

10.

Coupled Prediction: Integrating Atmosphere-Wave-Ocean forecasting

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10.1. Introduction to coupled prediction

In the early days of numerical modelling of the various components of the Earth system, each component was treated individually. Figure 10.1 shows a representation of two systems, ocean and atmosphere, that run independently: the output of one system is used to “force” the other. The interface between the ocean and the atmosphere was considered a phenomenon that had to be modelled independently of the two media.

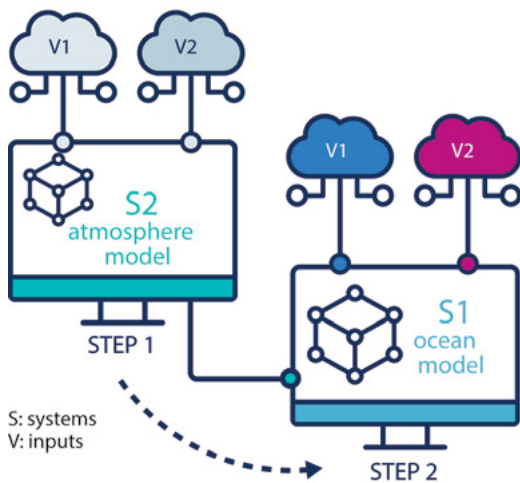


Figure 10.1. Traditional modelling platform characterised by Systems (S), like ocean model and atmosphere model, and inputs to each System (V).

This representation of the Earth system interactions is in some sense arbitrary. As the complexity of models grew, attempts were made to integrate the components more tightly, particularly in the field of climate modelling. Weather forecasting has a time scale of days to a couple of weeks (Lorenz, 1967) and, as new forecasts would be initialised regularly (typically every day), excessive diffusivity was never considered a problem. Making the early numerical weather prediction models conservative was therefore not a priority. The problem of conserving quantities such as heat, moisture, or momentum to avoid *model drift*, began to manifest itself only with the advent of long integrations of climate models. It became clear that long climate integrations of the atmosphere needed to also consider the impact of a (slowly) changing ocean, not least because the various climate components interact in nonlinear ways. This produces feedback loops that can fundamentally alter the state of each climate component. Numerical weather prediction models also need-

ed to close the energy budget at the top of the atmosphere (or in the case of climate change, get that imbalance right). This led to the first attempts at coupling ocean and atmosphere models. The ice floating on the ocean and the soil in the ground were also separate from the ocean and the atmosphere. The latter was the first to be incorporated into more complex models, leading to the first coupled models.

Figure 10.2 shows a conceptual representation of systems that can interact through a “mechanism” called coupler. Figure 10.3 shows a more detailed and realistic representation of this coupling process.

Theoretical challenges to producing skilful weather forecasts were noted early in the history of NWP. For example, Lorenz (1963) pointed to the phenomenon of sensitive dependence on initial conditions. This means that small changes in our current best guess of the atmosphere or ocean could lead to very large changes in the forecasts. As a consequence, skilful weather prediction is limited to a finite time horizon of around 1-2 weeks. However, this perspective tends to focus on synoptic scale atmospheric dynamics. When a numerical model of the atmosphere is coupled to numerical models of the ocean and other Earth system components, new timescales are introduced into the system. In such multiscale systems,

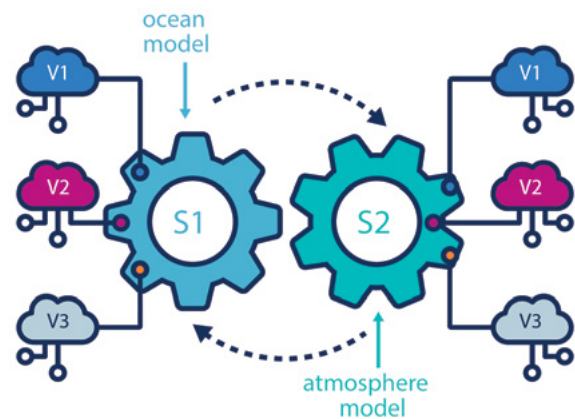


Figure 10.2. Coupling modelling platform where Systems (S) communicate with each other through an interface code called “coupler”.

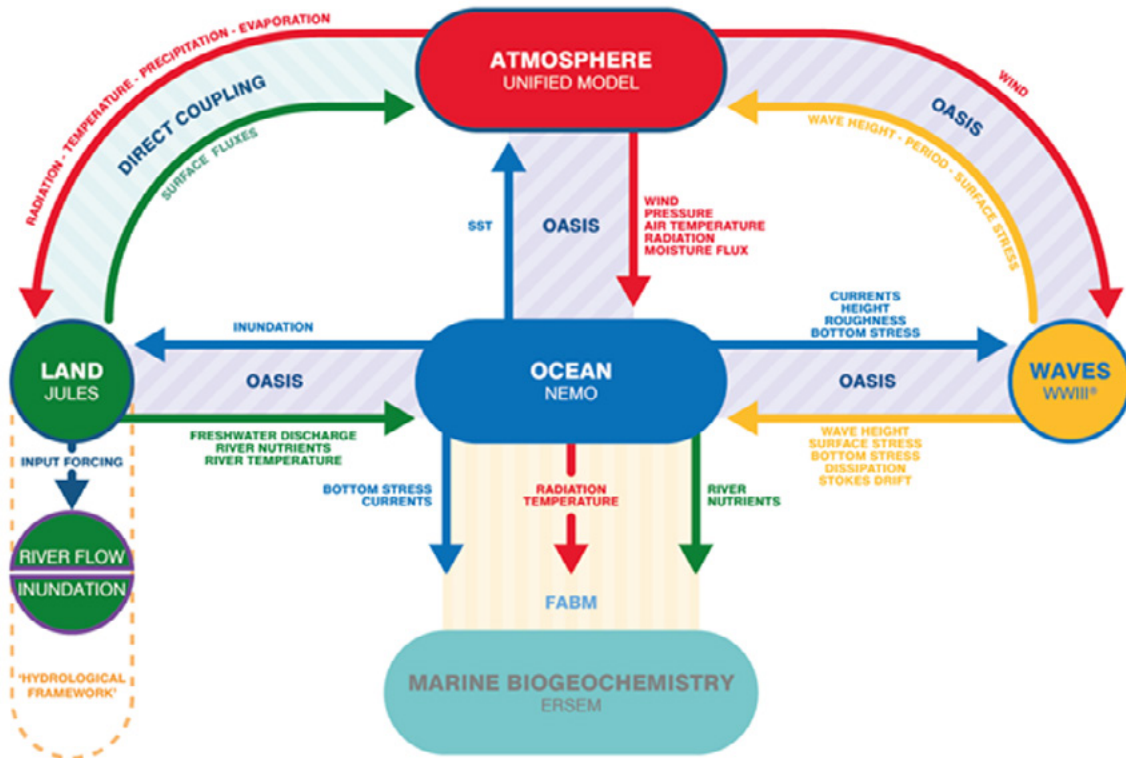


Figure 10.3. A schematic of the components (ocean, waves, etc.), the models (NEMO, WWIII, etc.), and the coupling exchanges between them, based on the system described in Lewis et al. (2019). Note the use of the coupler OASIS, the use of input forcing between Jules and the river flow model, direct coupling between Jules and the UM and direct forcing between the NEMO and ERSEM systems. A relatively simple coupled system (no ice) that includes 6 different models and 4 different approaches to coupling between them.

fast growing errors tend to be associated with processes that evolve quickly but saturate at smaller scales (Harlim et al., 2005), while slower growing or decaying errors tend to be associated with larger scale oscillations (Penland and Sardeshmukh, 1995; Penland and Matrosova, 1998; Vannitsem and Duan, 2020).

DA is the process of integrating information from numerical models with observations derived from real world measurements. At operational centres, DA systems have typically been built for each Earth system component independently. Early efforts to produce coupled forecasts maintained this separation of components when applying DA to provide initial conditions (Saha et al., 2006, 2010, and 2014; Zhang et al., 2007), an approach that is now called WCDA. More recently, there have been efforts to treat the entire coupled Earth system as one state and update accordingly. This more integrated approach allows observations to have immediate influence across domain boundaries (e.g. the air-sea interface), and as such is called SCDA. There are also approaches that fall on the spectrum between these extremes, such as the CERA system at the ECMWF that applies different DA systems to the

atmosphere and ocean but still allows influence across the air-sea interface via an iterative cycling over a moving 6-12 hour time window (Laloyaux et al., 2018).

Beyond these theoretical considerations, there are many technical complications involved in transitioning to coupled prediction. Many centres have developed monitoring and prediction tools independently for individual Earth components (e.g. atmosphere, ocean, land, waves, etc.). This is natural based on the historical context of their development and limitations on computing capabilities, but it has created an infrastructure within and across institutions that adds complexity to the task of unifying prediction systems. The major prediction centres are making progress towards an integrated approach by unifying software infrastructure for models and data assimilation capabilities, as well as providing opportunities to increase interactions among the development teams of each system component. Data formats for model output and observational data sets have not been fully standardised across the various Earth system domains, and so this adds further steps before seamless integration.

A very important practical limitation that has most certainly curtailed research and development in coupled prediction is the extreme demands it places on computational resources. The best performing applications for atmospheric prediction and ocean prediction have already been pushed to their limits of resource consumption. Acknowledging the fact that coupled systems can perform very differently at low resolu-

tions versus high resolutions, there remain very few organisations with the resources needed to explore unanswered questions in coupled prediction at relevant resolutions for operational prediction. For this reason, there are efforts underway to identify methods to reduce the computational demands at bottlenecks within the cycled data assimilation and forecast systems.



10.2. Coupling processes

10.2.1. Waves and their role in air-sea exchange

Waves have been called the gearbox of the climate system (Semedo et al., 2011). The analogy highlights the mediating role of the wave field between the atmosphere and the ocean interior. It may seem surprising that the sea surface demands its own class of numerical model. The other components (atmosphere, ocean, sea ice, land surface) have real substance, i.e. they each represent a three-dimensional chunk of the Earth system. In contrast, the wave model is a representation of a *surface* between two media, namely the air and the sea (Figure 10.4). There are, however, good practical reasons for this split. If we had access to unlimited computing power, we could model the ocean and the atmosphere with a grid resolution approaching Kolmogorov’s microscale. That would mean that the Navier Stokes equations could be solved in the approximative limit known as DNS (Moin and Mahesh,

1998). In this case, the (liquid) ocean would presumably interact with the (gaseous) atmosphere and on their interface would form a wavy surface that, given a sufficiently strong momentum flux (mostly from the atmosphere to the ocean), would form droplets and bubbles as the waves start to break. The computational reality is far from this. At present, we can model the ocean and the atmosphere with models that have grid cells of tens of metres in the horizontal if we limit ourselves to small domains, whereas the waves that form under the influence of the wind have wavelengths of the order of some metres to hundreds of metres and so cannot be explicitly resolved together with the bulk ocean properties.

The behaviour of these waves determines the mass and momentum fluxes between the ocean and the atmosphere. As waves grow under the influence of the wind, they become steeper. In this phase they are also choppier than they will

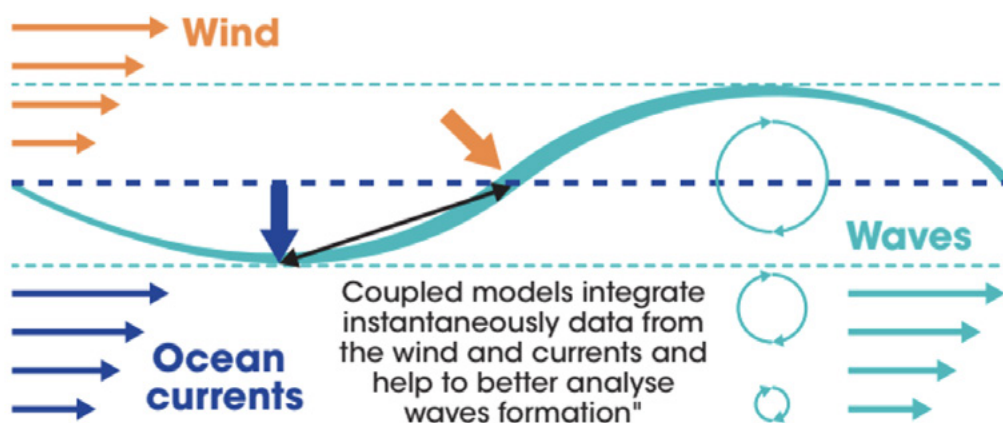


Figure 10.4. Representation of AWO coupled models.

be later on. All this means that the momentum flux between the atmosphere and the ocean is affected by the presence of waves (Janssen et al., 2004; Breivik et al., 2015). There is also very important feedback between the waves and the atmosphere. As waves grow, the sea surface becomes rougher, slowing the near-surface winds and increasing the momentum flux from the atmosphere to the wave field. This has the effect of stemming the deepening of low-pressure systems. This is important in the formation and growth of extratropical lows (Janssen, 1991 and 2004), but also in the evolution of tropical cyclones (discussed further below).

A secondary effect of waves on the air-sea interaction is through their ability to impart momentum and turbulent kinetic energy to the ocean interior (Figure 10.4). As waves grow, they absorb momentum that would otherwise go directly to the formation of ocean currents. As waves break, they part with this momentum, and also inject turbulent kinetic energy into the ocean (Janssen et al., 2004; Raschle et al., 2006; Ardhuin et al., 2008 and 2009). This leads to a redistribution of momentum and kinetic energy in time and space (Ardhuin and Jenkins, 2006; Breivik et al., 2015; Staneva et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2019), and has a profound effect on near-shore processes (Uchiyama et al., 2010; Kumar et al., 2012) where waves interact strongly with the currents. It is also clear that in open ocean conditions the mixed-layer depth is a function of the wave activity, in part sustained by the Langmuir turbulence (McWilliams et al., 1997; Fan and Griffies, 2014; Li et al., 2016 and 2017; Li and Fox-Kemper, 2017; Ali et al., 2019). The enhanced mixing due to waves is thus important for the sea surface temperature, which helps to determine the air-sea heat flux and thus constitutes an important feedback mechanism between the atmosphere and the ocean.

10.2.2. Land/sea exchanges

Land-sea interactions take place on a wide range of spatial and temporal scales. The presence of land modifies the weather in the coastal zone, e.g. the daily variations in wind speed and direction due to the sea breeze, and hence the atmosphere provides an indirect link between the land and the ocean. Another example of this indirect coupling is the way large-scale weather systems can influence the transport pathways of river water (Osadchiev et al., 2020).

The physical couplings between land, ocean, and atmosphere are not necessarily equal in strength and importance, and we often observed a lagged response. The runoff from rivers is dependent on the precipitation over a potentially very large catchment area, with significant lag between specific precipitation events and the freshwater discharge to the coastal ocean. This lag is particularly pronounced in temperate and polar regions where the precipitation accumulates as snow during parts of the year. This is reflected by the

state-of-the-art of coupled modelling, as very few systems couple the ocean to the land, but rather use the atmosphere as a mediator.

10.2.3. Air-sea exchanges across sea ice

At high latitudes, air-sea exchange is modified by the presence of sea ice. Varying in thickness up to a couple of metres, sea ice is sensitive to forcing from both air and sea and the air, sea, and sea ice are strongly coupled. Geophysical scale sea ice is essentially a mixture of ice floes of varying size and thickness, with the added complexity of being rafted and ridged. Describing accurately the sea ice mechanical behaviour is extremely challenging, although modelling sea ice as plastic materials at the large scale has long been a successful approach (Coon et al., 1974; Hibler, 1979; Hunke and Dukwicz, 1997; Girard et al., 2011). In medium to high model resolutions ($\leq 10\text{km}$), such models can generate small-scale features such as the ice leads (Hutchings et al., 2005; Wang and Wang, 2009; Girard et al., 2011; Spreen et al., 2017). This thin ice cover has a very small heat content and easily melts away during summer, resulting in large seasonal variations of sea ice extent.

In much of the pack ice region, the thermodynamic and dynamic interactions between air and sea are greatly suppressed. During wintertime, the air-sea heat flux through leads is two orders of magnitude larger than that through thick ice (Maykut, 1978). Dynamically, pack ice behaves as a low-pass filter, the air and sea surface stresses act on the ice cover thus driving the advection and deformation of sea ice, while ocean waves are generally suppressed. The MIZ is a highly complex region consisting of ice floes of varying dimensions and shapes. Wave energy propagating into the MIZ can lead to rapid breakup. The damping of waves in sea ice is directly related to the amount of energy imparted on the sea ice. This is a field of active research, and it is presently not fully clear how the MIZ attenuates wave energy (Doble and Bidlot, 2013; Williams et al., 2013; Kohout et al., 2014; Sutherland and Rabault, 2016; Ardhuin et al., 2016; Rabault et al., 2020).

Landfast ice is a special region where the air-sea interaction nearly ceases. It generally appears in winter seasons and often occurs in shallow waters where ridged ice grounds on the seabed (Mahoney et al., 2014), or occurs where islands are close to each other (Divine et al., 2003). Modelling studies have shown that adding base stress due to grounding ridges and increasing ice tensile strength improve the simulation of landfast ice evolution (Lemieux et al., 2016), although in some Arctic shelf seas the time duration needs to be further improved.

In coupled modelling, a key consideration is whether to couple the sea ice directly to the atmosphere or only through the ocean model. In some recent coupled models, particularly

for high-resolution short-term atmosphere, ocean, and sea ice forecasts, the timestep for coupling has decreased to one hour or less, e.g. the coupled ocean-ice model METROMS at the Norwegian Meteorological Institute (Naughten et al., 2018), or the atmosphere-ice coupled model at UKMO (Ridley et al., 2018). In these cases, the difference between using the atmosphere timestep or ocean timestep is generally negligible.

10.2.4. The importance of air-sea exchanges during storms and other extreme events

Air-sea exchange really comes to the fore in the development of tropical cyclones. The sea surface temperature must as a general rule exceed 26.5°C to sustain the growth of the cyclone (Emanuel, 1986). However, the depth to which the ocean's temperature must be above this critical threshold is also important. As the cyclone moves across the sea surface, the Ekman transport will lead to divergence, and vertical Ekman pumping will eventually lead cooler water to the surface. If the cyclone is moving sufficiently slowly, this will eventually kill the cyclone (Mogensen et al., 2017). Thus, it is essential to include an ocean model component that responds to the atmospheric forcing.

Polar lows are of a decidedly less extreme nature than tropical cyclones, but they share the same dependence on sea surface temperature (Rasmussen and Turner, 2003). As winds blow off the sea ice, the air is rapidly warmed by the (relatively) warm ocean surface. Under the appropriate atmospheric conditions (Kolstad, 2015), this can lead to the formation of polar lows. These are small-scale, intense cyclones, typically with gale-force winds. If the cyclone is rather stationary, a shallow layer of warmer water can mix with cooler waters through Ekman pumping. As the ocean temperature is key to sustaining a cyclone, the water mixing can sometimes be enough to inhibit further growth of the polar low.

Examples of instantaneous coupling between land, ocean, and atmosphere also include coastal inundation during landfall of tropical cyclones (Lee et al., 2019). In these cases, heavy precipitation leads to a swelling of local rivers, which is often coincidental with a large storm surge. The result is a rapid sea-level rise that may cause extensive damage to coastal infrastructure, especially when combined with large surface waves and strong winds.



10.3. Benefits expected from coupling

The importance of coupled ocean-atmosphere prediction systems in providing seasonal predictability is well-known (Kim et al., 2012, and references therein). Sources of predictability in seasonal forecasting systems tend to be, by their very nature, coupled systems driven by teleconnections that are functions of climate modes, such as the North Atlantic Oscillation and the El Niño–Southern Oscillation that have geographically far-reaching consequences. However, as timescales shorten and the dominance of these coupled climate modes become less fundamental to predictability of the atmosphere-ocean system, it becomes less obvious whether the benefits of fully coupled systems justify the computational cost or the technical and scientific complexity required. The coupling between atmospheric and wind wave models was first introduced operationally in 1998 at ECM-WF. The method based on the theoretical work of Janssen (1991) contributed to an improvement of both atmospheric and surface wave forecasts at the medium range on the global scale. The usual approach of forcing the ocean with atmospheric conditions (Takano et al., 1973), and referred to in this section as “forced”) using bulk parameterisations of

the fluxes (Large and Yeager, 2009) is computationally and structurally far easier and cheaper than coupling approaches. However, the key boundary layer processes (see Section 9.1 for details) are not taken into account and thus the feedback between the atmospheric boundary layer and the upper ocean is not represented. It is necessary to understand how important these processes might be, bearing in mind that coupled models can suffer from systematic errors as a result of positive feedback leading to drifts in the forecast (Hyder et al., 2018).

Ocean forecasting systems have become increasingly high-resolution, resolving coastlines, bathymetry, and eddy-scale processes. The effect of coupling on model predictions becomes more important with increasing grid resolution (Janssen et al., 2004), and so the question of the benefits of coupling to ocean forecasting is perhaps more relevant now than ever. A small but growing body of literature demonstrates the benefits to ocean prediction of coupling at shorter time-ranges (Brassington et al., 2015; Allard et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2018 and 2019).

Understanding the advantages of coupled over uncoupled predictions in short-range ocean forecasting is in its infancy. Although the future of advanced systems is clearly coupling, as several processes are better represented, predictive modelling without coupling is however possible thanks to parameterizations and should never be discarded as an option. At a recent science meeting of OceanPredict (Vinayachandran et al., 2020), the need for a careful evaluation of how ocean and atmosphere components interact and impact each other was highlighted. At monthly or shorter timescales, the benefits of running coupled systems need to be evaluated, balancing scientific and service benefits against complexity and computing costs. Intermediate complexity coupling may also be an appropriate approach if full coupling is not viable and the service is not reliant on the atmosphere and ocean information. Lemarié et al. (2021) provided an example of an atmospheric boundary layer approach that gives some of the benefits of coupling whilst being significantly simpler and computationally cheaper.

The potential benefits of using a coupled framework is reinforced by the move towards a multi-hazard approach to predictions. Natural hazards from multiple sources may combine or occur concurrently (Lewis et al., 2015). Large waves, storm surges, high-wind speeds, and extreme precipitation are all hazards that are likely to co-occur, and influence each other through coupled feedbacks that can compound one another (for example through over-topping). Coupled systems that predict these coupled feedbacks may enable an improvement in the range and consistency of actionable information to be provided through hazard warnings and guidance.

When considering providing services in multi-hazards frameworks, the opportunities that coupling provides should be considered alongside the scientific benefits. A coupled system combining the full water-cycle – including consistent precipitation, river runoff, wave, currents, and surge forecasts - can give users mutually consistent products in a joint probability framework. This can be important in coastal flooding, where the impacts for coastal communities or industries can come from high river flows and local heavy precipitation events, alongside overtopping waves and extreme surges. From a service perspective, it is attractive to provide probabilistic frameworks in which the timings and intensities of events are consistently incorporated and interact appropriately; these services increasingly rely on probabilistic information for decision making. An area that has had limited attention but seems likely to prove significant is the impact of feedback among Earth-system components upon ensemble spread, and hence the quality of the probabilistic information.

Ocean phenomena are usefully classified depending on their nature, which determines the timescale for oceanic predictive skill and whether a coupled ocean-atmosphere model would be advantageous. Some phenomena have strong de-

pendence, and a rapid response, to the atmosphere forcing and can be thought of as forced-dissipative systems. This category includes, surface waves, responses to surface heating and wind in the ocean boundary layer, and storm surges. These systems largely depend upon skill in the atmosphere model, and so the benefits of coupling to the atmosphere can be a leading-order driver of the ocean system skill. The advantage of coupling and its impact upon predictability often focus on the benefits to the atmosphere (Brunet et al., 2010; Belcher et al., 2015). The impact of ocean coupling on tropical meteorology is well documented with tropical cyclones (Bender and Ginis 2000; Mogensen et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2018; Neetu et al., 2019), monsoons (Fu, 2007), and the Madden-Julian Oscillation (Bernie et al., 2008; Shelly et al., 2014; Seo et al., 2014), which predictability improved in coupled systems. There is also an increasing body of evidence that the oceans have a significant local (important for short-range forecasts) and non-local (increasingly significant at longer lead-times) influence on the extra tropics (Minobe et al., 2008).

In the literature, there is limited quantification of the impact of the coupled improvement in atmospheric parameters on ocean services but it is an increasing area of study. Guiavarc'h et al. (2019) explored the impact of a coupled (atmosphere-ocean) system on short-range ocean forecast skill and showed that there are benefits in SST predictability at the short-range, but with mixed results for other parameters. Given that the research system they used is at a relatively early stage in development, and the resolution of the atmosphere is significantly lower than in comparable forced systems, these results are encouraging.

Although the importance of coupling the wave-ocean interface for improving forecasts of surge and waves is well documented (Wolf, 2008; Lewis et al., 2018), most storm surge and wave prediction systems remain largely independent. As well as the atmospheric forcing, ocean currents have a significant role in modifying ocean wave properties. The presence of eddies, fronts, and filaments with length scales of tens to hundreds km and ubiquitous in the world's oceans, can be the main source of variability in significant wave heights at these scales. Arduin et al. (2017) made a compelling case for the importance of coupling the ocean surface currents to a wave model allowing adequate representation of wave height variability in the world's open oceans. Wave predictions in shelf seas environments are shown to be improved as a result of coupling to an ocean model (Allard et al., 2012; Wahle et al., 2017; Lewis et al., 2018). as well as the predictions of ocean current and other ocean parameters, including upwelling due to stokes drift effects, were enhanced (Wu et al, 2019). Fan et al. (2009) showed that time and spatial variations in the surface wave field, as a result of coupling to winds, are particularly strong in hurricanes, with significant additional feedback from ocean currents and near-surface temperatures.

The ocean eddy kinetic energy is damped when taking into account the feedbacks between ocean surface current and winds (Oerder et al., 2018; Jullien et al., 2020). As ocean models increasingly resolve the mesoscale explicitly, they are likely to have the tendency to over-predict the eddy activity. In uncoupled systems, there is an option to calculate the wind stress using relative wind speeds (taking into account the eddies and other ocean current interactions). However, in these systems there is no imprint of ocean eddies on the atmospheric wind stress curl (due to the lack of ocean eddies in the uncoupled atmospheric modelling system), and so the feedback onto the wind stress results in over-damping of the eddies. A fully coupled system will correctly allocate the feedback between the winds and currents, allowing the eddy and wind fields to co-evolve correctly. This coupling between the winds and currents can also lead to upscaling to the large scale, e.g. Renault et al. (2016) showed that current/wind feedback, through its eddy killing effect, resolves long-lasting biases in Gulf Stream path.

Marine heatwaves have recently been recognised for their importance (Holbrook et al., 2019). They are high impact events that can be induced by anomalous heating at the ocean surface; their predictability is dependent upon air-sea coupled phenomena (Jacox, 2019). At the other end of the temperature scale, Pellerin et al. (2004) showed that

coupling can also have strong impacts in ice-infested seas even down to sub-daily time scales, due to rapid changes in coastal sea ice cover (i.e. the formation of coastal polynyas). The sea ice acts as a barrier between a relatively warm-wet ocean and cold-dry atmosphere, and changes in the sea ice cover can have dramatic effects on heat and moisture fluxes. The importance of coupling has also been recognized in polar regions (Jung and Vitart, 2006).

Coastal regions are particularly impacted by coupled processes, both between the ocean and atmosphere and coupling with river and estuaries. The impact of freshwater discharges on the ocean circulation is highlighted by Røed and Albretsen (2007) and, more broadly on the coastal marine environment, by Dzwonkowski et al., 2017. The inputs from the land surface, mediated through estuaries and lagoons, are generally poorly represented in ocean forecasting systems due to their scale (time and space) and their complexity. It is extremely difficult to accurately model nutrient inputs, which are mediated strongly by land use and societal factors, and the associated plankton response is therefore compounded. Although this problem is not fundamentally a coupling problem, there is still scope for improving the inputs to the coastal environment through specifying better the river-estuary-ocean interface.



10.4.

Ocean Information Services based on Coupled Frameworks

Over the past decades, operational oceanography underwent a rapid transition and gradually became part of core systems of operational centres previously largely focusing on weather. Sufficient observations are now available to improve the estimation of the ocean state, including mesoscale variability, ice cover, or wave spectra for wave systems. The development of weakly coupled data assimilation techniques, the exploration of strongly coupled data assimilation using cross-domain error covariance (Sluka et al., 2016), the ability to assimilate an ever-growing source of observations, the improvements in physics and dynamics of the various components of the Earth system, and rapidly increasing computing capacities, keep pushing forward the quality of forecasts and reanalyses that can be produced. As a result, information available for products and services is continuously expanding and including a rapid increase in the quality and quantity of ocean and marine services. It is now well established that marine services are essential to any nation with coastal assets.

In the late 90s and early 2000s, operational marine services were limited to a few marine weather variables such as waves, tides, and surges. With coupled systems now in place in many operational centres and the continuous push for increased resolution to better reflect local conditions, a wide variety of new services has and continues to emerge. It is now common for service providers to be overwhelmed with information drawn from many prediction systems, and for users to be submerged with products. In the next subsections are discussed the few steps that should be followed to sort through the very large number of products that can be generated numerically, so that services are centred on needs in a fit for purpose and accessible approach. A few simple examples are used to demonstrate ways of tying together all this numerical knowledge and provide forecasts and services that are informative and tailored to various groups of users.

10.4.1. Establishing service needs

The first step when evaluating services' needs, including whether to use or not a coupled or forced system, is to clearly define the service gap and how current capacity can be leveraged to address it. The second step is to identify enough resources required to bring the project to completion. Numerous capacities are required to sustain timely and accurate services: i) reliable and sufficient computing resources including telecommunications, bandwidth, and storage, along with staff to operate and maintain the IT infrastructure; ii) physical scientist to install; optimise; run; validate, and verify numerical systems; iii) physical scientists to produce forecasts; iv) forecasters able to disseminate and explain forecasts; v) the ability to sustain such services through extreme conditions (e.g. during a powerful cyclone); and vi) the capacity to overcome throughout the years the changes in IT infrastructure, complexification of systems, increasing volumes of data, etc. However, it should never be forgotten that, whatever is the capacity and the complexity of a state-of-the-art forecast, it only has value if it reaches the users in the due time.

For those countries that choose to operate regional systems driven with data provided by major operational centres, the capacity to download the required data quickly enough to run regional systems and issue timely regional forecasts is also key. It should be also ensured that sufficient local expertise is available to monitor, , and fix any issue with the regional system.

When launching new or improved forecast services, another important step is to identify user groups (e.g. marine engineers, marine transportation industries, search and rescue operations, fisheries and aquaculture, coastal communities) and understand their needs. It should be also kept in mind that within each group there can be considerable modulation of needs and that needs can evolve with time and hence they should be reviewed periodically. See section 4.8 for more details on user requirements.

10.4.2. Identifying the required information

Search and rescue and coastal flooding cases are used to illustrate how to select the modelling tools that are required to best address the problem. They are also used to demonstrate how a fit for purpose approach may identify the numerical systems best suited to deliver services.

A search and rescue incident that requires drift predictions is an example of a service to illustrate the choices needed. Forecasts of the trajectory of the drifting object requires knowledge of tides, eddies, inertial oscillations, winds, and waves. Such incidents often occur during high winds and large waves conditions and, as discussed in 9.1, it is under

such conditions that interactions between tides, waves, ocean, and atmosphere are most important. This suggests that coupled predictions could add value (Davidson et al., 2009) to the use of independent ocean, wave, and atmosphere forecasting systems. As already discussed, ensembles are essential to sampling uncertainty in various components of a system. In their comprehensive review of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill event, Barker et al. (2020) made a case for the importance of coupled atmosphere-wave-ocean systems for effective oil spill response. All these considerations point to the use of ensemble coupled ocean-wave-atmosphere systems that are post-processed through tracking systems capable of considering the characteristics of various objects, such as a person in the water or a vessel at drift. However, the simulation overhead (in time and computer resources) of the coupled system needs to be balanced with the need to quickly run ensemble simulations to provide probabilities of the search zone to help optimise search patterns. A case similar to that of search and rescue is the response to oil spill or tracking of nuclear debris, which also requires models to predict particulate dispersion but also need to consider other chemically induced processes, such as fate and behaviour.

Coastal flooding is the other example used here to illustrate how to select the best modelling tools. Local communities typically have precise questions such as: "How much water will there be and for how long?" "Will the water reach my street and my house?" "Will it damage my property?" "Will it erode my land or the cliff my house is perched on?" Local authorities and disaster management agencies might have further considerations such as: "What are the most likely and the worst-case scenarios?" "When should we consider evacuations and through what route?" "What critical infrastructures might be at risk?" However, the nature of the service will depend on local conditions. Consider for example a community living at high latitudes. In the event of a polar low (discussed in 9.1), ice can recede rapidly to expose long stretches of ocean leaving the coastline exposed to large swells. In these areas, wave-ice interactions can lead to rapid changes and coupled ice-ocean-wave-atmosphere systems should be preferred to provide accurate forecasts of the low's evolution, rapidly changing marine conditions, and to warn the coastal communities. On the other hand, locations exposed to tropical cyclones will need a system more focused on predicting ocean-atmosphere interactions in support of track and intensity prediction. However, the concept of a forecast based on total water level at the coast remains, although the fit for purpose numerical guidance to be used might have some differences. It is then particularly important to consider user orientated questions. User groups rarely care about technical issues, such as if the models are coupled or if the surge component is barotropic or baroclinic. They care that scientists put forward the combination that best addresses their concerns. They want to receive a fit for purpose service. Simulations of tide, surge, wave, erosion,

hydrodynamic, and atmospheric may all be required, but to decide whether they should be coupled or not it is necessary to understand if this improves the specific predictions identified by the user questions outlined above.

Advanced knowledge of the risk of an upcoming event is useful to put in place mitigation measures. An outlook for several days to several weeks is of particular interest, as well as the early identification of upcoming risk for which ensemble systems are relevant. At early stages, the focus should be on identifying risk and uncertainties, and communicating them in a clear manner. As the high impact event nears (e.g. next couple days), ensembles can be replaced with resolution increases, so that the risk forecast is changed into an impact-based forecast (i.e. damage to housing, risk of cars being swept away, risk of cutting off of an evacuation route, etc.). This should make the scientists understand that for the users the waves, surges, tides, and other phenomena are relevant only as much as they affect flooding in their areas of interest. This further highlights the importance of metrics used to evaluate models and forecasts. When it comes

to flooding, having a slightly better RMSD and thus a better representation of the mean state is useless if the total water level peaks are missed. Thus, relying on an overly complicated ocean system that results in little to no added skill in total water level forecasts is useless. Similarly, if a complicated system cannot be operated with sufficient resolution over long enough periods, or with enough ensemble members to sample uncertainties, it is not fit for purpose. In addition, coupling should be considered also in the context of the resources (always limited) of operational centres.

Finally, whether numerical systems are run locally or remotely and whether all systems required to produce such forecasts are coupled or not, the path forward should be one in which the forecasters are experts at providing added value taking into account the perspective of the public (e.g. placing in the context a particular expected extreme, comparing it to previous ones, explaining the subtle differences to be expected with the forecast risk, etc.). As such, the forecasters are the ultimate downscalers bringing added value based on local knowledge and history.



10.5. References

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