

Interactive comment on “Can seasonal hydrological forecasts inform local decisions and actions? An “in-the-moment” decision-making activity” by Jessica L. Neumann et al.

Anonymous Referee #2

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General comments

I would like to thank the authors for this innovative contribution that addresses a still little-explored topic in the (seasonal) hydrological forecasting research community. The proposed article explores forecast uncertainty, forecast communication and decision-making with an original experiment involving and giving voices to decision-makers from the West Thames. As highlighted by the authors, this is a research area with limited contributions, which, in my opinion, fits nicely in Geosciences Communication. The paper is didactic and well documented, and I strongly recommend it for publication, though I do have some minor questions which I list below.

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Specific comments

Section 2.2.1: (a) Here, I think some more information on the process of finding participants would be useful for the reader. From this section, it seems that all eleven invited participants agreed to be part of the focus group: “11 West Thames stakeholders [...] were invited to take part in the focus group [...]” (L.12). If so, I assume there were previous collaborations, and did these have any role in the willingness to participate? And if not, how many stakeholders were invited, how many declined and, if any, for which reasons? (b) Additionally, it would be interesting that the authors mentioned how many forecasters, public water suppliers, waste water modellers and operators, etc. are active in the area. For example, how representative are the 3 forecasters that took part in the group? What do 11 stakeholders represent at the scale of the region? This is for the sake of giving a wider picture to the reader on the stakeholders being active in the area, and on the impact/outreach this experiment has had. (c) How many different organizations were represented through these 11 participants?

Section 3.2.2: How much do you think the group opinion influenced the colour chosen by individual participants? Could there be biases here?

Figure 3: It is mentioned in the text that there are about 110 dots on each map (L.9), but in Figure 3, we observe around 9 or 10 dots per catchments. What is the reason for this? Were some stakeholders only working on their usual catchments of interest?

Section 3.3.1: It was not clear to me how familiar the participants were to this information and what they got out from it if they are already familiar with the region.

Section 4.2: “At no point did participants ignore the SHF information” (L.18) Isn't this result due to the context? From the moment the participants know they are in a seasonal forecasting experiment, they are willing to use the provided information.

Section 5.3 (L.22-29): How did the authors deal with forecast quality in this experiment? (a) From this paragraph, it seems that no quality information was provided, and

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indeed, no quality information appears in the Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 sections of the Supplement. Was it a choice to exclude this information, or is it not available to users in the Hydrological Outlook UK and the EFAS-Seasonal? (b) In the absence of quality information, did the users assume that forecast quality was the current/latest one they are aware of? (c) Several platforms now propose quality information along with the forecasts, and assuming that this information is provided in a clear manner, users do not have to hypothesize about the quality of the forecasts they use. In this specific paragraph, authors suggest “to keep water sector users informed of scientific developments”. In my opinion, it is also crucial to provide quality information in an intelligible way along with the forecasts, as well as build the required user knowledge to understand this information.

Technical corrections

Figure 8: A reminder of the colour codes would be useful for the reader to have.

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