GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, I think the authors have done a good job responding to the previous comments with regards to improving overall clarity, particularly with regard to the introduction and clarifying eth project goals. Additionally, the authors have done a good job streamlining and improving the writing, and aligning the intro, methods, and R/D for added clarity, making the paper much easier to read and understand.

TECHNICAL COMMENTS

- Section 3.5, first sentence. This is an odd sentence structure. I actually think you can just delete this sentence. However, you say that seasonal and inter-annual variability were explored—how were they explored? Just graphically? This is not clear in the methods. Additionally, to make it congruent with the results, I would title this section "Exploration of variation in oceanographic conditions"
- Section 4. Instead of saying the results and discussion are laid out in 1, 2, 3, I would rather see a very brief summary of the general findings to start out the results/discussion section and then follow with the details in those three sections.
- There is an incomplete sentence in the figure legend for Figure 2 ("In particular for kinetic and eddy kinetic energy calculation."). I am not sure what this is supposed to say. There should also be a period after (b).
- The sentence in Len 233-234 is odd ("considering the large number of predictors…"). I would move this sentence to the start of the paragraph and rephrase it as something like "Table 1 shows each predictor variable the associated hypotheses tested." Then go to explain them. Additionally, the table 1 headings still says multiple regression analysis, but you changed it everywhere else to GAMs. Also, regarding the heading—I don't think the hypotheses are subsequent, but rather associated?
- Line 311: Water circulation "was" not "were"
- Line 542: delete "despite its exploratory nature"