws, and updates the water content and potential of leaves, stem, and roots with a 30 minute model time step. Water flow from each soil layer within the root zone into the plant root system is calculated as a function of the hydraulic conductivity as determined by root biomass and root traits such as specific root length, and the difference in water potential between the absorbing roots and the rhizosphere. The vertical root distribution is based on Zeng's (2001) two parameter power law function, which takes into account the regolith depth:

$$Y_i = \frac{0.5(e^{-r_a z_{li}} + e^{-r_b z_{li}}) - 0.5(e^{-r_a z_{ui}} + e^{-r_b z_{ui}})}{1 - 0.5(e^{-r_a z} + e^{-r_b z})} \quad Y_i = \frac{0.5(e^{-r_a z_{li}} + e^{-r_b z_{li}}) - 0.5(e^{-r_a z_{ui}} + e^{-r_b z_{ui}})}{1 - 0.5(e^{-r_a z} + e^{-r_b z})},$$

(Eq 1)

where Y_i is the fraction of fine or coarse roots in the ith soil layer, r_a and r_b are the two parameters that determine the vertical root distribution, Z_{li} is the depth of the lower boundary of

the *i*th soil layer, and Z_{ui} is the depth of the upper boundary of the *i*th soil layer, and Z is the total regolith depth. The vertical root distribution affects water uptake by the hydrodynamic model by distributing the total amount of root, and thus root resistance, through the soils.

The total transpiration of a tree is the product of total leaf area (LA) and the transpiration rate per unit leaf area (J). In this version of FATES-Hydro, we adopt the model developed by Vesala et al. (2017) to take into account the effect of leaf water potential on the within-leaf relative humidity and transpiration rate:

$$E = LA \cdot J \quad \text{(Eq 2a)}$$

$$J = \rho_{atm} \frac{(q_l - q_s)}{1/g_s + r_b} \quad \text{(Eq 2b)}$$

$$q_l = \exp\left(\frac{w \cdot LWP \cdot V_{H2O}}{R \cdot T}\right) \cdot q_{sat} \quad \text{(Eq 2c)}$$

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where E is the total transpiration of a tree, LA is the total leaf area (m^2), J is the transpiration per unit leaf area (kg s^{-1} m^{-2}), ~~ρ_{atm}~~ ρ_{atm} is the density of atmospheric air (kg m^{-3}), ~~q_l~~ q_l is the within-leaf specific humidity(kg kg^{-1}~~),~~ ~~q_s~~), q_s is the atmosphere specific humidity (kg kg^{-1}~~),~~ ~~g_s~~), g_s is the stomatal conductance per leaf area, ~~r_b~~ r_b is the leaf boundary layer resistance(s m^{-1}), *w* is a scaling coefficient (unitless), which can vary between 1 and 7, and here we use a value of 3; LWP is the leaf water potential (Mpa), ~~V_{H2O}~~ V_{H2O} is the molar volume of water (18×10^{-6} m^3 mol^{-1}), *R* is the universal gas constant, and T is the leaf temperature (K).

The sap flow from absorbing roots to the canopy through each compartment of the tree along the flow ~~pathway~~pathway (absorbing roots, transport roots, stem, and leaf) is computed

according to Darcy's law in terms of the plant sapwood water conductance, the water potential gradient:

$$Q_i = -K_i[\rho_w g(z_i - z_{i+1}) + (\Psi_i - \Psi_{i+1})]$$

(Eq 3)

where ρ_w is the density of water; z_i is the height of the compartment(m); z_{i+1} is the height of the next compartment down the flow path (m); Ψ_i is the water potential of the compartment(Mpa); Ψ_{i+1} is the water potential of the next compartment down the flow path(Mpa); and K_i is the hydraulic conductivity of the compartment (kg Mpa^{-1} m^{-1} s^{-1}). The hydraulic conductivity of the compartments is by the water potential and maximum hydraulic conductivity of the compartment through the pressure-volume (P-V) curve and the vulnerability curve (Manzoni et al. 2013, Christoffersen et al. 2016).

The plant hydrodynamic representation and numerical solver scheme within FATES-HYDRO follows Christoffersen et al. (2016). We made a few modifications to accommodate the multiple soil layers and to improve the numerical stability. First, to accommodate the multiple soil layers, we have sequentially solved the Richards' equation for each individual soil layer, with each layer-specific solution proportional to each layer's contribution to the total root-soil conductance. Second, to improve the numerical stability, we have an option to linearly extrapolate the PV curve beyond the residual and saturated tissue water content to avoid the rare cases of overshooting in the numerical scheme under very dry or wet conditions. Third, Christoffersen et al. (2016) use three phases to describe the PV curves: 1) dehydration phases representing capillary water (sapwood only), 2) elastic cell drainage (positive turgor), and 3) continued drainage after cells have lost turgor. Due to the possible discontinuity of the curve between these three phases, it leads to the potential for numerical instability. To resolve this instability, FATES-HYDRO added the Van Genuchten model (Van Genuchten 1980, July and Horton 2004) and the Campbell model (Campbell 1974) as alternatives to describe the PV curves.

In this study, we use the Van Genuchten model because of two advantages: 1) it is simple, with only three parameters needed for both curves, and 2) it is mechanistically based, with both the P-V curve and vulnerability curve derived from a pipe model, and thus connected through three shared parameters:

$$\Psi = \frac{1}{-\alpha} \cdot \left(\frac{1}{Se^{1/m}} - 1 \right)^{1/n} \quad \text{(Eq 4a)}$$

$$FMC = \left(1 - \left(\frac{(-\alpha \cdot \Psi)^n}{1 + (-\alpha \cdot \Psi)^n} \right)^m \right)^2 \quad \text{(Eq 4b)}$$

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where ~~Ψ~~ Ψ is the water potential of the media (xylem in this case) (Mpa); ~~FMC~~ FMC is the fraction of xylem conductivity, K/K_{max}, (unitless); ~~α~~ α is a scaling parameter for air entry point (Mpa^{-1}), ~~Se~~ Se is the dimensionless standardized relative water content ~~as $Se=(\theta - \theta_r)/(\theta_{sat} - \theta_r)$~~ expressed as $Se=(\theta - \theta_r)/(\theta_{sat} - \theta_r)$ with ~~θ, θ_r, θ_{sat}~~ θ, θ_r, θ_{sat} are volumetric water content (m^3 m^{-3}), residual volumetric water content, and saturated volumetric water content correspondingly; and *m* and *n* are dimensionless (xylem conduits) size distribution parameters. The model assumes that xylem conductance can be restored as xylem water content increases due to increased water availability after a dry period without any hysteresis in the FMC curve.

The stomatal conductance is modelled in the form of the Ball-Berry conductance model (Ball et al. 1987, Oleson et al. 2013, Fisher et al. 2015):

$$g_s = b_{slp} \frac{A_n}{c_s / P_{atm}} \frac{e_s}{e_i} + b_{opt} \beta_t \quad g_s = b_{slp} \frac{A_n}{c_s / P_{atm}} \frac{e_s}{e_i} + b_{opt} \beta_t ,$$

(Eq 5)

where b_{slp} b_{slp} and b_{opt} b_{opt} are parameters that represent the slope and intercept in the Ball-Berry model, correspondingly. These terms are plant strategy dependent and can vary widely with plant functional types (Medlyn et al. 2011). The parameter b_{opt} b_{opt} is also scaled by the water stress index β_t. A_n is the net carbon assimilation rate (μmol CO2 m^{-2} s^{-1}) based on Farquhar's (1980) formula. This term is also constrained by water stress index β_t in the way that the $V_{cmax,25}$ is scaled by β_t as $V_{cmax,25}\beta_t$ (Fisher et al. 2018). c_s is the CO_2 partial pressure at the leaf surface (Pa), e_s is the vapor pressure at the leaf surface (Pa), e_i is the saturation vapor pressure (Pa) inside the leaf at a given vegetation temperature when $A_n = 0$.

The water stress index β_t, a proxy for stomatal closure in response to desiccation, is determined by the leaf water potential adopted from the FMC_{gs} term from Christoffersen et al. (2016):

$$\beta_t = \left[1 + \left(\frac{\Psi_l}{P50_{gs}}\right)^{ags}\right]^{-1} \quad \beta_t = \left[1 + \left(\frac{\Psi_l}{P50_{gs}}\right)^{ags}\right]^{-1}$$

(Eq 6)

where Ψ_l is the leaf water potential (MPa), $P50_{gs}$ is the leaf water potential of 50% stomatal closure, and a_{gs} governs the steepness of the function. For a given value of a_{gs}, the $P50_{gs}$ controls the degree of the risk of xylem embolism (Christoffersen et al. 2016, Powell et al. 2017). A more negative $P50_{gs}$ means that, during leaf dry down from full turgor, the stomatal aperture stays open and thus allows the transpiration rate to remain high and xylem to dry out, which thus can maintain high photosynthetic rates, at the risk of exposing xylem to embolism and thus plant mortality. Conversely, a plant with a less negative $P50_{gs}$ will close its stomata quickly during leaf dry down, thus limiting transpiration and the risk of xylem embolism and mortality associated with it, at the cost of reduced photosynthesis.

2.2.2 Sensitivity analysis and ~~Parameterization~~parameterization

The goal of this analysis is to better understand how coordinated aboveground and belowground hydraulic traits determine plant physiological dynamics and the interplay between ecosystem fluxes and tissue moisture during the extreme 2012-2015 drought at the Soaproot site. We thus conduct a global sensitivity analysis on selected hydraulic parameters to explore the linkages of aboveground and belowground hydraulic strategies. We use a full-factorial design for the parameter sensitivity analysis in order to best investigate the relationships between parameters. Because this design requires a relatively small set of parameters or groups of parameters to vary, we chose parameters that represent the major axes of relatively well-~~-~~understood stomatal, xylem and rooting mechanisms/strategies that control the hydraulic functioning of trees. We set the values of these parameters within the realistic (allowable biological) range based on online database, and literatures where the species and physical environment are as close to our system as possible. We list other major parameters and their estimates that are not varied in the sensitivity analysis (table 2). We acknowledge that the biggest disadvantage of this study is the lack of sufficient field data to constrain the model. This is a result of using a natural drought as an experiment of opportunity, which, because it was not anticipated, did not allow for ~~as~~ coordinated planning as would be the case in an experimentally-manipulated drought. The trees at that site had all died by the time we started this study.

The parameters that we vary here are 1) the pair of r_a and r_b, which control vertical root distribution as deep vs shallow roots, 2) two sets of xylem parameters (P_{50x}, K_{max}, m, n, and α) that jointly represent two distinct xylem strategies: efficient/unsafe and inefficient/safe xylem within the range observed for temperate conifer trees, and 3) the stomatal parameter $P50_{gs}$, which represents the stomatal strategy along a risky to safe gradient (Table 1). The ranges of root parameters are chosen so that the effective rooting depth, above which 95% of root biomass stays, varies from 1m to 8m which is the possible range at the Soaproot site, as indicated by current knowledge of the subsurface structure (see Klos et al., 2017). Note, here we refer to a higher proportion of roots in deep subsurface layers as 'deep rooting' (e.g effective rooting depth = 8m; r_a=0.1,r_b=0.1) as compared to 'shallow rooting' (e.g effective rooting depth = 2; r_a=1,r_b=5) which represents a larger proportion of fine roots in upper layers (Figure 1a).

The safety-efficiency tradeoff of xylem has been widely discussed in the literature (e.g. Gleason et al. 2016; Hacke et al. 2006, 2017; Martnez-Vilalta, Sala, and Piol 2004). Given that we don't have any measurements that can be used to a generate vulnerability curve at our study site, we consult the literature (Domec et al. 2004, Barnard et al. 2011, Corcuera et al. 2011, Anderegg and Hillerislambers 2016 , Baker et al. 2019, Kilgore et al. 2021) for observed curves from sites that are as similar both in climate (e.g mean annual precipitation and temperature) and in the set of conifer species (P. Ponderosa) to our study site as possible, ,as well as values of xylem traits (K_{max} and $P50_x$) of Ponderosa pine in temperate regions of the TRY database (Kattge et al. 2020) to determine the two hypothetical vulnerability curves representing the safe/inefficient and unsafe/efficient xylem strategies. We set the parameters of the van Genuchten model to represent these two sets of P-V and vulnerability curves as shown in Fig1b and 1c. It is worth noting that with the same K_{max} and $P50$, the exact shape of the vulnerability can differ depending on the formula used and parameter values. However, this should not be an issue in our study because the vulnerability curve is mainly constrained by P50 and Kmax. Second, given that there is a large range of variation in the measured values, the effect caused by the exact shape of the curves is minor. Third, since the objective of our study is not to accurately predict mortality, but rather to examine the effect of different ~~combination~~combinations of stoma, xylem, and root strategies, even if the shape of our vulnerability curve is not the most accurate, as long as the curve captures the overall pattern of the pressure-conductivity relation, it will not affect the relative outcome of this study.

We follow the theory of Skelton et al. (2015) to define safe vs. efficient stomatal strategy. In FATES-Hydro, there are two key stomatal parameters: $P50_{gs}$ and a_{gs}. Here, we only vary $P50_{gs}$ while keeping a_{gs} as a constant because the objective here is to choose the parameters that are relatively well understood and to catch the safe vs. risky strategies as described by Skelton et al~~.~~. (2015) rather than ~~to~~ exhaust the parameter space within the model. In essence, the different combinations of $P50_{gs}$ and the shape parameter (a_{gs}) can generate similar stomatal response curves. For example, a small negative $P50_{gs}$ with a small a_{gs} would result in a flat stomatal response curve, which is similar to a large negative $P50_{gs}$ combined with a large a_{gs}. Further, $P50_{gs}$ is well understood and has more observed data, while a_{gs} is less studied and barely has any observed data. With a given a_{gs}, the variance of $P50_{gs}$ for a given P_{xylem} value, controls the degree of embolism risk, from a 'risky' strategy, where $P50_{gs}$ is ~~equals~~equal to or lower than

P_{xylem}, to a 'conservative' strategy, where $P50_{gs}$ is higher than P_{xylem}. The P_{xylem}s in Skelton et al.'s (2015) are for Fynbos species, therefore are not appropriate for our study because our species are pine trees, a woody plant. Trees have woody tissue, which ~~contribute~~contributes to ~~strengthen~~strengthening the conduits and ~~make~~makes them less ~~easy~~likely to collapse when embolized, hence allow their stomata to be riskier than those of herbaceous plants. From the observed $P50_{gs}$ and xylem traits of closely related pine species in the TRY database (Kattge et al. 2020) and elsewhere in the literature (Bartlett et al. 2016), as well as the observed soil water potential at the study site, we choose to vary $P50_{gs}$ between $P50_{xylem}$ and $P20_{xylem}$, (correspondingly the point at which xylem have lost 50% and 20% of their maximum conductivity).

The emergent behavior of FATES or any model with dynamic ecosystem structure can make analysis of physiological rate variation difficult, as the stand structure will respond and thus also vary when parameters are changed. Here, we ~~wanted~~want to first understand the direct trait control in the absence of structural differences. To overcome complications~~complication~~ of the dynamic structure, we use a reduced complexity configuration for running the model which we refer to as 'static stand structure' mode. To investigate dynamic competitive effects when growth and mortality will be the next step. In this mode, the stand structure is initialized from observed forest census data, and subsequently is fixed, i.e. the model does not permit plant growth or death to change the vegetation structure. This allows the direct assessment of hydraulic and physiological parameter variation in the model without the consequent feedback loops associated with varying ecosystem structure. The stand structure is initialized with census data from the CZ2 site (Table S1) and thus includes multiple cohorts of different sized trees. Because this type of model configuration ignores prognostic plant mortality, in the interest of being able to compare across simulations where mortality rates might otherwise be very high, we use the loss of xylem conductivity as a measure of mortality risk of conifer trees at CZ2, which has widely been used as an indicator of drought mortality of forest (e.g. Hammond et al., 2019).

To force the model with an atmospheric upper boundary, we use the Multivariate Adaptive Constructed Analogs (MACA) climate data (Abatzoglou and Brown 2012) from 2008 – 2015 of a 4km x 4km grid covers the study area. The daily average MACA data are disaggregated to 3-hourly climate data (see Appendix S2 in Buotte et al. 2018 for detail). ~~).~~ We set the initial soil

water content to be 75% of saturated water content, close to field capacity. We believe this is a realistic value because the model is initialized in ~~Jan~~January~~uary~~, when the study area has high precipitation and trees are all in a dormant status, and in a year when there is not drought. We also tried to initialize the soil with higher water content (e.g. saturation), but did not find any differences, ~~differences,~~as the extra water drained quickly in the winter when transpiration is low.

3. Results

3.1 Sensitivity of GPP and ET to parameter perturbations

The parameter sensitivity analysis ~~shows~~revealed that in a monthly ~~-~~mean flux comparison, the simulations with deep roots ~~give~~provided a better match to the overall observed pattern of the GPP and ET (~~Fig.~~Figure 2). ~~The~~ In general, the simulated transpiration ~~contributes to~~contributed 90% of the ET ~~in general~~. The deep-rooted cases ~~better capture~~more accurately captured the seasonality (e.g~~.~~., the peak time) and the declining trend of observed GPP from 2011 to 2015. The deep-rooted cases also ~~match fairly well~~matched the observed ET fairly well. The simulated GPP of shallow-rooted cases ~~are~~was higher than the observed values during wet seasons (Dec. to Mar~~.),~~.) but much lower than ~~the observed values~~those during the dry season of the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period. ~~The~~Overall, the simulated ET of shallow-rooted cases ~~are overall~~was lower than the observed values. To quantify this assessment, we computed ~~Root Mean Square Error (~~the RMSE~~)~~ from the hourly mean GPP and ET of each month and each year of all ~~the~~ 40 cases (~~Fig.~~Figure S2). We ~~choose~~chose the RMSE as it is a common and compact metric ~~of~~for assessing model performance, though we note that other metrics could in principle be used, each of which has different advantages and disadvantages (e.g~~.~~., Collier et al., 2018). The RMSE of the GPP and ET ~~decreases~~decreased with both effective rooting depth and P50gs for both xylem strategies (~~Fig.~~Figure 3). The P50gs ~~has~~had less of an impact on the RMSE of the GPP for the case with safe xylem than on that of the GPP for the case with efficient xylem. In terms of the GPP, the effective rooting depth of 6.~~5m gives~~5 m provided the best fit, as indicated by the darkest color (GPP RMSE ~~of GPP~~ = 1.~~12gC~~12 gC/m^2/s, ET RMSE ~~of ET~~ = 250 W/m^2~~),~~ ~~underscoring~~). This underscores the importance of deep roots in maintaining transpiration and photosynthesis during the dry season~~,~~ as well as the role of deep roots in increasing the relative decline in these fluxes during ~~the drought~~droughts.

Among the parameters that we varied in the sensitivity analysis, the vertical root distribution ~~has~~had the largest impact on the GPP and ET at CZ2. ~~Figures~~Figure 2a~~, 2b~~, b show the monthly mean GPP and ET of the end members of the sensitivity analysis (see ~~Fig.~~Figure S1 for the complete set of outcomes). We acknowledge that the variation in rooting depth across the ensemble ~~is~~was large~~, but point out~~; however, we also highlight that so ~~is~~too was the uncertainty in plant rooting depth, and ~~moreover~~also that the uncertainty in rooting depth ~~is~~was less well-quantified than other plant traits ~~such as~~(e.g., P50~~,~~), such that this wide variation reflects a real and deep uncertainty in plant rooting profiles. Deep roots ~~result~~resulted in a substantially higher GPP and transpiration during normal years (2011 and 2012). During long-term droughts, when deep soil moisture ~~is~~was depleted, the relative advantage of deep roots over shallow roots ~~is~~was reduced. Shallow roots ~~result~~resulted in a substantially lower GPP and transpiration during the dry season (Aug. to Oct.), with the seasonal maximum occurring earlier~~,~~ – in May~~,~~ – as ~~compared~~opposed to July with ~~the~~ deep-rooted cases. The shallow-rooted cases also ~~have~~had a much lower GPP and ET during the dry seasons of the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period. During the late ~~stage~~stages of drought (2014 and 2015), the GPP and ET of the different cases ~~become~~became more similar between the shallow- and deep-rooted cases.

The second most important set of parameters ~~in importance to rooting depth~~ for controlling carbon and water fluxes ~~is~~are those that govern the stomatal strategy. The simulations with a ~~more risky~~riskier strategy ($P50_{gs}$~~=~~ = $P50_x$) ~~gives~~provided a higher GPP and ET than ~~the simulations~~those with a safer strategy ($P50_{gs}$~~=~~ = $P20_x$) during ~~pre-drought~~predrought periods and the early stage of the drought (2011 to 2013), but they provided a slightly lower GPP and ET ~~at~~in the late stage ~~of the drought~~ (2014 and 2015) for the deep-rooted cases. However, risky stomata ~~gives~~provided a slightly higher GPP and ET at all times for shallow-rooted cases. The xylem strategy ~~has~~had the smallest effect on the GPP and ET of the parameters that we varied (e.g.~~,~~., the RMSEs of ET ~~are~~were both ~~around~~approximately 260 W/~~m~~^{2}m^2 for safe and efficient xylem~~,~~, respectively, with P50gs = P20x and ~~8m~~an effective rooting depth of 8 m). In deep-rooted cases, the safe xylem and efficient xylem ~~strategy result~~strategies resulted in an almost ~~the same~~identical GPP and ET, which can be seen ~~via~~in the ~~wides~~widest overlap between the dashed and solid lines in ~~figure~~Figure 1. In shallow-rooted cases~~,~~ with safe stomata, safe xylem ~~generates~~generated a slightly higher GPP and ET than efficient xylem. In addition, the strength of the effects of stomatal and xylem ~~strategy~~strategies also depend on the rooting depth. The

deeper the effective rooting depth, the less significant the impacts of stomatal strategy (~~Fig.~~Figure S1).

3.2 Sensitivity of plant water status to parameter perturbations

We ~~examine~~examined the impact of vertical root distributions~~,~~ and stomatal and xylem strategies on the seasonal variation of the following three plant ~~physiologic~~physiological variables ~~that serve~~, which served as indices of plant water stress (~~fig.~~Figure 4): the fraction loss of xylem conductivity of the stem (SFL), leaf water potential (LWP), and an overall absorbing root water potential (AWP). In the model, absorbing roots in different soil layers ~~have~~had different water potentials~~,~~ associated with the soil water potential of that layer. We ~~calculate~~calculated a cohort-level effective AWP as the root-fraction~~-~~-weighted average of water potential in absorbing ~~root~~roots across all soil layers. ~~In this way~~Thus, the AWP represents the overall rhizosphere soil moisture condition that is sensed by the tree. These physiological variables ~~are~~were tracked for each cohort. ~~For~~In any given case, the differences in these variables among differently ~~-~~sized cohorts ~~are~~were negligible (~~Fig.~~Figure S3). Therefore, we present the outcome of all ~~cohorts~~ cohorts with a diameter at breast height (DBH) between 50 ~~–60cm~~and 60 cm, the size class that ~~is~~was most abundant at CZ2.

Stomatal and rooting strategies together ~~control~~controlled the loss of xylem conductivity during the dry season of the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period and the whole period of the long-term drought (~~Fig~~Figure 4a). In all cases, the xylem conductivity ~~reaches~~reached a maximum during the wet season (Dec. to Jan.), ~~starts~~started to decline during the growing season (Apr. to Jun.), and then ~~reaches~~reached its minimum in the dry season. With the same stomatal strategy, deep roots ~~lead~~led to a less ~~-~~extreme loss of xylem conductivity than shallow roots. A deep rooting strategy ~~is~~was also able to maintain xylem conductivity with very little seasonal loss during the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period~~, but~~; however, as deep soil moisture ~~is~~was depleted, this effect ~~is~~was reduced. With a shallow rooting profile, the xylem conductivity ~~starts~~started to decline earlier, and the minimum ~~is~~was much lower than that of a deep rooting profile. For example, with risky stomata, the minimum fraction of xylem conductivity ~~of~~in deep-rooted cases in 2012 ~~is~~was 0.4, but ~~is~~it was lower than 0.2 with shallow roots. Unlike deep-rooted cases, ~~in shallow-rooted cases,~~ the seasonal variation of the loss of xylem conductivity ~~does~~did not differ too much

during ~~pre-drought~~predrought and drought periods~~. During the~~ in shallow-rooted cases. Furthermore, during the very late stage of the drought, deep-rooted cases ~~have~~had a lower fraction of xylem conductivity than shallow-rooted cases (e.g.~~.,~~, in Jan. 2015).

In general, risky stomata ~~allow~~allowed a greater loss of xylem conductivity (K/Kmax) than safe stomata, but the extent ~~depends~~depended on the vertical root distribution. The effect of ~~the~~ stomatal strategy ~~is~~was more obvious in shallow-rooted cases. Risky stomata combined with shallow roots ~~result~~resulted in ~~increasing~~an increase in the duration of the 50% loss of xylem conductivity~~,~~ as well as the maximum loss of xylem conductivity during the dry season. With a deep rooting strategy, the difference in the percentage loss of xylem conductivity between safe ~~stomatal~~ and risky stomatal cases ~~increases~~increased with the progression of the drought~~, but~~; however, with a shallow rooting strategy~~,~~, this difference ~~remains more or less~~remained approximately the same over time. In addition, in 2011, a very wet year~~,~~ with deep roots, a safe xylem strategy ~~is~~was able to maintain the maximum xylem conductivity even during the dry season (~~Fig~~Figure 4a). The impact of the xylem strategy on the percentage loss of xylem conductivity ~~is~~was relatively weak. ~~For~~In both deep- and shallow-rooted cases, trees with safe xylem ~~lose~~lost less xylem conductivity during the wet season but ~~lose~~ more conductivity during the dry season.

The safe stomata ~~&~~and safe xylem cases for both deep- and shallow-rooted trees ~~experience~~experienced greater declines in stem conductivity ~~as~~ compared ~~to~~with the safe stomata and efficient xylem for the corresponding rooting depths (~~Fig.~~Figure 4a). This is because with safe stomata, trees operate at the right end of the vulnerability curve ~~shown~~displayed in ~~fig.~~Figure 1b, where the hydraulic conductivity of efficient xylem is much higher than that of ~~the~~ safe xylem. Thus, when ~~transpiring~~ the same amount of water~~, the~~ is transpired, efficient xylem will lose less water potential ~~as compared to~~ than safe xylem. This keeps the xylem water potential of a plant with efficient xylem higher than that of one with safe xylem, and consequently, it also keeps the xylem conductivity, K, higher. This is also because we set $P50_{gs}$ based on P_{xylem}~~,~~; thus, the $P50_{gs}$ of safe stomata for plants with efficient xylem ~~is~~was higher (less negative) than that of plants with safe xylem, ~~thus~~ resulting in lower transpiration rates, which in ~~term reduces~~turn reduced the loss of xylem water potential. As a result, plants with both safe stomata and efficient xylem not only ~~transpire~~transpired less water but also ~~lose~~lost less water

potential per volume of transpired water ~~transpired~~. Together, these two mechanisms ~~contribute~~contributed to ~~keep~~keeping the xylem conductivity of the efficient xylem cases higher.

~~Stomatal~~In addition, stomatal, rooting, and xylem strategies ~~have~~had similar impacts on the seasonal variation of both leaf and fine root water potentials (~~Fig4c~~Figure 4c and 4d). Leaf and fine root water potentials ~~peak~~peaked during the winter, then ~~start~~started to decline in early spring~~,~~, and ~~reach~~reached their lowest point in the dry season. Deep roots, safe stomata, and safe xylem traits all ~~contribute~~contributed to the maintenance of higher leaf and fine root water potentials during the growing and dry seasons. With deep roots, there ~~is~~was less of a difference in leaf and fine root water ~~potential~~potentials between stomatal and xylem strategies in the very wet year of 2011. Plants that combine safe stomata and/or safe xylem with deep roots ~~can~~were able to keep the leaf and fine root water potentials relatively high (less than -5 Mpa) during the dry season of the drought period. However, while plants that combine risky stomata or efficient xylem with deep roots ~~can~~could keep the dry season leaf water potential above -5 Mpa during the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period, their traits ~~lead~~led to the dry season leaf water potential dropping below -8 Mpa or even ~~below~~ -10 Mpa during the drought period. In both deep-~~rooted~~ and shallow-rooted cases, safe xylem ~~leads~~led to much lower leaf and fine root water potentials during the dry season. The seasonal and inter-annual variation of fine root water potentials ~~are~~was almost identical to the leaf water potential, except that the water potential of fine roots ~~is~~was slightly higher (~ 0.5 Mpa) than the leaf water potential.

3.3 Sensitivity of subsurface hydrology to parameter perturbations

In the simulation outcomes, the vertical root distributions again ~~have~~had the largest impact on ~~hydrologic~~hydrological processes ~~and~~, subsurface water content, and ~~the way that~~how they ~~change~~changed over the drought. With deep roots, there ~~is~~was less drainage loss from surface and subsurface runoff ~~as~~ compared ~~to~~with shallow roots, especially during the growing season (Figure 5a, c, e, and g). The subsurface water content ~~shows~~exhibited different vertical and temporal patterns between the cases with different vertical root distributions. In the deep-rooted cases, during the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period, the water content in the deepest layers ~~fluctuates~~fluctuated between wet and dry ~~seasonally~~seasons; during the first year of the drought, the water content of the deepest layers (6 ~~to 8m~~ –8 m) slightly ~~increases~~increased during the wet season, but ~~with the progression of~~as the drought progressed, the soil water content

becomesbecame consistently depleted in the middle and deep layers (between 5 and 8 m depth) and only the shallow layerlayer's (<0.16 m) water content increasesincreased during the wet season. In the shallow-rooted cases (Figure 5b, d, f, and h), soil moisture in the surface layers (top 2m) shows2 m) exhibited seasonal variation, but this seasonal variation becomesbecame weaker overwith depth and. Moreover, the soil moisture at 6 8m 8 m depth staysstayed consistently high throughout the year during pre-droughtthe predrought period, and remainsremained slightly low throughthroughout the entire drought period;, while the water content of the middle and upper layers of the shallow-rooted case havexhibited a similar pattern of seasonal variation before and during the drought.

StomatalThe stomatal strategy, as quantified by $P50_{gs}$, hashad a weak impact on hydrologichydrological processes and soil moisture. In both the deep- and shallow-rooted cases, riskier stomata leadled to a slightly lower total subsurface water content (Figure 6a). The effect of $P50_{gs}$ iswas less significant during the pre-droughtpredrought period for both the deep- and shallow-rooted cases and shallow-rooted cases, and becomesbecame more significant as the drought progressesprogressed. The effect of $P50_{gs}$ on total subsurface water content iswas less significant in shallow-rooted cases. Figure 5c showspresents the effect of $P50_{gs}$ on the water content of shallow and deep soil layers. In both the shallow- and deep-rooted cases, increasing $P50_{gs}$ hashad a negligible impact on the water content of the shallow layers during both the pre-droughtpredrought and drought periods (Figure 5c, left). For deeper layers, in the shallow-rooted case, $P50_{gs}$ hashad no impact on the water content at all timesany time; in the deep-rooted cases, a risky $P50_{gs}$ resultsresulted in a lower dry season water content of deep layers (7 8m 8 m) during the pre-droughtpredrought period (as indicated by the red cycles ofin Figure 5a and 5c), but decreasesit decreased the water content of those layers year-round during the drought period (Figure 5a and 5e). In deep-rooted cases, safe stomata with efficient xylem leadled to a slightly higher water content in deep layers (5m to 8m5–8 m) during the pre-droughtpredrought period, and in shallow layers (0 to 3m 3 m) during the drought period (Figure 6a). Risky stomata with safe xylem in deep-rooted cases arewere most effective inat accessing soil water. ThoughAlthough the soil water contents arewere generally high in shallow-rooted cases, stomatal and xylem strategies showexhibited a similar impact on the soil water storage as those in the deep-rooted cases (FigFigure S4).

~~Simulations~~ Furthermore, simulations with deep roots ~~have~~resulted in almost no loss of soil water to drainage during the dry season in normal years~~,~~ or during the whole drought period; ~~while~~by contrast, in simulations with shallow roots, the drainage loss ~~is~~was high during the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period and ~~decreases~~decreased through the drought period, but still with some runoff even at the end of the ~~drought~~ period (Figure 6a). The observed total annual runoff from the 2008 ~~to~~ –2011 ~~pre-drought~~predrought period was ~~about~~approximately 250 mm/year, but it was zero during the 2012—–2015 drought period (from ~~figure~~Figure 4~~,~~; Bales et al. 2018). This observed difference in runoff between the ~~pre-drought (~290mm~~predrought (~290 mm/year, 2011—–2012) and drought periods (~0 mm/year) ~~from~~in the deep-rooted case ~~is~~was consistent with the predicted pattern. During the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period, the wet season total subsurface water contents from ~~Dec.~~December to ~~Feb. are~~February were similar between the cases with deep and shallow roots~~, but~~; however, during the dry season (from June to Sep.) the total subsurface water content with shallow roots ~~is~~was substantially higher than the case with deep roots (Figure 6b).

4. Discussion

4.1 Vertical root distribution as the first-order control

The ~~outcome~~outcomes of our simulations ~~indicates~~indicated that the vertical root distribution ~~exerts the~~exerted first-order control over both ecosystem-level fluxes and plant physiology at CZ2. This dominance of the rooting strategy over other hydraulic traits is related to the nature of the rainfall pattern ~~of~~in the Mediterranean-type climate of that region. The CZ2 site receives effectively all of its rain during the winter. This water is stored in the soil column and slowly released through the growing season. The root zone soil moisture ~~has~~exhibits strong seasonal variation, which constrains plant water use and gas exchange as a function of the gradual drying of the soil column (Bales et al., 2018). In the model, the stomatal behavior ~~is~~was controlled by the leaf water potential, which itself ~~is~~was strongly affected by the root zone soil moisture. In our simulations, the daytime average leaf water potential of a 55cm DBH cohort ~~is~~was well correlated with the fine root water potential and ~~is~~was always ~~about~~approximately 0.5 Mpa lower (~~fig~~Figure S5). This offset is consistent with the relationship between the mid-day leaf water potential and ~~pre-dawn~~predawn leaf water potential found by Martínez-Vilalta et al. (2014) at the global scale.

With deep roots, trees ~~use~~used more subsurface storage capacity at the CZ2 site~~, and thus a higher amount of total rainfall.~~. In ~~a~~ wet ~~year~~years such as 2011, the root zone water potential of deep-rooted trees ~~is kept~~was maintained relatively high (Figure 4b) and the trees ~~operate~~operated at the upper end of their vulnerability curve ~~through~~throughout the year, with a typical loss of conductivity ~~<~~of 10% (~~Fig~~Figure 7). Therefore, we ~~don't see~~did not observe much of an effect of ~~the~~ stomatal strategy on the GPP and transpiration in ~~a~~ wet ~~year~~years. At the upper end of the vulnerability curve, stomata ~~are~~were fully open regardless of ~~the~~ stomatal strategy (either ~~to be~~ safe or risky). When the drought began in late 2012, annual rainfall fell below the total root zone storage, ~~thus~~and therefore, the deep storage remained depleted throughout the year. During the drought, the deep-rooted trees were able to operate at the high end of the vulnerability curve in the wet season, when the rainfall recharged the surface layer. As the surface layers ~~dry~~dried, water potential then gradually ~~falls~~fell to the lower end of the vulnerability curve; consequently ~~the,~~ photosynthesis and transpiration ~~start~~started to drop as the dry season ~~progresses~~progressed. With risky stomata, trees can drive ~~the~~ soil moisture to lower values. This is why we ~~see~~observed the difference in the effect on the GPP and transpiration between different stomatal strategies during the dry season ~~when~~as the drought ~~progresses.~~ progressed.

With shallow roots, trees can only use surface soil moisture storage. As a result, the surface water storage ~~is~~was quickly used up after the wet season, and the root zone water potential ~~drops~~dropped near the low end of the vulnerability curve during the dry season. Thus, ~~the~~ shallow-rooted trees ~~operate~~operated along the full extent of the vulnerability curve year-round, ~~both~~ during ~~the pre-drought~~both predrought and drought periods. Therefore, ~~as~~ for the deep-rooted cases, we ~~don't see~~did not observe a strong effect of stomatal strategy on the GPP and transpiration during the wet season~~, but~~; however, unlike the deep ~~root~~-rooted cases, the effect of stomatal strategy on the GPP and transpiration during the dry season ~~can~~could be ~~seen~~observed throughout the whole simulation period.

Rooting strategies greatly control the spatial pattern of vertical soil water content (Figure 5). With deep roots, the vertical soil moisture variation ~~is~~was more homogeneous due to the extensive root distribution. With shallow roots, the soil ~~becomes~~became extremely dry at the surface (<~~1m~~1 m) and extremely wet in deep layers (>~~5m) resulting from~~5 m) as a result of the aggregated root distribution in the upper layers. ~~Our~~This finding is similar to ~~a recent study~~

~~conducted by~~that of Agee et al. (2021), ~~where the authors~~who found that ~~the~~ extensive lateral root spreading results in homogeneous soil moisture distribution. The homogeneous soil moisture pattern may contribute to a more energy-efficient system that reduces plant water stress (Agee et al. 2021) because ~~that~~it minimizes the loss of energy dissipation ~~loss~~ through water transport (Hildebrandt et al. 2016). Both our study and that of Agee et al. (2021) ~~and our studies~~ emphasize the importance of the means by which the root distributions determine how the subsurface storage is ~~utilized.~~ used.

Given the shape of the vulnerability curves, ~~in all these simulations,~~ plants ~~will stop~~stopped transpiring in all simulations when their leaf water potential ~~reaches around -10Mpa~~reached approximately −10 MPa with efficient xylem or ~~-15Mpa~~−15 MPa with safe xylem, depending on their stomatal strategy (~~Fig~~Figure 7). Because we ~~are here holding~~held the stand structure and leaf area constant to allow ~~comparison~~comparisons between cases, the simulated leaf water potential of the shallow-rooted, risky stomata combination ~~can get~~could reach as low as ~~-15Mpa~~−15 Mpa (Figure 4b) during dry seasons, even during ~~pre-drought~~the predrought period, which is well below the lowest possible leaf water potential observed ~~(-10Mpa) ((~~(−10 Mpa; Vesala et al., 2017). Leaves ~~will~~would likely be wilted before the water potential drops below ~~-10Mpa~~−10 MPa, and the tree would ~~have~~ already have shed the leaves due to canopy desiccation. ~~But~~However, we specifically ~~do~~did not permit that ~~to occur~~ in these simulations~~, so as~~ to keep the different cases comparable. Although it might be unrealistic, the leaf water potential can serve as an ~~indicator~~indicator of the degree of canopy desiccation. With no or very ~~little leaves~~few leaves, trees would rely on ~~the storage~~stored carbon to support respiratory demand until the wet season ~~comes~~arrives to regrow leaves. Depending on the duration of the dry season, trees may exhaust ~~the~~their stored carbon and die from carbon starvation.~~Risky~~ While risky stomata can generate a higher GPP (Figure 1a), ~~but~~they also result in a longer duration of more negative leaf water potential (Figure 4b). This suggests that shallow-rooted pines at CZ2 with risky stomata ~~will~~would benefit from allocating more net primary productivity to their storage pools rather than growth in order to reduce ~~the~~ carbon-starvation mortality. Therefore, even though the model ~~generates~~generated unrealistically low leaf water potentials, the extent and ~~the~~ duration of ~~the~~these simulated ~~very low leaf water potential allows~~potentials allowed us to gain some ~~insight on~~insights into the interaction of ~~plant~~plants' hydraulic ~~strategy~~strategies and the life history ~~strategy~~strategies of conifer trees under a

Mediterranean-type climate. Furthermore, ~~Further,~~ the unrealistic leaf water potential from the shallow root simulations ~~indicates~~indicated that the trees at that site must have ~~really~~very deep roots to exist ~~at this site~~there, ~~,~~which is in agreement with the conclusions of Goulden and Bales (2019).

In this simulation, the impacts of xylem traits on the GPP and ET ~~are~~were weak and subtle. This ~~is~~was the result of the relative position of the two vulnerability curves, ~~in particular,~~particularly the intersection of the two vulnerability curves in absolute conductivity. When the absolute conductivity ~~is~~was plotted as a function of pressure (~~fig.~~Figure 1b and solid lines in ~~fig.~~Figure S6), ~~it can be seen that~~we observed, on the left side of the intersection, that the safe xylem ~~is~~was not only safe but also efficient~~, and~~; thus, a safety~~-~~efficiency tradeoff of xylem ~~thus~~ only ~~occurs~~occurred on the right side of the intersection point. Therefore, in shallow-rooted cases, when the root zone water content—and hence the plant water status—is low, safe xylem can generate a slightly higher GPP and ET than unsafe xylem. Furthermore, the two pressure~~-~~conductivity curves ~~diverge~~diverged mainly at the wet end (corresponding to the wet season). This is likely to be because the xylem structures of conifers are very similar~~,~~ and the range of variation of xylem traits in the sensitivity analysis ~~are~~was limited to the dominant species at the site. Therefore, the difference in the xylem traits of conifers ~~do~~does not cause significant impacts on the ecosystem-level fluxes under the Mediterranean-type climate of CZ2, ~~where the ecosystem fluxes~~which are constrained by energy during the wet season (Goulden et al., 2012). In addition, the maximum ~~rate~~rates of GPP and ET are co-constrained by the stand density, ~~the~~ total leaf area, ~~the~~ maximum stomatal conductance, and VPD. In this study, we used the static stand structure mode of FATES-Hydro, whereby the stand density and the total leaf biomass (so as total leaf area) of the trees ~~are~~were held constant. This further ~~limits~~limited the effect of xylem traits on the GPP and ET.

4.2 Balancing productivity and mortality risk

The hydraulic traits that contribute to high carbon fixation rates often make trees more susceptible to drought. Stomatal strategy ($P50_{gs}$) can have both positive and negative ~~impact~~impacts on ~~the~~ trees, creating a tradeoff in the balance between productivity and physiological stress. The risky stomata ($P50_{gs} = P50_{x}$) can generate a higher GPP but also result

in a greater loss of xylem conductivity and lower leaf water potential. The tradeoff varies depending on the plant's root strategy— (i.e.,, having a deep vs. a shallow root distribution—) and the moisture state.

To better understand the tradeoff between productivity and mortality risk, we plotplotted the simulated annual average GPP for each year against the fraction of conductivity (K/Kmax) of a 55cm55 cm DBH cohort for two scenarios: – deep roots (Fig.Figure 8a) and shallow roots (Fig.Figure 8b),) – with different combinationcombinations of xylem and stomatal strategies. In both scenarios, for each pair of xylem and stomatal strategies, the GPP per tree increasesincreased almost linearly with the K/Kmax. But, with increasingHowever, as the safety of the stomata increased, the GPP declinesdeclined faster with the loss of conductivity. This response isswas stronger in deep-rooted scenarios. Having efficientefficient xylem only slightly increasesincreased the steepness of the lines. The stomatal strategies thus representrepresented points along a gradient of the tradeoff between growth and mortality risk—; the safer the stomata, the more the GPP iswas traded for reducing the to reduce mortality risk.

Along this tradeoff space, wherethe point at which trees can maximize their net carbon gains likely depends on the xylem traits. Studies have showndemonstrated that trees may temporarily lose xylem conductivity during mild droughtdroughts, which can recover once the soil water becomes available. However, under an extreme drought, their xylem could collapse and permanently damage the xylem conduits. In this case, trees rely on new sapwood growth to support the transpiration (Brodribb et al. 2010, Anderegg et al. 2013). At one extreme, if the stomatal behavior is too safe, it will giveproduce a low GPP and the tree will be outcompeted for light due to faster-growing neighbors, but; however, at the other extreme, if the stomata behave very aggressiveaggressively (risky), itthis will giveproduce a high GPP but also empty the subsurface storage quickly, consequently leading to a prolonged dry period of soil moisture. This would lead to substantial xylem damage (and/or root death), and then the carbon neededrequired to grow new sapwood (or roots) cancould exceed the benefit of gettingbenefits from the additional GPP. SoThus, the optimal location along the gradient would probably be located slightly below the K/Kmax associated with that critical xylem water potential. Currently, the xylem refilling and associated carbon cost are not incorporated in into FATES-Hydro. These two

processes should be implemented in the model to ~~better understand~~obtain an enhanced understanding of the water~~ ~~carbon balance, which~~, and thus~~ remains ~~as~~for future work~~. ~~.

In the deep-rooted scenario, the values of the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period and early drought stage ~~are~~were clustered ~~at~~in the upper-right corner, above a K/Kmax of 0.6~~. (Fig.~~ (Figure 8a). In this region, the stress from the loss of xylem conductivity likely ~~won't~~would not be high enough to cause severe consequences~~,~~ if ~~using~~we were to use a 50 ~~percent~~% loss of xylem conductivity as the threshold for mortality and/or permanent xylem damage. The deep-rooted tree can thus benefit by trading less GPP for maintaining xylem conductivity with a risky/more ~~-~~productive stomatal strategy during normal years. ~~But~~However, during the late ~~stage~~stages of the drought (2014 and 2015), the conductivity values ~~become~~became much lower. If this ~~mega drought~~megadrought stopped earlier~~,~~ (e.g~~.~~., if it were a mild drought that only lasted for two years~~,~~), then the additional GPP obtained from risky stomata may ~~overweight~~outweigh the carbon cost ~~for~~of repairing xylem damage. This suggests that~~,~~ if the 2012~~ ~~2015 drought was not common in California, then natural selection might favor the risky/more ~~-~~productive stomatal strategy for deep-rooted trees. However, ~~this~~the same strategy would also ~~exposes~~expose trees to a high mortality risk ~~under~~during severe droughts.

In the shallow-rooted case (~~Fig.~~Figure 8b), the values ~~are~~were all clustered lower and to the left~~, as~~ compared ~~to~~with the deep~~-~~rooted scenario, irrespective of the drought status. Thus, for shallow roots, risky/more ~~-~~productive stomatal behavior ~~results~~resulted in a similarly high mortality risk during both the ~~pre-drought~~predrought and drought ~~period. Thus~~periods. Accordingly, under the long-term climate conditions ~~seen~~found at CZ2, regardless of whether ~~or not~~ severe droughts were frequent or not, the only shallow-rooted trees that could persist would have to follow the safe and less-productive stomatal strategy. ~~And, thus~~Therefore, safe and less-productive stomata also ~~protects the~~protect shallow-rooted ~~tree plant~~trees from mortality risk during drought.

The model outcome ~~indicates~~indicated that under drier root zone soil conditions, if pines were to follow a shallow rooting strategy, they would benefit from a safer stomatal strategy~~,~~ with more conservative water use; ~~but~~by contrast, if they were to follow a deep rooting strategy, ~~pines~~they would benefit from riskier stomata. This is consistent with Anderegg et al.'s (2016) finding ~~on~~regarding the relative stomatal conductance (gs) across elevation. They found that at a

low elevation (lower precipitation) site, Ponderosa pine ~~has~~had lower relative stomatal conductance and less loss of xylem conductivity, equivalent to safer stomata in our study, while at a mid-elevation (higher precipitation) site, ~~pine has~~it had higher relative stomatal conductance and a greater loss of xylem conductivity, equivalent to risky stomata in our study. The simulation results are consistent with the idea that the CZ2 region is dominated by deep-rooted trees~~. This~~, which is supported by previous studies. In situ measurements of regolith structure (~~particularly~~particularly the porosity) ~~indicates~~indicate that at CZ2, there is a layer of thick, semi-weathered ~~bedrock~~bedrock that ~~allows~~allows the trees to grow deep roots (Holbrook et al., 2014). Growing deep roots to access rock moisture to support plant water use ~~has~~was also ~~been~~ observed in the Eel River CZO catchment (Rempe et al., 2018), another Mediterranean-type ecosystem along the west coast. Observed net CO_2 exchange and ET during the ~~pre-drought~~predrought period ~~suggest~~suggested that during a wet year, deep moisture supported summer transpiration and productivity when the upper layer moisture was low (Goulden et al. 2015). Because the deep rooting strategy is sufficient in most cases ~~to avoid~~for avoiding the main effects of dry seasons and short droughts, and ~~that~~because, conditional on having deep roots, the risky stomatal strategy confers a productivity advantage at a little increased risk of vulnerability, ~~then~~ we would expect ~~that~~ plants with these traits ~~would~~to dominate. However, under extreme cases such as the 2012~~–~~–2015 drought, which ranked as one of the most severe in California in the last 1200 years (Lu et al. 2019), we would expect ~~that~~ plants with this deep-rooted, risky stomatal strategy ~~would~~to be highly vulnerable to drought, which is consistent with the ~~~~approximately 90% mortality of the pine observed at CZ2 during the drought (Fettig et al. 2019). The water balance of the catchment based on ~~the~~ long-term observation from precipitation, stream flow, and ET (Bales et al. 2018, Goulden and Bales 2019) also ~~support~~supports that it was the slow depletion of deep moisture that caused tree mortality in the late stage of the prolonged 2012~~–~~–2015 drought.

The ~~finding~~findings of our study ~~indicates~~indicate that ~~the~~ future drought mortality ~~would~~will likely occur in ~~the~~ ecosystems ~~which~~that are ~~co~~-limited by water and other factors. In ~~those~~such ecosystems, trees can benefit from having more efficient but less safe hydraulic traits, ~~which~~as they allow them to be more competitive for water~~,~~ and bring in a higher GPP. The extra carbon gain can be used to develop measures ~~to deal~~for dealing with other constraining factors, such as ~~increase storage~~increasing stored carbon to lower the risk of carbon starvation, ~~or~~

~~build~~building thicker bark to resist fire, and ~~to grow~~growing more roots, which further enhance their capacity to compete for water.

5. Conclusions

Our analysis indicates that root distribution can affect the most competitive stomatal ~~stomatal~~ traits. ~~In~~In a Mediterranean-type climate where the supply of energy and water is desynchronized and accessible subsurface water storage capacity is close to annual precipitation, deep roots combined with risky stomata represent a beneficial strategy for high productivity in normal years with low mortality risk~~, but~~ ; however, this strategy exposes trees to a high mortality risk during multi-year droughts. While such a strategy enables trees to fully ~~utilize~~use subsurface storage and precipitation for productivity over ~~the~~ regular years, the lack of deep water storage recharge during droughts exposes trees to high drought stress and makes this strategy unfavorable under severe and prolonged drought. ~~In~~By contrast, shallow roots combined with safe stomata represent a strategy for drought resistance, albeit at the cost of considerably reduced productivity, as such a combination only allows trees to use shallow subsurface storage while leaving deep moisture untouched~~,~~; thus, less precipitation is used for productivity. ~~But~~However, this strategy leaves trees ~~to be~~ less susceptible to drought-induced mortality should the deep reservoir be depleted. By~~In~~ contrast, shallow roots with risky ~~stoma~~stomata lead~~ta leads~~ to high mortality even during ~~non-drought year~~nondrought years, making this an ~~s, thus~~ ~~an~~uncompetitive combination at the site. These results suggest that stomatal strategy is controlled by root zone soil moisture and regulated by root distribution in that region. Thus, our study underscores the importance of considering plant rooting and hydraulic strategies within the larger context of plant ecological strategies.

Author contribution

JD and CDK design the study and write the MS. JD conducted the simulation. PB, RB, MG provided model input data. BC, CDK, RF, RK, CX, and JD wrote the code. PB, RB, BC, RF, MG, RK, LK, JS, CX edited the MS.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge support by the Director, Office of Science, Office of Biological and Environmental Research of the U. S. Department of Energy under Contract DE-AC02-05CH11231 through the Early Career Research Program, the University of California Laboratory Fees Research Program, and National Science Foundation Southern Sierra Critical Zone Observatory grant EAR-1331931. RF acknowledges funding by the European Union's Horizon 2020 (H2020) research and innovation program under Grant Agreement No. 101003536 (ESM2025 – Earth System Models for the Future) and 821003 (4C, Climate-Carbon Interactions in the Coming Century)

Data availability statement

The FATES code (branch FATEScodeforMS1), parameter files and data that support the findings of this study are openly available at ZENODO: https://zenodo.org/account/settings/github/repository/JunyanDing/Rooting-and-Hydraulic-strategy-of-pine-at-Sierra-CZ2- (DOI 10.5281/zenodo.5504405). The flux tower data can be retrieved from the UC Merced online database (https://www.ess.uci.edu/~california/).

Competing interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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Tables

Table 1 Parameters used in FATES-Hydro sensitivity analysis

Parameters	Biological meaning	Values	Units
r_a, r_b	Root distribution: shallow roots vs. deep roots	(0.1, 0.1) – (2 5)	unitless
$P50_{gs}$	Leaf xylem water potential at half stomatal closure stomatal control on safety vs. efficiency	P50x – P20x	Mpa
$P50_x$	Xylem water potential when xylem loss half of the conductance	-3.0[a], -4.8[b]	Mpa
K_{max}	Maximum xylem conductivity per unit sap area	0.88[a], 0.64[b]	kg/MPa/m/s
A	Shape parameter of van Genuchten hydrologic function	0.11855[a], 0.088026[b]	Mpa^{-1}
m, n	Shape parameters of van Genuchten hydrologic function	(0.8, 1.25)[a], (0.8, 1.5)[b]	unitless

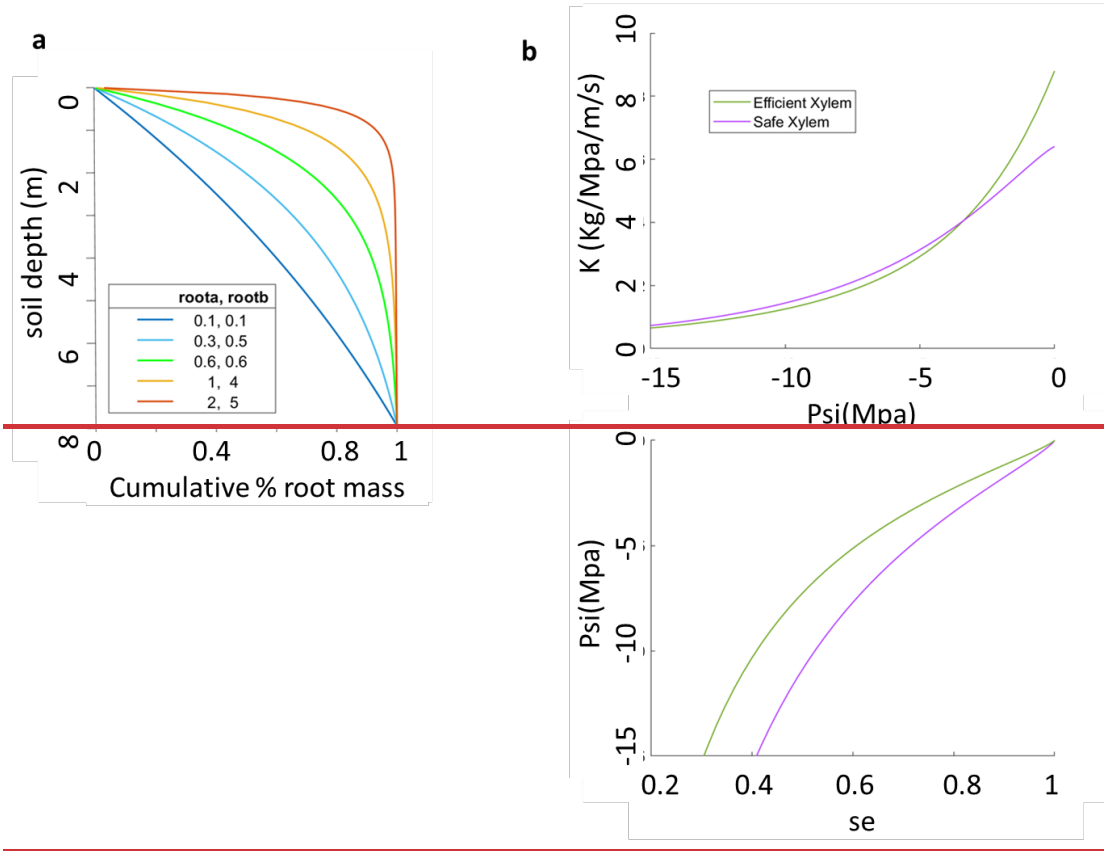
a: values for efficient/unsafe xylem
b: values for inefficient/safe xylem

Table 2. List of major parameters

Symbol	Source code name	Value	Units	Description	Source
a_{gs}	fates_hydr_avuln_gs	2.5	unitless	shape parameter for stomatal control of water vapor (slope)exiting leaf	Christoffersen et al., 2016
χ	fates_hydr_p_taper	0.333	unitless	xylem taper exponent	Christoffersen et al., 2016
$\pi_{o,l}$, $\pi_{o,s}$, $\pi_{o,r}$	fates_hydr_pinot_node	-1.47, -1.23, -1.04	MPa	osmotic potential at full turgor of leaf, stem, root	Christoffersen et al., 2016
$RWC_{res,l}$, $RWC_{res,s}$, $RWC_{res,r}$	fates_hydr_resid_node	0.25, 0.325, 0.15	proportion	residual fraction of leaf, stem, root	Christoffersen et al., 2016
$\Theta_{sat,x}$	fates_hydr_thetas_node	0.65	cm^3/cm^3	saturated water content of xylem	Christoffersen et al., 2016
SLA_{max}	fates_leaf_slamax	0.01	m^2/gC	Maximum Specific Leaf Area (SLA)	TRY
SLA_{top}	fates_leaf_slatop	0.01	m^2/gC	Specific Leaf Area (SLA) at top of canopy, projected area basis	TRY
$V_{cmax,25,\ top}$	fates_leaf_vcmax25top	55	umol $CO2/m^2/s$	maximum carboxylation rate of Rub. at 25C, canopy top	TRY
~~b_{opt}~~ b_{opt}	fates_bbopt_c3	10000	umol $H2O/m^2/s$	Ball-Berry minimum leaf stomatal conductance for C3 plants	Calibrated

Figures

Figure 1


a
soil depth (m)
0
2
4
6
8
roota, rootb
0.1, 0.1
0.3, 0.5
0.6, 0.6
1, 4
2, 5
0
0.4
0.8
1
Cumulative % root mass
b
K (Kg/Mpa/m/s)
0
2
4
6
8
10
Efficient Xylem
Safe Xylem
-15
-10
-5
0
Psi(Mpa)
Psi(Mpa)
0
-5
-10
-15
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1
se

1113

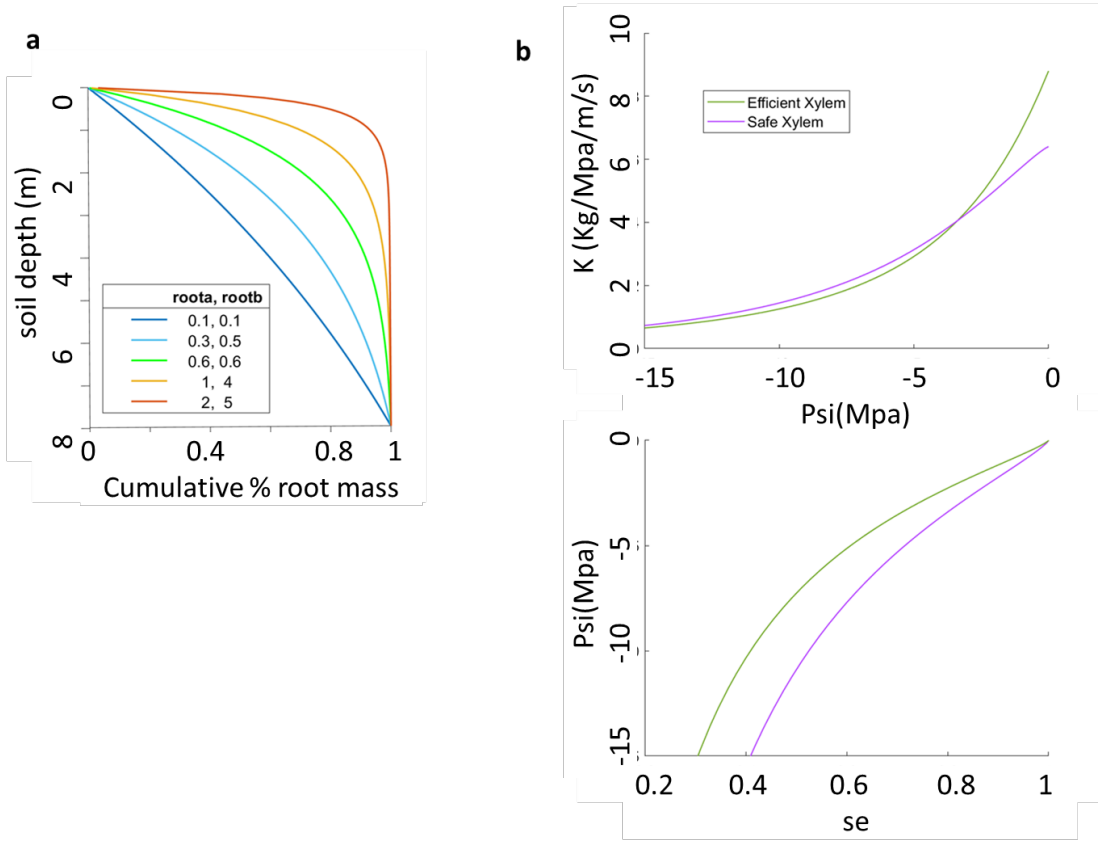
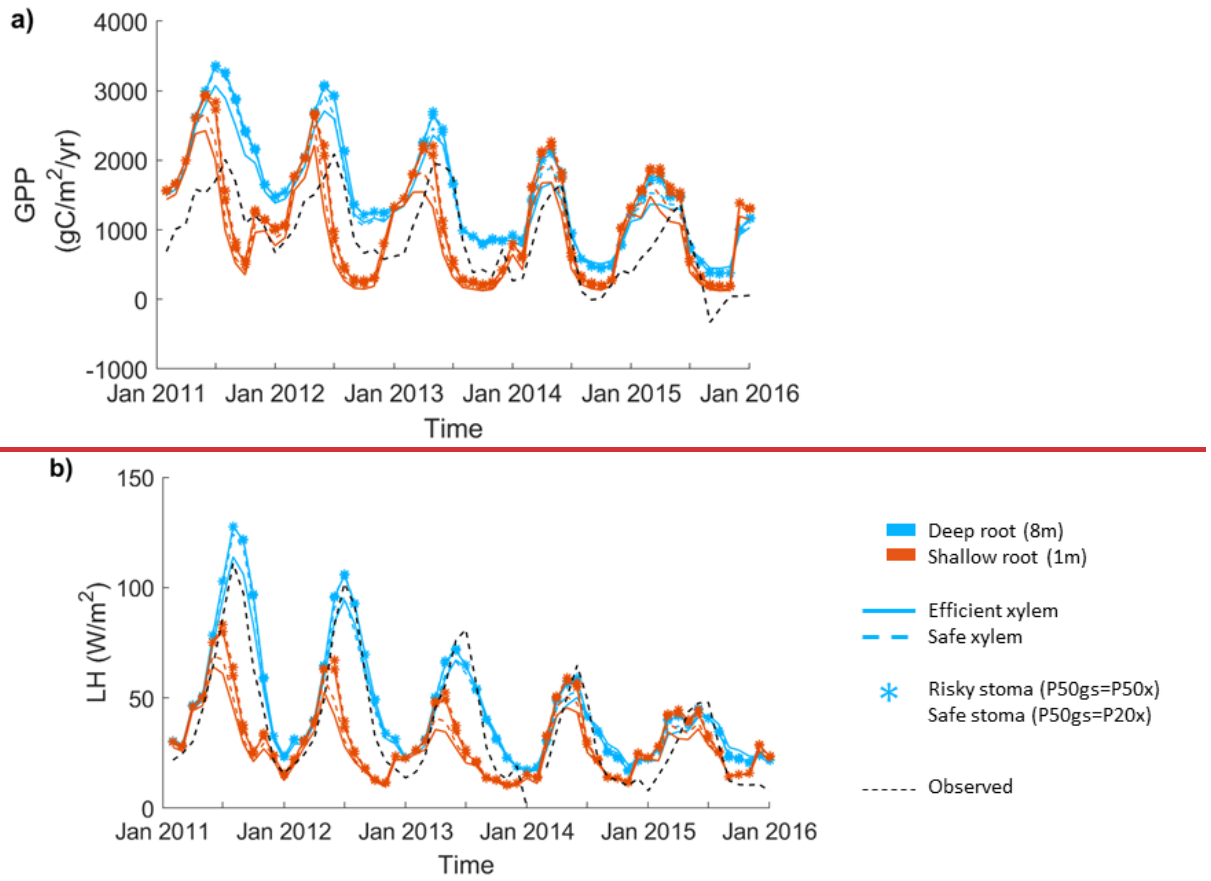


Figure 1. Sensitivity analysis set up for: a) root parameters that give five root distribution scenarios with effective rooting depths of 1m, 3m, 5m, 6.5m, and 8m , and b) two xylem scenarios for safe xylem (P50x=-4.8, Kmax=0.64), and efficient xylem (P50x=-2.5, Kmax=0.88).

1121 Figure 2



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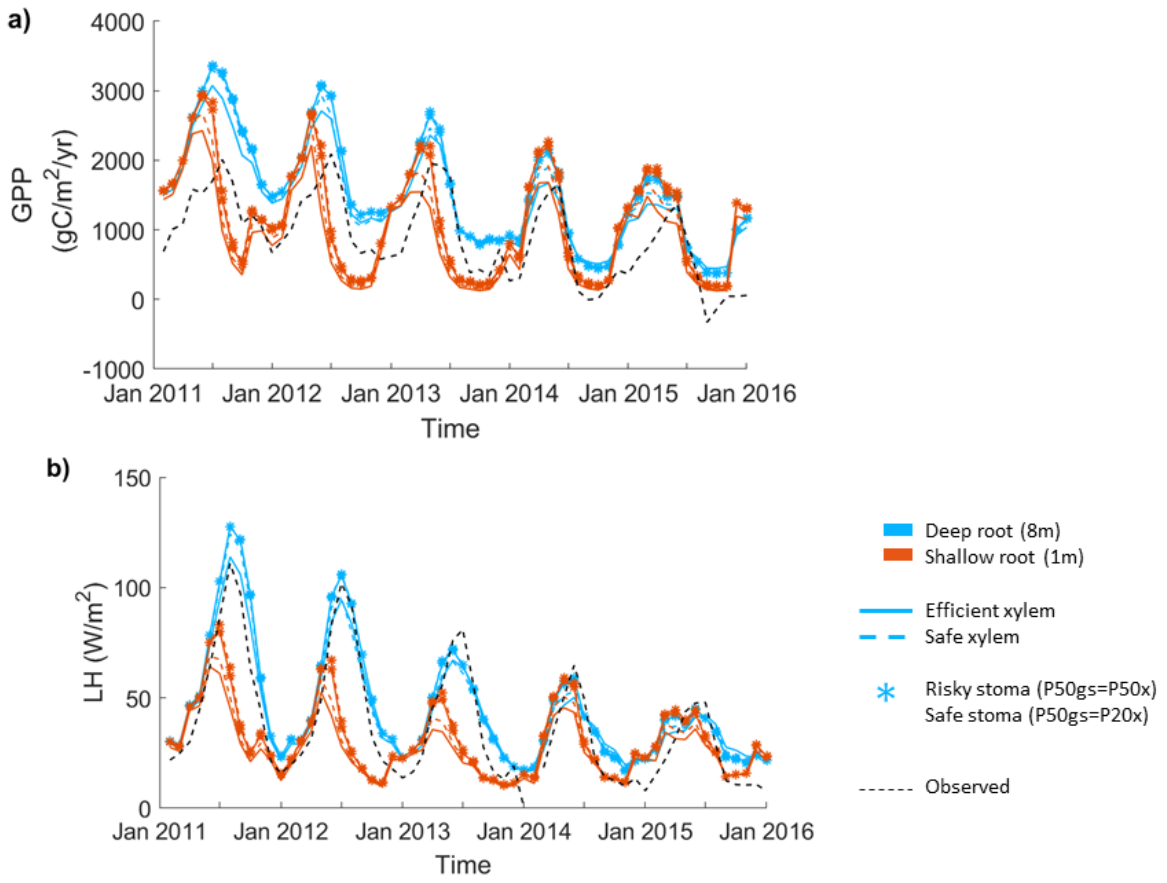
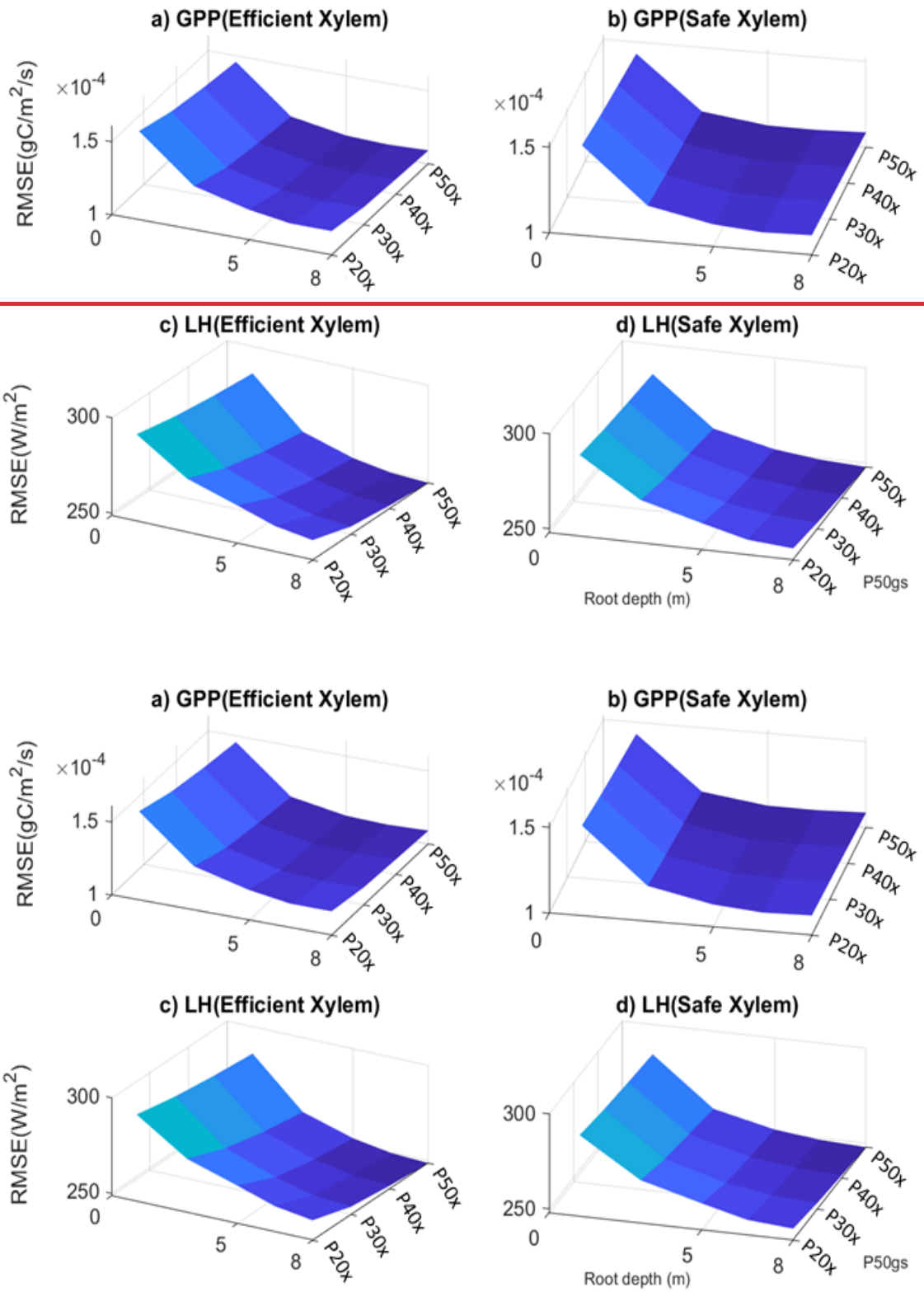


Figure 2. Impact of hydraulic strategies on ecosystem water and energy fluxes: a) monthly mean gross primary productivity, and B) monthly mean latent heat flux, of the end member cases.

Figure 3


a) GPP(Efficient Xylem)
b) GPP(Safe Xylem)
c) LH(Efficient Xylem)
d) LH(Safe Xylem)
RMSE(gC/m²/s)
RMSE(W/m²)
×10⁻⁴
1.5
1
300
250
0
5
8
P50x
P40x
P30x
P20x
P50gs
Root depth (m)

1131 Figure 3. Root mean square error of GPP (a-b), and latent heat flux (c-d) with respect to variation
1132 in input parameters.

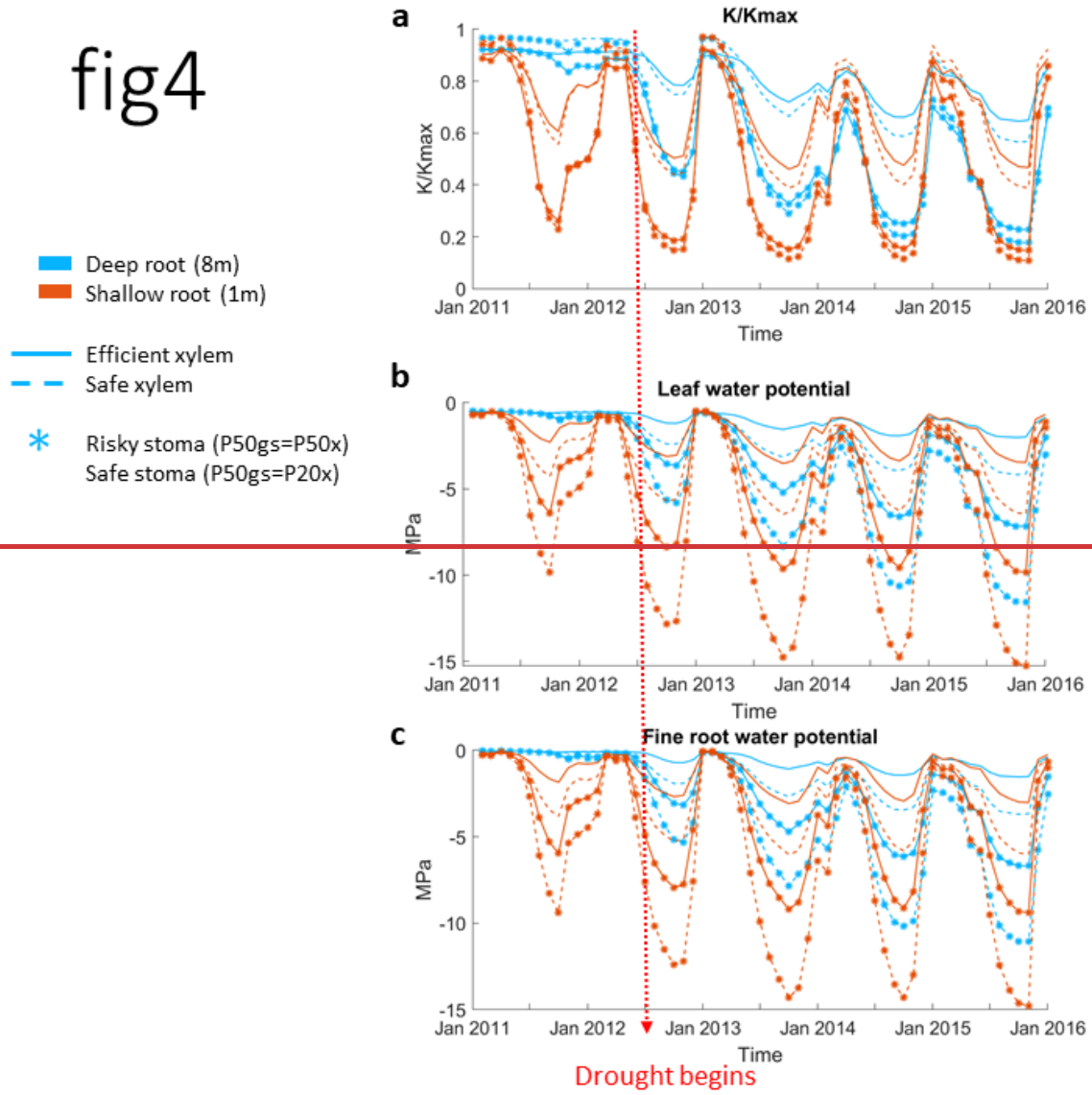
1133

1134

1135 Figure 4

1136

fig4



1137

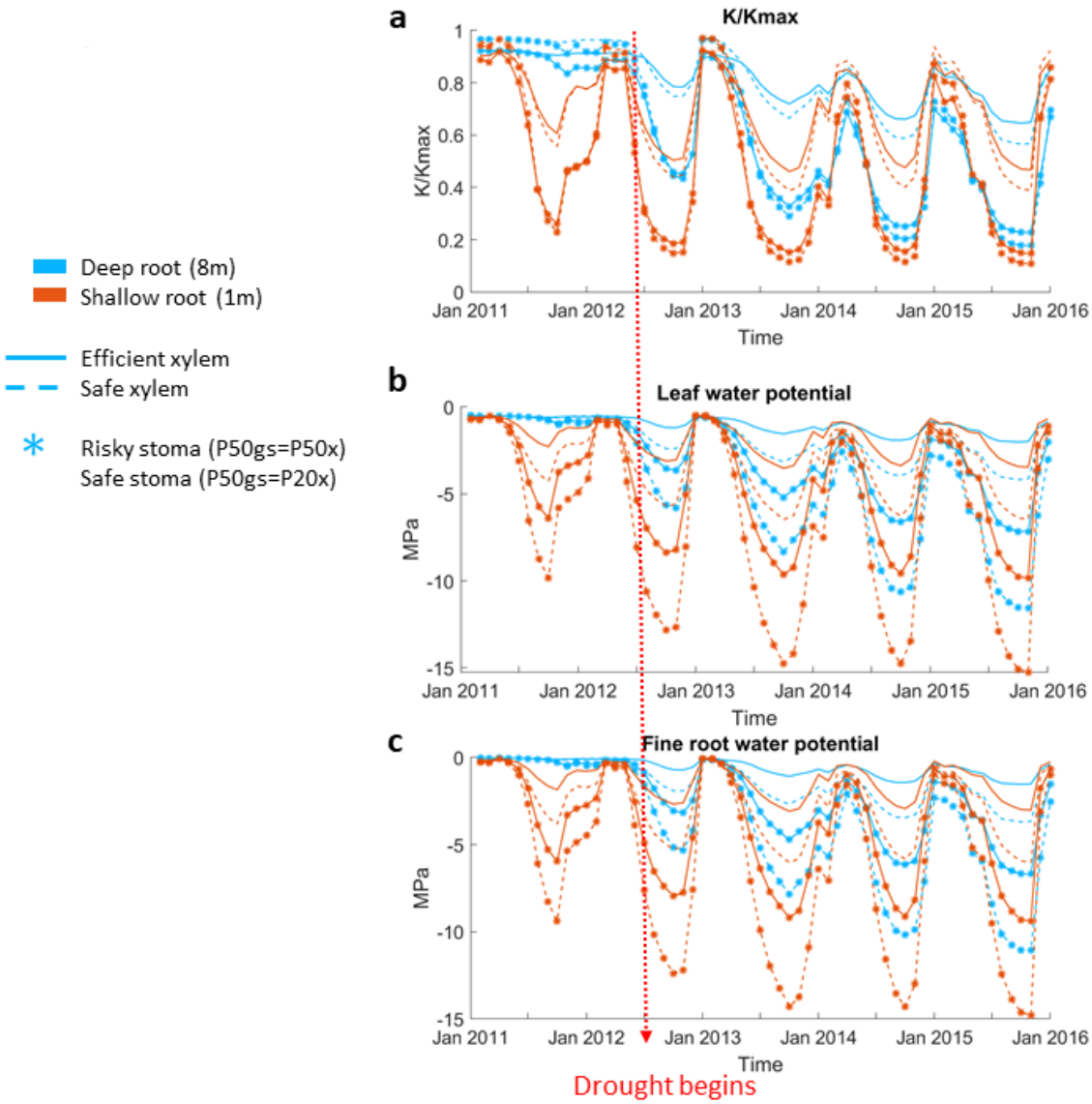
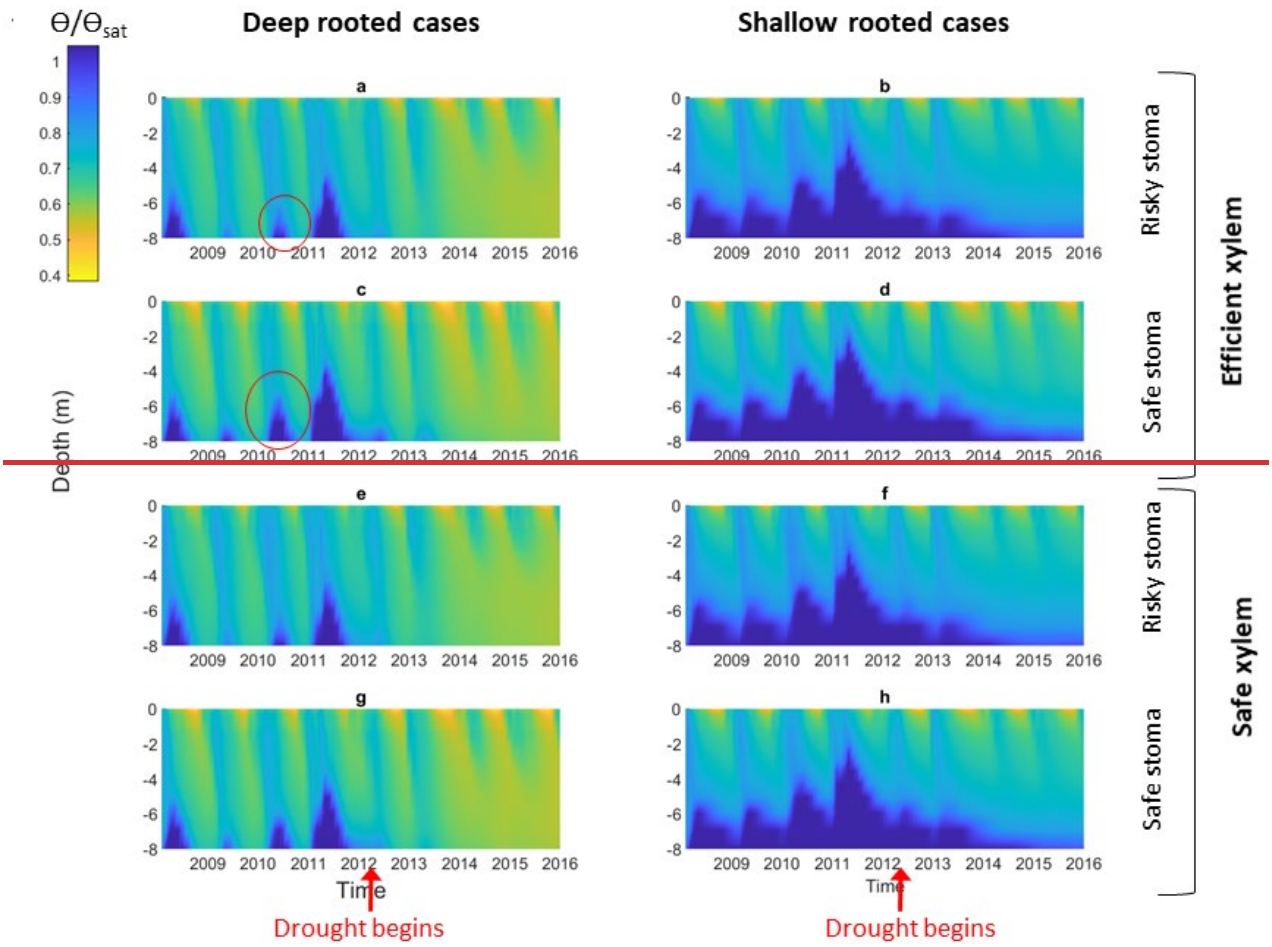


Figure 4. Seasonal and inter-annual variation of plant physiologic characteristics: a) monthly mean stem fraction of conductance K/K_{max} (a), monthly mean leaf water potential, and c) monthly mean overall absorbing roots water potential, of the 55cm DBH cohort throughout the 2011-2015 period.

1145 Figure 5



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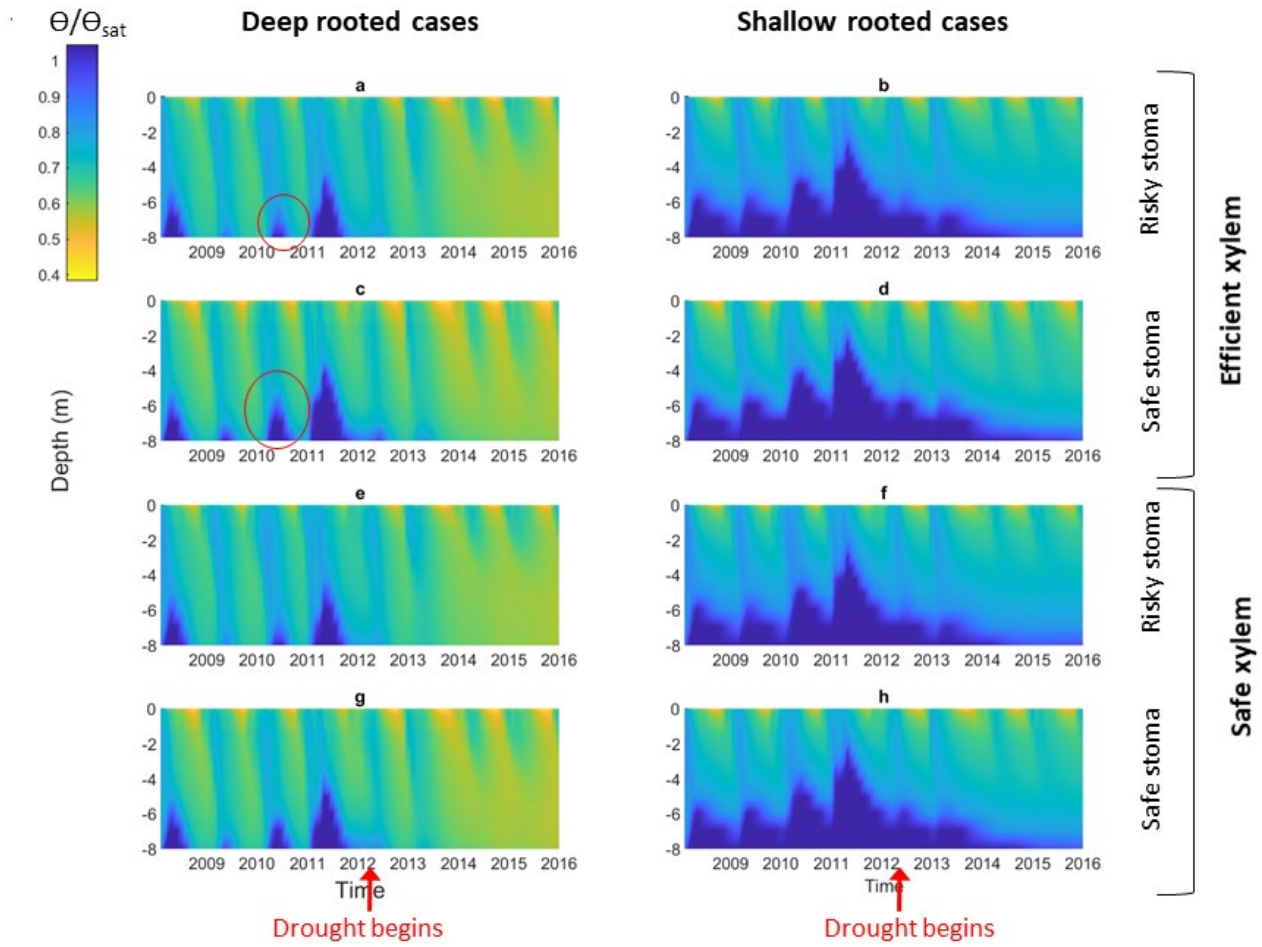
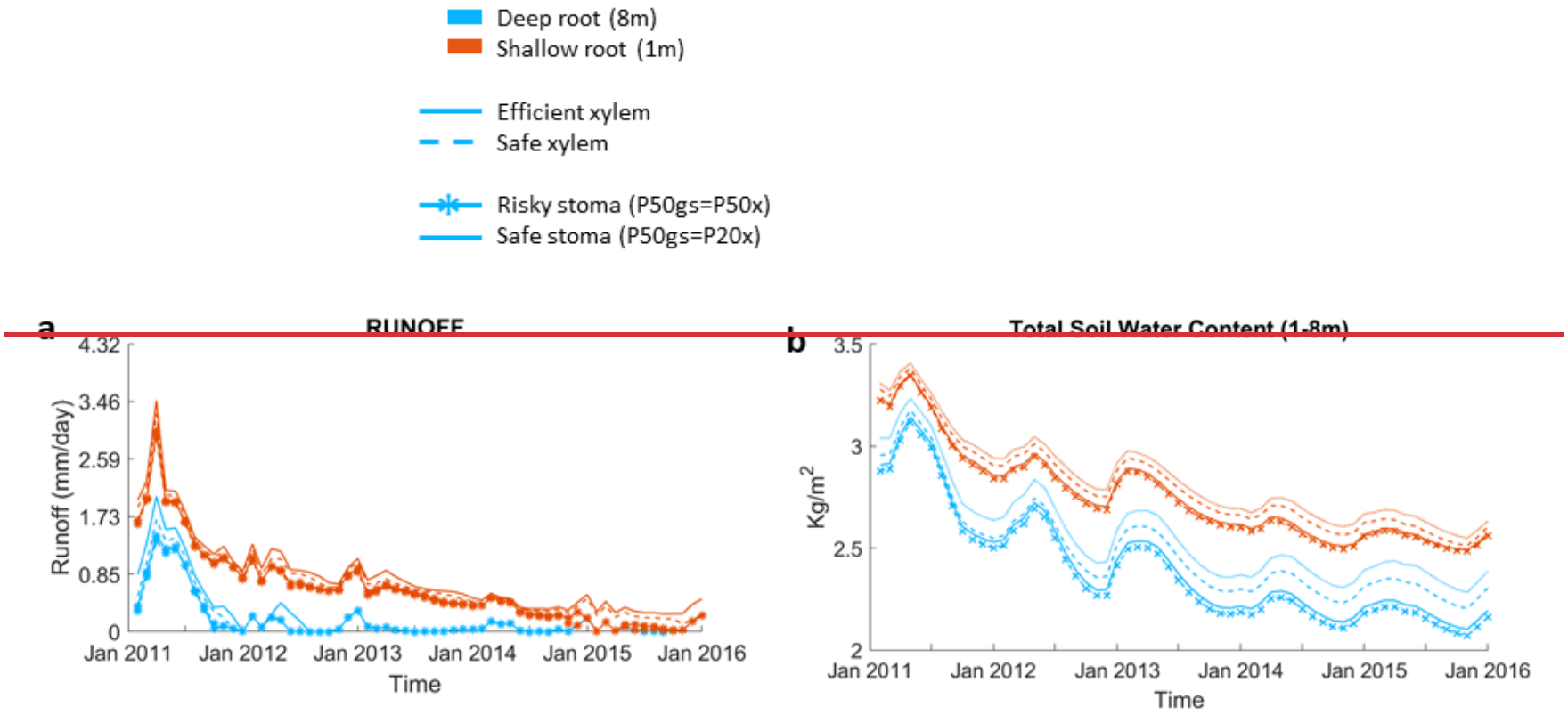


Figure 5. Impact of different combination of rooting depth, xylem and stomatal traits on soil moisture; left column shows deep rooted cases with a) efficient xylem and risky stoma, c) efficient xylem and safe stoma, e) safe xylem and risky stoma, g) safe xylem and safe stoma. Right column shows shallow rooted cases with b) efficient xylem and risky stoma, d) efficient xylem and safe stoma, f) safe xylem and risky stoma, h) safe xylem and safe stoma; red cycle highlights the effect of stomatal traits on deep water storage during the wet season of the pre-drought period

Figure 6


Deep root (8m)
Shallow root (1m)
Efficient xylem
Safe xylem
Risky stoma (P50gs=P50x)
Safe stoma (P50gs=P20x)
a
RUNOFF
Runoff (mm/day)
4.32
3.46
2.59
1.73
0.85
0
Jan 2011
Jan 2012
Jan 2013
Jan 2014
Jan 2015
Jan 2016
Time
b
Total Soil Water Content (1-8m)
Kg/m2
3.5
3
2.5
2
Jan 2011
Jan 2012
Jan 2013
Jan 2014
Jan 2015
Jan 2016
Time

1159
1160

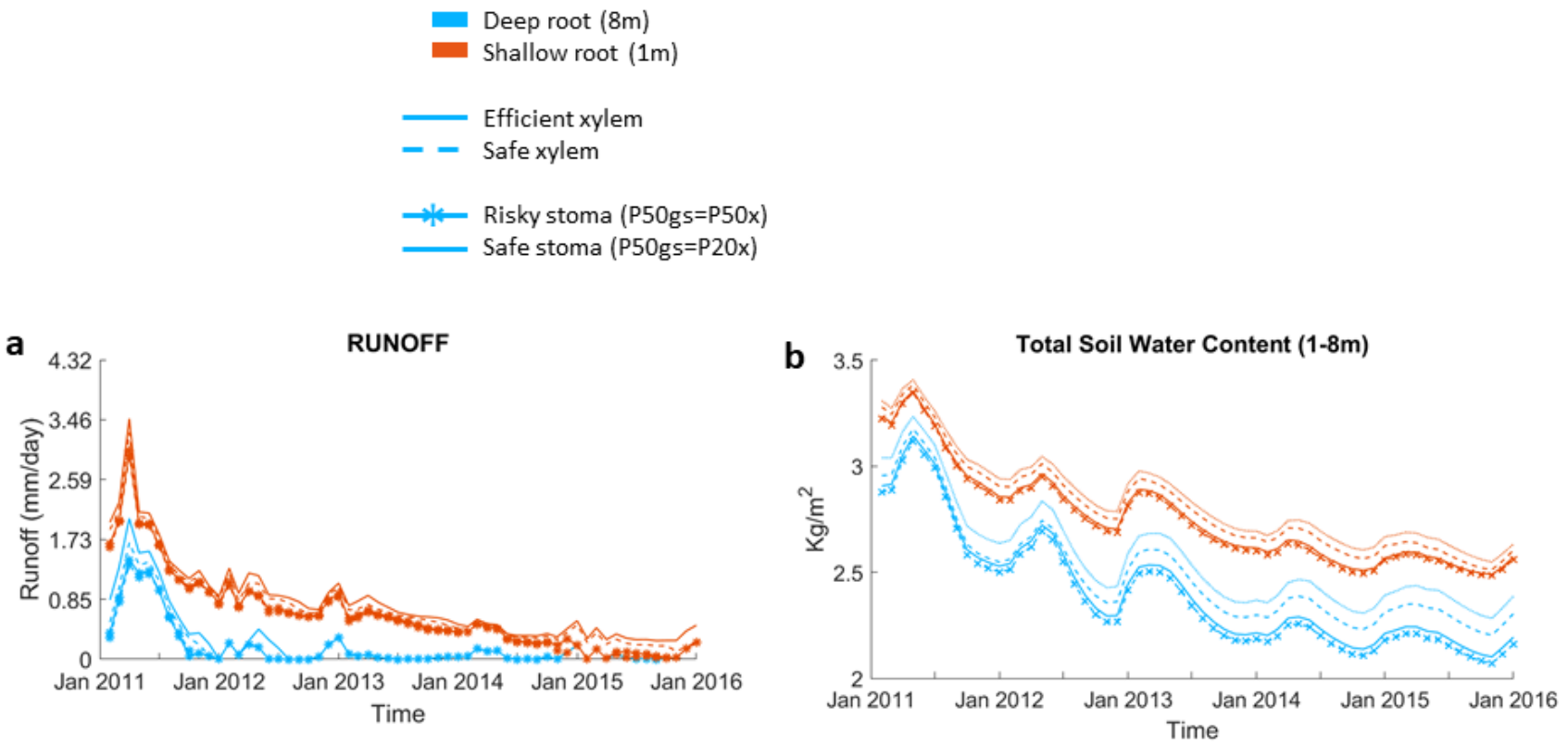
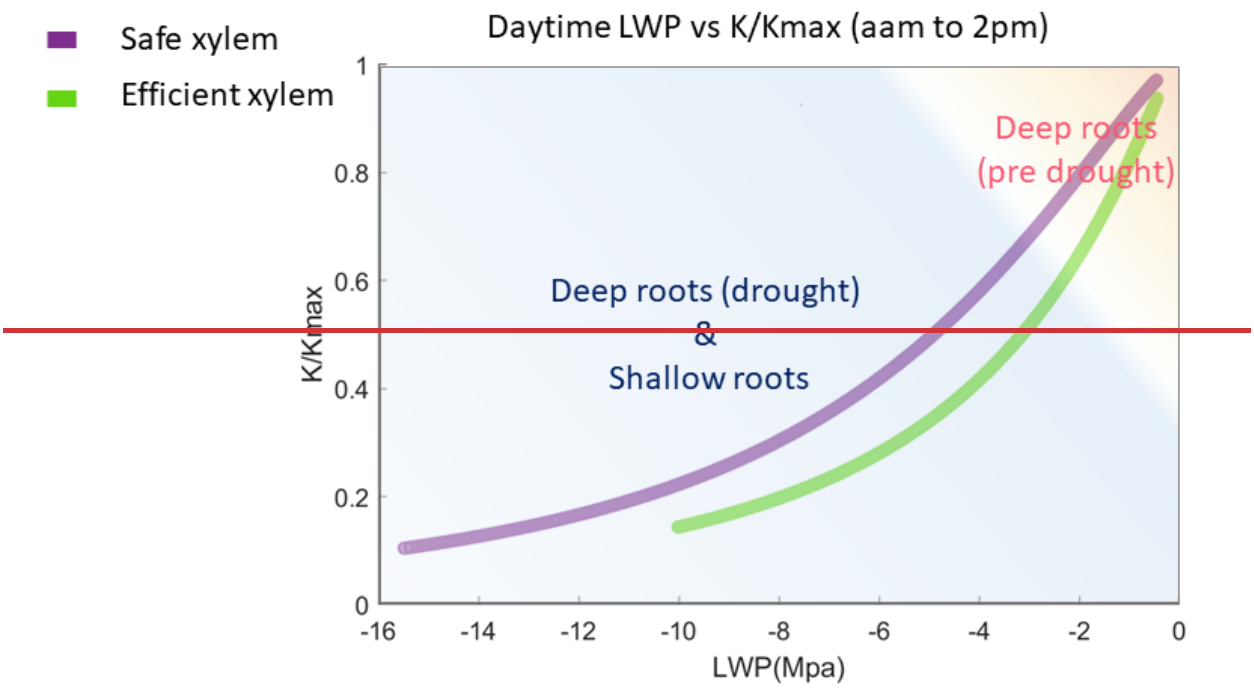
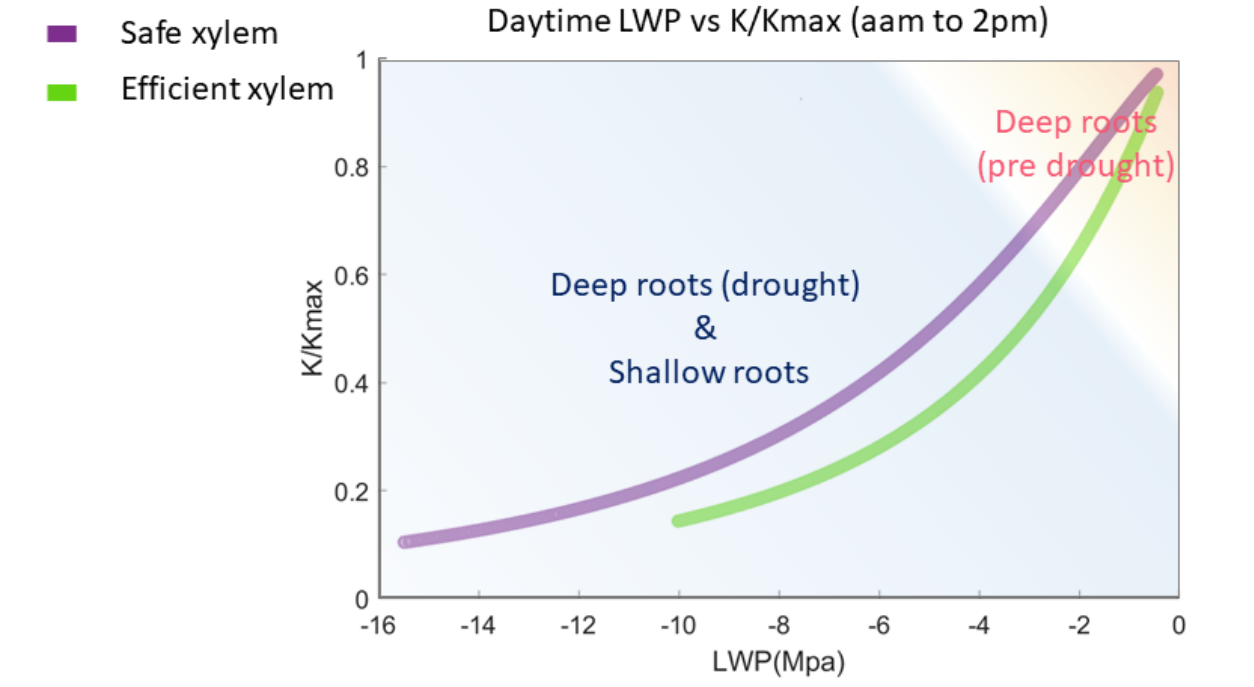


Figure 6. Impact on hydrologic processes: a) mean monthly total runoff, and b) monthly mean total soil water content of the entire soil column.

1164 Figure 7



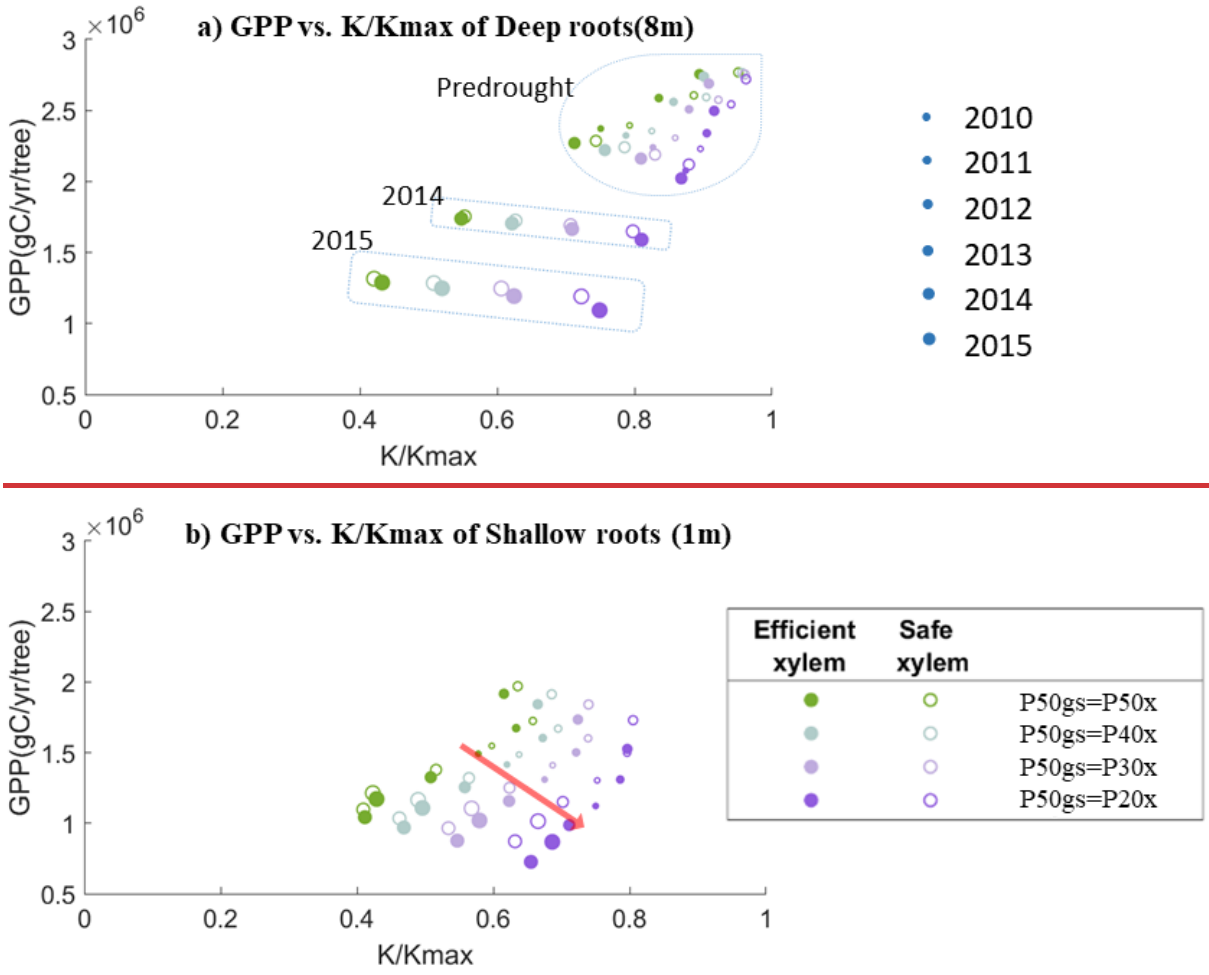
1165



1166

Figure 7. Simulated leaf water potential and fraction loss of conductivity (K/Kmax) of all the cases, which follow the two vulnerability curves.

1171 Figure 8


a) GPP vs. K/Kmax of Deep roots(8m)
×10^6
GPP(gC/yr/tree)
K/Kmax
Predrought
2014
2015
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
b) GPP vs. K/Kmax of Shallow roots (1m)
Efficient xylem
Safe xylem
P50gs=P50x
P50gs=P40x
P50gs=P30x
P50gs=P20x

1172

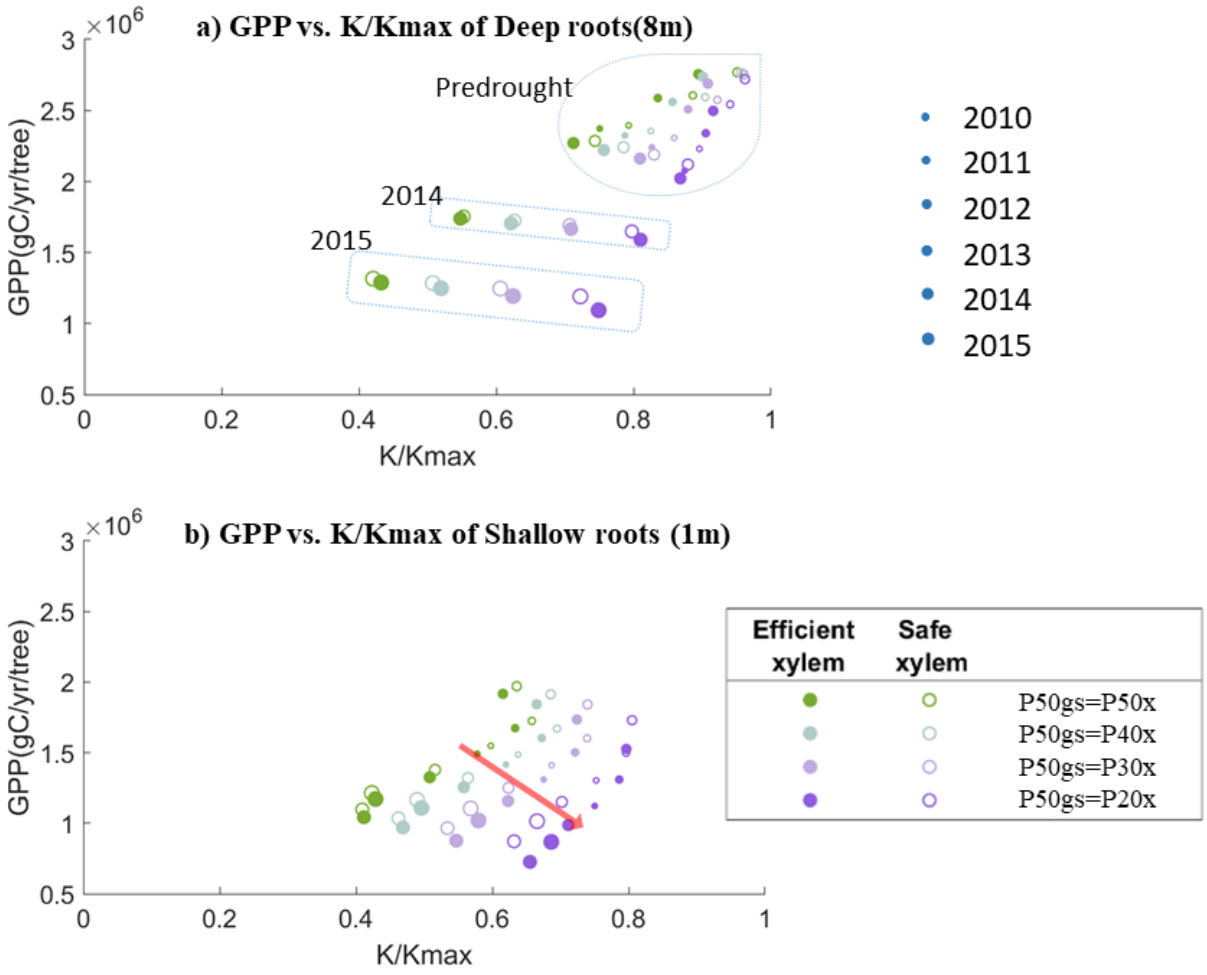


Figure 8. Simulated average annual GPP and fraction of conductance of a 55cm DBH cohort with a) deep roots (effective rooting depth= 8m) and b) shallow roots (effective rooting depth= 1m).