# 1 Using atmospheric observations to quantify annual biogenic carbon 2 dioxide fluxes on the Alaska North Slope

# 2 dioxide fluxes on the Alaska North Slope

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27 Abstract. The continued warming of the Arctic could release vast stores of carbon into the atmosphere from high-latitude

28 ecosystems, especially from thawing permafrost. Increasing uptake of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) by vegetation during longer

- 29 growing seasons may partially offset such release of carbon. However, evidence of significant net annual release of carbon
- 30 from site-level observations and model simulations across tundra ecosystems has been inconclusive. To address this knowledge
- 31 gap, we combined top-down observations of atmospheric  $CO_2$  concentration enhancements from aircraft and a tall tower,
- 32 which integrate ecosystem exchange over large regions, with bottom-up observed CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from tundra environments and
- 33 found that the Alaska North Slope is not a consistent net source or net sink of  $CO_2$  to the atmosphere (ranging from -6 to +6
- 34 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup> for 2012–2017). Our analysis suggests that significant biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from unfrozen terrestrial soils, and likely
- 35 inland waters, during the early cold season (September–December) are major factors in determining the net annual carbon
- 36 balance of the North Slope, implying strong sensitivity to the rapidly warming freeze-up period. At the regional level, we find
- 37 no evidence for previously reported large late cold season (January–April) CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to the atmosphere during the study

38 period. Despite the importance of the cold season CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to the annual total, the interannual variability of the net CO<sub>2</sub>

39 flux is driven by the variability in growing season fluxes. During the growing season, the regional net  $CO_2$  flux is also highly

40 sensitive to the distribution of tundra vegetation types throughout the North Slope. This study shows that quantification and

41 characterization of year-round CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from the heterogeneous terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the Arctic using both

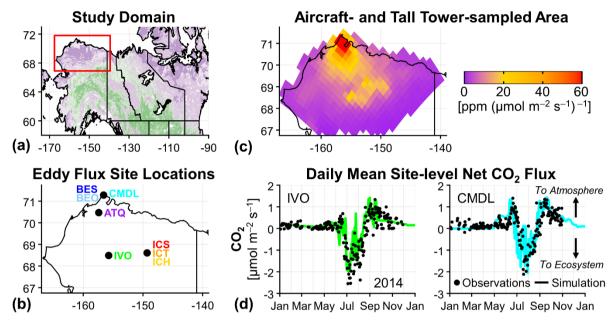
42 site-level and atmospheric observations is important to accurately project the earth system response to future warming.

# 43 1 Introduction

The Arctic surface air temperature is warming at twice the rate of the global average (Box et al., 2019; Meredith et al., 2019). 44 45 Continued thawing of Arctic permafrost has the potential to release vast stores of carbon into the atmosphere, thereby further 46 accelerating warming (Schuur et al., 2015; Hugelius et al., 2014). In the biosphere, the net  $CO_2$  flux is the balance between 47 uptake of  $CO_2$  by vegetation through photosynthesis (negative net  $CO_2$  flux indicates removal from the atmosphere) and release 48 of  $CO_2$  into the atmosphere by plant and microbial respiration (positive net  $CO_2$  flux indicates a source to the atmosphere). 49 Arctic growing seasons are short (~3 months), and the long, cold season dominates the seasonal cycle. The transition between 50 the growing and cold seasons is marked by the soil zero-curtain period, when belowground temperatures of the active layer 51 above frozen permafrost remain near freezing; the active layer is insulated by snow and ice at the surface and warmed by the 52 latent heat release of freezing water (Outcalt et al., 1990). During the zero-curtain period, soil respiration can remain active in 53 deeper soils for weeks to months after the end of the growing season (Zona et al., 2016; Romanovsky and Osterkamp, 2000). 54 As the climate warms, the active layer above permafrost deepens, thawed soils become wetter, a larger volume of soil remains 55 unfrozen for a longer period of time, and the duration of the zero-curtain period plays an increasingly important role in 56 determining the net carbon exchange in Arctic ecosystems (Kim et al., 2012; Arndt et al., 2019). Recent work has shown a 57 significant cold season source of  $CO_2$  from Arctic ecosystems, including more than 70% increase in October–December  $CO_2$ 58 concentration enhancements in the past 40 years, consistent with an increase in cold season respiration, which is not well 59 represented in earth system models (Commane et al., 2017; Natali and Watts et al., 2019). Neglecting these processes could 60 lead to large underestimation of  $CO_2$  emissions, biasing current and future climate projections.

61 Tundra ecosystems, characterized by frozen soils covered in low shrubs, sedges, grasses, and mosses, make up 62 approximately 50% of the Arctic landscape (Raynolds et al., 2019). Lacking trees, the magnitude of net CO<sub>2</sub> uptake in tundra 63 during the growing season is relatively small and may be offset by emissions from respiration that can continue well into the cold season (Watts et al., 2021). In the past, year-round  $CO_2$  flux measurements from tundra ecosystems were rare due to 64 65 difficulties in maintaining instrumentation under remote and extreme cold conditions (Euskirchen et al., 2017; Kittler et al., 2017; Goodrich et al., 2016). Long-term year-round CO<sub>2</sub> concentration measurements have been made in the Arctic at a small 66 67 number of tall towers, which have been situated to sample clean marine air off the ocean (Jeong et al., 2018; Worthy et al., 2009). While aircraft provide greater spatial coverage over land than these towers, they tend to operate for short durations, and 68 69 their temporal coverage is limited by weather and visibility during the cold season (Chang et al., 2014; Commane et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2016). However, the recent increase in availability of observations of gas fluxes and concentrations within a particular tundra region, the Alaska North Slope (Fig. 1a), is making it possible to better conduct year-round multi-scale assessments of tundra ecosystems, with the aim of improving our understanding of  $CO_2$  sink/source activity and carbon budgets

73 in these environments.



74

75 Figure 1. Alaska North Slope study region, eddy flux site locations, area sampled by aircraft and tower, and example results from the eddy 76 flux site measurement-model comparison. (a) North Slope region (red box) within Alaska and northwestern Canada. Tundra areas shown in 77 purple and boreal forest areas shown in green (Luus et al., 2017). (b) Location of eddy flux measurement sites on the Alaska North Slope 78 used in this analysis. (c) Ten-day WRF-STILT footprints used to sample CO<sub>2</sub> flux models, summed for all aircraft and tall tower CO<sub>2</sub> 79 observations used in this analysis. Colors represent values greater than 0 and are saturated at 60 ppm ( $\mu$ mol m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>)<sup>-1</sup>. Maximum value near 80 Utgiagyik, Alaska is 324 ppm (umol  $m^{-2} s^{-1})^{-1}$ . (d) Timeseries of observed (black dots) and simulated (colored lines) site-level daily mean net CO<sub>2</sub> flux for 2014 at IVO (left) and CMDL (right) eddy flux measurement sites, where site-level TVPRM net CO<sub>2</sub> flux simulations are 81 82 driven by NARR meteorology and the CSIF SIF product. Positive net CO<sub>2</sub> flux values indicate CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes into the atmosphere throughout 83 this study. A comparison for all eight eddy flux sites is provided in Fig. S1 in Supplement.

84 Currently, observations and models do not agree on the sign of the annual net CO<sub>2</sub> flux across the Alaska North Slope 85 region. Site-level measurements and atmospheric observations suggest this region is a net CO<sub>2</sub> source (Commane et al., 2017; 86 Oechel et al., 2014; Euskirchen et al., 2017). However, a comparison of process-based models of the North Slope found large 87 variability in the sign and magnitude of the net  $CO_2$  flux with an approximately neutral regional annual net  $CO_2$  flux multimodel mean of  $-3.5 \pm 67$  TgC yr<sup>-1</sup> (Fisher et al., 2014). In a more recent study, Tao et al. (2021) found an annual net CO<sub>2</sub> flux 88 range of -9 to 12 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup> for the years 2010–2016, with only 2014 being an annual net CO<sub>2</sub> source. Extrapolating from site-89 level CO<sub>2</sub> flux measurements to regional budgets is difficult due to the extreme heterogeneity of tundra ecosystems in the 90 91 North Slope and a lack of spatial and seasonal representativeness by existing flux monitoring sites (Pallandt et al., 2022). 92 In this study, we compare *bottom-up* flux estimates with *top-down* atmospheric observations from aircraft and a tall

92 tower using an integrated modeling approach to quantify the CO<sub>2</sub> budget sign and magnitude of the Alaska North Slope. Our

94 framework first applies a bottom-up approach to understand Arctic tundra ecosystem CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes, constrained by site-level 95 observations, using an empirical model ensemble of CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes derived from eddy flux measurements representing varied 96 tundra ecosystems within the region. We then apply top-down information gained from regional  $CO_2$  concentration 97 enhancement observations measured by a tall tower and aircraft, which sample the atmosphere-biosphere exchange throughout 98 the Alaska North Slope, to evaluate the range of potential CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes identified by the bottom-up model ensemble for 2012– 99 2017. This evaluation also identifies the ecosystem parameterizations, vegetation distributions, and environmental drivers that 100 best characterize the observed spatial and temporal distribution of biogenic  $CO_2$  in the atmosphere across the region. By developing regional CO<sub>2</sub> budgets constrained by both atmospheric observations and ecosystem environmental responses, we 101 102 can better project how Arctic tundra ecosystems will respond to climate change on annual and decadal timescales.

#### 103 2 Materials and methods

# 104 2.1 Observed CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations and fluxes on the Alaska North Slope

# 105 2.1.1 Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration observations

106 We use a suite of CO<sub>2</sub> concentration observations from various sources on the North Slope for our analysis. The United States 107 (US) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Barrow Atmospheric Baseline Observatory (BRW) tall 108 tower near Utgiagvik, Alaska has made continuous in situ CO<sub>2</sub> concentration measurements since 1973 (Sweeney et al., 2016). 109 The US Department of Energy (DOE) Atmospheric Radiation Measurement Climate Research Facility Airborne Carbon 110 Measurements V (ARM-ACME V) airborne campaign measured CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations sub-weekly from June to September 111 2015 over the North Slope (Biraud et al., 2016; Tadić et al., 2021). The US National Aeronautics and Space Administration 112 (NASA) Arctic-Boreal Vulnerability Experiment (ABoVE) Arctic Carbon Atmospheric Profiles (Arctic-CAP) airborne 113 campaign flew throughout Alaska and northwestern Canada approximately every month from May to November 2017 114 (Sweeney and McKain, 2019; Sweeney et al., 2022). CO<sub>2</sub> concentration observations from the NASA Carbon in Arctic 115 Reservoirs Vulnerability Experiment (CARVE) flights for 2012–2014 are incorporated into the Commane et al. (2017) 116 optimized CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes used in our analysis below. The NOAA/US Coast Guard collaborative Alaska Coast Guard (ACG) 117 flights have also made aircraft CO<sub>2</sub> concentration measurements in the region, but these coastal flights observe only limited 118 spatial coverage of the North Slope, and we do not use them here.

For the NOAA BRW tower, we use hourly CO<sub>2</sub> concentration observations with wind direction from the land  $(135^{\circ}-$ 202.5° clockwise w.r.t. north) and ocean sectors (0°–45°), avoiding Utqiaġvik anthropogenic activity, with wind speed > 2.5 m s<sup>-1</sup> (Fig. S2) (Commane et al., 2017; Sweeney et al., 2016). We only use land sector observations from the cold season (defined here as September–April) since seasonal wind patterns do not favor transport from those directions during the growing season (defined here as May–August). For the ARM-ACME V and ABoVE Arctic-CAP aircraft campaign observations, we group averaged sampling points into 50 m vertical bins after removing data influenced by combustion sources such as 125 anthropogenic activity and biomass burning events. These combustion sources of  $CO_2$  are expected to be small (<1 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup> 126 on the North Slope, see Table S1) during our study period. They are not accounted for in biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> flux models, however, 127 and must be removed from our analysis when observed. We remove time periods with elevated carbon monoxide (CO) concentration above 150 ppb, as in Chang et al. (2014) and Commane et al. (2017), which indicates local combustion sources. 128 129 Time periods with highly variable CO concentrations ( $\Delta CO > 40$  ppb) indicate complex mixing of more remote combustion 130 sources and are also removed (Chang et al., 2014). The remaining grouped sampling points correspond to the available 131 Lagrangian atmospheric transport modeling system simulations (WRF-STILT (Henderson et al., 2015), see below): ARM-ACME V points are calculated every 50 m vertically below 1 km, every 100 m vertically above 1 km, and every 10 km 132 horizontally from 1 s observations, and ABoVE Arctic-CAP points are matched every 20 s from averaged 10 s observations. 133 134 To ensure these points observe the Alaska North Slope, we only use points with at least 70% of the total 10-day WRF-STILT 135 simulated surface influence occurring in our regional domain.

#### 136 2.1.2 Eddy covariance CO<sub>2</sub> flux tower observations

We also use up to five years (2013–2017) of year-round observations of net  $CO_2$  flux from eight eddy covariance tower sites (for 32 total site-years) representing an array of tundra ecosystems throughout the Alaska North Slope (Figs. 1b, S1, Table S2 in Supplement). These half-hourly eddy flux measurements of net  $CO_2$  flux are not gap-filled to avoid introducing additional uncertainties. Three of the sites are located near Imnavait Creek along a wetness gradient from valley to hilltop: wet sedge tundra (ICS), moist acidic tussock tundra (ICT) and dry heath tundra (ICH) (Euskirchen et al., 2017, 2012). The other sites include tussock tundra at Ivotuk (IVO), wet polygonised tundra at Atqasuk (ATQ), and three sites near Utqiaġvik: wetland tundra (BES), wet polygonised tundra (BEO), and moist tundra (CMDL) (Zona et al., 2016; Arndt et al., 2020).

#### 144 **2.2 Observed atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration enhancement calculation**

We calculate the observed *top-down* atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration enhancement ( $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub>) for the North Slope region for every land-sector hour at the NOAA BRW tower and for every 50 m of vertical distance transited during the airborne campaigns (ARM-ACME V, ABoVE Arctic-CAP). The observed  $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub> [units: ppm] generated by the North Slope ecosystem is calculated relative to the background concentration without influence from this region such that:

149 observed 
$$\Delta CO_2 = observed [CO_2] - background [CO_2]$$
 (1)

150 following previous work (Sweeney et al., 2016; Commane et al., 2017; Jeong et al., 2018).

The background  $CO_2$  concentrations at the NOAA BRW tower are determined by smoothing the 10-day mean of the observed ocean sector concentrations using spline fitting to produce a daily  $CO_2$  background concentration. We calculate the uncertainty of these background concentrations by both 1) varying the starting hour of the 10-day mean calculation prior to spline fitting and 2) randomly sub-selecting 50% the ocean sector concentrations 1000 times. The interval that contains 95% of these 240,000 fits represents our daily background uncertainty. Figure S2 shows the ocean sector concentrations, resulting background concentration, and uncertainty described here. 157 To determine the background CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations for the ARM-ACME V and ABoVE Arctic-CAP aircraft 158 campaigns, we isolate aircraft observations without surface influence from the North Slope using the WRF-STILT footprints 159 as done for larger regions in Chang et al. (2014) and Commane et al. (2017). These observed CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations represent the 160 state of the air before it interacts with the surface in the study region. The regional backgrounds vary by the direction from 161 which the air enters the domain. For example, the backgrounds from the south and from over land generally experience  $CO_2$ 162 drawdown prior to those from over the Arctic Ocean. The time- and directional-dependent backgrounds we use are shown in 163 Fig. S3. We apply the uncertainty from the NOAA BRW tower background to the aircraft backgrounds as a reasonable representation of the variability associated with available background CO<sub>2</sub> concentration data. 164

# 165 2.3 Simulated atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration enhancement calculation

166 To understand how landscape interactions with the atmosphere (through  $CO_2$  flux) influenced the observed  $CO_2$  concentrations

167 across space and time, we calculate the corresponding simulated  $\Delta CO_2$  [units: ppm] by transporting *bottom-up* biogenic CO<sub>2</sub>

(2)

168 fluxes to each observation site such that:

169 simulated  $\Delta CO_2$  = simulated  $CO_2$  flux × simulated footprint

In this calculation, we multiply the hourly simulated CO<sub>2</sub> flux [ $\mu$ mol CO<sub>2</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>] by the footprint [ppm ( $\mu$ mol CO<sub>2</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>)<sup>-1</sup>] for that hour starting at the observation point, backward in time for each hour up to ten days, where the footprint quantifies the influence of the land surface on the concentration observed at a measurement point. The simulated  $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub> is then the sum of these hours.

We use expected CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes based on a variety of bottom-up model approaches which represent North Slope ecosystems. Year-round bottom-up estimates of net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes (defined by the models as net ecosystem exchange, NEE) are obtained from the Tundra Vegetation Photosynthesis and Respiration Model (TVPRM) ensemble, and from existing model output from Luus et al. (2017) and Commane et al. (2017). Independent bottom-up estimates of belowground CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (= NEE) for the cold season (net CO<sub>2</sub> uptake = 0) were obtained from Natali and Watts et al. (2019) and Watts et al. (2021). The TVPRM model ensemble development process is described in Sect. 2.4, and the other CO<sub>2</sub> flux models, including their native spatial and temporal resolutions, are listed in Table S3.

181 The footprints are generated by the Lagrangian atmospheric transport modeling system, WRF-STILT (Stochastic 182 Time-Inverted Lagrangian Transport model driven by Weather Research and Forecasting model meteorology (Henderson et 183 al., 2015)). In this system, WRF meteorological fields are first generated for the study region and time period (v3.5.1 for ARM-ACME V and NOAA BRW tower footprints used here, v3.9.1 for ABoVE Arctic-CAP footprints). STILT then uses the WRF 184 185 meteorology to estimate the contribution of surface fluxes to the atmospheric concentration at a specified time and place, called 186 a receptor, by calculating the amount of time air (represented by a distribution of particles) spends in the lower half of the 187 boundary layer at a given location. The WRF-STILT model configurations from Henderson et al. (2015) have been used 188 extensively in numerous previous papers to study greenhouse gas fluxes using observations from aircraft and towers in Alaska, 189 including on the North Slope (e.g., Chang et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2016; Zona et al., 2016; Commane et al., 2017; Karion et al., 2015; Hartery et al., 2018). An evaluation by Henderson et al. (2015) for WRF v.3.4.1 and v3.5.1 showed that their polar WRF configuration performs well against surface observations of air temperature and wind speed in Alaska and that WRF-STILT can capture the shape and approximate depth of greenhouse gases in the column. Zona et al. (2016) note that WRF planetary boundary layer ventilation rates may be biased in the fall (and winter) when heat fluxes are low, but this error is difficult to assess quantitatively. For this study, we use receptors set to correspond with the tower and aircraft  $CO_2$ concentration observations. The footprints (and their corresponding measurements) for these receptors sample air from throughout the North Slope but are concentrated more heavily toward the area around the NOAA BRW tower (Fig. 1c).

197 For calculating simulated  $\Delta CO_2$  from the TVPRM ensemble, we grid the distribution of WRF-STILT particles and 198 their corresponding surface influence to the spatial resolution of the meteorological reanalysis products driving the model. The 199 CO<sub>2</sub> flux models used for comparison to the TVPRM ensemble are similarly treated using 0.5°-gridded 10-day WRF-STILT 200 footprints, which are available on a circumpolar grid poleward of 30°N. The simulated CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from Luus et al. (2017), 201 Natali and Watts et al. (2019), and Watts et al. (2021) are regridded to  $0.5^{\circ}$  spatial resolution. For the models by Natali and 202 Watts et al. (2019) and Watts et al. (2021), which only estimate monthly CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes, we apply a constant flux for that month. 203 Since the ends of our defined cold season (September–April) include transitional periods when some biogenic plant activity does occur (hence belowground CO<sub>2</sub> emissions  $\neq$  NEE), for the Natali and Watts et al. (2019) and Watts et al. (2021) bottom-204 205 up scenarios, we add in estimates of photosynthesis and plant respiration fluxes from the TVPRM ensemble for April and 206 September.

# 207 2.4 Empirically simulated biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from tundra ecosystems

We develop the TVPRM as an ensemble of ecosystem-resolved models that represent a more extensive range of potential tundra ecosystem functional relationships, environmental drivers, and scaling assumptions than available from other CO<sub>2</sub> flux models. For this study, TVPRM generates a set of spatially and temporally varying CO<sub>2</sub> flux maps for a six-year period (2012– 2017) at 30 × 30 km spatial and 1 hr temporal resolution for the Alaska North Slope.

TVPRM is driven by parameterized functional relationships for soil respiration (R<sub>soil</sub>), plant respiration (R<sub>plant</sub>), and photosynthesis (gross primary productivity (GPP)), which are described by:

214 
$$\mathbf{R}_{\text{soil}} = \boldsymbol{\alpha}_{\text{s}} \times \mathbf{T}_{\text{s}} + \boldsymbol{\beta}_{\text{s}}$$
(3)

215 
$$R_{\text{plant}} = \alpha_a \times T_a + \beta_a \tag{4}$$

216 
$$GPP = \lambda \times T_{scale} \times SIF \times PAR \times \frac{1}{1 + \frac{PAR}{PAR_0}}$$
(5)

217 
$$T_{scale} = \frac{(T_a - T_{min})(T_a - T_{max})}{(T_a - T_{min})(T_a - T_{max}) - (T_a - T_{opt})^2}$$
(6)

The simulated hourly CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes [units:  $\mu$ mol CO<sub>2</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>] are determined as responses to light and heat: R<sub>soil</sub> is a function of near-surface soil temperature (T<sub>s</sub>) [°C]; R<sub>plant</sub> is a function of air temperature (T<sub>a</sub>) [°C]; and GPP is a function of a temperature scalar (T<sub>scale</sub>) and photosynthetically active radiation (PAR) [ $\mu$ mol photon m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>], with solar-induced chlorophyll fluorescence (SIF) [mW m<sup>-2</sup> nm<sup>-1</sup> sr<sup>-1</sup>] used to define the seasonal cycle of photosynthetic capacity.  $T_s$  depths are determined by reanalysis product and listed in Table S4.  $T_{scale}$  ranges from 0 to 1 based on the position of  $T_a$  on the continuum between minimum temperature ( $T_{min} = 0^{\circ}$ C), maximum temperature ( $T_{max} = 40^{\circ}$ C), and optimal temperature ( $T_{opt} = 15^{\circ}$ C). NEE is then calculated as:

225

$$NEE = R_{soil} + R_{plant} - GPP$$
(7)

with positive NEE values indicating a net source of  $CO_2$  into the atmosphere and negative NEE values meaning net movement of  $CO_2$  into the biosphere. We use NEE to be synonymous with net  $CO_2$  flux. Using SIF, which correlates to photosynthetic activity (Porcar-Castell et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2015), in the modeling framework provides an advantage over indices such as enhanced vegetation index (EVI) due to the limited canopy and evergreen nature of tundra ecosystems (Luus et al., 2017).

230 The parameter values ( $\alpha_s$ ,  $\beta_s$ ,  $\alpha_a$ ,  $\beta_a$ ,  $\lambda$ , PAR<sub>0</sub>) for the site-level relationships used by TVPRM are determined first 231 using the observed net  $CO_2$  fluxes from the eddy flux sites (see Sect. S1 in Supplement). We determine the site-level parameters 232 separately for each combination of reanalysis product (NARR (Mesinger et al., 2006) and ERA5 (Hersbach et al., 2020)), 233 which provide T<sub>a</sub>, T<sub>s</sub>, and PAR, and SIF product (GOME-2 (Joiner et al., 2016), GOSIF (Li and Xiao, 2019), and CSIF (Zhang 234 et al., 2018)) that will later be used to generate the regional TPVRM ensemble (Tables S4–S5, see Sects. S2–S3). Additional 235  $\alpha_s$  and  $\beta_s$  parameters are determined using T<sub>s</sub> from the Remote Sensing driven Permafrost Model (RS-PM (Yi et al., 2019, 236 2018)) to test its implementation in TPVRM. RS-PM uses tailored input for Alaska permafrost zones, such as downscaled 237 snow depth and aircraft-observed soil dielectric constants and was developed and tested using  $T_s$  and active layer thickness 238 measurements from the North Slope. RS-PM also produces  $T_s$  at higher vertical resolution in the near-surface than the 239 reanalysis products to capture subsurface heterogeneity in unfrozen soil, which is important to represent the zero-curtain 240 throughout the freezing and thawing periods in Alaska.

Using the median parameter value sets for each site, we simulate the TVPRM net  $CO_2$  flux for our study period at every site location to perform a cross-site evaluation (Fig. S1). These simulated net  $CO_2$  fluxes perform well against the net  $CO_2$  flux observations at their corresponding sites (Figs. 1d, S4, see Sect. S4). This process also identifies two distinct ecosystem groups: "inland", predominately graminoid and shrub tundra (ICS, ICT, ICH, IVO), and "coastal", predominately wetland tundra (ATQ, BES, BEO, CMDL), based on the similar simulated  $CO_2$  flux responses to the meteorology- and SIFdetermined functional relationships within each group demonstrated by the cross-site evaluation (Fig. S1).

247 The net  $CO_2$  flux for each meteorological grid box in our study domain is then calculated using the site-level 248 functional relationships for both tundra groups. These fluxes are weighted by the spatial distribution of inland and coastal 249 tundra from three different vegetation maps (CAVM (Walker et al., 2005), RasterCAVM (Raynolds et al., 2019), and ABoVE 250 LC (Wang et al., 2020), Fig. S5, Table S6, see Sect. S5) to produce the regionally scaled TVPRM net CO<sub>2</sub> flux. By varying 251 the choice of representative inland and coastal tundra sites, meteorological reanalysis product, vegetation map, and SIF 252 product, we generate 288 different simulations (members) of net  $CO_2$  flux (referred to here as the unconstrained TVPRM 253 ensemble) for each grid box across the region for each of the six study years. Monthly and annual regional net CO<sub>2</sub> flux values 254 are calculated as the area-weighted sum of all grid boxes simulated in our domain. Notable changes since the previous iteration of this empirical CO<sub>2</sub> flux model (Commane et al., 2017; Luus et al., 2017) include the expansion of the model to include multiple ensemble members to account for variability and uncertainty in model formulation, the use of additional site-years of CO<sub>2</sub> flux observations (with increased data coverage over the cold season), more inclusive data filtering methods, and much higher temporal (1-, 4-, and 8-day rather than monthly) and spatial (0.01° and 0.05° rather than 0.5°) resolution SIF datasets. We compare TVPRM to the previous model version by Luus et al. (2017) and its CARVE-informed optimization by Commane

260 et al. (2017) in Sect. 3.3.

#### 261 **2.5 Evaluation Framework**

We use the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration observations to evaluate the many tundra ecosystem parameterizations, vegetation distributions, and environmental drivers that represent the net CO<sub>2</sub> flux on the North Slope over various spatial and temporal scales. For this assessment, we compare the observed  $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub>, which are the observed CO<sub>2</sub> concentration changes driven by regional CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes, with the simulated  $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub> determined by combining the regional biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> flux models with the atmospheric transport model.

To compare the regional observed  $\Delta CO_2$  and simulated  $\Delta CO_2$ , we calculated the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) as the square of the Pearson correlation coefficient for all points. The slope (m) is determined by ordinary least squares using the median of each 10% bin of ordered observed and corresponding simulated net CO<sub>2</sub> flux. The normalized mean bias (NMB) of all points is defined as  $\frac{\sum (\text{simulated} - \text{observed})}{\sum \text{observed}}$ . The root-mean-square error (RMSE) of all points is defined as

271  $\sqrt{(\text{simulated} - \text{observed})^2}$ .

272 These comparisons enable us to constrain the regional net  $CO_2$  flux on the Alaska North Slope. First, we identify the 273 year-round empirically driven net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from the TVPRM ensemble (TVPRM Unconstrained) which are most consistent 274 with the CO<sub>2</sub> concentration observations from the two aircraft campaigns and at the tower (TVPRM Constrained) (Sects. 3.1– 275 3.2). Then, noting the large range in potential cold season  $CO_2$  fluxes, we compare our constrained TVPRM member with  $CO_2$ fluxes from previous studies (Sect. 3.3). Finally, we suggest and quantify sources of the missing CO<sub>2</sub> flux observed during the 276 277 early cold season (defined here as September–December) and incorporate those fluxes into our net CO<sub>2</sub> budget (TVPRM 278 Constrained + Additional Zero Curtain Emissions (ZC) and Inland Water Fluxes (IW)) (Sect. 3.4). This analysis provides a 279 unique regional net  $CO_2$  flux quantification for the North Slope that is verified using atmospheric observations and can also 280 be explained from an ecological and physical perspective.

#### 281 3. Results

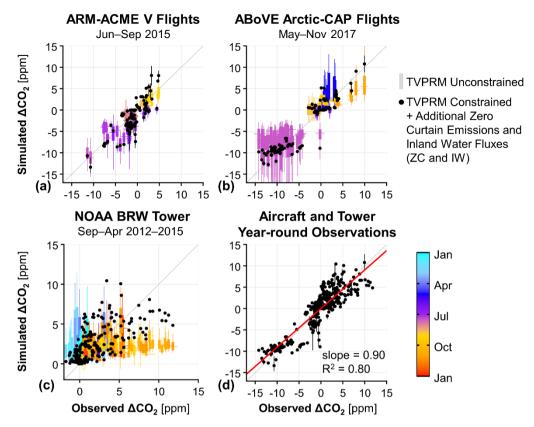
# 282 **3.1** Evaluation of unconstrained empirical net CO<sub>2</sub> flux model ensemble

# 283 3.1.1 Using aircraft-observed CO<sub>2</sub> enhancements

284 The observed  $\Delta CO_2$  during the ARM-ACME V (June–September 2015) and ABoVE Arctic-CAP (May–November 2017) 285 airborne campaigns show a strong seasonal uptake pattern throughout the growing season (Figs. 2a–2b). The frequent flights 286 during ARM-ACME V (multiple flights per week) observe the transition from early to peak growing season uptake (observed 287  $\Delta CO_2 = -11$  ppm) and on into cold season respiration, which results in net CO<sub>2</sub> source conditions in September (+5 ppm). 288 While less frequent, the ABoVE Arctic-CAP flights begin at the end of the cold season, extend later into following cold season, 289 and cover a larger area of the North Slope. Peak growing season uptake observed by the ABoVE Arctic-CAP flights (-14 ppm) 290 is slightly stronger than for during ARM-ACME V, and by November, the ABoVE Arctic-CAP flights observe a strong CO<sub>2</sub> 291 source throughout the North Slope (+10 ppm). The difference in observed  $\Delta CO_2$  during peak growing season uptake between 292 2015 and 2017 is likely similar to the uncertainty in the respective values and could be due to differences in areas of the North 293 Slope sampled between years.

294 The magnitude and timing of the observed net  $CO_2$  uptake throughout the growing season is generally well 295 represented by the empirical net CO<sub>2</sub> flux model ensemble (TVPRM Unconstrained, Figs. 2a–2b, S6). The median coefficients 296 of determination ( $R^2$ ) and ordinary least squares slopes between the observed and simulated  $\Delta CO_2$  for this time are 0.54 and 297 0.41 for ARM-ACME V and 0.82 and 0.72 for ABoVE Arctic-CAP, respectively. Only for the July observations during the 298 ABoVE Arctic-CAP campaign do many members of the CO<sub>2</sub> flux trend toward an underestimate of net CO<sub>2</sub> uptake, with all 299 points showing a much larger range in simulated values compared to ARM-ACME V. The net CO<sub>2</sub> release tends to be 300 overestimated by the TVPRM ensemble during the ABoVE Arctic-CAP seasonal transitions in May and September, but during 301 November the observed R<sub>soil</sub> is consistently underestimated.

302 Given the large range of unconstrained representations of the regional CO<sub>2</sub> flux, the accuracy in simulating the aircraft 303 observed  $\Delta CO_2$  varies between TVPRM ensemble members. For example, members using the RasterCAVM vegetation map, 304 which places less coastal tundra area cover in the south (Fig. S5), produce a smaller mean July net  $CO_2$  uptake flux (by ~1 305  $\mu$  µmol m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>, Fig. S7a) throughout the southern North Slope than members using other vegetation maps (CAVM and ABoVE 306 LC), and this placement consistently underestimates the net  $\Delta CO_2$  uptake during the growing season compared to the aircraft 307 observations by 5–10 ppm (Fig. S8). Also, members driven by SIF products that integrate additional remote sensing and/or 308 meteorological data (GOSIF and CSIF) better reflect the timing and magnitude of the peak season carbon uptake in tundra 309 ecosystems than members produced by interpolated SIF retrievals (GOME-2 SIF product), which underestimate the observed 310 CO<sub>2</sub> uptake during July (Fig. S8).



311

312 Figure 2. Aircraft and tower CO<sub>2</sub> concentration measurements constrain year-round simulated CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes on the Alaska North Slope. (a)-313 (c) Comparison of observed and simulated  $\Delta CO_2$  during the ARM-ACME V flight campaign (a), during the ABoVE Arctic-CAP flight 314 campaign (b), and at the NOAA BRW tower (c) for air over the Alaska North Slope. Horizontal lines indicate range of uncertainty in the 315 NOAA BRW tower ocean sector background calculation. Vertical boxes colored by month of the year represent 50% and whiskers represent 316 95% of  $\Delta CO_2$  values from all members of unconstrained TVPRM ensemble (see Sect. 2.4) from all binned points. Black points show values 317 from the constrained TVPRM member with additional zero-curtain emissions (ZC) and inland water fluxes (IW) (see Sect. 3.4). For (a)–(b). 318 observed values are vertically binned medians, and for constrained TVPRM member + ZC and IW, vertical lines contain middle 95% of 319  $\Delta CO_2$  values from all binned points. (d) Combined comparison of observed and simulated  $\Delta CO_2$  for all aircraft and tower points using 320 constrained TVPRM member + ZC and IW. Shown with linear best fit (red line), slope determined by ordinary least squares, and coefficient 321 of determination ( $\mathbb{R}^2$ ) of all points (n = 455). 1:1 line shown in dark gray.

Using these comparisons, we identify less-representative ensemble members that generally underestimate the observed  $\Delta CO_2$  uptake during the growing season (RasterCAVM vegetation map and GOME-2 SIF product members). Removing these members from the TVPRM ensemble improves the collective performance of the remaining members during the growing season (Fig. S6), brings the median slope of agreement closer to 1 for both campaigns (improves from 0.53 to 0.64 and from 0.71 to 0.94 for ARM-ACME V and ABoVE Arctic-CAP, respectively), and reduces median NMB (-0.34 to -0.03) and median RMSE (3.12 to 2.73) for ABoVE Arctic-CAP.

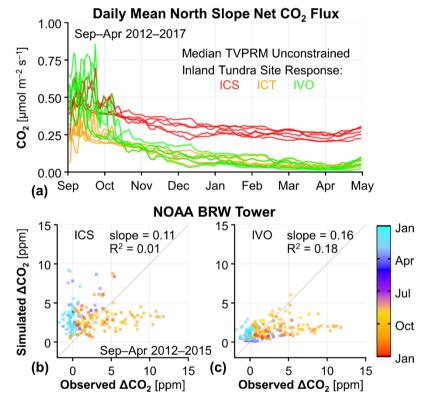
#### 328 3.1.2 Using tower-observed CO<sub>2</sub> enhancements

329 As seen with the September–November aircraft data, the observed  $\Delta CO_2$  at the NOAA BRW tower (Fig. 2c) indicate that the

330 CO<sub>2</sub> source to the atmosphere increases substantially from September to peak in October and November (+12 ppm) before

331 decreasing to near zero throughout the late cold season (January-April).

- 332 Most of the TVPRM ensemble members substantially underestimate the observed  $\Delta CO_2$  in the early cold season
- 333 (September–December) as the soils freeze, and some simulations produce too much  $CO_2$  in the late cold season when the soils
- are frozen (Fig. 2c). The cold season CO<sub>2</sub> flux differs greatest in magnitude and spatial extent between the ensemble members
- 335 parameterized for the ICS and ICT inland tundra sites (Figs. 3a, S9–S10), with a net CO<sub>2</sub> flux difference of ~0.2  $\mu$ mol m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>
- 336 throughout the region (Fig. S7b).



#### 337

**Figure 3.** Cold season CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for inland tundra site parameterizations and comparison to tower observations. (a) Timeseries of simulated daily mean Alaska North Slope net CO<sub>2</sub> flux for the median of all unconstrained TVPRM ensemble members using each of three inland tundra site parameterizations: ICS (red), ICT (orange), and IVO (green). Yearly colored lines shown for Sep–Apr beginning in Sep 2012 and ending in Apr 2017. Same for all eight eddy flux sites shown in Fig. S9. (b)–(c) Comparison of observed and simulated  $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub> at the NOAA BRW tower for air over the North Slope using the median of all unconstrained TVPRM ensemble members for the inland tundra site parameterizations at ICS (b) and IVO (c). All points colored by day of year. Shown with slope determined by ordinary least squares and coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) of all points (n = 191). 1:1 line shown in dark gray.

345 While the magnitude of  $CO_2$  flux from ICS members better matches the observed  $\Delta CO_2$  in the early cold season than 346 from other sites (Figs. 3b–3c, S11), the response to T<sub>s</sub> at ICS shows only a modest decrease in  $CO_2$  flux between the early and 147 late cold season (Fig. 3a, 32% decrease between October and March), resulting in an overestimate of the regional  $\Delta CO_2$  in the 148 late cold season. The CO<sub>2</sub> flux response to T<sub>s</sub> for ICT members is similar to that for ICS but lower in magnitude, and the 149 simulated  $\Delta CO_2$  from members of neither site performs well against the observations in both the early and late cold season. 150 Therefore, ICS and ICT inland tundra responses to T<sub>s</sub> are not representative of the regional  $\Delta CO_2$  observed at the NOAA BRW 151 tower throughout the entire cold season, and we remove those members from our TPVRM ensemble.

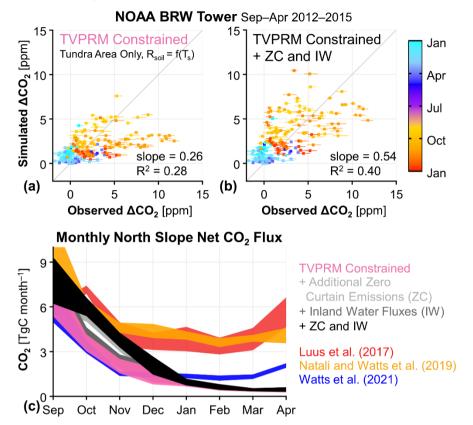
352 The observed net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes at the IVO inland tundra and CMDL coastal tundra sites both show prolonged zero-353 curtain emissions (Fig. S1) and respond strongly to  $T_s$  in the early cold season (Fig. S9). The stronger response of CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes 354 to T<sub>s</sub> from the early to late cold season at IVO (Fig. 3a, 70% decrease by January) compared to at the Imnavait Creek sites 355 produces TVPRM members that better represents the large regional decrease in  $\Delta CO_2$  observed on the North Slope (Fig. 3c). While all coastal tundra sites respond similarly to  $T_s$  during the cold season, we determine that the CO<sub>2</sub> flux magnitude at 356 357 CMDL is most consistent with the regional observations (Fig. S11). Ts from ERA5 remain warmer throughout the late cold 358 season compared to those from NARR, which causes simulations using ERA5  $T_s$  to overestimate CO<sub>2</sub> release during that time 359 (Fig. S11). Unlike during the growing season, cold season CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes are not sensitive to the vegetation distribution and SIF 360 products.

361 Finally, we identify the TVPRM member that best matches the observed  $\Delta CO_2$ : parameterized by IVO inland tundra 362 and CMDL coastal tundra site responses, distributed by the ABoVE LC vegetation map, and driven by NARR reanalysis and 363 the CSIF SIF product (referred to here as TVPRM Constrained, Figs. S6, S12). This constrained simulation estimates a mean regional CO<sub>2</sub> flux of 0.05 µmol m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> for the late cold season in 2012–2015 and reproduces well the observed  $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub> during 364 this time (Fig. 4a). The late cold season NMB and RMSE against the observations at the NOAA BRW tower are reduced from 365 4.91 to 2.04 and from 1.94 to 1.30, respectively, for the constrained simulation compared to the median of the entire TVPRM 366 367 ensemble (Fig. S12). However, the early cold season CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, with a mean regional CO<sub>2</sub> flux of 0.25  $\mu$ mol m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> for 368 September–December (Fig. S13a), are still underestimated, with the simulated  $\Delta CO_2$  lower than the observed  $\Delta CO_2$  by ~5 369 ppm (Fig. 4a).

# 370 **3.2** Alternative T<sub>s</sub> products and R<sub>soil</sub> parameterizations

371 To test the impact of reanalysis  $T_s$  on the early cold season CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes, we implement  $T_s$  that are more specifically developed 372 to represent Alaska tundra permafrost soils during freeze-thaw processes than the reanalysis products driving our constrained 373 TPVRM member. A single layer of T<sub>s</sub> at 8 cm depth from RS-PM (Fig. S14a) captures the magnitude and temporal behavior 374 of the observed early cold season CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes slightly better than the constrained member (Figs. 4a, S12), which uses NARR 375 reanalysis T<sub>s</sub> and does not incorporate permafrost-model derived T<sub>s</sub>. The RS-PM T<sub>s</sub> extends CO<sub>2</sub> emission fluxes further into 376 the cold season by up to a month, which is consistent with a better representation of the zero-curtain period, however, emissions 377 remain higher throughout the late cold season than our atmospheric observation-constrained CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes (Fig. S15). We also 378 test the implementation of a multi-layer fit driven by soil column temperature from RS-PM, but neither of these instances of 379 remote sensing informed T<sub>s</sub> substantially improve the agreement of the  $\Delta CO_2$  at the NOAA BRW tower during the early cold

- 380 season. Attempts to use alternative R<sub>soil</sub> formulations based on T<sub>s</sub>, including Q<sub>10</sub> relationships, also fail to reproduce the
- 381 observed elevated CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes during the cold season.



382

383 Figure 4. Tall tower atmospheric observations of the Alaska North Slope support early cold season emissions not driven by soil temperature 384  $(T_s)$  and present no evidence for elevated late cold season emissions. (a)–(b) Comparison of hourly cold season (Sep–Apr) observed and 385 simulated  $\Delta CO_2$  at the NOAA BRW tower for the constrained TPVRM member, where soil respiration (R<sub>soil</sub>) is determined only by T<sub>s</sub> (a) 386 and for the constrained TVPRM member + additional zero-curtain emissions (ZC) and inland water fluxes (IW) (b). Horizontal segments 387 indicate range of uncertainty in the NOAA BRW tower ocean sector background calculation. Shown with slope determined by ordinary least 388 squares and coefficient of determination ( $\mathbb{R}^2$ ) of all points (n = 191). 1:1 line shown in dark gray. (c) Monthly cold season total Alaska North 389 Slope net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes for various CO<sub>2</sub> flux models. TVPRM-based simulations and Natali and Watts et al. (2019) show values for 2012– 390 2017, Luus et al. (2017) show 2012–2014, and Watts et al. (2021) show Sep 2016–Apr 2017. Ribbons represent range of all years, where 391 applicable. Area of the North Slope domain used to calculate regional totals is  $3.537 \times 10^5$  km<sup>2</sup>.

#### 392 **3.3 Evaluation of other CO<sub>2</sub> flux models during the cold season**

393 More early cold season (September–December)  $CO_2$  flux into the atmosphere is observed at the NOAA BRW tower than is

394 emitted by our constrained empirical simulation member, and these observations also indicate low late cold season (January-

- 395 April) CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We compare our constrained CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes to several other representations of gridded CO<sub>2</sub> flux on the
- 396 North Slope (Table S3) and find that difficulty in simulating the magnitude and timing of the observed  $\Delta CO_2$  throughout the
- 397 cold season is not unique to the constrained fluxes from our study.

- 398 The net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from Luus et al. (2017) are similar to the constrained TVPRM member during the growing season 399 (Fig. S16), but release more than three times as much  $CO_2$  into the atmosphere throughout the late cold season (Fig. 4c). This large late cold season CO<sub>2</sub> flux leads to a large overestimate compared to the observed  $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub> (Fig. S14b). The optimization 400 employed by Commane et al. (2017) increases the September–October CO<sub>2</sub> flux to a range that matches our observations at 401 402 the NOAA BRW tower. However, Commane et al. (2017) did not optimize the cold season fluxes from November to March, 403 but reverted to Luus et al. (2017) fluxes during this time, thus producing late cold season fluxes that are too large. Overall, 404 Commane et al. (2017) projected a regional total cold season CO<sub>2</sub> source of 37–40 TgC for 2012–2014, which is more than twice as high as our constrained TVPRM member CO<sub>2</sub> flux (15–18 TgC) for those years. 405
- 406 Carbon dioxide fluxes from work by Natali and Watts et al. (2019), a cold season model developed for the global high latitude permafrost region, are similar to our constrained TVPRM member in September, but the fluxes remain high 407 408 throughout the cold season (Fig. 4c) similarly to Luus et al. (2017), for a range of total cold season CO<sub>2</sub> flux of 40–43 TgC for 409 2012–2017. This sustained CO<sub>2</sub> release also leads to an overestimation in the  $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub> in the late cold season for this region (Fig. 410 S14c). Tao et al. (2021) also show that the cold season CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes of Natali and Watts et al. (2019) are high compared to their 411 model. More recent work by Watts et al. (2021), using observations from new Soil Respiration Station monitoring sites in Alaska, produces cold season CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes more similar to our constrained CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes, with an underestimate in the simulated 412 413  $\Delta CO_2$  during the early cold season (Fig. S14d), for a total cold season CO<sub>2</sub> flux of 18 TgC for September 2016 to April 2017.

#### 414 **3.4 Sources of missing CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes**

None of the flux products discussed above, including our TVPRM ensemble, account for any potential CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes during the 415 416 zero-curtain period that are not driven by  $T_s$  or are from areas on the terrestrial-aquatic interface. To account for these processes, 417 we first add an additional CO<sub>2</sub> flux with zero-curtain timing to our constrained CO<sub>2</sub> flux (TVPRM) member from both inland and coastal tundra areas that consists of 0.25  $\mu$ mol m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> for October with a reduction to zero by the end of December. This 418 419 peak additional  $CO_2$  flux is within the daily variability of the observed  $CO_2$  flux at the IVO and CMDL eddy flux sites during 420 the zero-curtain period (Fig. S9) and the reduction into December is consistent with these observations. The additional zero-421 curtain flux improves the ability of the model to reproduce the observed  $\Delta CO_2$  at the NOAA BRW tower (slope = 0.46, R<sup>2</sup> = 422 0.41). We also apply the coastal tundra site ecosystem parameterization used in our constrained TVPRM member to all areas 423 of inland water on the North Slope, which account for 4% of the domain according to the ABoVE LC map (Fig. S5) and were 424 previously set to zero  $CO_2$  flux. Representing these aquatic areas with biogenic  $CO_2$  fluxes consistent with coastal tundra 425 ecosystems is one simple way to bridge the terrestrial-aquatic gap in tundra ecosystem models, where portions of aquatic 426 systems on the land-water gradient (i.e., the edges) may be more likely to respond to the environment as coastal tundra than 427 with the zero-flux assumed by water area. The ice phenology for areas of inland water producing  $CO_2$  flux is then considered 428 to be similar to that of the freeze-thaw timing in coastal tundra soils. Adding these coastal tundra fluxes to inland water areas also improves the performance of our model (slope = 0.32,  $R^2 = 0.29$  against NOAA BRW tower observations). The magnitude 429

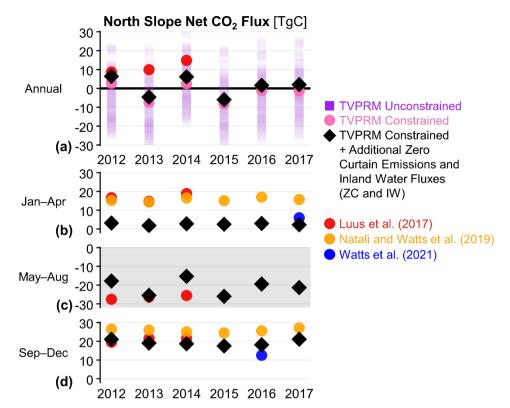
430 of additional zero-curtain flux suggested here and the portion of inland water represented with coastal tundra site431 parameterizations produce the best statistical comparison for a range of choices tested (Fig. S17).

Together, adding these zero-curtain (ZC) and inland water (IW) CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes to our constrained simulation (referred to as TVPRM Constrained + ZC and IW) increases the mean regional CO<sub>2</sub> flux in early cold season by 70% (0.18  $\mu$ mol m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>, Fig. S13b) and results in a large improvement to our comparison of  $\Delta$ CO<sub>2</sub> at the NOAA BRW tower (slope = 0.54, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.40, Figs. 4b, S12) and across the region using airborne data, especially during the November ABoVE Arctic-CAP flights (Figs. 2, S6). The year-round comparison using all available aircraft and tower observations shows these net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes are now representative of the region (slope = 0.90, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.80, Fig. 2d). As a result, the North Slope regional total cold season CO<sub>2</sub> flux increases by 6 TgC (~38%) to 20–24 TgC for 2012–2017 compared to the constrained empirical CO<sub>2</sub> flux model member.

#### 439 **3.5 Alaska North Slope annual net CO<sub>2</sub> flux**

440 The median Alaska North Slope annual net  $CO_2$  flux from the TVPRM ensemble (-5 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup>) for 2012–2017 is consistent 441 with the previous multi-model comparison (Fisher et al., 2014), but we find a much smaller range in regional  $CO_2$  flux values (26 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup> to -29 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup> for 95% of TVPRM members) (Fig. S18). The largest contribution to this ensemble range comes 442 443 from the difference in parameterizations determined for the ICS and ICT inland tundra sites, with TVPRM members using ICS trending toward a net  $CO_2$  source, while ICT trends toward net  $CO_2$  uptake. The distribution of inland and coastal tundra 444 445 throughout the region represented by the vegetation maps also has a noticeable impact on the sign of the net  $CO_2$  flux, with 446 members using the RasterCAVM more likely to release net  $CO_2$  into the atmosphere than members using the other maps. There is also little interannual variability in the unconstrained TVPRM ensemble, with only 2014 moving toward a net  $CO_2$ 447 448 source, consistent with Tao et al. (2021) for these years.

449 Our best quantification of the annual net CO<sub>2</sub> flux for the North Slope informed by atmospheric observations, TVPRM 450 Constrained + ZC and IW, indicates that the region is a small net sink for 2013 ( $-5 \text{ TgC yr}^{-1}$ ) and 2015 ( $-6 \text{ TgC yr}^{-1}$ ) and a small net source for 2012 (+6 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup>), 2014 (+6 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup>), 2016 (+2 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup>), and 2017 (+2 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup>) (Fig. 5a). We 451 452 estimate a 10% uncertainty in the net annual CO<sub>2</sub> flux based on the slope from our final comparison with the year-round 453 observations (Fig. 2d). The year-round net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from Luus et al. (2017) (driven with NARR meteorology, monthly 454 GOME-2 SIF, and CAVM vegetation map) indicate the North Slope to be a strong annual net CO<sub>2</sub> source for 2012–2014 (+9 455 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup> to +15 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup>, Fig. S18) and are inconsistent with our results. Our results are more consistent with Tao et al. (2021), 456 but we find a smaller range in the magnitude of net  $CO_2$  flux over the same years and more years trending toward a net  $CO_2$ 457 source.



459 Figure 5. Annual and seasonal Alaska North Slope net CO<sub>2</sub> flux constrained by aircraft and tower observations. (a) Annual, (b) late cold
 460 season (Jan–Apr), (c) growing season (May–Aug), and (d) early cold season (Sep–Dec) total Alaska North Slope net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes for various
 461 CO<sub>2</sub> flux models for 2012–2017 as in Fig. 4. Purple squares indicate middle 95% of all TVPRM ensemble members.

We find that the regional net growing season  $CO_2$  uptake and the cold season emissions on the North Slope are comparable in magnitude, so the net balance could depend on small perturbations in either flux. However, the regional cold season  $CO_2$  emissions for these years were relatively similar from year to year: 18–21 TgC for the early cold season (Fig. 5d), diminishing to only 2–3 TgC for the late cold season (Fig. 5b). Therefore, the interannual variability of the regional carbon balance is largely driven by fluctuating net growing season  $CO_2$  fluxes during these years: greater net growing season uptake in 2013 and 2015 than in 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2017 (Fig. 5c).

#### 468 4. Discussion

458

# 469 4.1 Tundra ecosystem growing season net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes

470 The good performance of the TVPRM ensemble against the atmospheric observations during the growing season indicates that

- 471 the tundra ecosystems of the Alaska North Slope respond to light and heat as quantified by PAR,  $T_s$ , and  $T_a$ , and that the net
- 472 CO<sub>2</sub> flux is largely controlled by the simple R<sub>soil</sub>, R<sub>plant</sub>, and GPP relationships in the empirical model over this time.

473 The growing season of each year determines the sign of the regional annual net CO<sub>2</sub> flux during our study period, 474 with 2013 and 2015 being strong net sinks and 2014 being the strongest net source. The relative magnitude of each component 475 of the net  $CO_2$  flux during the growing season (i.e.,  $R_{soil}$ ,  $R_{plant}$ , GPP) varies from year-to-year (Table S7) and helps explain the 476 interannual variability in the net source or sink status of the North Slope. Growing season 2015 was very warm, dry, and sunny 477 in Alaska and resulted in extreme biomass burning activity outside of the North Slope (Table S1). High regional mean  $T_a$  and 478 PAR (Table S8) and low accumulated precipitation (Table S9) in NARR confirm this was the case for North Slope as well, 479 with high T<sub>a</sub> and PAR contributing to a very high GPP. The growing season SIF signal from the CSIF product, which determines the seasonal cycle and relative magnitude of photosynthetic activity, is also large in 2015 (Table S8), further 480 481 enhancing GPP. This year and others with a larger GPP component of NEE correspond to growing seasons with stronger SIF 482 signals, which is an indicator of increased productivity and consistent with previous studies (e.g., Magney et al., 2019; Sun et 483 al., 2017). While fairly high  $T_a$  and  $T_s$  in 2015 also result in high  $R_{soil}$  and  $R_{plant}$ , respectively, this elevated respiration is not 484 enough to offset the very high GPP and results in a large net CO<sub>2</sub> sink. In contrast, the summer of 2014 was cool, wet, and 485 cloudy, and the North Slope experienced very low T<sub>a</sub>, PAR, and SIF signal, producing very low GPP. Lower-than-normal T<sub>a</sub> also results in very low R<sub>plant</sub>, but as with 2015, this is not enough to offset the extremely low uptake resulting in a large net 486 487  $CO_2$  source for 2014. In 2013, the other growing season with a strong net  $CO_2$  sink, moderately high GPP combines with 488 moderately low R<sub>plant</sub> and very low R<sub>soil</sub>. Extremely low T<sub>s</sub> causes this very low R<sub>soil</sub>, which, relative to moderate T<sub>a</sub> and PAR, 489 is likely a result of above-average lingering snowpack into May (Table S9). This lingering snowpack is perhaps surprising 490 given that the mean snowpack for the proceeding cold season was not particularly deep. The important impact that snow cover 491 and the timing of snowmelt has on  $T_s$  and carbon response in tundra ecosystems has been recently emphasized (e.g., Kim et 492 al., 2021), and is supported by our work, which shows that the prevalence of snow in the spring may determine the sign of the 493 regional net  $CO_2$  for an entire year.

494 The regional net  $CO_2$  flux is highly sensitive, however, to the distribution of tundra vegetation types (upland v. 495 coastal) throughout the North Slope during the growing season. Coastal tundra takes up more  $CO_2$  for a given unit PAR 496 compared to inland tundra, based on the relationships between observed site-level net CO<sub>2</sub> flux and PAR in this study (TVPRM 497 parameters, Fig. S1), which could be evidence for an adaptation to lower light levels. This difference is consistent with Luus 498 et al. (2017), who calculated greater uptake at "wetland" sites like Atqasuk and Barrow than at "graminoid tundra" sites like 499 Ivotuk and Imnavait when all driver inputs are constant and with Mbufong et al. (2014), who also found that peak growing 500 season net uptake for constant light is greater at Barrow than at Ivotuk. The stronger  $CO_2$  uptake response of coastal tundra to light is important to consider due to the fact that the vegetation distributions assessed here with more coastal tundra to the 501 502 south (CAVM (Walker et al., 2005), ABoVE LC (Wang et al., 2020)) better agree with the atmospheric observations. When 503 considering the ability of coastal tundra to take up  $CO_2$  when moved toward the south, Patankar et al. (2013) saw that tundra 504 plants exposed to additional intense light did not respond with additional uptake. Therefore, while the ecosystem response of 505 the southern North Slope is more consistent with coastal ecosystems, it seems possible that these areas are misclassified in 506 either our simplified two-tundra type scheme or in the vegetation maps themselves. The large variability in net  $CO_2$  flux 507 calculated by using the different maps supports the importance of accurate ecosystem type locations in upscaling eddy flux 508 measurements and highlights the need for improved vegetation mapping and classification schemes in the Arctic ecology 509 research community.

# 510 4.2 Regional-scale cold season CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

511 Observations across scales, at the in-situ eddy flux towers, the NOAA BRW tower, and from aircraft, consistently show signs 512 of large early cold season  $CO_2$  emissions from ecosystems on the Alaska North Slope. However, there is no evidence of 513 widespread elevated emissions in this region during the late cold season, contrary to other studies (Commane et al., 2017; 514 Natali and Watts et al., 2019). The TVPRM ensemble parameterizations using terrestrial eddy flux sites and the fluxes from 515 other terrestrial  $CO_2$  models cannot reproduce both the observed magnitude and across-season timing of these cold season  $CO_2$ 516 emissions.

517 The largest differences in the net CO<sub>2</sub> flux between TVPRM ensemble members result from the contrasting site conditions 518 driving the ICS and ICT R<sub>soil</sub> parameterizations during the cold season. When taken separately by cold season segment, ICS 519 members perform quite well against observations at the NOAA BRW tower for early cold season and ICT members perform 520 well for the late cold season. The contrasting performance between site parameterizations is due to the topographic and 521 hydrologic conditions, which are quite heterogeneous over a short distance and influence the plant communities and carbon 522 storage, at each site. The ecosystems sampled by the ICS tower are seasonally inundated and retain a deep layer of organic soil 523 that can be respired in greater amounts longer into the early cold season, while the well-drained hillslope at ICT does not allow 524 for accumulation of organic matter in the same way (Euskirchen et al., 2017; Larson et al., 2021). While varying topography 525 and soil inundation throughout the North Slope means that each of these site relationships is likely to be representative of many 526 other locations in the region with similar conditions, the early-to-late cold season reduction in  $CO_2$  fluxes at these sites is not 527 consistent with the observed regional atmospheric trend, however, and we remove the members parameterized by them from 528 the ensemble. Individual eddy flux site parameterizations may reproduce regional  $CO_2$  fluxes for a given season, but it is 529 important to consider their response to drivers across multiple seasons when scaling from the site-level to regional domains.

530 The observed cold season CO<sub>2</sub> flux pattern on the North Slope may be unique to tundra ecosystems of this region. For 531 example, the  $CO_2$  fluxes from Natali and Watts et al. (2019) and Watts et al. (2021) both incorporate measurements from the 532 North Slope. However, Natali and Watts et al. (2019) used boosted regression trees trained on belowground respiration 533 measurements from across the pan-Arctic tundra and boreal zones, which may not be representative for our study region. The 534 fluxes from Watts et al. (2021) are based on respiration measurements from throughout only Alaska and northwest Canada 535 and conform better to local conditions. The evaluation of these CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes against atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> measurements also 536 produces results that are more consistent with our TVPRM ensemble determined by North Slope eddy flux tower 537 measurements.

538 We find that the atmospheric observations are best matched by biogenic  $CO_2$  fluxes that include an additional  $CO_2$  source 539 from tundra ecosystems during the zero-curtain period that are independent from  $T_s$  variability and year-round net  $CO_2$  fluxes 540 from areas of inland water. The additional zero-curtain flux represents large-scale emission events not directly timed to 541 microbial activity and root respiration controlled by  $T_s$ , but could be related to the delayed physical release of previously 542 produced CO<sub>2</sub> from soil through the snowpack as the soil layers remain unfrozen (Bowling and Massman, 2011). The Alaska 543 North Slope also has many water bodies distributed throughout the coastal tundra region, and the extent to which carbon cycles 544 between small, shallow ponds and their surrounding terrestrial components is unclear (Magnússon et al., 2020). The biogenic 545 CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes in these areas are likely driven by ecosystem-scale CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from both coastal tundra and small ponds (Holgerson 546 and Raymond, 2016; Tan et al., 2017) and their impact on the regional net CO<sub>2</sub> flux, via both emissions and uptake, may be 547 significant (Elder et al., 2018; Beckebanze et al., 2022). Only by adding fluxes that match observed zero-curtain CO<sub>2</sub> emission 548 pulses and by approximating net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes in aquatic areas can we reproduce the observed  $\Delta CO_2$  magnitude in both early 549 and late cold season. The resulting seasonal change between the early and late cold season is consistent with the extended 550 duration of the observed regional-scale zero curtain. The simplistic approximations suggested here are not inconsistent with 551 the existing uncertainties in tundra  $CO_2$  flux modeling and demonstrate the importance of considering these additional  $CO_2$ 552 fluxes and their mechanisms for future study.

#### 553 **4.3 Future state of net CO<sub>2</sub> flux on the Alaska North Slope**

554 As the Arctic warms rapidly, the competition between the growing and cold season Arctic  $CO_2$  fluxes will determine the net 555 biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> flux into the atmosphere. Warming T<sub>a</sub> warms soils, thaws permafrost, increases active layer thickness and has 556 extended the duration of the zero curtain from weeks to over 100 days (Romanovsky and Osterkamp, 2000; Schuur et al., 557 2015; Zona et al., 2016), all of which increase cold season  $CO_2$  emissions. The warming may also increase net growing season 558 uptake, but the severe light limitation at high northern latitudes limits the extent of the growing season, especially on the North 559 Slope (Zhang et al., 2020). The future of  $CO_2$  fluxes from inland waters and wetlands in the Arctic is uncertain, but some 560 studies suggest  $CO_2$  emissions from lakes may increase (Bayer et al., 2019). The culmination of these effects will likely push 561 the North Slope into a consistent net source in the future. However, observations at the NOAA BRW tower during our study 562 period do not show elevated late cold season CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, so the North Slope was not a consistent net source through 2017. Accordingly, care must be taken to accurately represent CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from Arctic ecosystems during both the early and late cold 563 564 season when calculating the annual net  $CO_2$  budget. TVPRM could be used with projections of meteorology and SIF to 565 calculate the future net  $CO_2$  balance for this region, but we caution against overuse of the model using current parameters, as 566 the flux-driver relationships in the rapidly warming Arctic ecosystems are changing so quickly that we would not assume 567 accuracy into the future. While we can constrain the annual net  $CO_2$  budget with existing data, the Arctic is rapidly changing 568 and needs constant monitoring. The following recommendations would provide more detailed spatial and seasonal constraints 569 and up-to-date information on the processes driving  $CO_2$  fluxes across the region.

#### 570 4.3.1 Future observation efforts

571 Our results motivate the need for a more extensive network of CO<sub>2</sub> eddy flux towers operating year-round, alongside sensors for soil moisture and Ts profiles throughout the active layer to better understand the mechanisms driving year-round and 572 573 especially early cold season CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes. Noting that automated or semi-automated monitoring systems for aquatic 574 environments currently do not exist for the North Slope or other high latitude regions, this sensor network should be distributed 575 throughout poorly sampled ecosystem types, particularly along wetness gradients that span mixed terrestrial-aquatic 576 environments. The results in this study also support the need for additional continuous CO<sub>2</sub> concentration measurements at tall 577 towers across the North Slope (including away from the coast) to increase coverage of observed  $\Delta CO_2$  during all seasons and 578 to better constrain the regional background. Airborne measurements of both CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations and CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes remain 579 valuable to sample areas less accessible via ground-based measurements, but a large-scale flight campaign in the region has 580 not occurred since 2017. Any additional flights should be targeted as early before, and as late after, the growing season as 581 possible. Satellites that rely on reflected sunlight to detect  $CO_2$  have increasingly been used to constrain  $CO_2$  budgets in the 582 northern latitudes (e.g., Byrne et al., (2022)), but data is very limited in the cold season, especially in far-northern regions like 583 the North Slope.

#### 584 **4.3.2 Future modeling efforts**

585 The large initial range of potential regional net  $CO_2$  flux values we found for the Alaska North Slope indicates a large sensitivity 586 to choices and assumptions made when scaling eddy flux observations from the site- to regional- scale. The most important of these choices are the representation of the upland tundra, particularly for the response of  $R_{soil}$  to  $T_s$  during the cold season, and 587 588 the distribution of vegetation types throughout the domain. Future tundra  $CO_2$  modeling efforts should focus on using site-589 level data that is the most consistent with regional-scale fluxes, rather than incorporating data from all available sites. 590 Consistency and accuracy in classification schemes used in vegetation maps must also be addressed. As we have shown with 591 the atmospheric observations, not all model scenarios have equal likelihood to be true, and the mean of the model ensemble is 592 not necessarily the most likely or most consistent with the atmosphere. Using these atmospheric observations is uncertain, 593 however, due to potential errors in the transport modeling, which are difficult to quantify. Atmospheric modeling of remote 594 areas such as the Alaska North Slope requires further evaluation and improvement. Further, increasing model temporal 595 resolution should be considered as the importance of the zero-curtain and snow cover to the net CO<sub>2</sub> flux of tundra ecosystems 596 is recognized, both of which vary on the order of days and weeks, rather than months.

#### 597 **5.** Conclusions

598 Observed atmospheric concentrations from aircraft and towers are a powerful tool that provide a regional constraint on the 599 many combinations of possible  $CO_2$  flux parameterizations and distributions of tundra ecosystems on the North Slope of 600 Alaska. We find that the annual regional net  $CO_2$  flux on the North Slope in not a consistent net source or sink, but instead varies between -6 and +6 TgC yr<sup>-1</sup> for 2012–2017. We can also identify ecosystem relationships and driver combinations that best represent both local CO<sub>2</sub> flux patterns and regional atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> enhancements. The simulated regional net CO<sub>2</sub> flux is highly sensitive to assumptions made while scaling up eddy flux observations, especially the ecosystem response to T<sub>s</sub> of tundra during the cold season and the spatial distribution of tundra types across the North Slope. Additionally, scaling methods that average observations from multiple eddy covariance flux sites should consider which sites are most representative of the regional impact of the biosphere on the atmosphere using integrative top-down observations.

This work shows that year-round measurements of atmospheric  $CO_2$  concentrations and fluxes across heterogeneous terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are needed to represent the drivers of  $CO_2$  fluxes from Arctic regions. Arctic ecosystems have the potential to accelerate warming if vast stores of carbon are released or buffer warming if increasing carbon uptake from vegetation occurs. All components of Arctic tundra ecosystems must be fully incorporated into earth system models to

611 improve projections of future climate warming and associated carbon cycle feedbacks.

# 612 Data availability

- 613 Data that support the findings of this study are available as listed below:
- 614 TVPRM NEE for all ensemble simulations: <u>https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1920</u>.
- 615 ICS, ICT, and ICH eddy flux tower observations: <u>http://aon.iab.uaf.edu/data</u>.
- 616 IVO, ATQ, BES, BEO, and CMDL eddy flux tower observations: <u>https://doi.org/10.18739/A2X34MS1B</u>.
- 617 NOAA BRW tower observations: <u>https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/dv/data/?site=brw</u>.
- 618 ARM-ACME V aircraft observations: <u>https://www.osti.gov/dataexplorer/biblio/dataset/1346549</u>.
- 619 ABoVE Arctic-CAP aircraft observations: <u>https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1658</u>.
- 620 NARR meteorology: <u>https://psl.noaa.gov/data/gridded/data.narr.html</u>.
- 621 ERA5 meteorology: <u>https://www.ecmwf.int/en/forecasts/dataset/ecmwf-reanalysis-v5</u>.
- 622 GOME-2 SIF: https://avdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/pub/data/satellite/MetOp/GOME\_F/.
- 623 GOSIF: https://globalecology.unh.edu/data/GOSIF.html.
- 624 CSIF: <u>http://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.6387494</u>.
- 625 CAVM vegetation map: <u>https://www.geobotany.uaf.edu/cavm/</u>.
- 626 RasterCAVM vegetation map: <u>https://dx.doi.org/10.17632/c4xj5rv6kv.1</u>.
- 627 ABoVE LC vegetation map: <u>https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1691</u>.
- 628 RS-PM T<sub>s</sub>: available from authors upon request.
- 629 NOAA BRW tower and ARM-ACME V aircraft campaign WRF-STILT footprints:
- 630 <u>https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1431</u>, particle trajectories: <u>https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1430</u>.
- 631 ABoVE Arctic-CAP aircraft campaign WRF-STILT footprints: <u>https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1896</u>, particle
- 632 trajectories: https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1895.

- 633 Luus et al. (2017) fluxes: <u>https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1314</u>.
- 634 Commane et al. (2017) optimized fluxes: <u>https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1389</u>.
- 635 Natali and Watts et al. (2019) fluxes: https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1683.
- 636 Watts et al. (2021) fluxes: https://doi.org/10.3334/ORNLDAAC/1935.

#### 637 Author contributions

LDS and RC designed the study. KAA, ESE, JPG, AK, WCO, and DZ provided eddy covariance flux tower data. SCB, KM, and CS provided aircraft concentration data. JMH and MEM provided WRF-STILT particle files and footprints. YY provided RS-PM  $T_s$  data. JDW provided Watts et al. (2021) cold season belowground CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes. LDS developed and evaluated TVPRM net CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes against observations. RC, EJLL, JWM, and JDW assisted the analysis. LDS wrote the paper. All co-

authors contributed to the preparation of the manuscript.

#### 643 Competing interests

644 Authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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