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Interactive comment on "Divergent predictions of carbon storage between two global land models: attribution of the causes through traceability analysis" *by* R. Rafique et al.

Anonymous Referee #3

Received and published: 10 November 2015

General comments

The authors have applied the recently developed traceability framework for benchmarking terrestrial carbon cycle models (Luo et al (2012), Xia et al (2013)) to two such models, to compare their simulated ecosystem carbon storage capacity and to explain the differences they find. The study demonstrates the power of the traceability framework approach in elucidating the mechanisms underlying differences in behaviour between models. The outcome of this work is suggestive of how useful a larger study with a greater number of terrestrial carbon cycle models could prove to be. The paper is generally well written and clear.

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Specific comments

The only concern I have with this work is the difference in forcing used to drive CABLE and CLM CASA'. The authors do address this, and demonstrate that the forcing is largely comparable, although for some biomes the differences in precipitation and air temperature were significant. A repeat simulation by one model with the forcing of the other (or the same for both) would be useful to indicate how important this difference in forcing might be to the overall result though I suspect it would not change the results significantly. However should a similar study be undertaken with a greater number of land surface / terrestrial carbon cycle models I would hope common forcing to be a feature. Also, it would be good to see a little more on the soil carbon stores which are barely mentioned in the paper.

Technical corrections

Page 1580 line 14: was a function OF the

Page 1580 line16-17 – Lines 17-19 constitute a more detailed version of lines 16-17 so presumably lines 16-17 should be deleted.

Page 1581 line 1: should be (Sitch et al. 2015)

Page 1581 line 7: The "The" at the start of the sentence is a bit unnecessary.

Page 1581 line 19-20: "for the period 1850-2100" makes more sense

Page 1582 line 18: Luo et al 2003 is not referenced – the Luo et al 2001 reference listed is actually from 2003 though so I think it is that which needs changing.

Page 1582 line 18: Should this be Luo et al (2003) given the above?

Page 1583 line 22: Missing comma after CLM.

Page 1584 line 9: Could perhaps do with another sentence giving a bit more detail as to how the aggregation was done.

Page 1584 line 12: Q_{10} is used without any prior explanation as to what it is so a few words stating what it is would clarify

Page 1584 line 19: using THE following equation

Page 1584 line 22: ...vector of length n "representing the carbon pool sizes"?

Page 1585 line 1: "exit rates of carbon left in pool" is not all that clear – presumably it means the rate of loss of carbon from each pool via decay or respiration

Page 1585 line 12: here the baseline ecosystem residence time is a function of A, C and B, but on page 1582 line 24 you state that the baseline carbon residence times are usually preset in a model according to vegetation characteristics and soil types. Confused me at first, but on re-reading I think it is the case that A, B and C are all usually function of model parameters and therefore it follows that the baseline ecosystem residence time is also? If so this could be spelled out a little more.

Page 1586 line11: Xia et al 2013 not 2012

Page 1587 first paragraph. A table summarising the residence time, NPP and ecosystem carbon storage capacity for each pool for both models might be a useful

Page 1591 lines 1-2: ...and evergreen broadleaf forest AND SHRUB? in CABLE, and evergreen broadleaf forest, C4 GRASSES, SHRUB in CLM-CASA',

Page 1591 lines 4: tundra in both CABLE and CLM-CASA' ?

Page 1591 lines 8: ...(0.87) in CABLE and EBF (0.98?) in CLM-CASA' ?

Page 1591 lines 9-10: Overall, the lowest water scalar was DNF in CLM CASA' and the lowest temperature scalar was Tundra in CABLE?

Page 1591 line 11: ...for most biomes

Page 1595 line23: , 2003 not 2001

Page 1598 final two columns might be a little clearer if CABLE was expressed as a

fraction of CLM-CASA' or the other way round, rather than one minus the other.

Page 1599: presumably the units of the grey contour lines are kgC ?

Page 1604: line 4: T and W need subscripting.

Interactive comment on Earth Syst. Dynam. Discuss., 6, 1579, 2015.

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