

# **Dynamic Effects of Airborne Water Droplets on Air-Sea Interactions: Sea-Spray and Rain**

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## **LONG-TERM GOALS**

We anticipate that this research will lead to an improved understanding of water droplet mediated air-sea fluxes with implications in basic research, satellite or land-based remote sensing of the ocean surface, electromagnetic communication, military surveillance, and weather forecasting. We foresee that this work will become the initial stages of a long-term effort involving further development of theoretical work, and laboratory and field experiments.

## **OBJECTIVES**

In recent years, small-scale surface dynamics (waves, turbulence, bubbles, and drops) have been recognized as crucial to global climate through their impact on air-sea fluxes. However, the dynamics of a turbulent surface can be quite complicated, and at times (at high wind speed) the main problem is to identify the surface which then resembles a mixture of bubbles and drops. While the upper ocean bubbly mixture has been relatively well studied, especially in the context of the acoustics, it appears that airborne water droplets have been widely ignored despite their undeniable importance.

Recent work point toward the fact that airborne water droplets can exchange with the atmosphere a consequent amount of momentum, energy, and enthalpy, especially at high wind speeds. At low wind speed, it appear that a significant fraction of shear stress can be carried by falling rain and transmitted to the wind field. The direction and amplitude of the momentum and enthalpy fluxes depend on the origin of the droplet (the upper atmosphere for the rain, the ocean surface for sea spray), and in the case of sea spray, if it evaporates entirely or falls back.

This project is aimed at improving and use an existing sea-spray Lagrangian turbulent transport and evaporation model to study the heat, moisture and momentum balances in the lower atmospheric boundary layer when water droplets are present.

## **APPROACH**

We propose to improve our current sea-spray Lagrangian turbulent transport and evaporation model to include several important effects that have been neglected in the past. Also, we propose to generalize part of the parameterizations such that the model is adequate for a wide range of conditions and therefore usable to study both suspended sea-spray and also rain droplets. The numerical part of this

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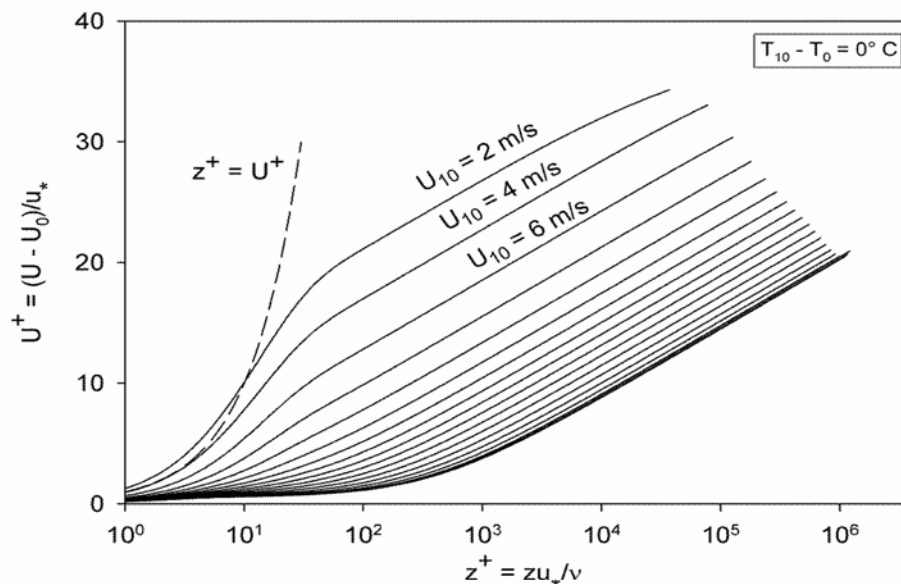
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project will be aimed at further developing the model, and making use of a cluster of PC computers to run the calculations. In addition, a laboratory experimental part is proposed for the later years, in which we will examine the momentum exchanges between impacting rain and the ocean surface.

## WORK COMPLETED

We have implemented a large computer system consisting of twenty-four, single processor PCs on which the model processing is performed. The data are then recombined on a large server computer for analysis. We have modified the currently existing model to account for anisotropy in the Lagrangian turbulence in the air-flow above the wavy ocean surface, and include wave-turbulence interactions. To date, we believe we have successfully implemented turbulence closures and the wave effects. Turbulent for the passive scalars has also been included. Furthermore, we have developed a general description of the wind, temperature and humidity velocity profiles above the wavy surface which includes the diffusive molecular layer based on hybrid equations from the classical Van Driest (viscous) and logarithmic layers. The full wave spectrum also generates a moving bottom boundary which then interacts with the mean profiles as well as the turbulence. To date, we have completed coding of the Lagrangian model and have performed preliminary runs with full droplets size distribution that will serve as debugging trials and will generate preliminary data.

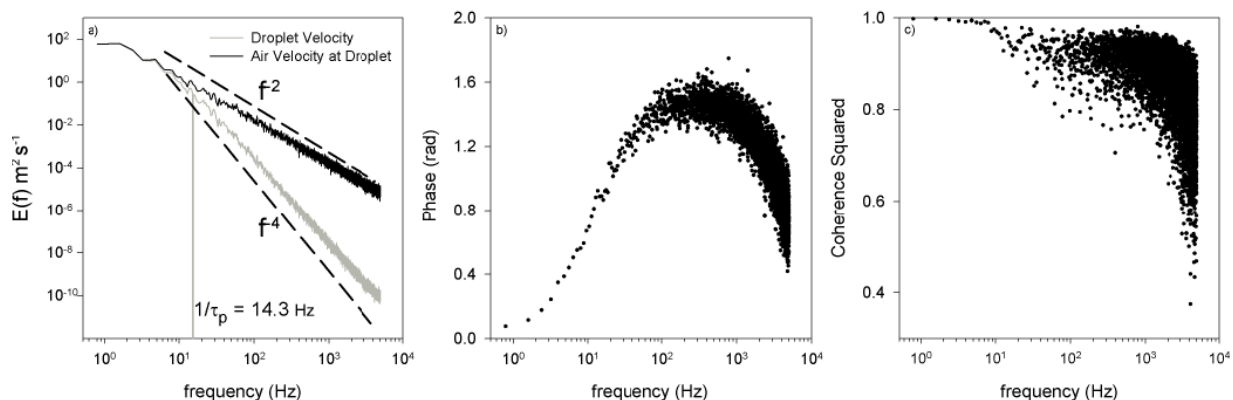


**Figure 1. Wind profiles from 2m/s to 40m/s in 2m/s increment and plotted in wall layer coordinate. Note the presence of a well defined viscous sub-layer and the effect of stratification at low wind speed (the top most profiles for large z).**

## RESULTS

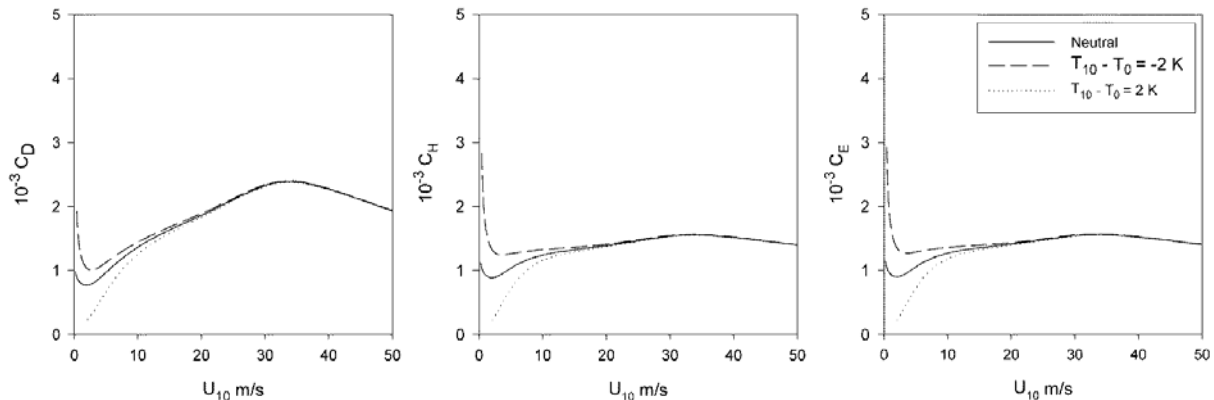
We have developed a Spray Lagrangian Turbulent Transport and Evaporation model (hereafter SpLaTTE) which includes droplet microphysics, propagating surface waves, atmospheric stratification, turbulence, and the complete linear unsteady equation of motion for the droplets. Our preliminary results indicate that the short thermal and inertial response time of small droplets is such that they decelerate and warm up significantly as they approach the thermal and momentum boundary layer near

the ocean surface. We have therefore spent considerable effort in developing a generalized form for the wind and scalar profiles (including stability), which account for the viscous layer close to the interface. Figure 1 shows the wind profile above the surface (plotted in wall layer coordinate) for wind speeds from 2 to 40m/s in increments of 2m/s. The departure from the log-layer at the lowest wind speed is due to effects of atmospheric stratification, effects that disappear at higher wind speeds. Another significant improvement to the model was the inclusion of fully non-isotropic Lagrangian turbulence for the velocity, temperature and humidity variables. Figure 2 shows spectra for the vertical velocity of both a 150 $\mu$ m droplet and the air velocity around the droplet. In order to assure a sufficiently long residence time to obtain statistical properties for this test case, the droplet was released at 10 meters above the wavy bottom boundary. We found that the air velocity around the droplet is not significantly different from the true Lagrangian velocity that would be experienced by a fluid particle. Because the air velocity at the droplet is decorrelated in both time and separation from an idealized fluid trajectory, the spectrum is slightly flatter than the theoretical  $\omega^{-2}$  behavior for a fluid Lagrangian spectrum. The spectrum of the drop velocity, however, shows an  $\omega^{-4}$  dependence as is expected. Figure 2 shows that at lower frequencies, the particle and air at the particle are in phase and then move out of phase around the stokes response frequency, 14.3 Hz in this case. The results in figure 2 suggest that our model correctly simulates the trajectory of a particle in a Lagrangian turbulent airflow. It should be noted here that the simulated turbulence will uniformly have an approximate  $\omega^{-2}$  dependence, and therefore, the very high frequencies at which a dissipation range should exist will not be accurately modeled. But considering that the spectrum for the particle velocity follows a  $\omega^{-4}$  law, the contribution of very high frequencies to the total particle velocity variance is expected to be negligible. In addition, it should also be noted that the particle moves through the atmospheric surface boundary layer and that consequently, the nature and strength of the turbulence will also change as the particle, for example, changes altitude. As a result, since individual droplets are followed through their course in the boundary layer, we did not expect to obtain an  $\omega^{-2}$  dependence in the air-velocity spectrum surrounding a droplet along its path. Finally, as the particle stays suspended in the air-flow, its density and radius will change which will affect its response time and behavior vis-à-vis the forcing from the turbulence in the air during the entirety of its flight. This will in turn render spectral analysis along the flight rather difficult to interpret. We feel however, that this is one of the strength of the Lagrangian approach since we can keep track of both the droplet and the atmospheric properties surrounding it at all times.



**Figure 2 (a) Lagrangian frequency spectra for the vertical air velocity at the particle location (black), and for the vertical droplet velocity (gray), (b) phase relationship between the air and particle velocities, and (c) the coherence squared values between the air and particle velocities.**

We believe we have successfully implemented the closures and wave effects in the simulation of the Lagrangian turbulence. Finally, we have also improved upon several existing parameterizations of the roughness length and other parameters. In particular, we have refined the expression for roughness coefficients, and specifically, we have improved the parameterization of the Charnok coefficient including a dependence on the wind wave spectrum. These changes led to air-sea bulk exchange coefficients that are consistent with recent observation at high wind speed by a modification of (figure 3).



**Figure 3. Plot of the drag coefficient,  $C_D$ , the Stanton number,  $C_H$ , and the Dalton number,  $C_E$ , as a function of 10m wind speed and for different stability condition as indicated by the 10m-to-surface air temperature difference.**

## IMPACT/APPLICATIONS

We anticipate that this research will lead to an improved understanding of water droplet mediated air-sea fluxes. Potential impacts are cited above and also include a better understanding of air-sea fluxes, especially at high wind speeds when significant amount of water droplets can be suspended in the air-flow. In particular in storm conditions or hurricanes, there can be a combined effect of sea-spray and rain which then leads to competing droplet-mediated momentum fluxes. The spray is expected to carry some momentum from the ocean to the atmosphere, while the rain will impart momentum to the ocean surface. We anticipate that our model will allow us to determine the net momentum fluxes carried by different droplet types. In addition, the model should lead to heat and moisture fluxes as well, which are a critical component of storm dynamics.

## HONORS/AWARDS/PRIZES

Best student presentation, James Mueller - American Meteorological Society annual meeting 2006