REPORT	DOCUMENTATION PAGE	

Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188

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Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 not per response, including the time for revening instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1284, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503						
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blan	k) 2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AN	D DATES COVERED			
· ·	10/29/96 Annual Progress 9/1/95 - 8/3					
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE			5. FUNDING NUMEERS			
	the and at Daniel	Theory	NOO016 02 1 1200			
Waves in Plasma Shea Computer Experiments	itns and at Boundaries 3	:ineory and	MUUU14-93-1-138 <u>9</u>			
6. AUTHOR(S)	· · · ·					
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7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION N	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION					
Univ. of California, Berkeley			REPORT NUMBER			
Electronics Research Laboratory			449497-92122			
253 Cory Hall			442427-20100			
Berkeley, CA 947	720					
9. SPNSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSORING /MONITORING			
Office of Naval Research			AGENCY			
Code 251:EF			ONR			
Ballston Tower One						
800 NOrth Quincy Dr	rive					
Arlington, VA 222	217					
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES						
128. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE			
unlimited						
DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT &						
	anoroved for pub	ic releant				
	Distribution Ur	inmited .				
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)						
Detailed understar	ding of sheath waves	in metal bounded p	lasmas. Sheath waves			
are defined as sur	face waves which pror	agate along a plas	ma/sheath surface.			
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10061106 476 3						
13301100 14X						
14. SUBJECT TERMS			15. NUMBER OF PAGES			
	210					
surface waves, plasma/sheath interface						
			15. PRICE CODE			
17 SECURITY OF ADDITION						
OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATIO	JN 20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT			
unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited			
NSN 7540-01-280-5500			Standard Form 298 (890104 Draft)			
		-	Standard Form 200 (000101 Bran)			

Standard Form 298 (890104 Draft) Preecribed by ANSI Std. 239-18 298-01 Waves in Plasma Sheaths and at Boundaries Theory and Computer Experiments

> AASERT Annual Progress Report 9/1/95 - 8/31/96

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> Office of Naval Research N00014-93-1-1389

ONR Progress Report '96: Sheath Waves

Summary of current and future research

Our 2d3v simulations have added to the detailed understanding of sheath waves in metal bounded plasmas. We define sheath waves as surface waves which propagate along a plasma/sheath interface. Sheath wave modes analogous to Gould-Trivelpiece waves (which exist in dielectric bounded cylindrical plasmas) have been measured in electrostatic PIC simulation of a metal bound plasma slab. Thermal excitation (linear regime) of these normal modes has been sufficient to measure both real and imaginary components of the sheath wave dispersion relations, $\omega(k_y)$ where the waves propagate along the y-axis and the x-axis is perpendicular to the plasma slab. A time averaged power spectral density of the signal $\phi(x, k_y, t)$ in ω -space was used to measure this dispersion. By computing the PSD at varying x positions, the eigenfunctions of the perturbed wave potential were measured.

Additional sheath wave modes, whose $k_y = 0$ cutoffs represent Tonks-Dattner resonances of a plasma slab, have also been measured. The experimental measurement of the spatial eigenfunctions of these modes (Fig. 1) suggests good qualitative agreement with the prior theoretical work of Parker, Nickel and Gould[1] who predicted that Tonks-Dattner resonances resulted from the trapping of a longitudinal plasma wave between a bounding wall and an internal turning point. This detailed study of the linear behavior of sheath waves in a plasma sustained by external means (typically uniform ionization) has been followed by an investigation of sheath wave sustained plasmas. Early work has been limited to 1d3v simulation in which the sheath wave is driven at its cutoff frequency to resonantly sustain the plasma discharge. This cutoff is known as the **series resonance** since its frequency $\omega(k_y = 0)$ represents the point at which the series capacitance of the sheath regions and the plasma regions cancel. Resonantly sustained discharges have been observed at varying plasma and neutral species densities (Fig. 2). Scaling laws predicted by Godyak[2] have been demonstrated in our simulation. Also, for sufficiently low neutral species densities, as in conventional (low frequency $\omega_{rf} \ll \omega_{pe}$) capacitively coupled discharges, a large deviation from a single Maxwellian distribution of electron energies is observed.

There are several additional step to be taken, as follows.

Observation of electron heating exhibits large spatial oscillation near the plasma/sheath boundary indicating the likelihood of different heating mechanisms than observed in non-resonant discharges. These observations (Fig. 3) serve as a motivation to further study the mechanism by which these resonantly sustained discharges are heated.

Large area discharges may be sustained via the excitation of a standing sheath wave. Such a device may be of particular applicability to materials processing where large area, uniform plasmas are desired. This possibility has served as a motivation for developing a doubly bounded, electromagnetic PIC

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code with which preliminary simulations have proven that standing sheath waves can in fact sustain a discharge. Further investigation is needed to characterize the plasma dependencies along the parallel direction., e.g. density profiles, uniformity of energy deposition.

There are also some more speculative ideas to be considered, such as the application of microwave sheath waves to enhance plasma uniformity in traditional capacitively and inductively coupled discharges.

References

- [1] J. V. Parker, J. C. Nickel and R. W. Gould, Phys. Fluids 7, 1489 (1964).
- [2] V. A. Godyak, Soviet Radio Frequency Discharge Research, (Delphic Associates, Falls Church, VA, 1986)



Figure 1: Electron density perturbation of the asymmetric main resonance (top) and the first Tonks-Dattner resonance (bottom). The mid-plane of the plasma slab is at x = 0.01m.



Figure 2: Normalized density profiles for series resonance sustained discharges. Peak densities range from $10^9/cm^3$ (case A) to $10^{11}/cm^3$ (case G).



Figure 3: Electron heating profile (top) for discharges of various peak densities, $10^9/cm^3$ (case A) to $10^{11}/cm^3$ (case G). Electron energy probability functions for these experiments (bottom).