Climate of the Past

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Discussions

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Interactive comment on "Tree-ring based spring precipitation reconstruction in the Sikhote-Alin Mountain Range" by Olga Ukhvatkina et al.

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Dear Reviewer,

First of all, we would like to thank you for the time spent on our manuscript and to express regret that it left you such a negative impression.

At the very beginning of your review, you wrote that "the overall quality is neither sufficient for Clim Past nor for any other peer-reviewed journal". This is a very strict verdict, and, such opinion should be supported by well justified arguments. However, in our opinion, you did not provide valid points supporting your verdict. Specifically, you wrote that: 1) "The English style and grammar both require thorough improvement". 2) "figure captions that lack the necessary level of information". 3) "manuscript's structure is

sometimes challenged by weak and confusing chains of arguments". 4) "I am not fully convinced that the TRW dataset (sample size and age structure), the standardization applied (age-dependent splines) and the chronology option used (residuals) are indeed ideal (?) for the development of robust precipitation reconstructions". 5) "I recommend removing all of the spectral analyses and its vague and misleading interpretation, because the time-series are too short to reveal any meaningful patterns and behavior". 6) "I believe that stable isotopes could help improving the climate signal substantially". 7) after revision and improvements, our manuscript "should be submitting to a more specialized journal"

Please, find below our answers to your comments and the summary at the end of this letter

1) English/grammar problems This comment is in the first place; therefore, it is probably your biggest concern. However, the grammar in our manuscript has been corrected by the American Journal Experts (AJE). We are sure that they are native speakers (at least, this is stated on their website). It would be very helpful if you highlighted the specific problems (incorrect phrases or sentences) in the text or, possibly, some unsuccessful terms that make the manuscript incomprehensible. If there are too many such sentences and terms, then you could select them for example on several pages. Since you did not do this, it is very difficult to understand exactly what the problem is. Thus, we believe that without mentioning single specific example, this point cannot be considered. Also, we would like to highlight that this is not our first article in English and, at least some of us, are fluent in "international English" and these authors previously published papers in respected journals (sometimes even without professional check of grammar). To conclude, we believe that there could be some problematic parts or errors in English in our manuscript. Such problems, however, could occur also in manuscripts authored by native speakers. Thus, we believe that your concern that we are not native speaker is unfair and kind of offensive. Helpful review normally highlights such specific points or point out kindly to some general problem(s). Just to

be clear, we would be happy to ask another native speaker to improve our English, but we do not agree, also on the base of our experience, that the level of English so low that it is not understandable at its current stage. We think you would be interested in reading these articles: https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2019/10/reviewers-don-t-be-rude-nonnative-english-speakers and maybe also this: https: / /link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00264-020-04504-1. You may know them well, but if not, it will be very useful for other reviews.

2) Problems with illustrations It would be helpful if you wrote, the captions for which illustrations do not contain enough information and what information they should contain. Again, thus comment is of very low relevance and cannot not directly aid us to improve the manuscript, which is a pity.

3) Manuscript structure and argument chain We are very sorry, but we cannot understand at what moment you were lost in the chain of our arguments and what are the drawbacks of the structure of the manuscript. It is possible that some parts of the manuscript need to be interchanged and some additional explanations should be made. Changes in structure are commonly suggested by reviewers as they can see manuscripts from different perspective and we always try to improve manuscript according the specific recommendations of the reviewers (as well as we provide such recommendations in our reviews). However, again, you did not provide specific details and suggestions how to improve the manuscript.

4) Not ideal dataset and methods We should say that the concepts of "ideal" and "not ideal" are subjective, and we (since we are scientists) should use what can be calculated or measured. There are important tables in our article - Table 1 (descriptive statistics of the signal-free chronologies) and Table 2 (calibration and verification statistics of the reconstruction equations). The statistics in these tables, although not the best among other similar works, are at a fairly high level and sufficient for the purpose of our study according the clearly described standards. The same goes for the explained variance, and you have not given at least some evidences to the contrary.

5) Spectral analysis: too short series and vague and misleading interpretation Unfortunately, we cannot agree that our reconstructions are too short for spectral analysis. We can agree that the reconstruction of the NSA is relatively short (155 years), but the SSA series has a length of 412 years and this can be considered a good result. When spectral analysis is performed, what is important is how long the cycles will be statistically significant. First, we are talking about relatively short cycles (< 100 years). Secondly, cycles of about 60 years are statistically significant for SSA reconstruction and marginally significant for the other two points and we are talking about this. Shorter cycles are again significant for SSA and marginally significant for CSA and NSA. Thus, as you do not provide any support of your suggestion (e.g. published and generally accepted criticism of our approach) and, on the contrary, we are following the well-accepted methodology, we prefer to keep this analysis in our manuscript. We would be happy to improv the interpretation of this analysis, as you think it is misleading, but again, as you did not provide specific details what is misleading, we are not able to grant your non-specific comment.

6) Isotope analysis Without going deep into the details, if we have good statistics for TRW dataset there is no need to look for some other proxy, especially very expensive isotope analysis.

7) A more specialized journal We are sorry, but this is very personal opinion, and this is choice of editors which already considered it and concluded that topic is interesting for this journal as they send it for review.

Now we will return to the very beginning of our answer and your general opinion that "the overall quality is neither sufficient for Clim Past nor for any other peer-reviewed journal". We could agree with your conclusion (or at least humbly accept it) if in your review you convincingly proved that we incorrectly collected the data and/or used the wrong methods for its statistical analyses (or simply used the reliable methods incorrectly) and/or having incorrectly collected materials and incorrect methods, we obtained the wrong results and make the wrong conclusions based on them. But, unfortunately,

your further comments are not clear because they are far too general. Therefore, we cannot use your review to improve our manuscript and also cannot consider it as an objective evaluation of the pros and cons of our manuscript. Thus, we respectfully recommend you to provide next time review containing necessary details and avoid comments which: 1) cannot aid authors in manuscript improvement (i.e. very general or irrelevant), 2) are subjective, or 3) even rude and racist (see the articles provided at the end of our answer to the first point). Only specific comments can actually help author(s) to improve the manuscript and thus make reviewers work useful (and in our experience somehow satisfying, unless one is satisfied by meaningless comments). We believe that only such unbiased author-reviewer relationship, and thus whole peer-review system, can lead to the progress of science and this should be our joint goal. We strongly believed that your review was not personal. Similarly, we hope that you will understand and accept our answers and opinion.

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