



Interactive comment on “Microbial diversity-informed modelling of polar marine ecosystem functions” by Hyewon Heather Kim et al.

Hyewon Heather Kim et al.

hkim@whoi.edu

Received and published: 31 March 2021

Thank you very much for your constructive comments and suggestions on our manuscript. Please note four major elements as our effort to fully address your and other reviewer's concerns together, which served as the basis for updated results in the revised manuscript as well as our response to each comment in this file. After these major changes summarized below, most of the results and main conclusions remained similar compared to the previous version: 1) significant associations of the observed bacterial mode with the modelled NPP, POC flux, and BCD; 2) significant associations of the observed fHNA with the modelled NPP, POC flux, and BCD 3) larger

C1

increases of HNA stocks and functions under climate change conditions than those of LNA cells; and 4) larger cell-specific BP and SDOC uptake rates of HNA cells than those of LNA cells. This suggests the robustness of our model study.

In response to the reviews, we made a number of substantial revisions to the modeling study and manuscript:

- 1) Modification of modeling framework: We re-built, re-optimized, and re-analyzed the model by completely changing the previous version's 0-D (fixed surface layer) formulation to a 1-D (vertical profile) framework.
- 2) Additional data assimilation: We added diatom and cryptophyte Chl observations for 2010-2011, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014 in that data assimilation; this new data became available for use during the period of revision.
- 3) Model equations and GMD manuscript: We included a complete set of model equations (line 92-104, Appendix A) and other details about the model set-up (Text S1-4), as well as attached our Geoscientific Model Development (GMD) manuscript on the original WAP model that served as the basis for our study's bacteria-oriented model (Kim, H. H., Luo, Y.-W., Ducklow, H. W., Schofield, O. M., Steinberg, D. K., and Doney, S. C.: WAP-1D-VAR v1.0: Development and Evaluation of a One-Dimensional Variational Data Assimilation Model for the Marine Ecosystem Along the West Antarctic Peninsula, Geosci. Model Dev. Discuss. [preprint], <https://doi.org/10.5194/gmd-2020-375>, in review, 2021).
- 4) Climate change simulations: We updated error estimates in the climate change experiments (Results 3.4) after fixing an error in the Monte Carlo simulation code. Temperature and sea-ice perturbations were also replaced by +0.5°C and +1.0°C of warming and 5% and 10% of melting, from +1.0°C and +2.0°C of warming and 10% and 20% of melting in the previous version, in order to reflect better the trends and changes relevant to the WAP.

C2

5) Others: We 1) added the summary of the climatological model optimization in Table 2 (missing in the previous version), 2) combined the 4-modelled years together (Figure 3a; each year presented in the previous version) and included the Taylor diagram of the climatological model (Figure 3b; missing in the previous version) for model skill assessment, 3) removed discussion on microzooplankton model fits from Table 1 for consistency (presented in Table 1 in the previous version but never discussed), and 4) removed the discussion on the fate of BCD as it did not add new information to the study.

In particular, modification of the modeling framework to 1-D vertical profile and additional data assimilation were both labor-intensive and time-consuming, which caused a long delay in providing our Final Author's comments. Thank you again for your patience and for your willingness to re-review the revised manuscript in advance. Below are our responses to each of your specific comments that are highlighted throughout the revised manuscript file.

The manuscript provides an analysis of the bacteria dynamics and ecosystem functioning in the surface ocean layer of the coastal West Antarctic Peninsula, based on in situ measurements and an ecosystem model. The authors develop and validate an existing model and apply it in a 0-dimensional configuration to analyze the bacteria dynamics and the link between the bacterial characteristics and the ecosystem functions. To investigate the impact of climate change on the ecosystem, they use the model to assess changes on bacteria fluxes and ecosystem functions under temperature increase and sea-ice melting conditions. The manuscript makes novel contribution with respect to ecosystem modelling, in which bacteria are often under-studied despite the fact that they play a crucial role in the ecosystem. The manuscript is well written and organized. However I have the following main concerns that should be addressed before I can recommend its publication: some aspects on the description of the model and its specific implementation for this study should be justified and clarified; the authors carried out a validation effort but, as the validation performed in the study of Kim et

C3

al. (in review) is not accessible and the specific implementation is unclear, this effort should be fleshed out to gain additional confidence in the model results; also discussions on model performance, on limitations and weaknesses of the modelling should be included.

Answer: We hope that the GMD manuscript and added details about the model in the revised version clear up these concerns. For other significant issues that you listed, please see our response below specific to each of your comments.

1/ Description of the ecosystem model and its implementation for this study One of the objectives of the work is to extend an existing model (Luo et al., 2010) applied by Kim et al. (in review) in the study area, by refining the bacteria compartment of this model. The fact that the manuscript of Kim et al. (In review) is not yet accessible makes it difficult to understand the extension and the specific implementation (period, 1-d/0-d, boundary conditions) performed for the study presented here. The modelling is 0-dimensional. The authors should justify the choice of the 0-dimensional study instead of a 1-dimensional study as performed by Luo et al. (2010) and that is usually done for ecosystem modelling at a water column measurement station. Is 0-dimensional (and even 1-dimensional) modelling appropriate for this coastal site? Is there a significant influence of lateral transport of organic carbon or nutrients on the ecosystem in this region? If a 0-dimensional is justified here the limitations of this 0-d modelling should be clearly discussed.

Answer: The model was applied as a 0-D framework in the previous version (i.e., a 0-D box model of the surface layer at 10 m), but as mentioned above, the revised version is now based on the new model results from a 1-D profile simulation (line 126-129). We also added the justification for the 1-D modeling of the WAP study site (line 129-134).

In the Supplementary Material, the authors specified the boundary conditions of the model during the growth season for the nutrient and dissolved organic matter: "The boundary conditions of nitrate, phosphate, SDOC, SDON, and SDOP are set to 30.9

C4

mmol m-3, 2.4 mmol m-3, 6.5 mmol m-3, 0.6 mmol m-3, and 0.03 mmol m-3, respectively". I find unclear the description of the boundary conditions for this 0-dimensional modelling. What are the boundary conditions for phytoplankton, zooplankton and particulate organic carbon? Are the given conditions at the base of the 10m depth layer? A constant concentration of variables over time at 10m depth does not seem appropriate for representing a seasonal cycle of the ecosystem. The vertical fluxes of the different model variables at the base of the modelled layer should be better specified in the case when the MLD is greater than 10m or at least references to a similar 0-dimensional study describing this should be included (Luo et al. (2010) study is a 1-dimensional modelling study). The authors should clarify and justify the forcing and boundary conditions of the modelled surface layer and specify the depths of the euphotic and mixed layer here.

Answer: We appreciate your concern about several issues regarding the 0-D modeling of the system in the previous version. As mentioned above, the revised version is now based on the new model results from 1-D modeling, whose framework is directly comparable to the 1-D models in Luo et al. (2010; Luo, Y.W., Friedrichs, M.A., Doney, S.C., Church, M.J. and Ducklow, H.W., 2010. Oceanic heterotrophic bacterial nutrition by semilabile DOM as revealed by data assimilative modeling. *Aquatic Microbial Ecology*, 60(3), pp.273-287. doi: 10.3354/ame01427) and in the attached GMD manuscript (Kim et al., 2021). In these two studies climatological observations of the deep water values were used for bottom boundary conditions of NO₃, PO₄, and SDOM, while bottom boundary conditions of other variables (i.e., C, N, and P components of bacteria, phytoplankton, zooplankton, LDOM, and detritus as well as NH₄) were set as zero – an approach valid for the vertical domain down to the deep, (near) bottom depth of the study sites. For this particular bacteria-oriented study, however, we think it is best to minimize the number of depth levels that do not have bacterial traits observations, yet to include an adequate number of depth levels required for simulating seasonally-varying MLD and light impacts (mostly < 20 m of MLD and ~ 25 +/- 8 m of euphotic zone depth using hydro-light data for 2010-2011 and 2013-2014 at our study site). Thus, we chose

C5

to model 0, 10, and 20 m, which required non-zero bottom boundary values from 20 m, because of high biological and biogeochemical activities there. There are, however, no available observations of HNA, LNA, LDOM, microzooplankton, and krill biomass, LDOM, detritus, and NH₄ at 20 m at the study site. Instead, we 1) estimated the climatological (2010-2013) HNA and LNA biomass at 20 m using the ratio of bacterial production to group-specific biomass observations at 10 and 20 m, 2) extracted the climatological (2002-2011) modelled values of microzooplankton, krill, detritus, LDOM, and NH₄ at 20 m from our GMD manuscript (Kim et al., 2021), and 3) used the climatological (2010-2013) observations of diatom- and cryptophyte biomass at 20 m for their bottom boundary conditions. We revised the section detailing these procedures (Text S3, line 345-351).

2/ Data assimilation The authors show that data assimilation and parameter optimization can reduce model/observation errors, especially for bacterial stocks and flows. However, the simultaneous assimilation of climatological data and data corresponding to the given year raises questions, notably given the strong link between nutrients and phytoplankton time evolutions (Kim et al 2016) and the possibility of a time lag in phytoplankton growth from one year to another. The authors should justify the choice to assimilate climatological data for Chl and microzooplankton instead of not assimilating these data if they were not measured in the simulated year as is done for nitrate and POC? Does this choice lead to some inconsistencies?

Answer: In the previous version, the decision of assimilating the climatological Chl data had been made based upon our initial attempt of model optimization without assimilating Chl data type at all. However, model cost functions had failed to reach local minima, suggesting the necessity of the Chl data type to constrain key model parameters sensitive to lowering total cost functions (e.g., Θ). Similarly, the single-year observation of microzooplankton data had been assimilated to better constrain grazing loss terms of phytoplankton and bacteria, which otherwise also led to failed optimization. We had not encountered the same issue when not assimilating nitrate and POM. In the

C6

revised version, thanks to the updated data sets we were able to assimilate diatom- and cryptophyte-specific Chl for 2010-2011, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014, resolving your concern about the potential mismatch between the time evolutions of Chl and of nutrients (or PP, also) in those years. However, Chl data were still missing in 2011-12, for which we assimilated the climatological observation due to the above reasons. We revised the Results 2.4. section to include these points (line 176-182).

3/ Validation of the model results The authors present a comparison of the model results with the available in situ data. First, the description and discussion of these comparisons should be a little more substantial. For instance, the error on primary production appears significant in some years (e.g. 2012-2013) and data assimilation does not seem to bring an improvement in modelled primary production for all periods and years (e.g. January/February 2012) (Figures S1-S5). Also, a negative correlation is obtained in some years for phosphate. The authors should mention and discuss these points. Second, a description with a figure of the comparison of the modelled and observed climatological or 4-year seasonal cycles of nutrients, phytoplankton, zooplankton, and bacteria (in addition to the error that is presented) in the main text or in the Supplementary Material would increase confidence in the capacity of the model to represent the seasonal cycle of the ecosystem.

Answer: We updated the Results 3.1 on model skill assessment based on the new 1-D model results and mentioned several data types whose correlations were negative and variability was not well captured (line 255-259). We also included the seasonal cycle of the ecosystem, as suggested, and included it in the discussion of model fits (Figure S7).

The authors use their model to explore the impact of an increase in temperature and a decrease in sea ice concentration, predicted as a result of climate change, on the WAP ecosystem, in particular on bacterial fluxes, primary production and POC export flux. A validation of the model's capacity to reproduce the already observed climate trends of the ecosystem as mentioned in the introduction L49-52, over a longer period for some

C7

of the model's variables (POC, Chl), fluxes (primary production) and/or indicators (for instance time and magnitude of the maximum concentration of bacteria, phytoplankton, DOM or POM or primary production or annual averages) would strengthen confidence in the model for the study of the impact of future changes. This is perhaps presented in the study by Kim et al (in review) but could be redone with this new version of the model and added in this manuscript, perhaps in the Supplementary Material. Another possibility would be to compare the interannual variability obtained with a modelling without data assimilation and with the climatological model parameter set of the 4 simulated years (2010-2011 to 2013-2014) to the observed interannual variability (by specifying the potential anomaly in temperature and sea-ice concentration for those years).

Answer: This is a great suggestion. As suggested, we conducted a modified set of the cross-validation analysis to examine the climatological model's capacity to reproduce the observed climate trends of the WAP ecosystem variables. In this analysis, we compared the observed interannual variability to the modelled interannual variability using the climatological parameter set and each year's forcing (without further data assimilation). The climatological model yielded overestimated BP and HNA biomass in 2011-12 and underestimated PP in 2012-13 and 2013-14, compared to other variables whose interannual variability was captured comparatively well to their observed interannual variability (Table S7). Notably, 2011-12 was characterized by the negative temperature anomaly (-0.13 +/- 0.83°C versus 0.03 +/- 0.84°C for the 4-year climatology) and the positive sea-ice anomaly (24 +/- 38% versus 21 +/- 29% for the 4-year climatology), with significantly lower temperature and higher sea-ice cover than other three years (all p < 0.05, two-sample t-test). This coldest year had the lowest values of BP, HNA biomass, and PP observations (Table S7), consistent with increases in the modelled BP, HNA biomass, and PP under the combined warming/melting scenario, adding confidence in using the climatological model for the climate change experiments. We revised the Results 4.4 to discuss these points (line 461-474) and added a supplementary figure (Table S7).

C8

4/ Interannual variability The following comment is in line with the previous one. The ecosystem model is applied to 4 consecutive years, 2010-11 to 2013-14. The results show interannual variability in bacterial carbon stocks and fluxes. As the changes of primary production and POC export flux are analyzed under varying temperature and sea-ice concentration conditions, those fluxes could also be presented (in Figure 4) and discussed for the 4 modeled years. The authors do not discuss the link between the interannual variability of bacterial C flux and that of meteorological and physical forcing. The authors should consider adding a short description of the meteorological and physical forcing for these 4 years. A figure of the forcing in the Supplementary Material would also be helpful. The authors could specify the potential anomaly in temperature and sea-ice concentration for these 4 years and consider adding a discussion on the interannual variability in ecosystem functioning and in particular bacteria dynamics in response to the interannual variability of forcing.

Answer: We added a figure summarizing each year's physical forcing (Figure S1) and discussed the interannual variability of the ecosystem variables in relation to the interannual variability of temperature and sea ice (line 474-477), in addition to our response above under section 3/ validation of the model results (line 461-474). We also added the modelled PP and POC sinking flux in Figure 4 and added a supplementary table summarizing the annual maximum and minimum values of the modelled variables in different sets of temperature/sea ice anomalies (Table S7).

5/ Discussion on modelling limitations and results Section 4 should be flushed out with discussions on weaknesses and limitations of the model such as 0-dimensional modelling, short duration of the simulation to explore impact of climate change, errors in some variables or fluxes, data assimilation. The authors mention a "microzooplankton model-observation misfits" in their model outputs (L 163). A discussion on the potential impact of this discrepancy on major results of the study, for instance on the distribution of loss terms (including grazing) of the BCD presented in 3.2 and discussed in 4.1, seems to me to be necessary. The authors refine the bacterial compartment of the

C9

model.

Answer: Thank you for reminding us to discuss the weakness and limitations of the study that were poorly demonstrated in the previous version. As suggested, we added the discussions on the duration of the climate change experiments (line 461-464) and error/mismatch of zooplankton variables in data assimilation aspects (line 401-408). As mentioned, we no longer include the fate of the BCD as it does not add much new information to the findings and discussion points of the study.

It would be interesting that the authors specify if they have compared the results of this new version with those of the basic version and if so, if they obtain a significant improvement of the modeling of bacteria concentration and production, primary production and POC stock with this new version. It would be relevant to know the potential positive contributions of this complexification of the ecosystem model to guide future works on ecosystem modelling.

Answer: As suggested, we added a paragraph to discuss the suggested points and contributions to WAP ecosystem modeling brought by our bacteria-oriented modeling (line 478-490).

The use of the term "POC export flux" for the calculated sinking flux of particulate organic matter at 10m depth does not necessarily seem appropriate to me. The term POC export generally refers to POC export under the euphotic layer or the mixed layer. What are the depths of the mixed layer and the euphotic layer in this region? This term could be replaced by a more appropriate term at least in the introduction, discussion and abstract sections.

Answer: As suggested, POC, C, or particle export flux was replaced by POC, C, or particle "sinking flux" throughout.

L55-58: Could you be more specific and indicate the growth of what, the depth of the Palmer Station, the period of comparisons with observations? Answer: Revised (line

C10

56-69)

L118-119: Could you specify the depth of the site modelling? Answer: Added (line 122)

L 299-301: The authors should justify the choice of perturbations applied on temperature and sea-ice concentration by citing previous studies on climate change in the study area. Answer: Added (line 438-445)

L 406: Replace "phytoplankton account" by "POM production by phytoplankton accounts"? Answer: This sentence was deleted as no longer valid.

L 415: "experiments" seems more appropriate than "scenarios" considering the duration of the simulation. Answer: Replaced by "experiments", "simulations", or "conditions" throughout

L 418, 431: Warming temperature/ temperature warming : Remove temperature or replace warming by increasing. Answer: Fixed

Figure 4: black titles written over blue colours are difficult to read in Figure 4b, the values in the colour bar overlap. The comparison of HNA and LNA bacteria biomass and fluxes would be easier with an identical range in the colour bar of both panels. Answer: We tried, but the figure was illegible due to significant intergroup variability.

Figure 5: The reading of this figure could be simplified by a colour code for the different compartments. Answer: Color-coded the flows mentioned (Figure 5).

Figure 8b: via instead of vi on the fourth panel. Answer: Fixed

Figure S1-S5: Some labels of y-axis on figures S1 S5 S6 are cut and grey lines are visible. How are the model outputs and observations normalized? Are they both divided the observed means? Please indicate units of the model/observations errors. Answer: Fixed the figures and legends (Figures S2-6)

L 117: "Kim et al. in prep" : Is it the same article as Kim et al. in review? Answer:

C11

Yes, it is the same article as the attached GMD manuscript (Kim et al. 2021). Fixed throughout the manuscript.

L 209: Do you mean June 1, 2012 instead of June 1, 2011? Answer: Fixed

Tables S2-S6: Please indicate units of the parameters. Answer: Fixed

Please also note the supplement to this comment:

<https://bg.copernicus.org/preprints/bg-2020-302/bg-2020-302-AC2-supplement.pdf>

Interactive comment on Biogeosciences Discuss., <https://doi.org/10.5194/bg-2020-302>, 2020.

C12