

Moored Observations of Internal Waves in Luzon Strait: 3-D Structure, Dissipation, and Evolution

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Grant Numbers: N00014-09-1-0219, N00014-09-1-0279, N00014-09-1-0184

LONG-TERM GOALS

We are interested in the general problems of internal waves and ocean mixing. Knowledge of these is important for advancing the performance of operational and climate models, as well as for understanding local problems such as pollutant dispersal and biological productivity. In the specific case of NLIWs, the currents and displacements of the waves are strong enough to impact undersea operations. More generally, most of the ocean's physical and acoustic environments (particularly in straits) are severely impacted by internal waves. The research described here substantially improves both our understanding and predictive ability of linear internal tides and NLIWs in Luzon Strait and the South China Sea.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the generation mechanisms, and better predict the arrival times, of waves that ultimately become the NLIW that propagate westward into the northeastern South China Sea (SCS).
- To better understand generation and propagation of internal waves in a strongly sheared environment (the Kuroshio).
- To relate findings to the more general problem of internal waves in straits.

APPROACH

The IWISE DRI (Internal Waves in Straits Directed Research Initiative) includes an impressive combination of moored, shipboard and autonomous observations, together with remote sensing and modeling studies. The bulk of IWISE observations took place in Luzon Strait (Figure 1) during summer 2011. These were preceded by a pilot experiment in summer 2010 to shake out equipment, refine hypotheses and determine the best location for the assets in the main experiment.

Our contribution to the main experiment was a 7-element array of profiling moorings. These feature McLane moored profilers (MP), which repeatedly transit a standard subsurface mooring wire while measuring temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity and velocity. These ~hourly profiles were

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE 30 SEP 2013		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2013 to 00-00-2013	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Moored Observations of Internal Waves in Luzon Strait: 3-D Structure, Dissipation, and Evolution				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) University of Washington, Applied Physics Laboratory, 1013 NE 40th St, Seattle, WA, 98105				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 16	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

augmented by much faster measurements from up and downlooking 300-KHz and 75-KHz ADCP's (for velocity) and Seabird microcats and T-loggers (temperature and salinity). Turbulence will be estimated both from density overturns measured by the profiler and by micro-temperature measurements from an OSU chi-pods (Moum/Nash) mounted on the profiler and on the wire above and below. The array will serve as a "backbone" for the rest of the observations and is enabling determination of the 3-D structure of the internal waves generated in the Strait.

WORK COMPLETED

Pilot Experiment

We volunteered to take the lead on the pilot experiment, which was completed in summer 2010. Initial results from the pilot experiment were published in *Journal of Physical Oceanography* (Alford et al., 2011). Extremely large breaking internal tides were observed, with overturns several hundred meters tall giving rise to some of the largest diffusivities in the oceans. Figure 2 shows a map of observed energy fluxes during the pilot experiment, along with fluxes from the UAF model run by Harper Simmons. Observed and modeled fluxes agreed well in most locations. Taking advantage of this agreement, the observations and model were used to make a rough estimate of the fraction of converted tidal energy dissipated locally. The resulting estimate of $Q=0.39$ is higher than at Hawaii, suggesting that Luzon strait is a more dissipative system.

Main Experiment

The main IWISE field campaign took place in summer 2011. Our contribution was to deploy the main array of 7 profiling moorings in Luzon Strait (Figure 2). An additional mooring with full-depth coverage (Nash's instruments) was deployed at site "A1" on the eastern side of the northern line. We also deployed 4 thermistor string moorings (Nash) around N2 on the western ridge, which will provide highly resolved (depth and time) measurements of turbulence. We also deployed 13 PIES for David Farmer's group, which remained in place until spring 2012 and will be used to study the evolution and seasonal cycle of NLIW. With remaining ship time on the mooring deployment and recovery cruises, we occupied 5 additional full-depth LADCP/CTD stations.

Based on the the results of the 2010 pilot experiment, we chose to re-occupy the same two measurement lines in 2011. *The goal of the moored array was to sample these locations for a longer period encompassing several tidal cycles and different Kuroshio states, in order to understand the temporal variability of the internal tide and dissipation.*

A combination of strong tidal flows and the Kuroshio resulted in larger-than-expected mooring knockdown during the pilot experiment, which prevented the McLane profiler from crawling for short periods. To overcome this issue, the moorings were redesigned with an upward looking ADCP and temperature chain measuring the upper few hundred meters where the Kuroshio flow is strongest. With these modifications, the McLane Profilers were able to profile nearly continuously in the upper ocean.

Luzon Strait continued to prove itself a challenging environment for moorings. Moorings on steep slopes needed to be placed accurately (within 100m of target), which was done nearly without exception owing to state-of-the-art modeling of anchor drops accounting for currents and ship speed. Fishing was another hazard – mooring MPS was unwittingly deployed over a submerged longline,

parting the line and causing the loss of an MMP. This already challenging requirement was made more so by strong, time variable surface currents (caused by tides and Kuroshio). Upon recovery it was found that 6 out of 10 profilers failed to profile. After investigating it was found that this was caused by a blown fuse/diode, likely caused by large surface currents during deployment. This issue had never occurred before, and we have modified the fuses and launch procedures for future deployments. Despite these unfortunate failures, the mooring array returned excellent data in an extremely energetic and challenging environment. The ~50 day timeseries at each mooring cover 4 spring-neap cycles, allowing us to achieve our goal of measuring the temporal variability of internal waves as tidal forcing and background conditions change. Moorings A1 and S9 measured nearly full-depth profiles of velocity, temperature, and salinity.

RESULTS

Internal Tides and Energy Fluxes

Measurements of velocity and density are used to compute the energy and energy flux of the internal tide. A strong spring-neap modulation in energy and energy flux are seen in the timeseries from S9 (figure 3) and A1 (figure 4). Besides the spring-neap cycle, there is significant variation in magnitude between spring tides. With the exception of the diurnal internal tide at A1, it appears that much of the variability in energy and flux can be attributed to variations in the barotropic forcing.

The new moored observations complement and enhance the picture of energy flux patterns that emerged during the pilot. At mooring A1 (Nash) on the eastern ridge of the northern line, semidiurnal energy flux is very large (mean of ~30 kW/m) and directed towards the south (Figure 5). This energy flux, transverse to the expected direction of wave propagation, supports the notion of interference between waves generated at the western and eastern ridges. Diurnal energy fluxes are comparatively much weaker, though still quite large by open-ocean standards (10 kW/m). At mooring S9 on the southern line, there are fewer signs of an interference pattern. Time-mean internal tidal energy fluxes were 25 (14) kW/m for the diurnal (semidiurnal) frequency band. Energy flux was directed away from the eastern ridge towards the northwest, in the expected direction of wave propagation.

We seek to understand the variability observed in energy flux. Between S9 and A1, the diurnal internal tide at A1 is the most variable. The direction of diurnal flux at A1 varies dramatically over the 50 day observation period, much more so than accounted for by the barotropic forcing. We are currently investigating possible mechanisms for this variability. One mechanism is local changes in the interference pattern between the ridges. A likely source of these changes is the velocity and stratification of the Kuroshio, a hypothesis we are currently investigating. If these local effects cannot account for the observed variability, it may be due to waves propagating into Luzon strait from remote sources.

Lee Waves and Dissipation on Supercritical Slopes

A profiling mooring and 4 thermistor chains were deployed at station N2 on the western ridge, where the largest turbulence was observed during the pilot experiment. Longer timeseries allows us to see how dissipation varies with different forcing (i.e. diurnal vs semidiurnal tides). These measurements resolved the unstable lee-waves leading to turbulence. Modeling studies (Buijsman, 2012) suggest that turbulent dissipation is increased during periods of semi-diurnal forcing, due to a resonance effect. This data and further modeling will allow us to better understand these processes.

Large density overturns were observed by the lower McLane profiler on S9, from which we can estimate the turbulent dissipation rate (Figure 6). Preliminary analysis shows that dissipation has a strong spring-neap cycle and appears to peak during westward (downslope) flow, probably due to breaking lee waves. We are collaborating on this analysis with M. Buijsman, who has provided high-resolution model output that will help to put the mooring observations in context.

We will investigate these processes and compare them to similar processes on the northern ridge (ie N2), to further understand the effect of the two-ridge system on dissipation.

Kuroshio

One of the goals of the moored array was to study how internal tides and NLIW are affected by the Kuroshio current. The moorings measured velocity in the upper 300m with upward-looking ADCPs. These measurements will be used to determine the location, strength, and variability of the Kuroshio current and during the experiment. The low frequency velocity averaged over the upper 150m (Figure 7) shows that the Kuroshio was strong and nearly always present over the western half of the northern line. The measured velocities agree well with model output provided by Dr. Ko (gray arrows). At other locations, the low-frequency flow is weaker and more variable in magnitude and direction. These data will be an important baseline for various other studies on the effect of the Kuroshio on internal tides, NLIW, and dissipation.

Propagation of Internal Tides Generated near Luzon Strait: Observations from Autonomous Gliders

As part of the OKMC (Origins of the Kuroshio and Mindanao Currents) DRI, long-endurance, autonomous Seagliders are used to characterize the Kuroshio variability. These surveys, along with the Spray and Seaglider surveys conducted in 2007-2008 in the Kuroshio, can be used to estimate the amplitude and phase of the linear semidiurnal and diurnal internal waves in this energetic region, particularly in the previously poorly sampled area near the eastern ridge and on the Pacific side of Luzon Strait.

Nearly 23,000 glider profiles (Figure 8), collected during 29 different missions since 2007, are used to quantify the mean and variability of the internal wave field in the upper 1000 m of the water column. The phase progression of internal waves as they propagate away from their generation sites is directly captured. Fitting a mode-1 vertical structure to the displacements observed by the gliders, the total (depth-integrated) energy of the semidiurnal and diurnal internal tide can be estimated. Furthermore, by looking at the spatial variations of the phases of the fits, one can determine the propagation direction of the internal tides (Figure 9). The glider-based observations are used to map the mode-1 semidiurnal and diurnal internal wave fields, providing the baroclinic energy flux over a roughly 600 by 800-km region based strictly on in-situ observations (Figure 10).

The gliders reveal a rich internal wave field in and around Luzon Strait. If the internal tides were generated by the regular barotropic tidal currents always acting on the same stratification and bathymetry, and if they propagated through an ocean without mesoscale or large-scale structure (or a time invariant structure), the amplitude and phase of the internal tide displacements at a given position and depth would remain proportional to and phased locked with the barotropic tidal forcing at the ridge. However, observations show significant variations, even for estimates at the same location. By providing persistence and broad spatial coverage, gliders constitute a powerful tool that complements very well the direct observations from moorings and LADCP/CTD stations collected during IWISE.

This work is done in collaboration with Craig Lee (APL/UW), and Dan Rudnick and Shaun Johnston at Scripps Institution of Oceanography (see Rainville et al., 2013)

One of the striking aspects of previous observations and models in the region is the relatively simple and organized wave field that emerges from the complicated fields near the ridges. Another main goal of the IWISE moored array is to understand this evolution of the internal tide away from the generation site. Ongoing and future work will attempt to track the progression of internal tide signals along each mooring line and observe how they evolve.

IMPACT/APPLICATIONS

TRANSITIONS

RELATED PROJECTS

There are several connections between the measurements collected during IWISE and those collected in the other ONR programs that took place in the area, in particular during OK-MC and ITOP. The observations from all these programs are being synthesized to investigate the propagation of internal waves towards the Pacific Ocean.

Within IWISE, we are working closely with modelers (especially Klymak, Simmons, Ko, and Buijsman), as well as with other observational groups (Moum/Nash in developing the moored profiler chi-pod, and Nash/Moum in LADCP/CTD measurements during the pilot and main experiment).

We are working closely with Nash, who came on the 2011 cruises and whose equipment was deployed at mooring A1, as well as the 4 temperature-string moorings surrounding mooring N2.

The mooring array has served as a ‘backbone’ for other shipboard measurements (especially St. Laurent, Lien & Pinkel), and helped interpret observations at far-field basin moorings (Yang/Ramp) by providing accurate time-series of barotropic velocity and internal tide energy flux at the ridges.

We helped deploy and recover 2 Spray Gliders (Rudnick & Johnston). The gliders were deployed in the deep basin west of the ridges. We collaborated on a paper with Johnston, Rudnick, and Simmons describing internal tides measured by the gliders and moorings, which was recently published (Johnston et al., 2013).

We collaborated with M. Buijsman on his 3-D modeling paper (currently under review at *JPO*), and provided mooring data to help validate the model.

With regard to other DRI's, the understanding of the generation process of the NLIW, which is the goal of IWISE, fills a major void in the NLIWI DRI. Our mooring data, combined with the PIES we deployed during summer 2011, will help to further understand the evolution of IT into NLIW.

We are also compiling shipboard ADCP data from opportunistic Kuroshio transects made by the R/V *Revelle* during the main experiment. These data, showing the vertical and horizontal structure of the current, will be useful both for our studies and for the larger ONR community studying the Kuroshio.

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- Alford, M. H., J. A. MacKinnon, J. D. Nash, H. Simmons, A. Pickering, J.M. Klymak, R. Pinkel, O. Sun, L. Rainville, R. Musgrave, T. Beitzel, K. Fu, and C. Lu, 2011: Energy flux and dissipation in Luzon Strait: two tales of two ridges. *J. Phys. Oceanogr*, **41**, doi:10.1175/JPO-D-11-073.1, 2211–2222.
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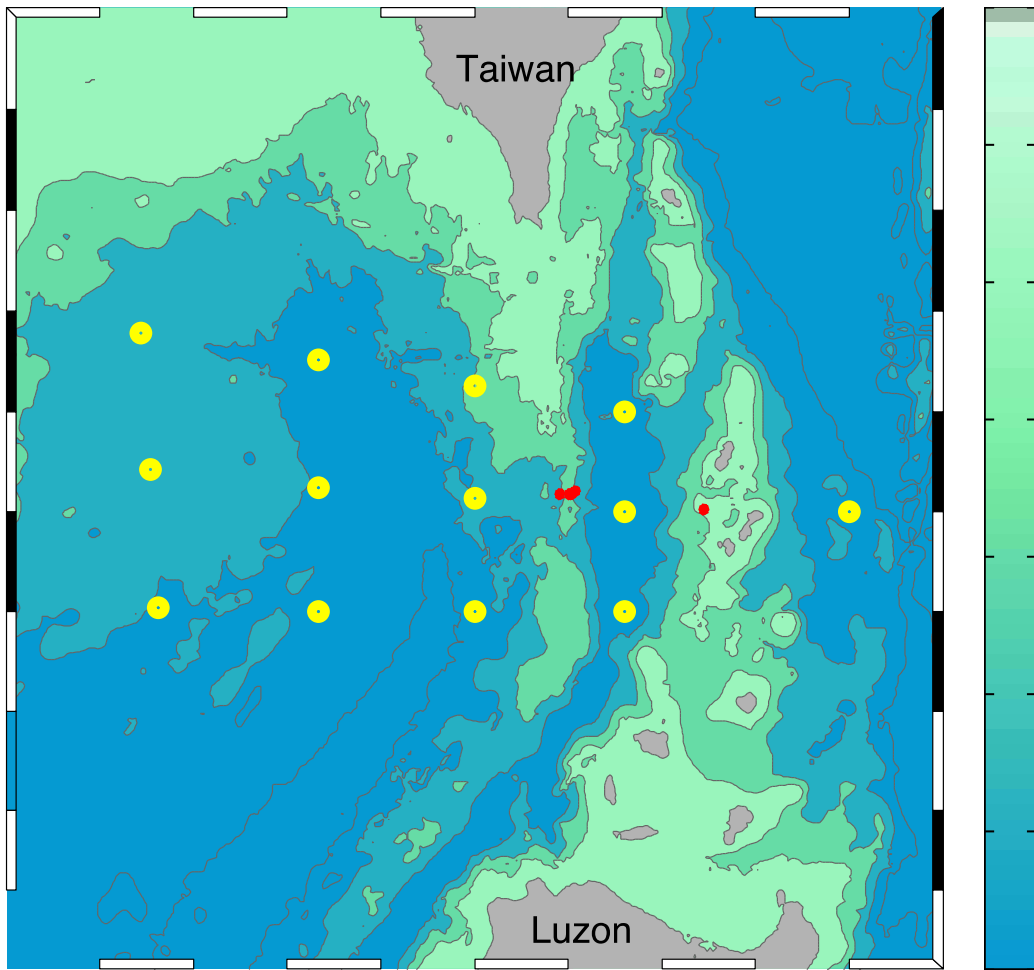


Figure 1: Map of 2011 IWISE observations discussed in this report. Not shown are 4 T-chain moorings deployed close to N2.

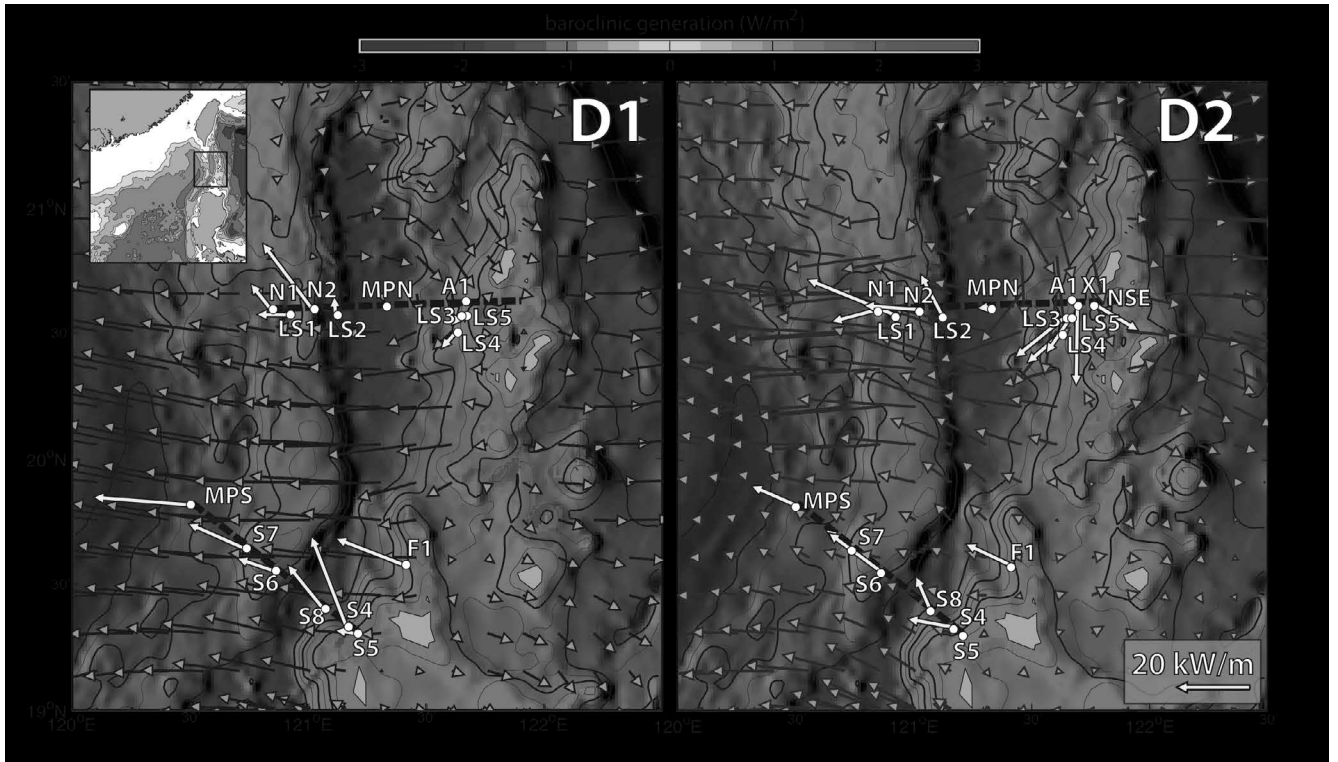


Figure 2: Tidal conversion (colors) and energy flux vectors from UAF model (green, Simmons) and Pilot observations (yellow). Observations were concentrated along two lines (dashed black). From Alford et al (2011).

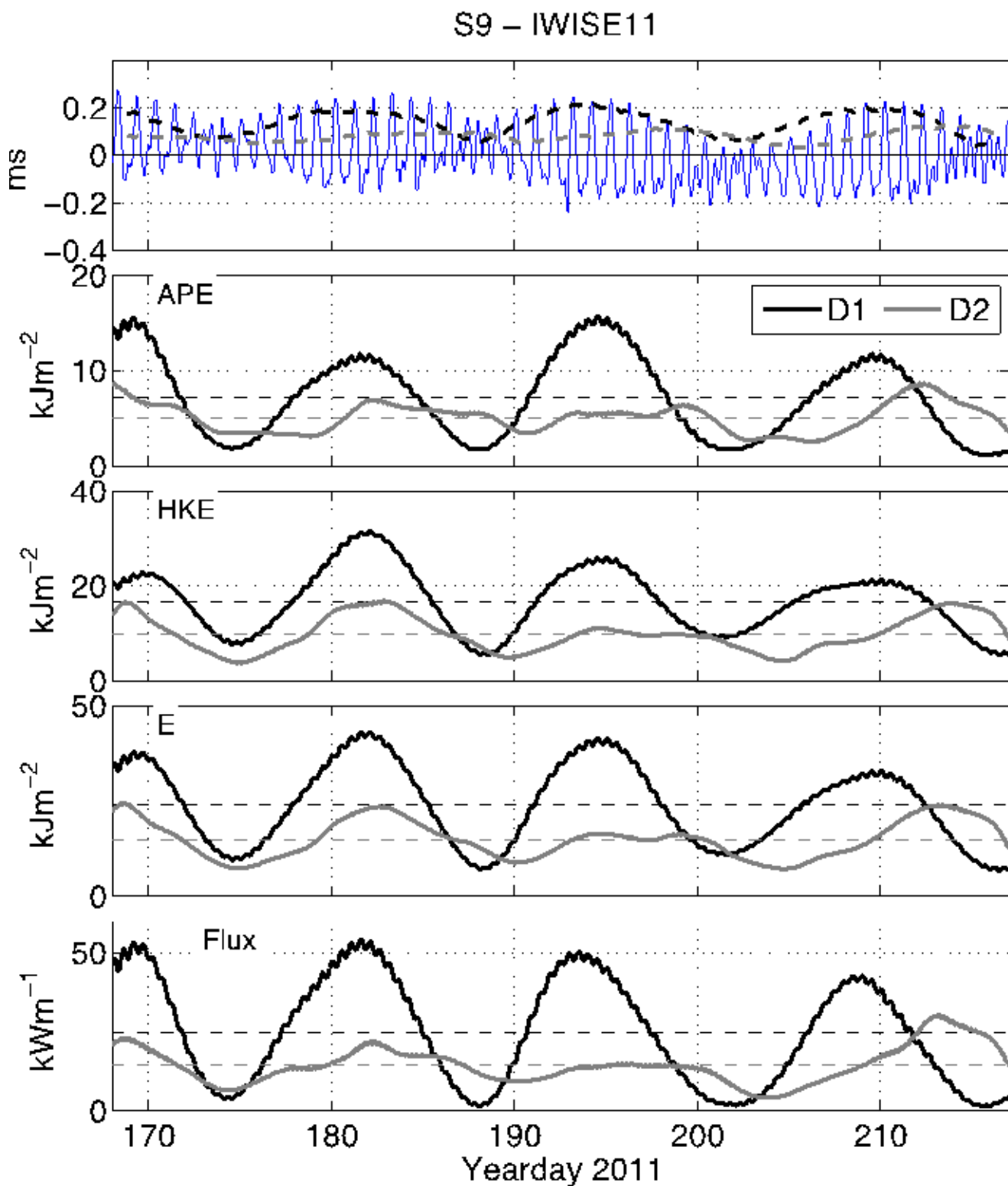


Figure 3: Barotropic velocity, energy, and flux at mooring S9. (a) Barotropic velocity (blue) and amplitude of BT velocity, computed from sliding harmonic fit with 3 day window. (b) Depth-integrated potential energy. (c) Depth-integrated kinetic energy (d) Depth-integrated total energy (e) Depth-integrated energy flux. For lower 4 panels, black indicates diurnal frequency, while gray indicates semidiurnal frequency.

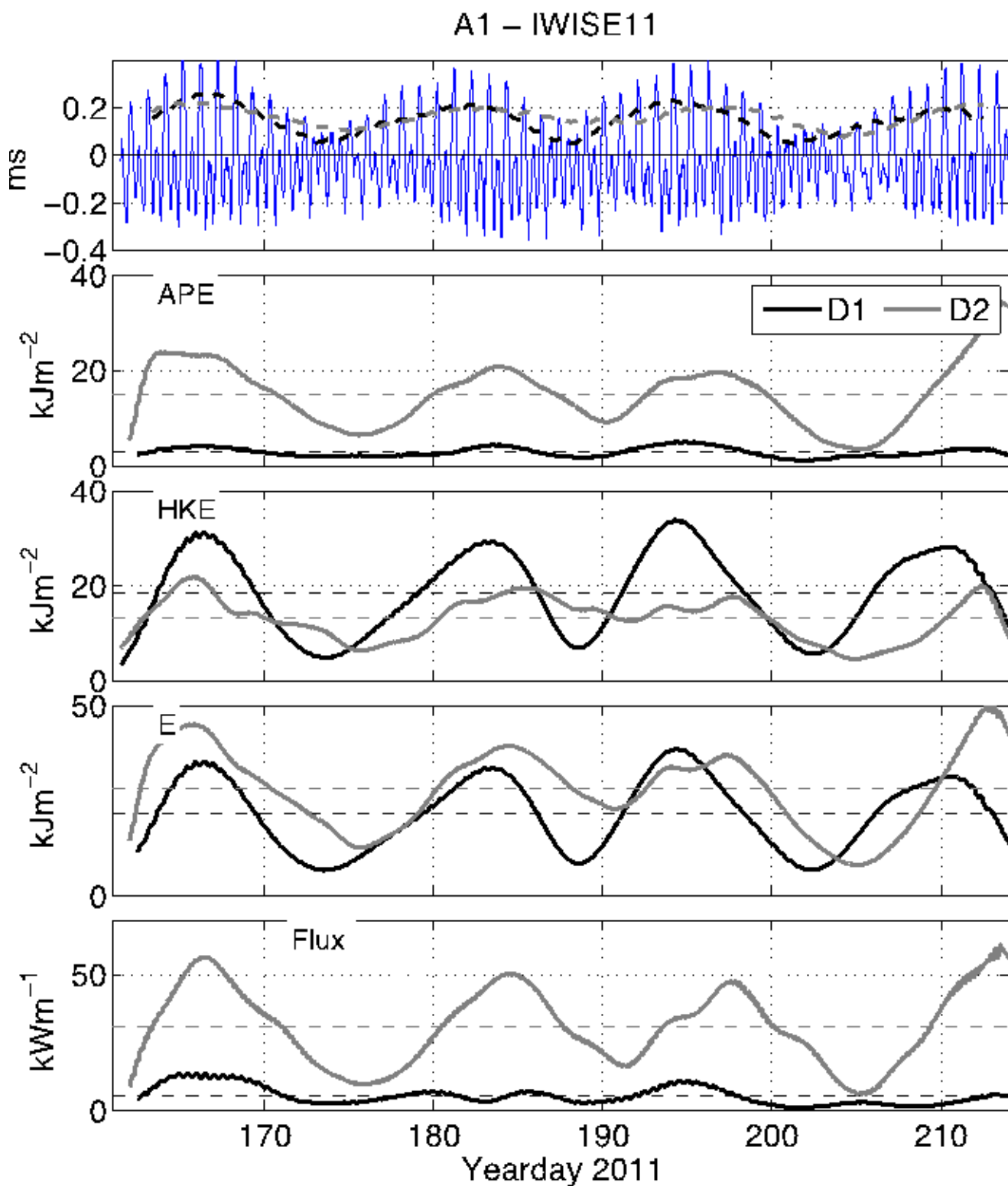


Figure 4: Barotropic velocity, energy, and flux at mooring A1. (a) Barotropic velocity (blue) and amplitude of BT velocity, computed from sliding harmonic fit with 3 day window. (b) Depth-integrated potential energy. (c) Depth-integrated kinetic energy (d) Depth-integrated total energy (e) Depth-integrated energy flux. For lower 4 panels, black indicates diurnal frequency, while gray indicates semidiurnal frequency.

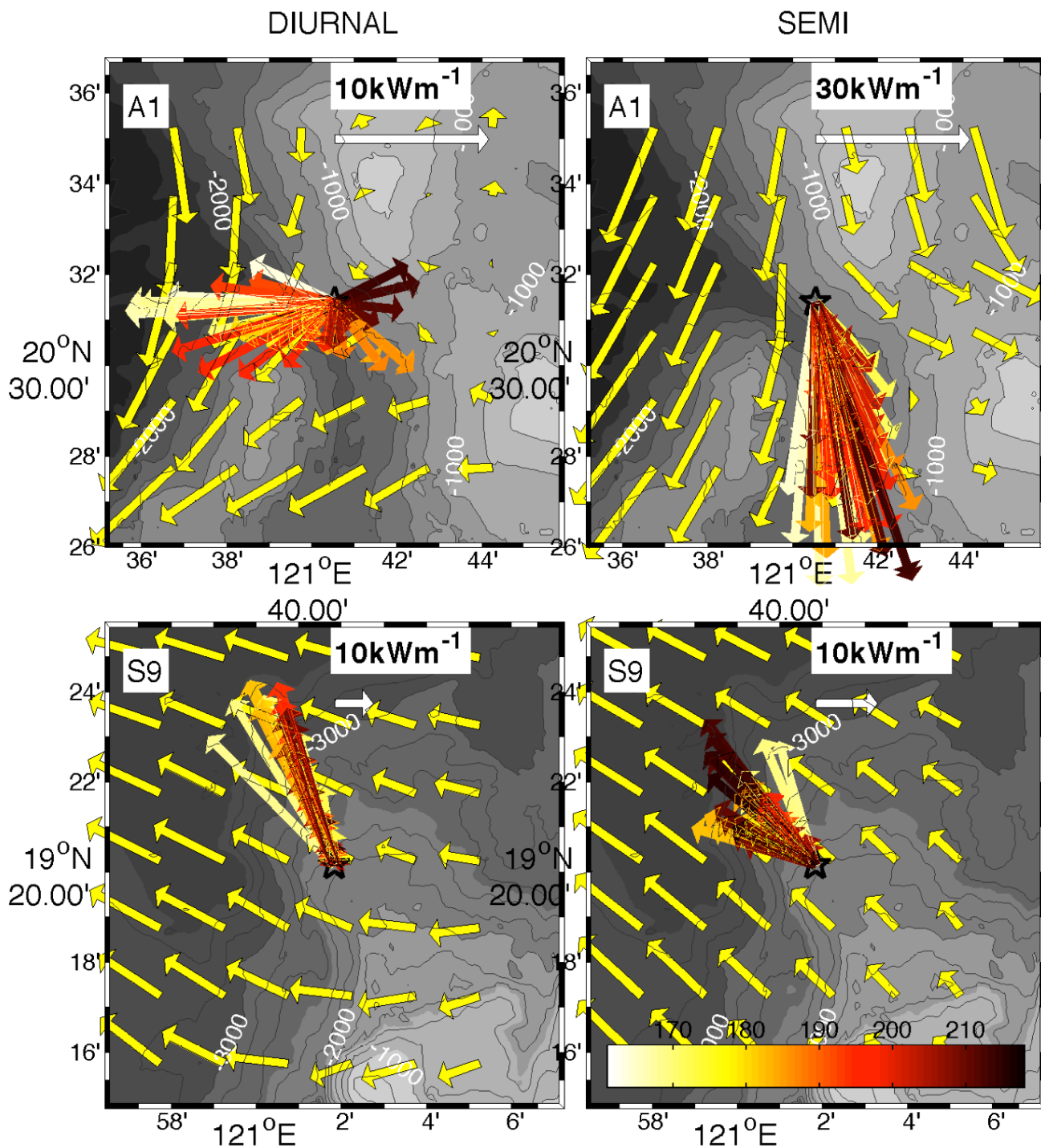


Figure 5: Depth-integrated energy fluxes measured at moorings A1 (top) and S9 (bottom). Diurnal fluxes are shown on the left, and semidiurnal on the right. Color of vectors indicates time (yearday 2011). Yellow vectors are time-mean energy fluxes from the UAF model (Simmons).

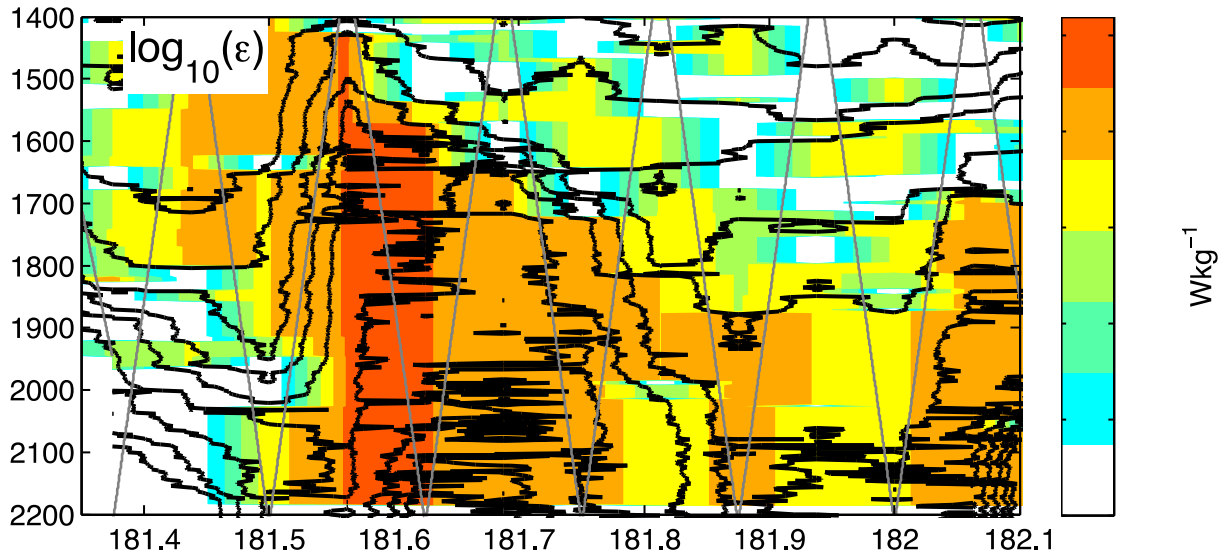


Figure 6: Turbulent dissipation rate (color) inferred from density overturns at mooring S9. Black lines are isopycnals. Gray lines show the sawtooth sampling pattern of the moored profiler.

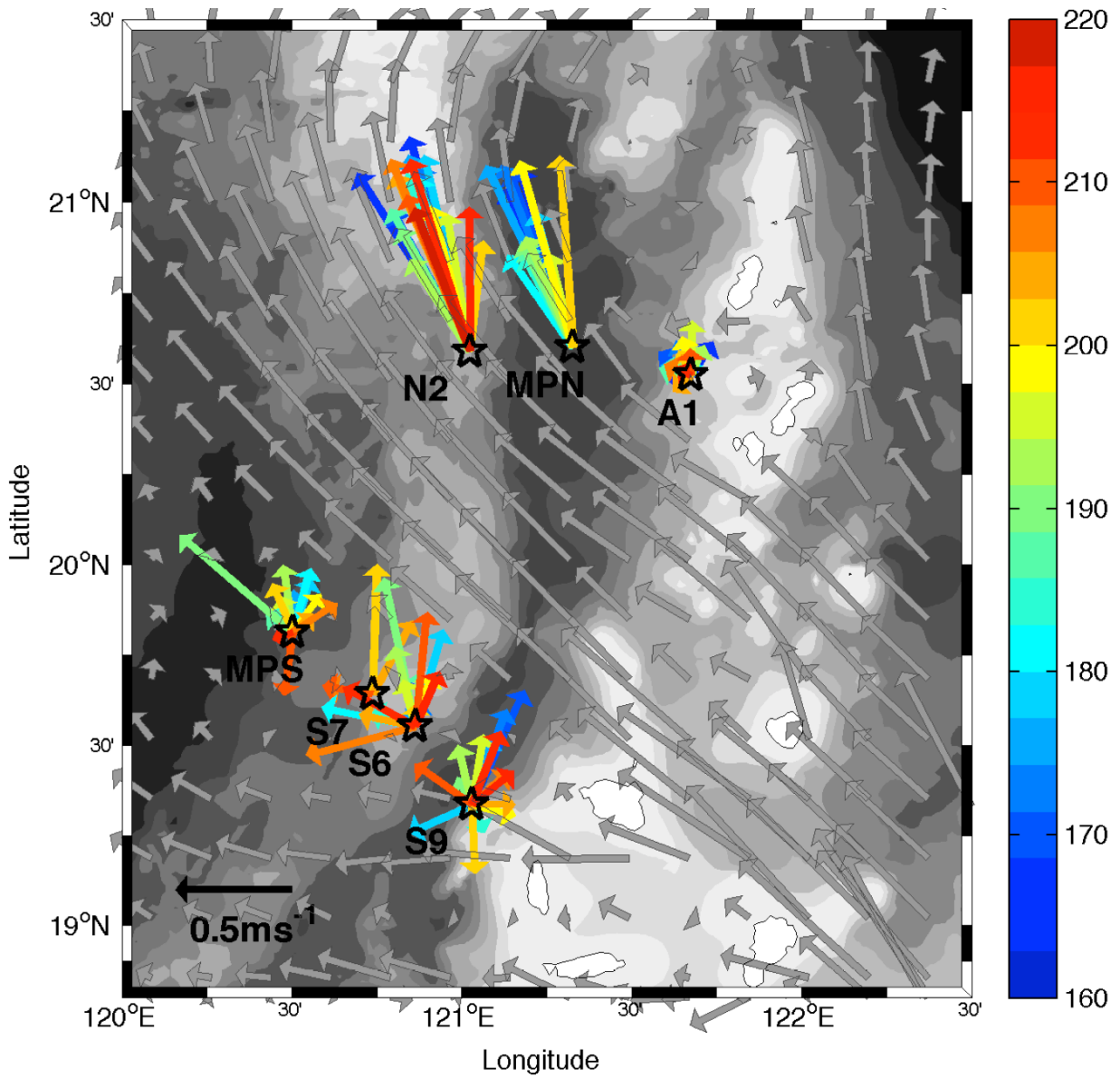


Figure 7 : Low-passed velocity from moored ADCP's, averaged over the upper 150m. Vector colors indicate time (yearday 2011). Gray arrows are velocity at 150m from NRL EASNFS model provided by Dr.Ko, averaged over the duration of the mooring deployment. Note the strong and relatively constant northward flow over the western half of the northern line. Velocity scale is shown in lower left.

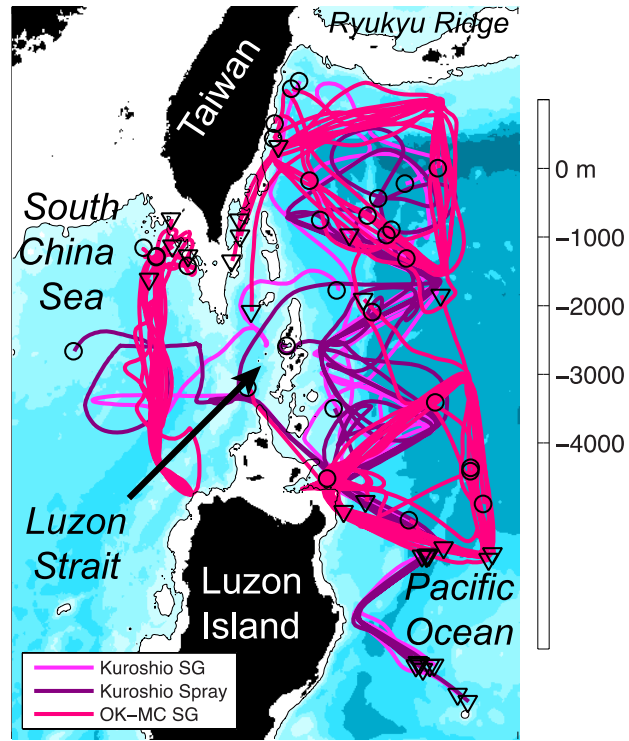


Figure 8: Tracks of the 29 glider missions used in this study, collected as part of the Kuroshio (Seagliders and Spray gliders) and OKMC (Seagliders only) projects. Launch and recovery positions are indicated by the triangles and circles, respectively.

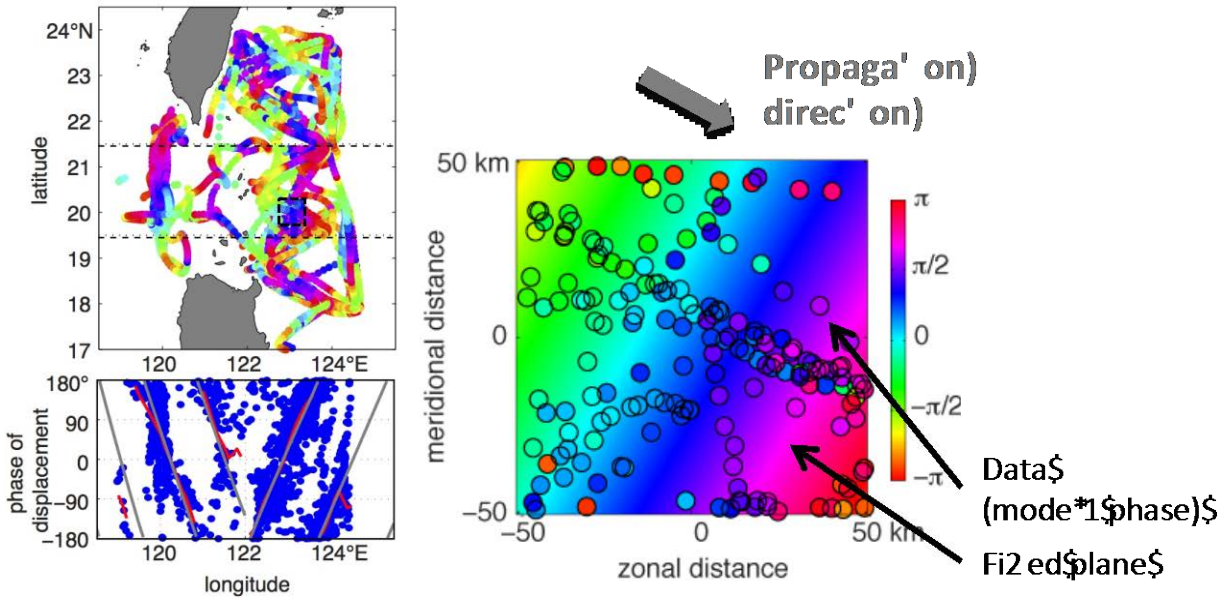


Figure 9: Top left: Phase of the semidiurnal internal tide at 500 m as a function of location. Estimates in Luzon Strait (between 19.5° and 21.5° are plotted as function of longitude in the bottom panel, showing progression equal to the mode-1 phase speed (gray lines). The direction of propagation can be estimated by looking at the spatial variations of the phase.

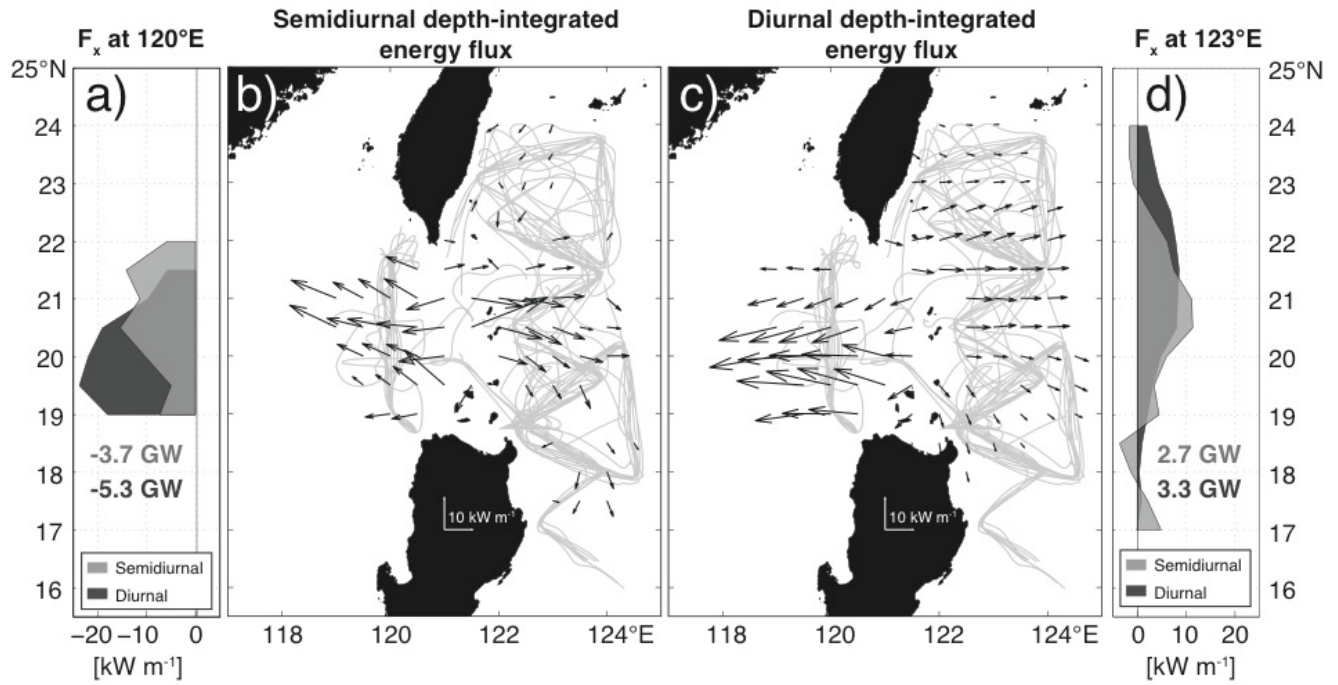


Figure 10: Maps of the (b) semidiurnal and (c) diurnal mode-1 depth-integrated energy flux estimated from glider data alone. Glider tracks are shown in thin gray. The zonal energy fluxes along 120 and 123°E are shown in (a,d).