Analysis of Bermejo Watershed in Santa Fe, Panama using radar topography and GPS

Tim Klug, Kelly Hodgskins, Nick Davis, Rebecca Chalker
Earth System Science Program, UAH

Overview
Creating a watershed model using Shuttle Radar Topography Mission digital elevation models and GPS provides valuable information about environmental factors that influence water quality in rural communities.

Key Findings
Watershed analysis of a community’s aquifer is vital for maintaining quality drinking water because it enables the identification of:
• Possible contaminants located within the watershed
• Treatment options based on proximity to contaminants and land cover features
• Elevation differences that could account for temperature and pressure fluctuation
• Stream networks that could allow for additional water sources to be tapped

Model

Completed Watershed

Impact
The identification of watersheds is critical to understanding the different variables that can affect the quality of a community’s drinking water. With the extent of each watershed clearly defined, it is possible to identify points where runoff could introduce potential contaminants into the community’s water source.

Explanation
The Bermejo watershed model was created using GPS waypoints and a 30m SRTM DEM. Because of the low resolution of the DEM, the original GPS point taken at the aquifer yielded only a 30x30m watershed. Additional pourpoints were created at nearby branches of the area’s stream network to expand the model. Two GPS points of low intensity development and deforestation fell within the model, indicating possible sources of contamination.

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