

Interactive comment on “Recurrence intervals for the closure of the Dutch Maeslant surge barrier” by Henk W. van den Brink and Sacha de Goederen

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Below we reply to the comments of anonymous referee #1. The original comments are given in *italics*.

- *Instrumental observations*

- *The authors underline from the introduction (from line 26), with reasons, that the use of ECMWF derived time series is a real plus regarding the use of instrumental observations alone. Yet, it would be beneficial regarding the readability of the paper to have from the start a clear vision of what the instrumental time series is (duration, quality, what would be the estimate of*

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inter-arrival time using it alone, etc.).

We agree with the referee that the section about the observations is too short. In order to improve the readability, we did the following:

1. we renamed the section "Models" to "Models and observations".
 2. we moved the section 4.1 ("Water level observations") to section 2.4.
 3. We extended the section about the Water level observations (2.4) with extra information about the duration and quality as follows: "The observational record of water levels at Hoek van Holland starts in 1864 (Holgate et al, 2013; PSMSL, 2017). Accurate readings of the water level start in August 1887. We used the data from 1888 onward. The data before 1987 are obtained visually from (digitized) charts, afterwards 10-min average values are used." Additionally, we added an extra figure with the timeseries of the observed and corrected annual maxima in Hoek van Holland, with the following accompanying text: "The annual maxima of the water level in Hoek van Holland are shown in Figure 2, both uncorrected and corrected. The observational record contains (after correction) 10 events that exceed 3 m in Hoek van Holland, the smallest interarrival time being 1.2 years (in 1953 and 1954). This makes direct derivation of the recurrence intervals of interarrival times smaller than 1 month impossible."
- *Furthermore, adding more details regarding the way the correction due to land subsidence / long term trend (Figure 1) has been derived would also be appreciated (Sect. 4.1).*

(Note that section 4.1 has been moved to section 2.4.) The analysis has been done in the 'Basispeilen langs de Nederlandse kust' report (1993), which can be found online at <https://repository.tudelft.nl/islandora/object/uuid:c5fb1012-e296-49cf-a6fa-95d4ed58000c/datastream/OBJ/download>, (page 56). It contains an analysis of the discontinuities and trends. A discontinuity in 1965 has been

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observed, which is attributed to the extension of the Rotterdam harbour to the west (as mentioned in the manuscript). The trend is determined separately before 1965 and after 1965. We re-calculated the trend after 1965, because of the extension of the observational record with 30 years (1986-2015).

We added the reference to the Basispeilen-report to the manuscript. The reason for not referencing it in the earlier version is that it is written in Dutch.

- *Presentation of the methodology*

In section 3, the authors present the methods used but it would be beneficial to have a section recalling the different stages of their whole strategy, because the link between the methods is not clear. As far as I understand, the authors only perform Extreme Value Analysis to correct the bias of ECMWF derived time series and to be used to fit the exponential model for the inter-arrival times. Besides in the section 5, which is dedicated to result analysis, the authors present another method, which is confusing.

We added an introductory part to Section 3, in which we introduce the different parts of the analysis, and their mutual relationship. Additionally, we added a small section about the Empirical Distribution Function (section 3.3).

- *Alternative approaches*

- *The statistics of inter-event spacing can also be analysed using the tools of extreme value analysis as it has been done regarding extreme beach erosion; for instance Callaghan et al. (2008): Coastal Engineering. Could the authors discuss/ comments on how their approach differ / complement? Callaghan et al. (2008) do model the seasonal variation of the event occurrence. However, they do not model the event-clustering explicitly (p 382).*

Although Callaghan et al. (2008) uses advanced techniques to model many

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processes, the fact that all processes have to be modelled statistically (and the required parameters have to be estimated from the short dataset) is at the same time the weakness of their approach, especially because these models are extrapolated outside the range of the observations.

In our approach, the results are much less sensitive to the (parameters of the) statistical models than the results of Callaghan. On the other hand, our approach heavily relies on the quality of the both the meteorological and hydrological model, whereas Callaghan uses observations.

In our opinion, the combination of the ECMWF model with the WAQUA/DCSMv5 outperforms the statistical approach of Callaghan, especially in situations where observational records are either lacking, short or of bad quality.

- *The extreme value analysis is performed using a GEV distribution. Could the authors justify their choices, especially regarding the use of a more complete approach with GPD distribution.*

It is, in our opinion, unlikely that the GPD will give better results than the GEV distribution, as both approaches have 3 parameters. The GPD might results in better estimates for short record lengths, as it allows multiple (independent) events per year to be considered in the estimation of the parameters. However, in our case, this will not be of any importance for the 6282-year ECMWF record, and also for the 128-year observational record of Hoek van Holland, the application of the GPD will not lead to (significantly) different results than the GEV does.

- *As stated by the authors in Section 2.3 with references to Van den Brink et al. (2005), Kew et al. (2013), the joint occurrence of extreme discharge and extreme water levels is independent. Could the authors comment on the manner to address the problem when this situation does not exist.*

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We added the following sentence as a footnote to the manuscript (section 2.3): "In the case that extreme discharge and extreme water levels are correlated, the most promising solution - in line with the topic of this paper - is to use the precipitation amounts, the temperature and snow melt in the Rhine basin as input for a hydrological model to calculate the Rhine discharge. In this way no explicit assumptions about the correlation have to be made. This is however outside the scope of this paper."

- *Results*

- *The authors seem to base their approach on the independence assumption. In section 3 and in the introduction, the authors underline the use of the Poisson process model, but in section 5, they underline the violation of the assumption, and propose an alternative. What is confusing is that this alternative is not highlighted in the abstract neither in the conclusion (reading line 13 'assuming independence...' leads to wonder what can be done to overcome the independence problem.*

We added the following sentence to the abstract: "We show that the Poisson process model leads to wrong results, as it neglects the temporal correlations that are present on daily, weekly and monthly scales. By counting the number of double events over a threshold of 2.5 m, and using that the number of events is exponentially related to the threshold, . . ." We also reshuffled the Conclusions, by first mentioning that the assumption of independence is violated, and afterwards that we used the empirical distribution to count the number of double closures.

- *Regarding the presentation of the results (figure 7 and 8 in particular), could the authors discuss / comment on the uncertainty related to the use of an empirical probability distribution. More specifically, there is some slight scattering of the dots in Figure 7, which makes wonder about the uncertainty in the results described in Sect. 5.1*

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In our opinion, we have addressed this point by indicating the effect when another threshold is used than 2.5 m. This effect on the recurrence times is indicated by the blue shading in figure 9 (old figure 8). Note that the effect of the uncertainty in the Gumbel parameters of the observed record (which is added based on the question below) is considerably larger than the uncertainty due to the choice of the threshold. Both uncertainties are indicated in Figure 9 (old figure 8).

- *The question of uncertainty is also raised regarding the GEV fit (Fig. 4) and the derived bias correction.*

We admit that neglecting this uncertainty was a shortcoming of the manuscript. We thank the referee for pointing this out.

Neglecting the uncertainty in the GEV fit of the 6282-year ECMWF-WAQUA/DCSMv5 dataset, we focus on the uncertainty in the Gumbel fit of the observations. A first-order estimation of the 95% uncertainty range is made by replacing μ_{obs} and σ_{obs} in Equation 9 with $\mu_{obs} \pm 2\Delta\mu_{obs}$ and $\sigma_{obs} \pm 2\Delta\sigma_{obs}$, respectively. Redoing the calculations with those adjusted bias corrections gives a good indication of the uncertainty range in the estimated recurrence intervals. We have added these intervals to Figure 9 (old figure 8). It indicates that this uncertainty due to the statistical uncertainty in μ_{obs} and σ_{obs} is much larger than the uncertainty due to the choice of the threshold.

We added an extra paragraph about the uncertainty (section 3.4) in which we explain how we derived the uncertainty in figure 9 (old figure 8).

- *Technical corrections*

- *Figure 6: in the legend, the blue line for observations appears twice. corrected*