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# An investigation of sea level and circulation response during a coastal trapped wave event on the Eastern Agulhas Bank, South Africa

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## Abstract :

An investigation into the ocean response to a protracted (>48 h) strong south-westerly wind event averaging 9.6 m/s on the eastern Agulhas Bank, South Africa, using in situ instrument data from Algoa Bay and a high resolution (dx ~1 km) ROMS ocean model, is presented. A coastal trapped wave (CTW) was shown to be associated with the event, the peak amplitude of which increased as it travelled eastward through the domain. Alongshore current reversals to the full depth were seen in both the model and two acoustic doppler current profiler (ADCP) moorings (30 m bottom depth) as the CTW traversed the study domain, with strong currents exceeding 1 m/s developing directly to the south of Cape St Francis and Cape Recife at the peak of the wind event within the model. In a model run with wind forcing removed, the effects of remote wind forcing were shown to be a significant contributor to local circulation during strong wind events, suggesting that an estimated 61% of the total eastward transport of shelf water over the entire period of the event was due to remote forcing. In the no-wind model, a short lived anticyclonic rotating feature forms in the lee of Cape Recife in Algoa Bay shortly after the peak of the CTW, in contrast to the reference model, where instead a broad anticyclonic flow throughout the bay establishes.

## Highlights

► The Regional Oceanographic Modelling System has predictive skill in reproducing coastal trapped wave events along the south coast of South Africa. ► Sudden alongshore current reversals are seen to full depth in the model and ADCP mooring data. ► The model shows very strong eastward currents develop off Cape St Francis and Cape Recife. ► The model shows very large volume displacement caused by the CTW, which carries most of the energy from remote wind forcing to the west of Oyster Bay

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**Keywords** : Coastal Trapped Wave, Regional Ocean Modelling System, Wind Event, Agulhas Bank, Algoa Bay

## 35 1. Introduction

36 In this study, the Regional Ocean Modelling System (ROMS) is used to examine  
37 circulation patterns and sea level changes during a protracted south-westerly wind  
38 event with an average of 9.6 m/s that lasted approximately 58 hours on the eastern  
39 Agulhas Bank off the south coast of South Africa. A detailed analysis is made of the  
40 effects of the wind event passing through the two bays on this portion of the South  
41 African coastline, namely St Francis Bay and Algoa Bay, and the adjacent shelf using  
42 a combination of a reference run and a no-wind run together with *in situ* instrument  
43 mooring data.

44 Algoa Bay is a large log-spiral shaped bay located on the south eastern coast of South  
45 Africa facing into the Southwest Indian Ocean. The bay is relatively shallow, less than  
46 70 m deep, with the depth of the adjacent shelf reaching 150 m near the shelf break,  
47 which lies about 50 km south-east of Cape Recife (Bremner 1983). A study involving  
48 ship transects and vertical profiling instruments by Goschen & Schumann (1988)  
49 demonstrated that wind and the Agulhas Current (AC) are the primary driving forces  
50 behind circulation patterns within Algoa Bay. In general, currents in the bay tend to  
51 align to the direction of the prevailing wind, modified by the topography and the shape  
52 of the coast. This typically holds true for circulation over the shelf away from the  
53 influence of the AC. In the shallow western sector of the bay, Schumann et al. (2005)  
54 demonstrated that generally, wind was important in surface water movement and  
55 setting up of pressure gradients resulting in the generation of geostrophic currents.  
56 While surface currents tend to follow prevailing winds across the wider reaches of the  
57 bay, deeper offshore waters often flow in a more south to south-westward direction.  
58 While the exact mechanism for this deeper flow is yet to be described, it is possibly  
59 linked to entrainment of shelf water by the AC in a similar manner described by Swart  
60 and Largier (1987). In the north-eastern sector of the bay, Roberts (2010) and Pattrick  
61 et al. (2013) found that there is a strong correlation between currents and prevailing

62 wind directions, even in the deeper layers within 2km of the coast, coupled with overall  
63 stronger current velocities to that of the western sector. These differences are likely  
64 due to topographic influences such as shoreline orientation to prevailing wind  
65 directions in the different regions of the bay. Patrick et al. (2013) showed that current  
66 structures in the shallow nearshore area of north-eastern Algoa Bay to be complex,  
67 with the dominant flow towards the east.

68 Eastward propagating wind systems along the south coast of South Africa can induce  
69 shelf waves through resonance, which then travel perpendicular to the coastline in an  
70 eastward direction in near-resonance with these wind systems (Gill and Schumann  
71 1974). Should the forcing of these waves be initiated simultaneously to the alongshore  
72 wind stress creating an onshore-offshore transport within the Ekman layer, a  
73 compensating offshore-onshore flow is created at a greater depth as a result of mass  
74 conservation (Brink 1991). The local relative vorticity changes as the flow crosses  
75 isobaths, and since this process expresses itself largely in terms of alongshore  
76 velocity, interaction with any alongshore variability will result in wave propagation. The  
77 resulting coastally-attached sub-inertial continental shelf wave then propagates along  
78 the coast on its left-hand side due to the conservation of potential vorticity (Maiwa et  
79 al. 2010) and is then considered a coastal trapped wave (CTW). An assessment of air  
80 pressure and tide level recorders by Schumann (1983) provides further evidence on  
81 the existence of CTW off the south coast of South Africa, which typically occur as  
82 barotropic shelf waves with periods within the weather band of between 3 and 20 days  
83 and phase propagation speeds anywhere between 4.4 to over 9 m/s (Schumann and  
84 Brink 1990). Large CTW can have profound, although short lived, effects on the  
85 regional ocean state and can be a considerable contributor to near shore variability  
86 (e.g. Tilney et al. 1996, Schumann 1999). Circulation over the shelf and in St Francis  
87 Bay and Algoa Bay can experience periodic barotropic changes due to the passage  
88 of CTW. Data analysed from Acoustic Current Doppler Profilers (ADCP), deployed by  
89 Goschen et al. (2012) off Woody Cape in the north-eastern sector of Algoa Bay, show  
90 that currents here are influenced by CTW passing through this region, causing periodic  
91 reversals in current flow. In the western sector of the bay, however, although CTW are  
92 present, it appears that there is little influence on the currents in this region (Schumann  
93 et al. 2005). It is believed that this is due to the abrupt headland at the south-western  
94 corner, coupled with the change in the coastal boundary from the southern coast to

95 the bay. The waves eventually dissipate as they travel eastward along the narrowing  
96 shelf and interact with the south-westward flowing AC (Brink 1990, 2006).

## 97 **2. Data and Methods**

### 98 *2.1 Study Area*

99 The region of focus is the eastern Agulhas Bank, found on the south-eastern portion  
100 of the southern African continental shelf (Figure 1). The shelf here has an average  
101 depth of 120 m and progressively narrows to the north-east, from 50 km off Cape St  
102 Francis to 34 km off Port Alfred (measured from the coast to the 200 m isobath),  
103 bounded by a coastline to the north and a steep shelf break to the south that descends  
104 rapidly to beyond 1000 m depth. The shelf break is flanked by the Agulhas Current  
105 (AC), a major western boundary current that follows the continental shelf break on the  
106 east coast of southern Africa with a typical width of 70-90 km, a depth of 2300 m, and  
107 a surface core velocity often exceeding 2.5 m/s (Roberts et al. 2010), with a mean  
108 southward transport of between 77 and 84 Sv (Beal et al. 2015). Two large log-spiral  
109 bays are found near 34°S, Algoa Bay and St Francis Bay. The domain of this study  
110 extends from Oyster Bay to north of Port Alfred, outlined in Figure 1b.

### 111 *2.2 Numerical Model*

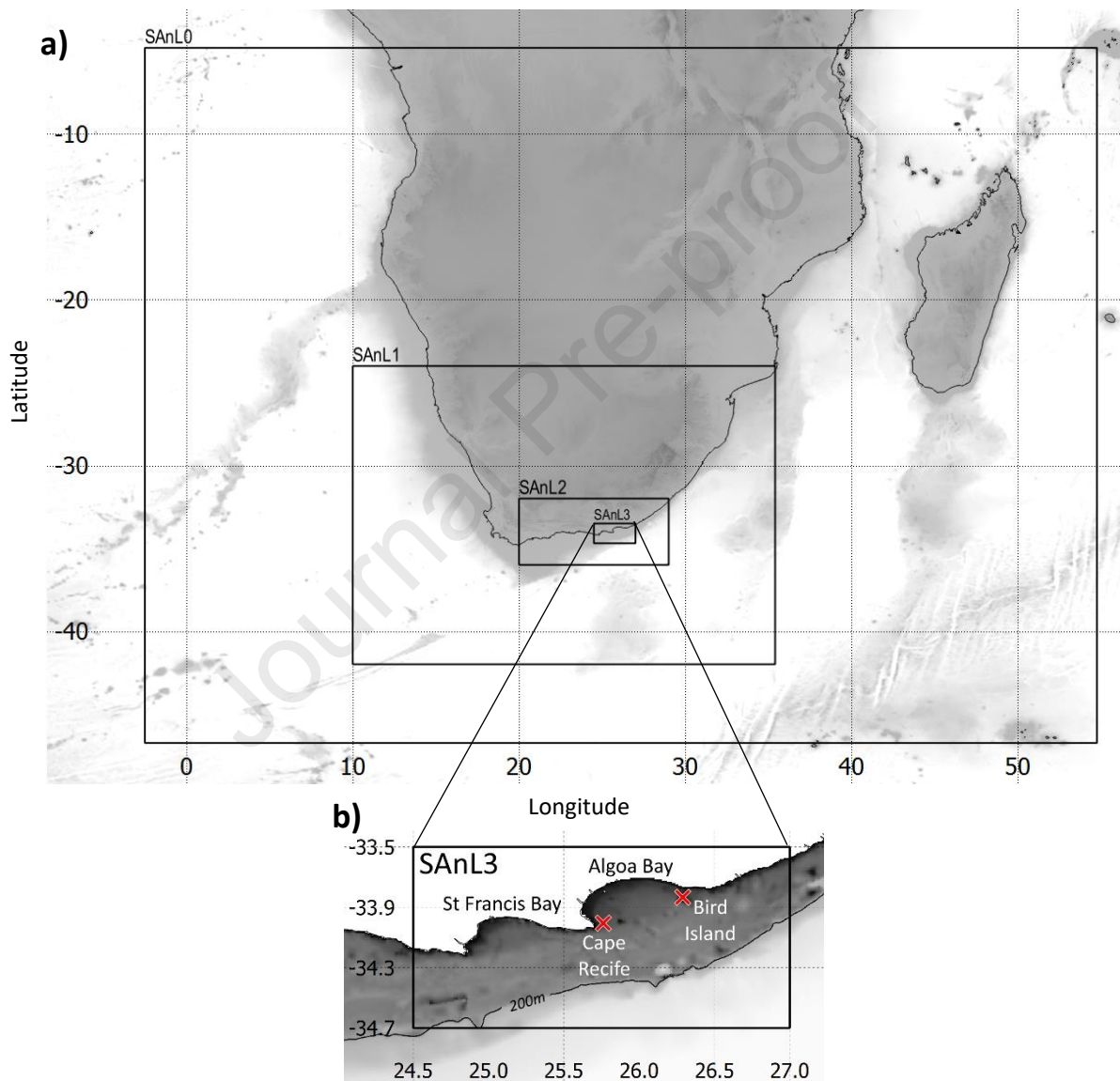
112 The Regional Ocean Modelling System (ROMS), a split-explicit, terrain following  
113 regional oceanographic model using a third-order, upstream-biased advection scheme  
114 (Shchepetkin and McWilliams 2005) was used for the numerical simulations. To  
115 resolve fine scale coastal circulation while giving consideration to larger mesoscale  
116 dynamics, a multi-nested downscaling technique was employed to resolve disparities  
117 in spatial and temporal scales. A one-way, offline method of model nesting to finer  
118 scale was used without feedback from the child grid solutions (Penven et al. 2006b).  
119 Consideration of the open boundary condition (OBC) configuration was given to the  
120 approaches described by Penven et al. (2006a), Mason et al. (2010) and Marchesiello  
121 et al. (2001) for offline regional ocean model nesting. For the ROMS configuration  
122 described here, prognostic variables were connected to the external conditions in the  
123 open boundary configurations using Orlanski active radiation schemes for the  
124 baroclinic mode (for both temperature and salinity), and modified Flather-type  
125 characteristic radiation scheme for the barotropic mode. This was coupled with a

126 nudging scheme, as described by Mason et al. (2010), to ensure that external  
127 information was adequately incorporated through the boundaries. A total of four  
128 regional model domains, a parent and three child nests, were defined on an Arakawa-  
129 C Mercator grid, hereafter referred to as SAnL0, SAnL1, SAnL2, and SAnL3  
130 respectively (Figure 1). Child grids were nested in a one-way and offline configuration  
131 using a downscaling factor of 3. Domain specific configurations, including time frames  
132 for surface forcing, lateral boundary forcing and spin up are summarized in Table 1.  
133 SAnL0 was the parent grid, providing lateral climatological boundary conditions for the  
134 first nest SAnL1. Lateral boundary conditions for SAnL2 and SAnL3 were then  
135 extrapolated from the outputs of the prior nest. All grids and forcing files were created  
136 using ROMSTOOLS ([https://www.croco-ocean.org/download/roms\\_agrif-project/](https://www.croco-ocean.org/download/roms_agrif-project/)), a  
137 toolbox of Matlab scripts and datasets that aid in the configuration of grids and  
138 production of forcing files for ROMS. Additional Matlab code was used from the ROMS  
139 Numerical Toolbox (<http://oces.us/RNT/>) to produce the offline lateral boundary  
140 conditions between nested grids. The parent domain, SAnL0, uses a modified SAnE  
141 configuration (Penven et al. 2006a), where the surface is forced using an interannual  
142 atmospheric dataset and the lateral boundary conditions are forced using the World  
143 Ocean Atlas 2009 (WOA09) monthly climatology. This configuration was chosen as to  
144 reduce the introduction of biases that would have occurred if lateral boundary forcing  
145 from an inter-annual global ocean model was used. A full evaluation was carried out  
146 to ensure that the parent SAnL0 model was of a suitable size and resolution to resolve  
147 the most important of the basin scale processes at the correct time scales for the  
148 subsequent nests (Bailey 2020).

149 A surface forcing atmospheric dataset with hourly wind variables was chosen in order  
150 to resolve fine temporal scale coastal ocean circulation as accurately as possible  
151 (Cucco et al. 2019). The NCEP Climate Forecast System version 2 (CFSv2) (Saha et  
152 al. 2014) provided historical hourly timeseries analysis over the required time period  
153 on a  $0.205^\circ$  by  $0.205^\circ$  global grid. The 30 arc-second GEBCO\_2014 gridded dataset  
154 (version 20150318, [www.gebco.net](http://www.gebco.net)) provided the bathymetric data for all domains.  
155 This was bilinearly interpolated onto the grid and smoothed with an r-factor of 0.2 to  
156 reduce pressure gradient errors (Haidvogel and Beckmann 1999). All model domains  
157 had 42 vertical  $\sigma$ -coordinate levels with surface and bottom grid stretching factors of  
158  $\theta_s = 6$  and  $\theta_b = 0$ , respectively. Models were run in a free slip configuration using a

159 split and rotated 3<sup>rd</sup> order upstream biased advection scheme (Marchesiello et al.  
 160 2009). The integration period was five years, spanning from 1 January 2011 to 31  
 161 December 2015, with averaged outputs of temperature, salinity, and momentum  
 162 (sampling periods shown on Table 1). Models were spun up by repeating the 2011  
 163 forcing year as many times as needed to obtain statistical equilibrium (shown in Table  
 164 1).

165



166 *Figure 1 (a) Relative position of the model domains, outlined by solid black lines, with respect to the*  
 167 *sub-Saharan African and Madagascan continent. (b) Extents of SAnL3 model domain from Oyster Bay*  
 168 *to north of Port Alfred, encompassing St Francis Bay and Algoa Bay, used in this study, with the*  
 169 *locations of the SAEON ADCP and UTR moorings at Cape Recife and Bird Island. Latitude and*  
 170 *longitude in decimal degrees. Shelf to the 200m isobath denoted by dark shaded area, with 200m*  
 171 *isobath shown in (b).*

172



173 *Table 1 Nested domain configurations for ROMS*

	SAnL0	SAnL1	SAnL2	SAnL3
Domain Extents	2.5° W - 54.75° E; 4.8° S - 46.75° S	10.0° E - 35.4° E; 24.0° S - 42.0° S	20.0° E - 29.0° E; 32.0° S - 36.0° S	24.5° E - 26.5° E; 33.7° S - 34.7° S
Domain Resolution	1/4° (~28km)	1/12° (~9 km)	1/36° (~3 km)	1/108° (~1km)
Surface Forcing	NCEP CFSv2	NCEP CFSv2	NCEP CFSv2	NCEP CFSv2
Bulk Flux Forcing Time	6 h	6 h	6 h	6 h
Surface Wind Stress	6 h	6 h	1 h	1 h
Lateral Boundary Forcing	WOA05	SAnL0	SAnL1	SAnL2
Lateral Boundary Time	Monthly	Daily	8 h	3 h
Tides Enabled	No	No	No	Yes
Spin Up Period	5 years	3 years	1 year	1 year
Output Time	Daily	8 h	3 h	3 h

174

175 

### 2.3 Observation Data

176 *In situ* current data was obtained from the South African Environmental Observation  
 177 Network (SAEON) Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) instrument moorings  
 178 located at Cape Recife (Figure 2: A1) and Bird Island (Figure 2: A2) on the eastern  
 179 and western extents of Algoa Bay respectively. Sea level data was obtained from the  
 180 South African National Hydrographers Office (SANHO) Tide Recorder located at the  
 181 Port Elizabeth Harbour in Algoa Bay (Figure 2: D1), as well as Port Nolloth, Cape  
 182 Town, Mossel Bay, Knysna, and East London. Weather data was obtained from the  
 183 South African Weather Services (SAWS) Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) at Cape  
 184 Agulhas, Plettenberg Bay, Port Elizabeth, Coega, Bird Island, Port Alfred and East  
 185 London (Figure 4).

186 

### 2.4 Identification of events for case study

187 Only a few strong south-westerly wind events occurred in the time period of the model  
 188 that provided optimal conditions for an assessment. Ideally, the Agulhas Current (AC)  
 189 should not be in a meandering state and be free of cyclonic eddy activity (eg.  
 190 Lutjeharms and Roberts 1988, Schumann and van Heerden 1988, Lutjeharms et al.  
 191 2003a, 2003b) (confirmed by visual inspection of sea surface temperature (SST)) in  
 192 both the numerical model and *in situ* environment, and ADCP and Tide Recorder data  
 193 should be available for that time. Considering these requirements, only a single wind  
 194 event, occurring between 17 September 2014 and 20 September 2014 (Figure 3),

195 presented itself. It was also the only significant south-westerly wind event to occur for  
196 that month.

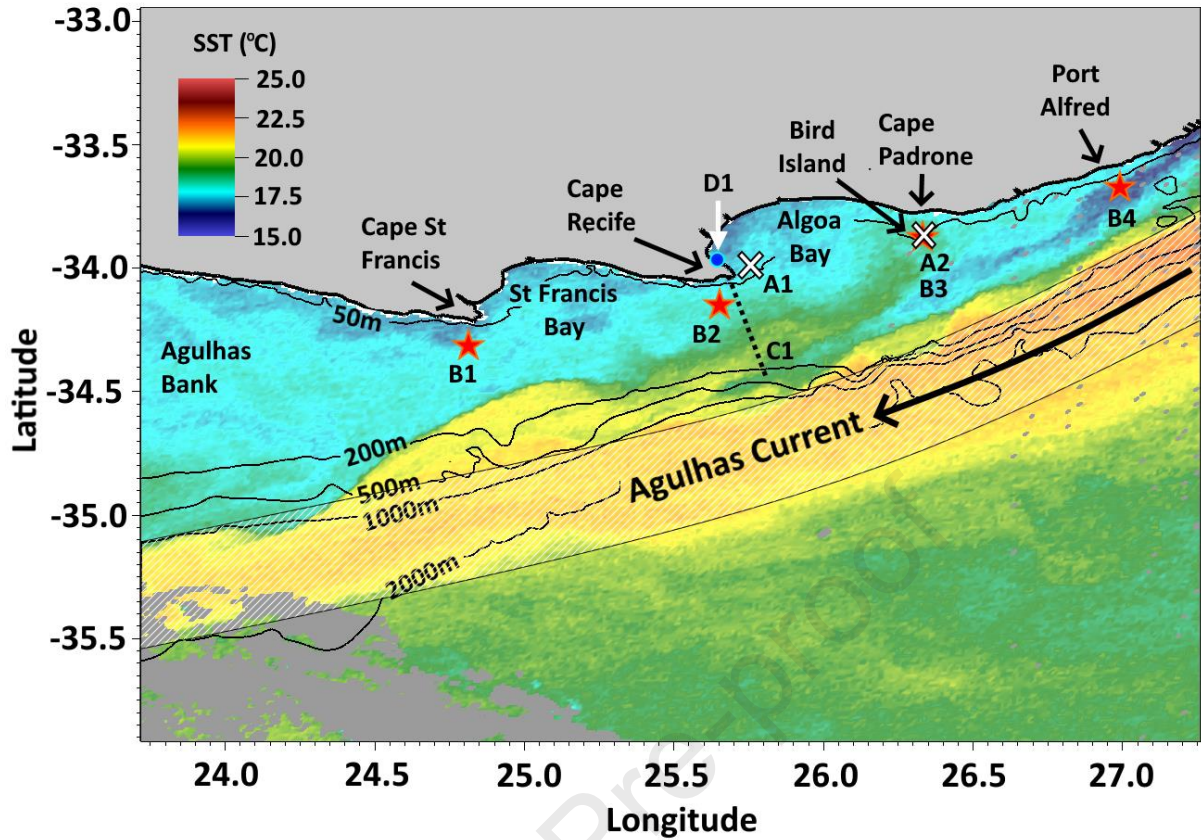
## 197 2.5 *Sea level, alongshore currents, and along-shelf transport assessment*

198 Four key locations in the model located within 6km of the shoreline (Figure 2 red stars:  
199 south of Cape St Francis (B1) (65 m depth), Cape Recife (B2) (55 m depth), and Bird  
200 Island (B3) (35 m depth), and southeast of Port Alfred (B4) (30 m depth)) were used  
201 to assess sea level and alongshore currents during the event. Along-shelf volume  
202 transport (assessed by depth-integration of flow along a transect) was measured  
203 between Cape Recife and 10km inshore of the mean position of the AC inshore front  
204 to reduce interference from any submesoscale ( $O(<10\text{ km})$ ) frontal variability (Figure  
205 2 dashed line: C1) (Lutjeharms et al. 1989, Krug et al. 2017, Tedesco et al. 2019).

206 The influence of remote forcing on the circulation on the shelf and bays during the  
207 event was assessed by comparing the SAnL3 reference model with a modified SAnL3  
208 model run where all surface wind forcing was removed while maintaining advective  
209 surface heat fluxes. Shelf waves and edge waves (CTW) and currents were free to  
210 pass through the domain in this configuration, but with no further input of kinetic energy  
211 from local wind forcing.

212 Unless otherwise stated, all sea level plots were filtered using a Lanczos filter with a  
213 quarter-power point of 0.031 cycles per hour to remove tides, and all wind plots were  
214 filtered using a Lanczos filter with a quarter-power point of 0.03509 cycles per hour.  
215 Wind stick plots were averaged to three hours to match *in situ* and model time steps.  
216 Sea level correction along the south coast was done for Port Elizabeth, using air  
217 pressure (Gaspar and Ponte 1997) from the AWS at the Port Elizabeth Airport, and  
218 Mossel Bay, using pressure from George Airport, to estimate propagation speeds of  
219 the CTW. Depth-integrated (barotropic) currents were calculated by weighted  
220 averaging of current velocities for each depth bin height (0.2 m – 0.3 m) in the ADCP  
221 data and each grid cell height in the numerical model.

222

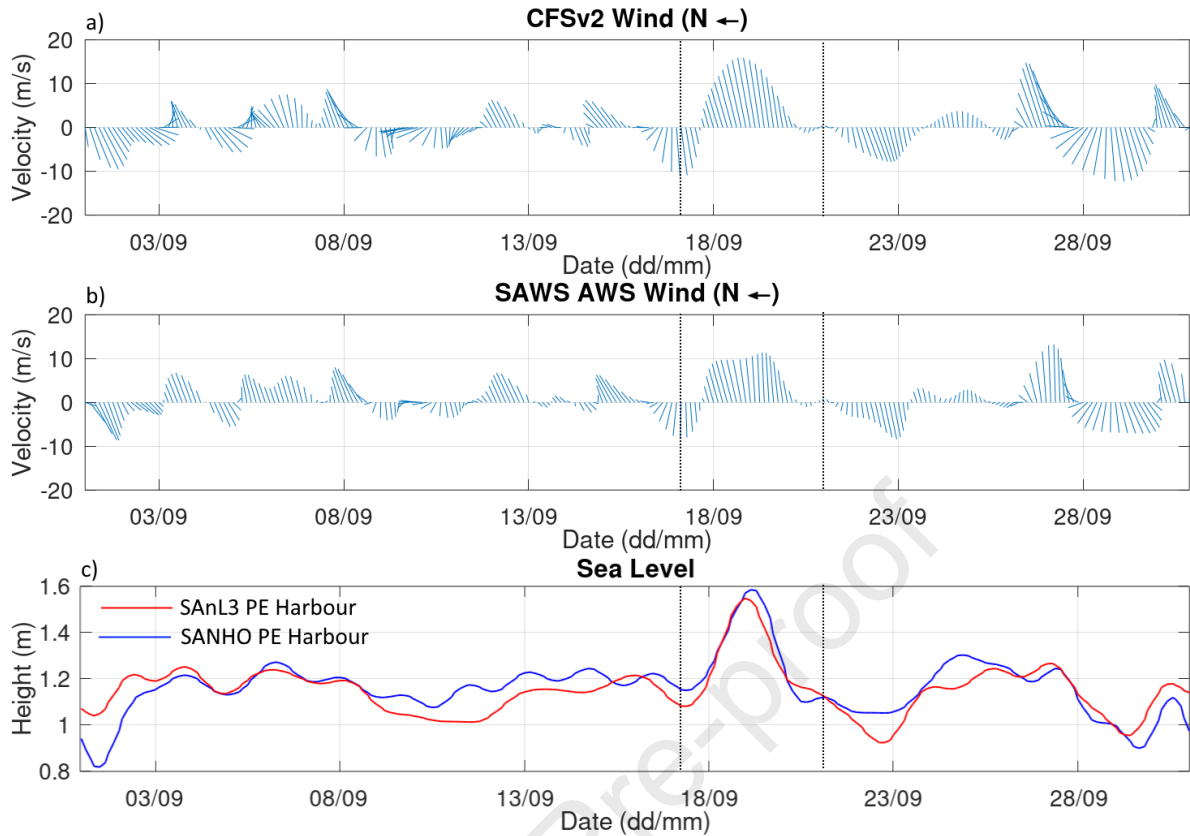


223

224 Figure 2 MODIS sea surface temperature (SST) image taken on 21 July 2009 with bathymetry overlay  
 225 of the south eastern coast of South Africa off Algoa Bay to illustrate the typical path of the warm (> 21  
 226 °C) Agulhas Current as indicated off the continental shelf margin. White crosses denote locations of  
 227 Cape Recife (A1) and Bird Island (A2) ADCP moorings. Red stars denote locations of the Cape St  
 228 Francis (B1), Cape Recife (B2), Bird Island (B3) and Port Alfred (B4) locations used for current  
 229 assessments in the numerical models. Dashed line denotes transect used for volume transport  
 230 assessment (C1). Location of the SANHO Tide Recorder at the Port Elizabeth Harbour shown by blue  
 231 dot (D1). The Port Elizabeth SAWS weather station at the Port Elizabeth Airport is approximately 3km  
 232 inland of the Port Elizabeth Harbour.

233

234



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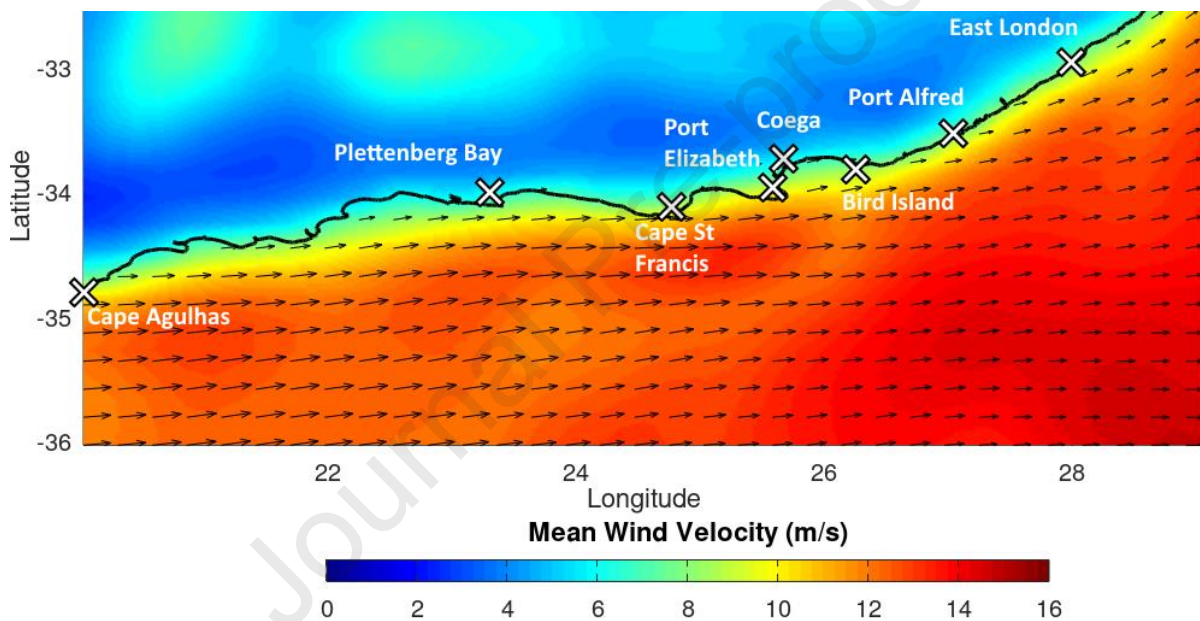
236 *Figure 3 (a) Wind plot from the CFSv2 dataset extracted at the SAWS AWS location at the Port*  
 237 *Elizabeth airport. (b) Wind plot from the SAWS AWS at the Port Elizabeth airport. (c) Uncorrected sea*  
 238 *surface height from the SANHO tide recorder at the Port Elizabeth (PE) harbour (blue) and the closest*  
 239 *grid cell in the SANL3 reference model (red). Dates shown from 1 September 2014 to 31 September*  
 240 *2014. Coastal trapped wave event between 17 September 2014 and 22 September 2014 highlighted*  
 241 *with dashed lines. Date lines denote midnight.*

242

243 **3. Results**

244 **3.1 Wind and Model Skill Evaluation**

245 Correlation coefficients ( $R$ ) and relative bias in wind velocity between the Automatic  
 246 Weather Station (AWS) wind data from the South African Weather Service (SAWS)  
 247 and the closest georeferenced grid cell in the CFSv2 dataset (Figure 4) revealed a  
 248 good correlation for most stations, with an average  $R$ -value of 0.83 ( $p < 0.05$ ) (results  
 249 summarised in Table 2). Relative bias for wind speeds were within 20% for most  
 250 stations. The relatively poor correlation and high wind bias at the Plettenberg Bay AWS  
 251 was due in part to large portions of missing readings in the dataset.



252

253 *Figure 4 Mean CFSv2 10m wind field for the SANL2 model domain during the westerly wind event from*  
 254 *12h00 17 September 2014 to 12h00 20 September 2014. Locations of SAWS weather stations used*  
 255 *for wind skill assessments shown.*

256

257

258 *Table 2 Comparative analysis of NCEP CFSv2 10m wind and SAWS AWS wind for the period 1 January*  
 259 *2011 to 31 December 2015. Stations in the SANL3 study domain highlighted in bold. Relative bias*  
 260 *shown as CFSv2 wind velocity over AWS.*

AWS Station	Location		Altitude (m)	R ( $p < 0.05$ )	Relative Bias
	Latitude	Longitude			
Cape Agulhas	-34.8262	20.0131	11	0.91	+ 97 %
Plettenberg Bay	-34.0896	23.3259	138	0.54	+ 69 %
<b>Cape St Francis</b>	-34.2122	24.8357	9	0.78	- 3.5 %
<b>Port Elizabeth</b>	-33.9827	25.6138	60	0.94	+ 18.9 %
<b>Coega</b>	-33.8050	25.6680	46	0.92	+ 10.9 %
<b>Bird Island</b>	-33.8388	26.2861	3	0.9	+ 15 %
<b>Port Alfred</b>	-33.5595	26.8809	84	0.91	+ 46 %
East London	-33.0225	27.8199	149	0.88	+ 6.9 %

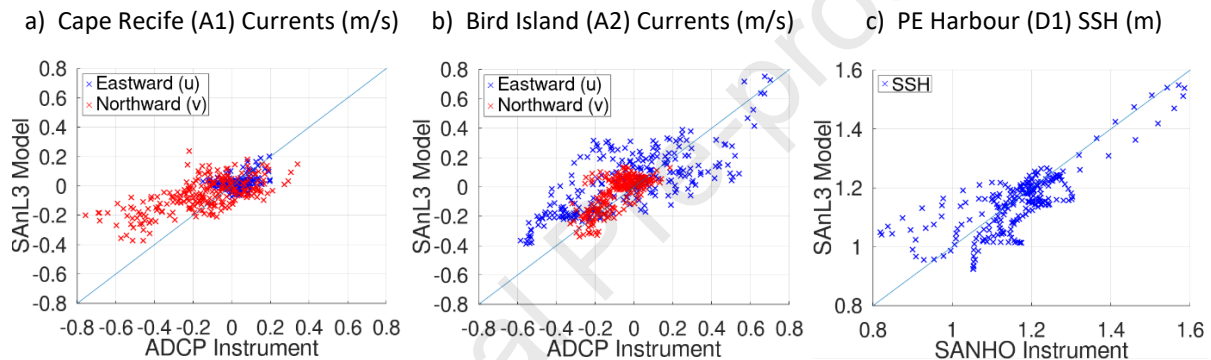
261 Correlation factor, bias and Root-Mean-Square-Error (RMSE) were used along with  
 262 the cost function  $\chi$ , the ratio of RMSE against the standard deviation of the  
 263 observations (Holt et al. 2005), to assess model performance against observations  
 264 between 1 September 2014 to 31 September 2014 (results summarised in Table 3).  
 265 For the cost function  $\chi$ , values less than 1 (RMSE smaller than the standard deviation  
 266 of the observations) indicate that the predictive skill of the model is acceptable (Holt  
 267 et al. 2005). Sea surface height had the overall best performance, with comparisons  
 268 against the SANHO tide level recorder (Figure 5c; Table 3) resulting in an R value  
 269 ( $p < 0.05$ ) of 0.8, a mean bias of 0.013 m ( $\sigma$  0.015 m) (Mean SSH 1.152 m), and  $\chi$  of  
 270 0.62. Depth-averaged velocities showed less agreement. Zonal (eastward) and  
 271 meridional (northward) current component velocities for Bird Island (Figure 5a) had a  
 272 relatively good correlation of 0.74 and 0.72 respectively, with  $\chi$  indicating a better  
 273 agreement in the zonal component (0.72) compared to the meridional component  
 274 (0.88). Cape Recife (Figure 5b) performed the worst with regards to the zonal  
 275 component velocities, with a correlation of 0.29 and  $\chi$  of 1.05. The meridional  
 276 component velocities performed moderately better with a correlation of 0.66 and  $\chi$  of  
 277 0.85. However, as shown in the scatterplot of Figure 5b, a positive bias in the model  
 278 at higher southward velocities is evident. The site is directly to the east of a major  
 279 headland, oriented perpendicular to south-westerly winds, with a relatively complex  
 280 topographic gradient not well represented in the GEBCO topography. As a result, flow  
 281 patterns during south-westerly winds are complex, leading to a poor representation of

282 zonal velocities in the model (Figure 7a,c) and likely contributing to the bias in  
 283 southward meridional velocities.

284 *Table 3 Model skill assessment between observed and modelled depth integrated current velocity and*  
 285 *sea surface height from 1 September 2014 to 31 September 2014.*

	BIAS	R (p<0.05)	RMSE	X
Cape Recife (A1) Eastward Current (m/s)	0.013	0.29	0.062	1.05
Cape Recife (A1) Northward Current (m/s)	-0.081	0.66	0.180	0.85
Bird Island (A2) Eastward Current (m/s)	-0.071	0.74	0.213	0.72
Bird Island (A2) Northward Current (m/s)	-0.043	0.72	0.093	0.88
Port Elizabeth Harbour (D1) Sea Level (m)	0.013	0.8	0.076	0.62

286



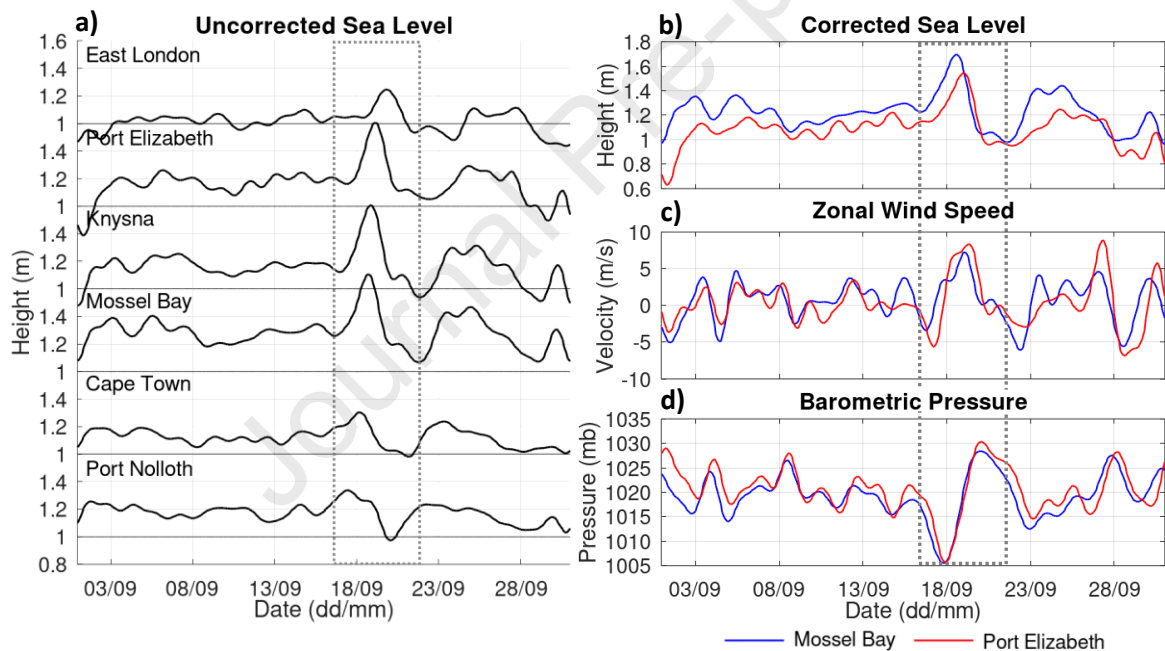
287 *Figure 5 Scatter plots of (a) the SAnL3 model depth integrated currents against SAEON ADCP*  
 288 *moorings at Cape Recife (A1) and (b) Bird Island (A2). (c) The SAnL3 model sea surface height (SSH)*  
 289 *against the SANHO tide level recorder in the Port Elizabeth Harbour (D1). Plot data from 1 September*  
 290 *2014 to 31 September 2014. Negative values are southward/westward flow.*

291

### 292 3.2 The regional ocean response to a large wind event

293 The south-westerly wind event began during the evening of 17 September 2014  
 294 following a north easterly wind event and persisted for a total of 58 hours (2.5 days).  
 295 Hourly average wind speeds measured at the Port Elizabeth Airport AWS varied  
 296 between 5.6 m/s and 15.7 m/s, with an average of 9.6 m/s over the entire duration of  
 297 the event (Figure 3b). The peak wind speed of 15.7 m/s (near gale) occurred on 19  
 298 September at 11h00. The wind event was associated with a large fluctuation in sea  
 299 level with an amplitude of 45 cm measured at the SANHO tide level recorder at the  
 300 Port Elizabeth Harbour (Figure 3c). The mean water level rose from 1.14 m to 1.59 m  
 301 over a period of 42 hours, reaching its peak at 04h00 on 19 September 2014, with a  
 302 similar response observed in the SAnL3 model (Figure 3c). The water level increase  
 303 was associated with a CTW, which followed the typical anti-clockwise passage of CTW

304 around southern Africa, first recorded by the Port Nolloth tide gauge on the west coast,  
 305 increasing in amplitude as the wave travelled along the south coast, and then  
 306 dissipating near East London on the east coast, as described by Schumann and Brink  
 307 (1990) and Schumann (2013) (Figure 6a). The wave was associated with a  
 308 propagating low-pressure system, evident by high zonal wind speeds associated with  
 309 a large change in air pressure, shown for Mossel Bay and Port Elizabeth in Figure  
 310 6b,c,d. This indicates that the wave was initiated and propagated in resonance with  
 311 the system as it travelled along the coast. The peaks in corrected sea level records  
 312 between Mossel Bay and Port Elizabeth occurred exactly 12 hours apart (Figure 6b),  
 313 which indicates a propagation speed of the wave along the south coast, measured  
 314 peak to peak, of approximately 7.5 m/s. Surprisingly, this perfectly matches the  
 315 propagation speed calculated by Schumann and Brink (1990).

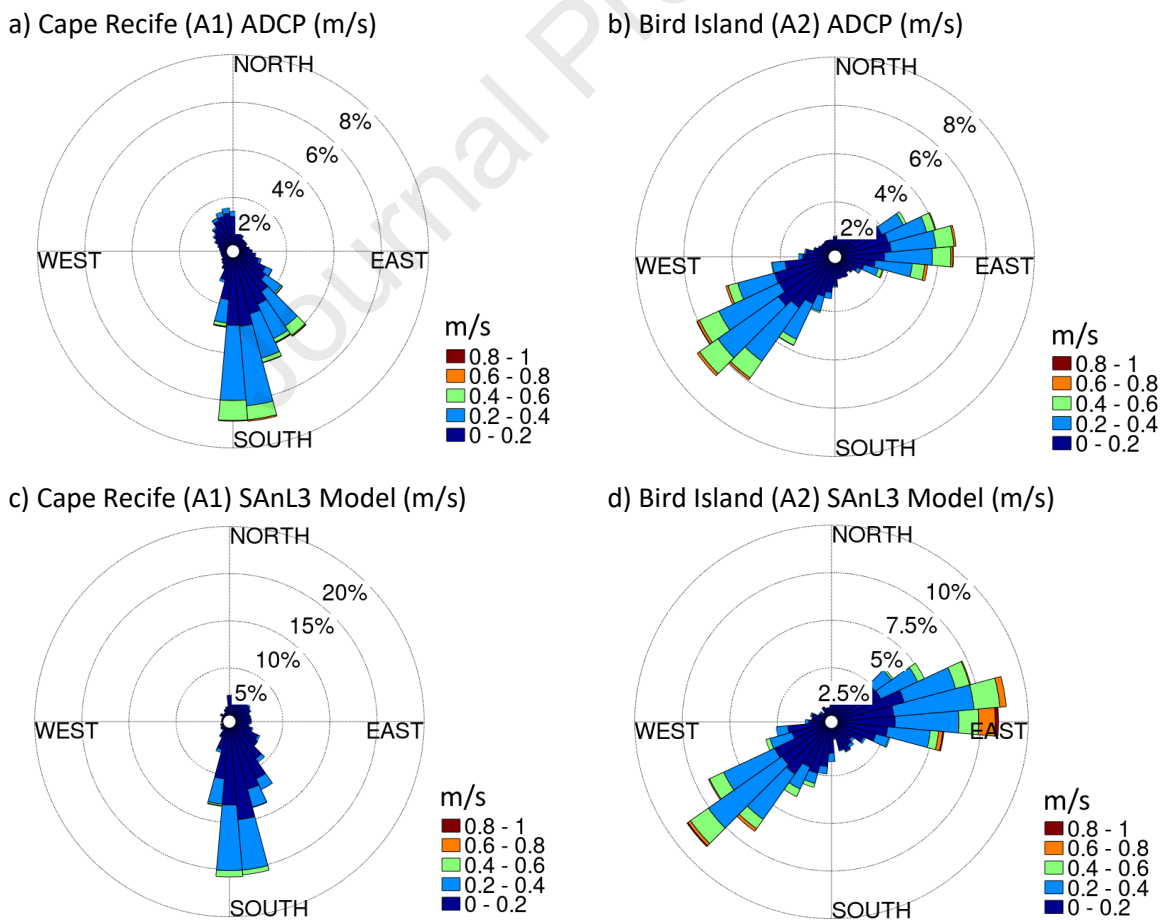


316 *Figure 6 (a) Uncorrected SANHO tide level records from Port Nolloth on the west coast of South Africa*  
 317 *(tbottom) to East London on the east coast (top). (b) Pressure corrected sea level, (c) zonal wind speed*  
 318 *(positive eastward) and (d) barometric pressure for Mossel Bay (blue) and Port Elizabeth (red). Dates*  
 319 *shown from 1 September 2014 to 31 September 2014. Coastal trapped wave event between 17*  
 320 *September 2014 and 22 September 2014 highlighted with grey dashed box.*

321 The ocean response to the wind event was captured by the SAEON ADCP moorings  
 322 at Cape Recife and Bird Island. The alongshore current at Cape Recife (meridional  
 323 rotated 23° anti-clockwise), which is usually dominated by southward flow (Figure 7a),  
 324 underwent a barotropic reversal shortly after the arrival of the leading edge of the wave  
 325 at 12h00 on 17 September 2014 (Figure 8b,d). The northward flow lasted for  
 326 approximately 23 hours before mostly resuming to a southward flow just prior to the

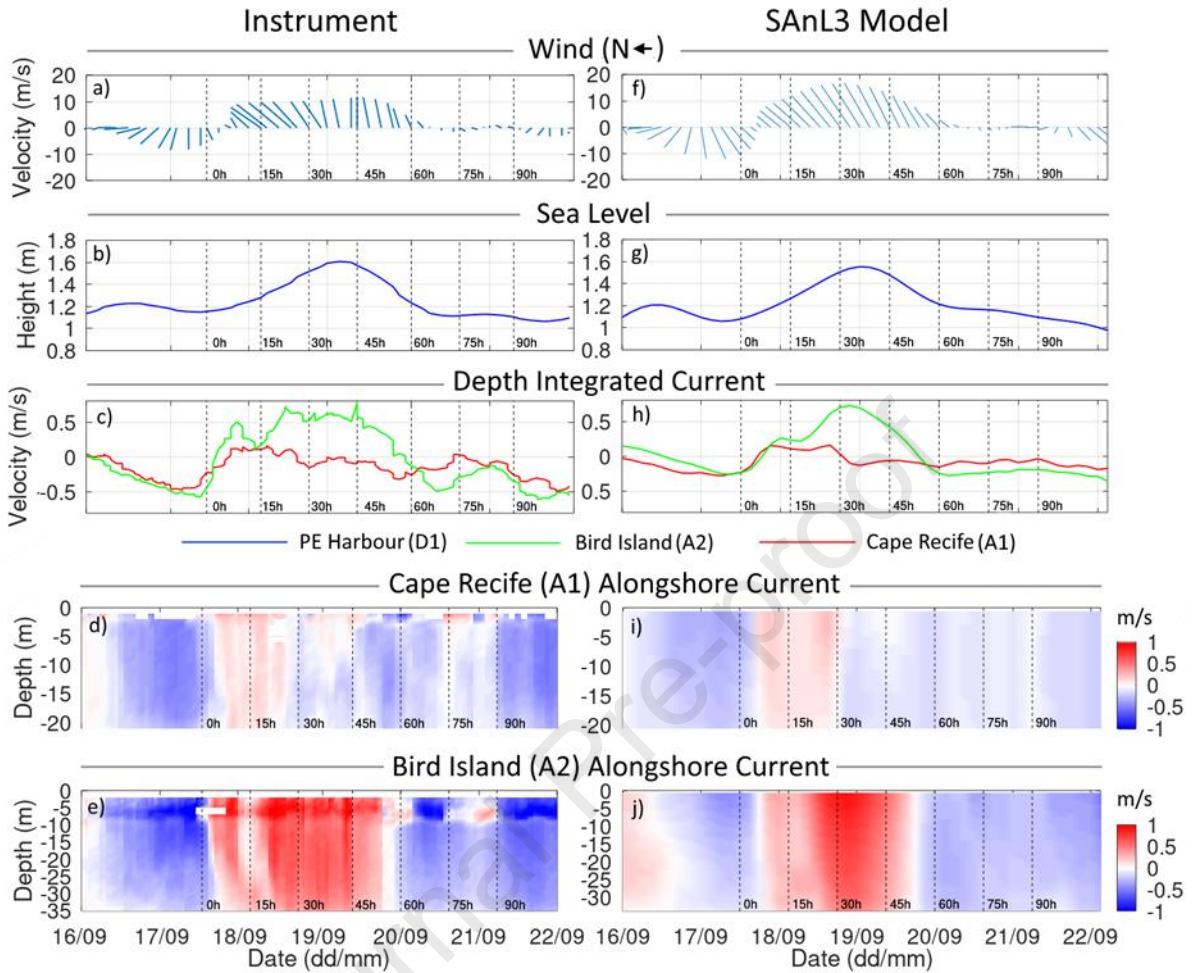


327 peak of the wave. At the Bird Island mooring, the alongshore current (zonal rotated  
 328  $20^\circ$  clockwise, according to the isobath contours) saw a relatively quick barotropic  
 329 current reversal that took place from the onset of the wave, lasting approximately 60  
 330 hours (Figure 8b,e). The current reversal occurred within 1 hour to the arrival of the  
 331 south-westerly wind event, although it was a full 2 hours ahead of the current reversal  
 332 seen at the Cape Recife mooring. The wave and subsequent response in alongshore  
 333 current was well represented in the numerical model (Figure 8f,g,h). An approximate  
 334 three-hour delay in the barotropic response in alongshore currents at Bird Island,  
 335 compared to the ADCP mooring, was noted (Figure 8e,i). Maximum depth integrated  
 336 current speeds near the peak of the wave were exceptionally close between the ADCP  
 337 observations and the numerical model. At Bird Island, eastward flows peaked at 0.77  
 338 m/s and 0.72 m/s for the ADCP and SAnL3 model respectively (Figure 8c,h: green  
 339 plot). At Cape Recife, northward flows peaked at 0.17 m/s and 0.16 m/s for the ADCP  
 340 and SAnL3 model respectively (Figure 8c,h: red plot).



341 *Figure 7 Depth averaged (from surface to bottom) current rose for Cape Recife (A1) and Bird Island*  
 342 *(A2) ADCP (a,b) and SAnL3 Model in corresponding locations (c,d) from 1 January 2011 to 31*  
 343 *December 2015.*

344



345

346 *Figure 8 The south-westerly wind event of 17 September 2014, with dashed lines showing time in 15h*  
 347 *increments from the onset of the event (denoted by the preceding shelf wave trough) at T0 + 0h (12h00*  
 348 *on 17 September 2014). Left panels (a-e) from in situ instrumentation, and right panels (f-j) from the*  
 349 *closest matching grid cell location in the numerical models. (a,f) Wind at the Port Elizabeth Airport*  
 350 *(Oriented northward to the left). (b,g) Sea level at the Port Elizabeth Harbour. (c,h) Depth-integrated*  
 351 *alongshore current at Cape Recife (A1) and Bird Island (A2). (d,i) Alongshore current at Cape Recife*  
 352 *and (e,j) Bird Island. Alongshore current oriented positive northward (CR (d,i)) / eastward (BI (e,j)).*

353

## 354 3.3 Examination of the event in the SAnL3 models

355 Within the reference model, shortly after the preceding trough at  $T_0 + 0h$  (12h00 on  
356 17 September 2014), eastward currents quickly establish after the onset of the south-  
357 westerly wind (Figure 8). Current reversals occur within approximately 3 hours of each  
358 assessment station (Figure 9b-f), with circulation in the bays switching direction from  
359 counter-clockwise to clockwise (Figure 10:  $T_0 + 15h$ ). This switch occurs  
360 approximately 6 hours after the start of the wave ( $T_0 + 0h$ ) and is evident as a reversal  
361 of the flow from southward to northward at the Cape Recife (A1) ADCP mooring  
362 (Figure 8d,i). Depth integrated current velocities peak at  $T_0 + 30h$  (18h00 on 18  
363 September 2014) (Figure 9b), with a region of very high current velocities seen over a  
364 large area south of Cape St Francis (Figure 10 left:  $T_0 + 30h$ ). An inverse relationship  
365 between the amplitude of the wave and the strength of the current reversals is evident  
366 (Table 4). The smallest wave height and strongest currents occur off Cape St Francis  
367 (B1), with the wave amplitude increasing as it passes offshore of Cape Recife (B2),  
368 Bird Island (B3) and Port Alfred (B4). This coincides with a progressive decline in peak  
369 wind speed at each station. Peak current velocities progressively decrease as the  
370 wave travels to the east, although the duration of each current reversal event is similar.  
371 The circulation in the two bays switches back to counter-clockwise very shortly after  
372 the peak of the wave at  $T_0 + 30h$ , which was captured at the Cape Recife (A1) ADCP  
373 mooring as a current reversal back to southward flow (Figure 8d,i). Nearshore current  
374 velocities begin to decrease steadily after  $T_0 + 45h$  as surface winds slow and the  
375 wave begins to move out of the domain, although strong north-eastward flows are still  
376 present over the deeper portions of the shelf south of Cape St Francis and Cape Recife  
377 (Figure 10 left:  $T_0 + 45h$ ). The counter-clockwise circulation patterns in St Francis and  
378 Algoa Bay become firmly established, with the near-shore currents having returned to  
379 south-westward flows (Figure 9b-f) and residual north-eastward flows in the offshore  
380 shelf areas as the domain enters the post-CTW state at midnight on 20 September  
381 2014 (Figure 10 left:  $T_0 + 60h$ ).

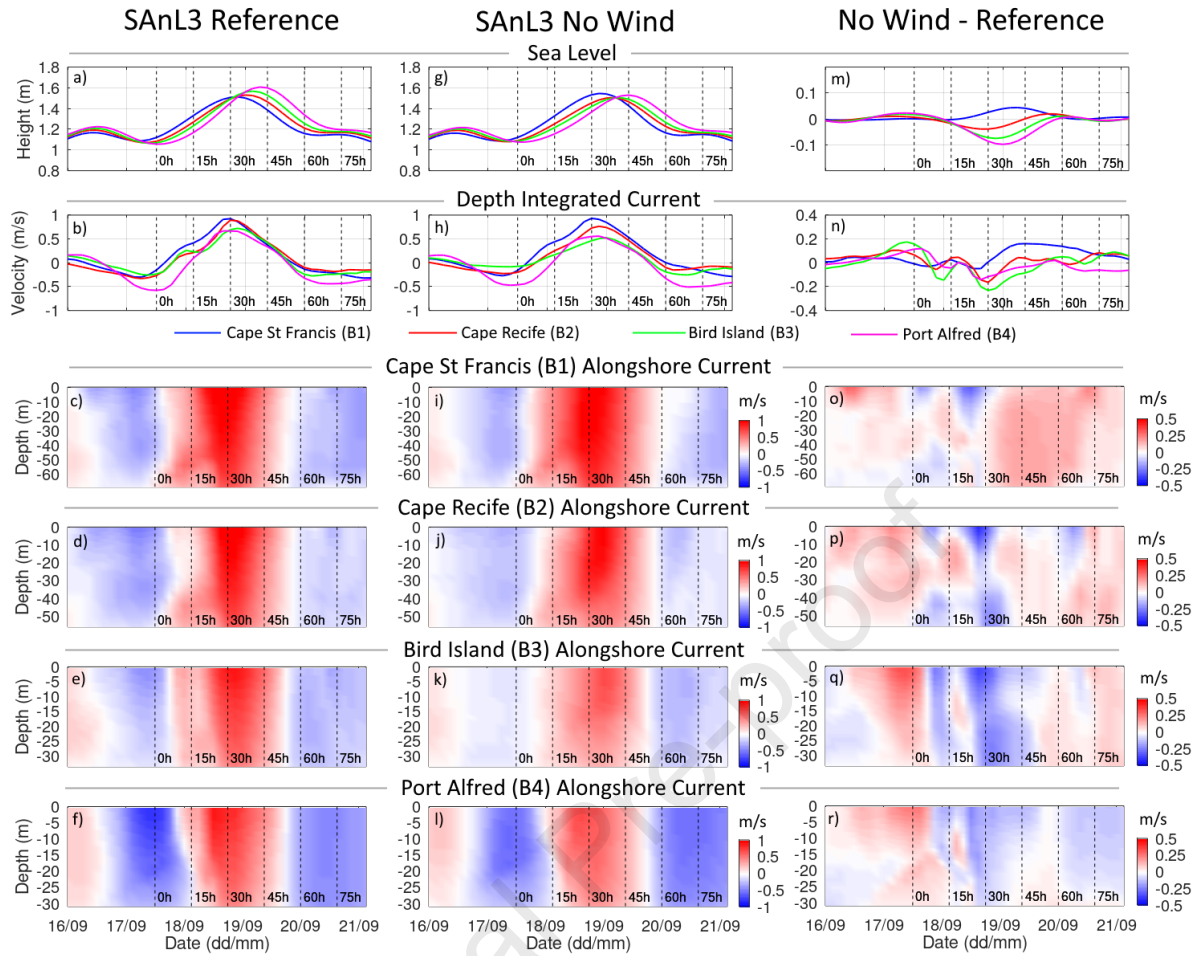
382 An examination of the circulation in the SAnL3 no-wind model during the passage of  
383 the CTW reveals surprisingly similar patterns to the SAnL3 reference model (Figure  
384 10, Figure 9). The wave progressively loses amplitude more rapidly as it travels to the  
385 north-east compared to the reference model (Table 4, Figure 9m). At Port Alfred (B4),

386 located past a sudden decrease in the continental shelf width to the east of Algoa Bay,  
387 the CTW amplitude increases with a slightly greater lag in the wave peak compared  
388 to the other stations. Currents are generally weaker in the no-wind model, given the  
389 absence of surface wind stress, with the flow over the shelf driven by the bulk  
390 displacement of water as the CTW passes. Peak current velocities become  
391 progressively weaker to the east, with the average barotropic velocity 18% less than  
392 the reference model (Table 4, Figure 9n). This indicates that the water displacement  
393 caused by the CTW itself contributes significantly to the net flow observed during the  
394 strong south-westerly wind event. In the no-wind model, a relatively well defined but  
395 short-lived anticyclonic eddy forms in the lee of Cape Recife in Algoa Bay shortly after  
396 the peak of the CTW (Figure 10 right: T0 + 45h and T0 + 60h). This eddy is not as well  
397 defined in the reference model, instead a more general broad anticyclonic flow  
398 establishes throughout the bay (Figure 10 left: T0 + 45h and T0 + 60h).

#### 399 *3.4 Effect on along-shelf transport*

400 The along-shelf volume transport measured across the transect C1 between Cape  
401 Recife and the shelf break (Figure 2) during the event is shown in Figure 11. During  
402 the passage of the CTW, the flow reached a peak of 3.54Sv (2.92Sv) in the reference  
403 (no-wind) model. When the balance of the volume displacement over the entire period  
404 of the wave is computed across this transect, measured from T0 + 0h to the end of the  
405 proceeding trough of the wave at T0 + 90h, a considerable nett displacement to the  
406 east is recorded, measuring 153.3 km<sup>3</sup>. The no-wind model also exhibits a nett volume  
407 displacement to the east, measuring 93km<sup>3</sup> or 61% of the water volume displacement  
408 in the reference model.

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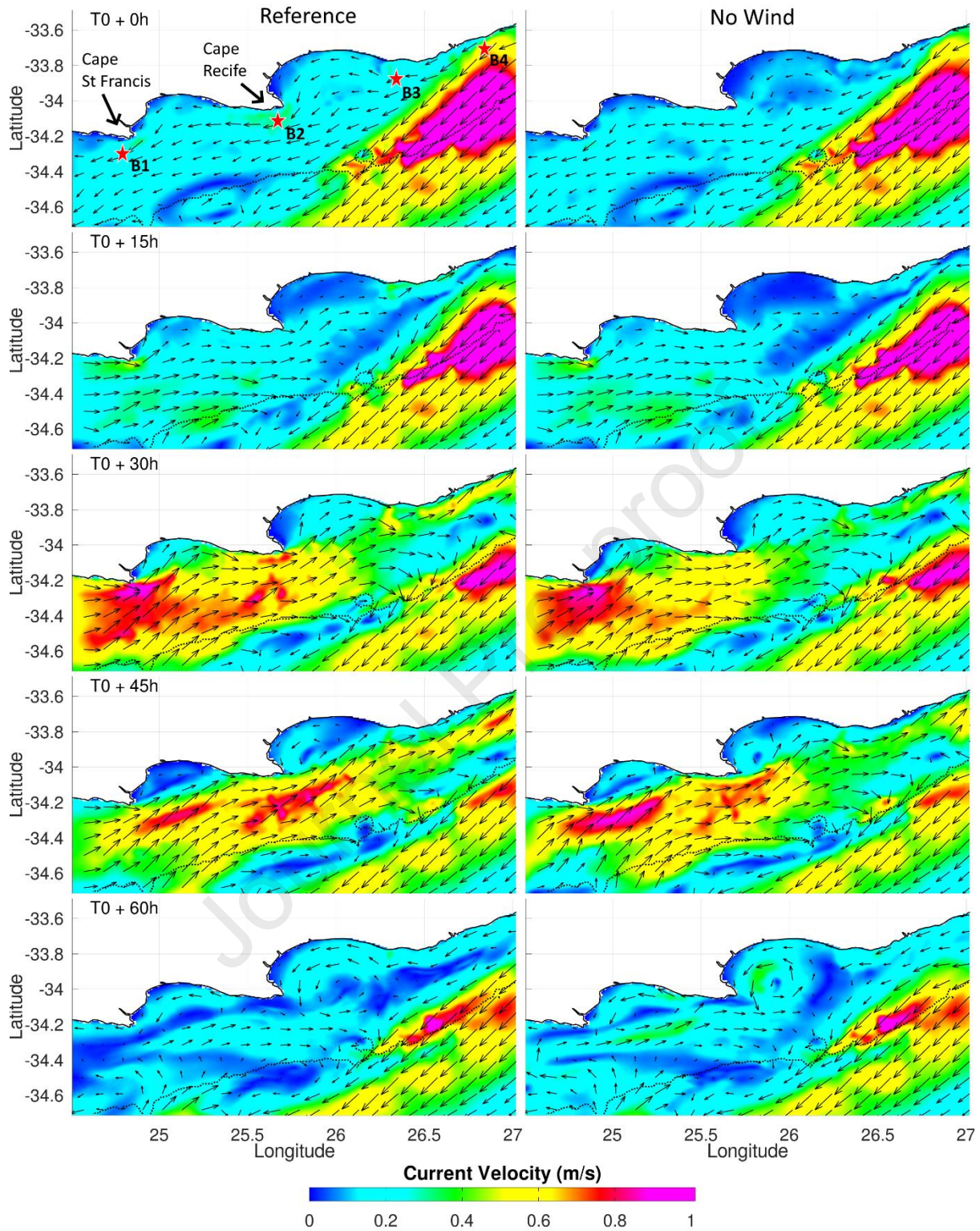
411 *Figure 9* Sea level, depth integrated current, and alongshore currents from 17 September 2014 to 21  
 412 September 2014 from stations B1, B2, B3, and B4 (see Figure 2) in the SANL3 reference model (a-f),  
 413 SANL3 no wind model (g-l), and the difference between the no wind model and the reference model (m-  
 414 r). Alongshore current oriented positive eastward/northward.

415 *Table 4* Peak wind speed (CFSv2), wave height, and depth-integrated eastward/north-eastward  
 416 alongshore current velocity at stations B1, B2, B3, and B4 for the reference and no wind SANL3 models.

	Cape St Francis (B1)		Cape Recife (B2)		Bird Island (B3)		Port Alfred (B4)	
Depth	65m		55m		35m		30m	
	Wind	No Wind	Wind	No Wind	Wind	No Wind	Wind	No Wind
Wind Max	20.3m/s	--	18.8m/s	--	15.8m/s	--	13.4m/s	--
CTW Height	1.51m	1.54m	1.53m	1.5m	1.57m	1.5m	1.61m	1.53m
Alongshore Current	0.92m/s	0.93m/s	0.89m/s	0.77m/s	0.72m/s	0.53m/s	0.67m/s	0.56m/s

417

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419

420 *Figure 10 Depth-integrated current direction (vectors) and velocity (shading) during the passage of the*  
 421 *coastal trapped wave in the SAnL3 reference (left) and no wind (right) model.  $T_0 = 12\text{h}00$ , 17 September*  
 422 *2014. Dotted black line denotes the 200m isobath. B1, B2, B3, and B4 current assessment stations as*  
 423 *per figure 2 shown top left.*

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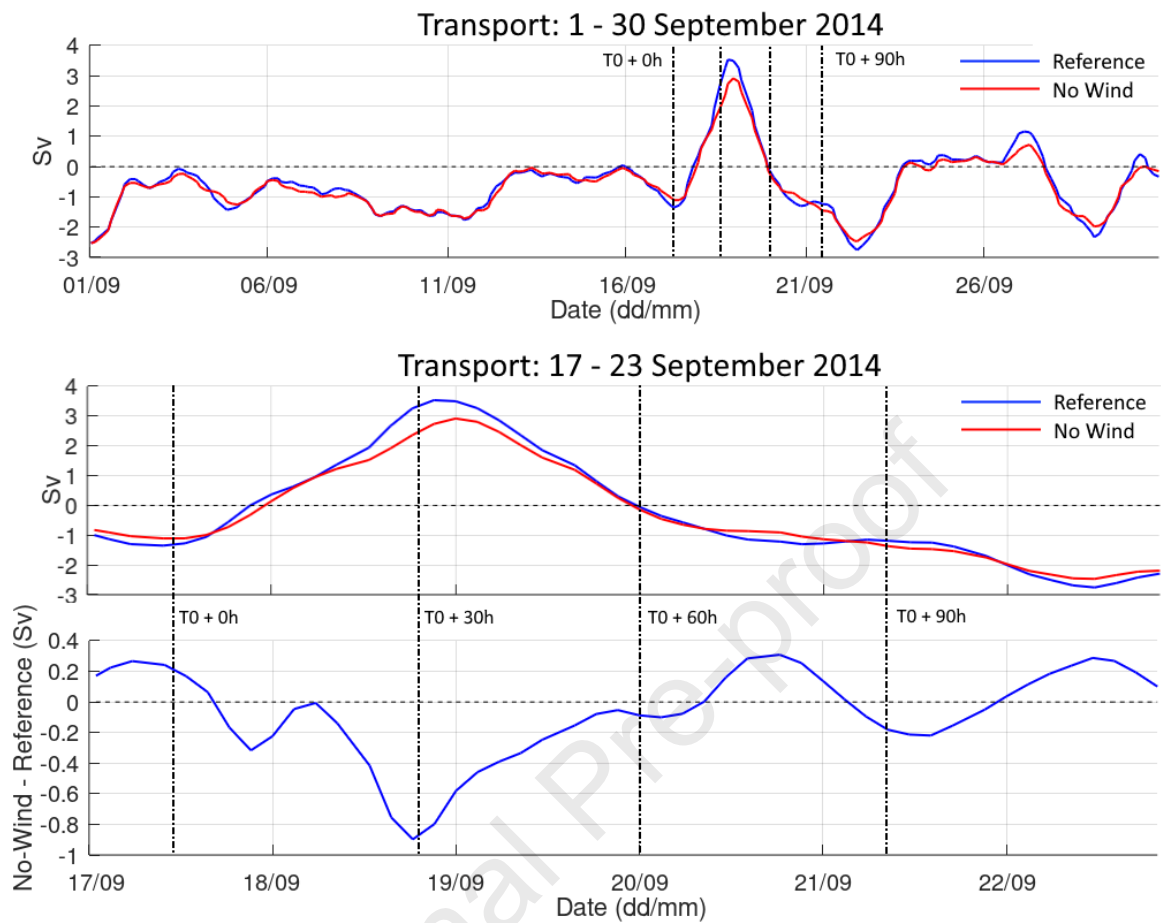


Figure 11 Along-shelf volume transport for the month of September 2014 (top) and during the passage of the CTW (middle) with the difference between the runs shown at the bottom, measured across transect C1 between Cape Recife and 10km from the inshore front of the AC in the SAnL3 reference (blue) and no-wind (red) models.

#### 4. Discussion

A protracted south-westerly wind event lasting in approximately 45h and reaching a peak hourly average of 15.7m/s of occurred between 17 September 2014 and 20 September 2014, with a substantial response in sea level and circulation patterns captured by *in situ* sea level and ADCP instrument moorings within Algoa Bay. A dx ~1km ROMS numerical model, forced on the surface using hourly CFSv2 wind data, was able to reproduce the characteristics of the ocean response.

The prevailing south-westerly wind blowing in an approximately along-shelf direction, would be expected to result in onshore Ekman transport and subsequent sea-level set-up near the coastal boundary (Lentz and Fewings 2012). However, when considered against pressure corrected tide level records from stations to the west, it is evident that this response is also governed by the passage of lowest mode CTW, the characteristics of which were similar to that described by Goschen et al. (2012) after capturing a CTW of similar magnitude at their study site off Bird Island on 3 February 2009. Within the reference model, the peak amplitude of the CTW increases despite a decrease in wind speeds as it travels eastward (Table 4, Figure 9a). It is noted, however, that the depth of the stations gradually decreases toward the east, which would affect the wave height accordingly. Within the no-wind model the shelf wave height remains relatively similar across all stations (B1 to B4). The shelf width progressively narrows toward the east, and a similar effect of shelf width on increasing CTW amplitude and decreasing propagation speed, as observed by Kitade & Matsuyama (2000) along the southeast coast of Honshu, Japan, and demonstrated by Maiwa et al. (2010) in a shelf modelling experiment around Tasmania and the eastern coast of Australia, would be expected.

The omission of local wind forcing in the no-wind model demonstrates that remote forcing can be a significant contributor to local circulation, particularly during strong wind events. This is predominantly governed by the passing CTW, and similar processes have been investigated and described both locally (e.g. Jury et al. (1990), Schumann and Brink (1990)) and elsewhere (e.g., South-eastern Australian Coast (Church et al. 1986), Gulf of Mexico (Rivas 2017), South-west African coast (Junker et al. 2019), Fukushima coast (Kubota et al. 1981), South China Sea northern coast (Ding et al. 2012), West coast of India (Amol et al. 2012, 2018), Northern portion of



the California Current System (Engida et al. 2016)). Apart from the Port Alfred (B4) station, full depth alongshore current reversals were recorded at all other SAnL3 model stations within two model time step (6 hours) of the change in wind direction (Figure 9), with the ADCP's showing a strong full depth current reversal with a time lag of less than 4 hours to the wind switch (Figure 8). In an idealized sense, at this latitude ( $34^{\circ}$  South) the establishment of the Ekman layer to its full depth would be expected to take approximately 10 hours (Gill 1982, Brink 1983). Goschen et al. (2012) found a 2.5-hour phase lag between winds and surface currents at the Bird Island (A2) DCP mooring, outside of any CTW activity. Sharp barotropic current reversals during the passage of CTW along the south coast were also noted by Schumann and Brink (1990). In case studies by Jury et al. (1990), it was found that the phase relationship between propagating wind systems and shelf waves along the west and south coast of South Africa was close, and that current reversals were primarily controlled by shelf waves which are in turn forced in phase with the propagation of alongshore winds associated with coastal lows. The currents induced by this resonance response contributes to the transient along-shelf transport of shelf waters during such events, as seen in the SAnL3 model shown in Figure 11. Comparison between the wind and no wind model across the C1 transect off Cape Recife suggests that an estimated 82% of this transient eastward transport at the peak of the event ( $T_0 + 30h$ ), and 61% of the total eastward movement of the water mass over the entire period of the CTW ( $T_0 + 0h$  to  $T_0 + 90h$ ), is due primarily to remote wind forcing.

In the no-wind model, a short lived anticyclonic rotating feature forms in the lee of Cape Recife in Algoa Bay shortly after the peak of the CTW (Figure 10 right:  $T_0 + 45h$  and  $T_0 + 60h$ ), in contrast to the reference model, where instead a broad anticyclonic flow throughout the bay establishes (Figure 10 left:  $T_0 + 45h$  and  $T_0 + 60h$ ). Zamudio et al. (2007) investigated a similar process occurring in the Cabo Corrientes – María Islands off the Mexican West Coast. Here, it was shown that poleward moving CTW would intensify local wind forced currents and trigger the generation of anticyclonic eddies off cape-like features. While there is no published evidence to support the notion of submesoscale anticyclonic eddy formation off the lee of Cape Recife specifically, given the sharpness and orientation of the cape to the prevailing currents during the event it certainly presents itself as a strong possibility (see Røed 1980, Klinger 1994, Pichevin and Nof 1996, Cenedese and Whitehead 2000, Elkin and

Zatsepin 2013). Eddies would be expected to lose kinetic energy and vorticity due to shear from down-front wind stress (Thomas 2005, Mukherjee et al. 2016), therefore a plausible explanation as to why eddy formation off the cape is not a regularly observed feature during similar events is that the strong south-westerly winds hinder its establishment, instead spreading out into broader anticyclonic gyre-like flow throughout the bay. The curious prospect that free travelling CTW may occasionally induce eddy formation off the capes should they pass during calm wind conditions, is certainly a subject deserving further study.

## 5. Conclusion

*In situ* instruments and high resolution ROMS model data were used to investigate the effects of an eastward travelling wind system on sea level and circulation responses in the shelf and bays on the eastern Agulhas Bank. Measurements at tide level recorders across the western and southern coasts of South Africa indicated the event was associated with an eastward travelling CTW that passed through the study region. Sudden alongshore current reversals to the full depth were seen at the ADCP sites to the south-west of Bird Island and to the east of Cape Recife, with the ROMS model showing this current reversal also occurring south of Cape St Francis and south of Cape Recife, with particularly strong currents developing here at the peak of the CTW ( $>1$  m/s). The omission of local wind forcing in the model demonstrated that remote forcing can be a significant contributor to local circulation, particularly during strong wind events. An along-shelf transport assessment over a cross-shelf transect south of Cape Recife illustrated that remote wind forcing can be responsible for an estimated 61% of the total eastward movement of the water mass over the entire period of the event. Curiously, when wind was removed in the model, a short-lived anticyclonic eddy-like rotating feature formed in the eastern lee of Cape Recife in Algoa Bay shortly after the peak of the CTW, in contrast to the broad anticyclonic flow that typically establishes throughout the bay seen in the reference model run.

The substantial along-shelf movement of water coupled with the changes in circulation patterns within the bays highlight the importance of such wind events on governing water exchange between the bays and the shelf. This has significant implications for regional marine biota, and the effects of climate change on local pressure and wind

systems could indeed alter the characteristics of these marine environments by enhancing or diminishing the movement and exchange of shelf waters.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

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Journal Pre-proof

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- The Regional Oceanographic Modelling System has predictive skill in reproducing coastal trapped wave events along the south coast of South Africa
- Sudden alongshore current reversals are seen to full depth in the model and ADCP mooring data
- The model shows very strong eastward currents develop off Cape St Francis and Cape Recife
- The model shows very large volume displacement caused by the CTW, which carries most of the energy from remote wind forcing to the west of Oyster Bay

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**Declaration of interests**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

Dylan F. Bailey reports a relationship with Bayworld Museum Complex that includes: employment.

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