CHLOROPHYLL *a+b* CONTENT ESTIMATION THROUGH TURBID-MEDIUM AND MONTE-CARLO RT MODEL INVERSION FOR FOREST CANOPIES USING HYPERSPECTRAL DATA

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1. Introduction

This paper reports on progress made within the Bioindicators of Forest Sustainability Project (Mohammed *et al.,* 1997; Sampson *et al.,* 1998) to develop links between physiologically-based bio-indicators (e.g., pigment concentrations, chlorophyll fluorescence) from field and laboratory data and optical indices from hyperspectral remote sensing data for assessing forest condition.

Predictions of chlorophyll content (chl_{a+b}) or any other canopy biophysical parameter from airborne or satellite canopy reflectance are generally carried out through four different methodologies: i) directly studying the statistical relationships between ground-measured biochemical data and canopy-measured reflectance (Johnson *et al.,* 1994; Matson *et al.,* 1994); ii) applying the leaf-level relationships derived between optical indices and the pigment content directly to canopy-measured reflectance (Peterson *et al.,* 1988; Yoder and Pettigrew-Crosby, 1995; Zagolski *et al.,* 1996); iii) *scaling-up* the leaf-level relationships based on optical indices related to pigment content through models of canopy reflectance or infinite reflectance (Zarco-Tejada *et al.,* 1999a; 1999b; 2000); and iv) inverting the observed canopy reflectance through a canopy reflectance or infinite reflectance model coupled with a leaf model to estimate the optimum pigment content (Jacquemoud *et al.,* 1995; Kuusk, 1998; Demarez and Gastellu-Etchegorry, 2000; Weiss *et al.,* 2000; Jacquemoud *et al.,* 2000).

Traditional statistical methods have demonstrated successful retrievals of pigment content from hyperspectral reflectance, such as from multivariate analysis between Airborne Visible InfraRed Imaging Spectrometer (AVIRIS) reflectance and total nitrogen, lignin, starch, chlorophyll content and LAI (Johnson *et al.,* 1994) and with nitrogen and chlorophyll (Matson *et al.,* 1994) through application of a stepwise multiple-regression procedure using the AVIRIS spectral bands. Nevertheless, statistical leaf-level relationships applied to canopy reflectance for pigment estimation are site and species specific (Chappelle *et al.*, 1992; Gitelson and Merzylak, 1997) and therefore require relationship parameterisation that is a function of the canopy structure and viewing geometry at the time of remote sensing data collection. Therefore, the statistical relationships derived at leaf level need to be parameterised in order to be useful for estimation at the canopy level, due to the differences between the two media: one where the relationship is derived (leaf) and the other where it is applied for estimations (forest canopy). Although significant correlations are found when statistical approaches are used, no prediction capabilities can be inferred from either one of these research results since the locally-derived relationships are affected by species, canopy structure, LAI, canopy openings, shadows and understory.

Scaling-up methods using coupled leaf-level statistical relationships and radiative transfer (RT) models (Zarco-Tejada, *et al.,* 1999a, 1999b; Zarco-Tejada, 2000), and RT model inversion techniques coupling leaf and canopy models (Jacquemoud *et al.,* 1995; Kuusk, 1998; Demarez and Gastellu-Etchegorry, 2000; Jacquemoud *et al.,*

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2000; Zarco-Tejada *et al.*, 2001a; 2001b) allow consideration of the canopy structure, with leaf RT simulation using leaf biochemical constituents as input to model leaf reflectance and transmittance that is in turn used as input for the canopy reflectance model. This paper reports on progress made to estimate leaf chlorophyll content by radiative transfer model inversion techniques. The study was carried out at forest sites of *Pinus strobus* L. and *Acer saccharum* M. in Ontario, Canada, where field measurements and hyperspectral CASI imagery were collected between 1997 and 2000 in airborne deployments. PROSPECT, SAILH, and SPRINT radiative transfer models were used for numerical inversion using red edge spectral indices to build the merit function used in the optimization procedure. Individual tree samples were collected at each site for biochemical analysis and measurement of leaf chlorophyll, carotenoid concentrations, as well as reflectance and transmittance of broad leaves and needles. The model inversion techniques were tested using CASI data of 72 and 288 channels and 0.5 and 2 m spatial resolution.

2. Hyperspectral Data Collection

Data collection was carried out in 18 study sites of *Pinus strobus* L. and *Acer saccharum* M. in Ontario (Canada), where field data and airborne hyperspectral data were collected with the *Compact Airborne Spectrographic Imager* (CASI) sensor. Airborne data were collected in the 400-950 nm spectral range, with spatial resolution varying from 0.5 to 5m and with CASI modes of operation of 72 and 288 bands with 7.5 and 2.5 nm spectral resolution, respectively. Field campaigns were carried out in summer of 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000, collecting LAI, canopy cover, using hemispherical photography and PCA-LiCor 2000. A total of 440 leaf samples per year were collected from 12 deciduous sites and 84 groups of needles from the 6 conifer sites. Leaf and needle samples were used for measuring chlorophyll $a+b$ and carotenoids as described in Zarco-Tejada *et al.* (2000). Reflectance (r) and transmittance (t) from each broad leaf and needle sample were obtained with a LiCor integrating sphere attached to a 7.5 nm fibre spectrometer in the 400-900 nm range. Raw CASI data were calibrated to radiance and atmospherically corrected using CAM5S model using aerosol optical depth at 550nm collected over the area at the time of airborne data collection. Airborne data were geocoded using onboard GPS and INS.

3. Leaf-Level Radiative Transfer Modelling for Broad Leaves and Needles

Accurate determination of the optical properties of leaf samples is critical for development and validation of leaf RT models. PROSPECT model (Jacquemoud and Baret, 1990), has been widely used and validated in broadleaves for numerical inversion to estimate chlorophyll content. Nevertheless, development and validation of leaf models to simulate needle reflectance and transmittance has not been that successful due to existing difficulties to measure the optical properties of needles associated with their shape and size.

The method of Daughtry *et al.* (1989) for needle r and t was adapted by Harron and Miller (Harron, 2000) through the use of a carrier to support the needles avoiding gaps between samples. Using the carrier-based method the effect of the specular scattered light is eliminated completely, therefore avoiding errors made in the meticulous measurement of the gap fraction between the needles presented at the exit port. Besides, Harron and Miller's method avoids the influence of specular scattered light from the curved needle surface which in previous methods escapes from the sphere in the reflectance measurements and is introduced into the sphere in the transmittance measurements. This new method considerably improved the measurement of needle optical properties (Harron, 2000) and allowed successful application of PROSPECT model to simulate needle r and t. Figure 1 shows needle reflectance and transmittance spectra measured with Harron and Miller's method using a carrier in the Li-Cor integrating sphere, and simulated by PROSPECT leaf model using chl_{a+b} and N values obtained by model inversion. The close agreement obtained between measured and simulated reflectance and transmittance spectra in needles from the study areas, and the extensive validation of PROSPECT in the literature prompted our adoption of the traditional PROSPECT for the needle simulations presented in this paper.

The 84 reflectance and transmittance spectra were used for estimation of the leaf structural parameter N and the total chlorophyll pigment chl_{a+b} using the PROSPECT model. The model inversion was performed by iteration, varying N from 2 to 5 as the first step, with the root mean square error (RMSE) function $\xi(N)$ to be minimized using both r and t in the NIR (780-800 nm), where structural effects dominate significantly over pigment effects in reflectance and transmittance [Equation 1].

$$RMSE = \xi(N, chl_{a+b}) = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{\lambda}[(r_{PROSPECT} - r_m)_{\lambda}^2 + (t_{PROSPECT} - t_m)_{\lambda}^2]}{n}} \qquad [1]$$

where r_m and t_m are r and t measured from the needle samples with the Li-Cor and fibre spectrometer. In the second step, with N estimated, chl_{a+b} was varied from 40 to 100 $\mu g/cm^2$ and the function $\xi(N, chl_{a+b})$ minimized by calculating the RMSE over the 450-700 nm range. Following the above procedure, the assessment of chl_{a+b} estimation by PROSPECT model inversion yielded r^2=0.4.
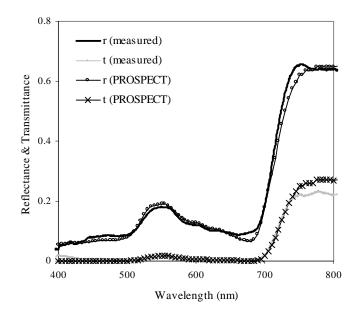

Figure 1. Needle reflectance and transmittance spectra measured with Harron and Miller's method using a carrier in the Li-Cor integrating sphere, and simulated by PROSPECT leaf RT model. Measured chl_{a+b} in the shoot of the set of needles used for optical measurement of this plot was 60.2 $\mu g/cm^2$ (after conversion using nominal thickness and FLA). Plotted simulated reflectance and transmittance with PROSPECT was carried out with $chl_{a+b} = 68.5 \mu g/cm^2$ and N=3.5, obtained previously by numerical inversion of the leaf model.

4. Estimation of Chlorophyll *a+b* by RT Model Inversion from Airborne Hyperspectral Data in Deciduous and Conifer Canopies

Canopy simulation modeling was carried out using two radiative transfer models, SAILH for closed deciduous canopies, and SPRINT for conifers. The use of turbid-medium models such as SAILH in deciduous canopies was carried out by building a merit function based on spectral transforms to minimize the forest canopy structure, shadows and openings. Building merit functions based on spectral transforms or vegetation indices (Zarco-Tejada, 2000; Zarco-Tejada *et al*., 2001a) enables the design of a merit function based on optical indices that are related with the variable subject to estimation, such as chl_{a+b}. The use of optical indices in the merit function has not been reported in any of the validation work found in the literature, although it appears that there is significant inherent potential of this approach in remote sensing application. Reflectance values measured from airborne or satellite sensors are a function of illumination, canopy structure, and atmospheric condition at the time of data collection. On the other hand, estimation of biophysical parameters through optical indices enable the sensitivity to such biophysical parameters to be maximized, normalizing external effects due to atmosphere, illumination conditions, and viewing geometry (Running *et al.,* 1994; Huete and Justice, 1999).

The iterative-optimization numerical model-inversion technique to estimate chlorophyll content by using a coupled leaf model and a canopy model requires the error calculation by comparison of estimated canopy reflectance r^* to the at-sensor measured reflectance r_m. Error calculation consists of determination of a set of parameters $P=(N,Chl_{a+b},C_w,LAI,\theta_s...)$ which minimizes a merit function Δ^2 over the whole spectrum [Equation 2].

$$\Delta^2 = \sum_n [r_m(\lambda_i) - r^*(\lambda_i, P)]^2 \qquad [2]$$

where, $r_m(\lambda_i)$ is the measured canopy spectral reflectance; and $r^*(\lambda_i, P)$ is the modelled canopy spectral reflectance with a set of P parameters. Equation [3] presents the merit function used in this study when the red-edge spectral parameter R_{750}/R_{710} is used for pigment estimation:

$$\Delta^2 = \left[\left(\frac{R750}{R710}\right)_m - \left(\frac{R750}{R710}, P\right)_*\right]^2 \qquad [3]$$

where R750/R710$_m$ is the optical index calculated from measured canopy reflectance, and R750/R710$_*$ is the optical index calculated from modelled canopy reflectance, for a given set of input parameters P. Zarco-Tejada *et al.* (2001a) demonstrated that forest canopy shadows and heterogeneity are minimized when a red edge optical index is used in the merit function used for error assessment in the coupled PROSPECT+SAILH RT models. This methodology was used for model inversion in deciduous and coniferous study sites, using PROSPECT+SAILH for deciduous and PROSPECT+SPRINT for coniferous sites. Structural parameters and viewing geometry values for RT modeling (Figure 2) were measured in the field at the time of data collection, with specific white pine values extrapolated from field measurements made earlier (Fox, 1991). The structural values from both species were used for model simulation, using the following for *Pinus strobus*: tree density, 1100 trees/ha; Poisson distribution of trees; irregular conical crown shape (ellipsoidal), height of trunk, 8.5 m; height of tree, 15.0 m; trunk radius, 8.3 cm; crown radius, 2.0 m; spherical leaf angle distribution; shoot area, 0.0008 m^2; canopy effective LAI, 2.5; and leaf area density, 0.4171 /m. whereas for *Acer saccharum* parameters were: LAI=3.5, plagiophile leaf angle distribution function (LADF), soil reflectance data derived from CASI imagery, and model-estimated skylight irradiance fraction based on conditions during airborne acquisitions. Estimated versus measured leaf pigment content results from the 12 study sites of *Acer saccharum* yielded r^2=0.4, RMSE=5.5 μg/cm^2 (years 1999 and 2000), and r^2=0.4, RMSE=8.1 μg/cm^2 for *Pinus strobus* (year 2000).
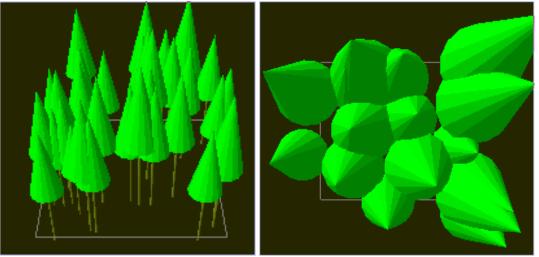

Figure 2. Scene representation of the *Pinus strobus* coniferous canopy used for the Monte-Carlo radiative transfer simulation with SPRINT model (30° viewing angle, left; nadir view, right). Structural parameters and viewing geometry values were measured in the field at the time of data collection for *Pinus strobus*: tree density, 1100 trees/ha with Poisson distribution; irregular conical crown shape, height of trunk, 8.5 m; height of tree, 15.0 m; trunk radius, 8.3 cm; crown radius, 2.0 m; spherical leaf angle distribution; shoot area, 0.0008 m^2; canopy effective LAI, 2.5; and leaf area density, 0.4171 /m.

5. Conclusions

This paper demonstrates that radiative transfer model inversion techniques can be applied successfully to forest canopies with different structural characteristics, such as *Acer saccharum* and *Pinus strobus*. The new approach of Harron and Miller for measuring the optical properties of needles using a carrier method, enabled the validation of PROSPECT leaf model for pigment content estimation by inversion in needles. Estimation of chlorophyll content in closed deciduous canopies was successfully carried out using a turbid-medium model (SAILH) coupled to PROSPECT, and building the merit function with a red edge optical index R750/R710. It was previously demonstrated that a turbid-medium model could successfully be used in closed forest canopies when a red edge index is used in the merit function used for minimization. Red edge indices such as R750/R710 used as merit function minimizes shadows and canopy openings, therefore enabling the use of less complicated RT models such as SAILH in forest canopies. The same approach was carried out for the coniferous canopies, coupling PROSPECT to SPRINT Monte-Carlo RT model and using the same red edge index to build the merit function. Results obtained from the 12 study sites of *Acer saccharum* were $r^2=0.4$, RMSE=5.5 $\mu g/cm^2$ (1999 and 2000 campaigns) and $r^2=0.4$, RMSE=8.1 $\mu g/cm^2$ for *Pinus strobus* (2000 campaign), showing that RT model inversion methods can be used with success over forest canopies to estimate chlorophyll content.

6. References

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Presented at the 2001 AVIRIS Workshop, JPL-NASA, Pasadena, California, Feb. 27th - March 2nd, 2001