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When is flow re-entrainment important for the flushing time in coastal reef systems?

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15 **Abstract**

16 The rates of water exchange between coastal reef systems and the surrounding ocean are key
17 physical drivers of water quality and reef ecosystems. It is generally assumed that water
18 exiting a reef system through reef channels is predominantly replaced by ‘new’ water from
19 offshore. However, exiting water may also recirculate back into the reef system reducing the
20 rate of exchange between the reef and the ocean, which has implications for reef water
21 temperatures, nutrient fluxes and population connectivity. To quantify flow re-entrainment at
22 a rocky reef site in southwestern Australia, flow patterns were measured with GPS-tracked
23 drifters during a two-week field experiment. The field observations were extended via a set of
24 idealized numerical experiments to determine the effect of variable oceanic forcing and reef
25 geometry on flow re-entrainment. The observations demonstrate that re-entrainment can vary
26 significantly and the numerical results support the hypothesis that re-entrainment increases
27 with increasing offshore wave height, increasing alongshore currents outside of the reef, and
28 decreasing reef channel spacing but is largely not impacted by reef roughness. Re-
29 entrainment was correlated with a predictor variable R , which is a measure of wave forcing
30 versus the total offshore flow cross-section, and alongshore currents outside the reef. For
31 large values of R and strong alongshore currents, flow re-entrainment increases the effective
32 flushing time by a factor of three or more. The results suggest that flow re-entrainment may
33 be particularly important in small-scale reef systems or reefs exposed to an energetic wave
34 climate and/or strong alongshore currents.

35 **Keywords:**

36 Reef, wave-driven circulation, flushing, Lagrangian, drifter

37 **1 Introduction**

38 The circulation of water within reef systems controls the exchange of dissolved and
39 particulate material between reefs and the surrounding deeper ocean, which substantially
40 influences ecosystems of both tropical coral reefs [see *Lowe and Falter, 2015* for a review]
41 and temperate rocky reefs [e.g. *Morgan et al., 2016*]. For example, the influx of water to reefs
42 from the surrounding ocean often has higher nutrient concentrations and is cooler [*Lowe and*
43 *Falter, 2015*]. As the water flows over shallow reefs, nutrients in various forms are taken up
44 by reef communities at rates influenced by local water motion [*Falter et al., 2004*].
45 Furthermore, this influx of water contributes to the regulation of reef water temperatures,
46 which due to the relatively shallow water depths, can either heat or cool relative to the
47 surrounding ocean [*Zhang et al., 2013*]. Water that exits through the reef channel can also
48 remove suspended sediments [e.g. *Storlazzi et al., 2004*], larvae [e.g. *Lugo-Fernández et al.,*
49 *2001*] as well as pollutants from the reef system (e.g., associated with terrestrial discharge).

50 Reef circulation can be driven by a combination of different processes including tides
51 [*Black et al., 1990*], buoyancy differences [*Herdman et al., 2015*], wind stresses [*Tartinville*
52 *et al., 1997*] and breaking waves [*Hoeko et al., 2011; Lowe et al., 2009; Taebi et al., 2011*].
53 However, many reef systems that fringe coastlines are exposed to wind (sea-swell) wave
54 energy that provides the main forcing to reef circulation. For these wave-exposed reefs,
55 radiation stress gradients [*Longuet-Higgins, 1962*] that originate from wave dissipation on the
56 forereef or reef crest generate variations in the mean water level over the reef flat and cross-
57 reef currents. In the absence of reef channels (i.e., a one-dimensional, cross-shore system) the
58 setup over a coastal reef is maximum near the shoreline and the net depth-averaged cross-reef
59 mass flux is zero [*Buckley et al., 2016; Vetter et al., 2010*]. When the reef flat is intersected
60 by reef channels, the net forcing, which is the residual difference between radiation stress and
61 setup gradients, drives a net cross-reef onshore flow that is countered by bed friction

62 [Symonds *et al.*, 1995]. The return flow in the channel may also be fed directly by alongshore
63 flows entering the channel laterally from the reef platform. The relative contribution of water
64 entering the channel from the lagoon or directly from the reef depends on the relative
65 importance of flow resistance across the reef and along the lagoon, which is governed by the
66 roughness properties as well as geometry of the reef system [Monismith, 2013].

67 In many reef studies, water that exits through a reef channel is assumed to leave the
68 reef system and to be replaced by ‘new’ offshore water [Herdman *et al.*, 2015; Lowe *et al.*,
69 2010; Taebi *et al.*, 2011]. While this approach allows ocean-reef exchange rates to be more
70 easily quantified from fixed (Eulerian) measurements, it does not account for water that has
71 initially flowed out through the channel and then returns back into the reef-lagoon system,
72 which will effectively increase the flushing time of the system. While water exchange and
73 flow re-entrainment in wave-dominated reefs have been previously estimated from numerical
74 simulations, these have typically been done for either a specific reef system [e.g. Zhang *et al.*,
75 2013] or for cases where the wave forcing was not modeled explicitly [e.g. Herdman, 2012].
76 Thus, a systematic approach to flow re-entrainment in wave-dominated reef environments
77 that incorporates the impact of different oceanic forcing and reef geometry is currently
78 lacking and motivates the present study.

79 The aim of this manuscript is to identify the parameters that govern flow re-
80 entrainment in wave-dominated coastal reef systems. To assess the hydrodynamic response to
81 different parameters, we validate the numerical model XBeach [Roelvink *et al.*, 2009] with
82 field observations from moored instruments and Lagrangian drifters in a coastal reef system.
83 The model is then extended to test the effects of wave forcing and along-shelf currents as
84 well as geometric parameters on flow re-entrainment in an idealized wave-dominated reef
85 system. The specific objectives of this study are to: (i) investigate the variability of flow re-
86 entrainment, (ii) identify the governing parameters that drive this variability and (iii) to assess

87 the implications of variable flow re-entrainment on flushing time estimates for coastal reef
 88 systems, more generally. The results can thus help to classify coastal reef systems as being
 89 predominantly open or closed systems [*Cowen et al.*, 2000] based on their specific
 90 geometrical characteristics and predominant forcing.

91 Section 2 provides background on water exchange processes between the nearshore
 92 and the open ocean and explains different methods to quantify these exchange processes.
 93 Section 3 describes the field experiment and observations. In section 4 we present a
 94 numerical model of the field site that has been used to test the sensitivity of flow re-
 95 entrainment to variable hydrodynamic forcing and reef geometry in a simplified reef system.
 96 Section 5 discusses the physical processes that change with the tested parameters and the
 97 impact of the re-entrainment rate on flushing time estimates.

98 **2 Background: Quantifying water exchange rates**

99 Water exchange between a coastal basin (e.g., an estuary or lagoon) and the
 100 surrounding open ocean is typically quantified in terms of a flushing time. This time scale is
 101 often estimated as the average time (T_f) it takes for the entire volume (V) of water inside the
 102 basin to be replaced by ‘new’ water and can be estimated as [*Fischer et al.*, 1979]:

$$T_f = \frac{V}{Q} \quad (1)$$

103 where Q is the flux of water into the basin. Importantly, Eq. (1) assumes that the outflow
 104 from an enclosed water body is not re-entrained once it exits the basin through defined
 105 boundaries [*Monsen et al.*, 2002].

106 For tidally-flushed systems, Eq. (1) has been extended to include a re-entrainment
 107 fraction b that accounts for water that exits the basin and subsequently re-enters the system at
 108 a later time [*Sanford et al.*, 1992]:

$$T_f = \frac{V}{(1-b)Q} \quad (2)$$

109 In prior studies of reef systems, re-entrainment is usually assumed to be zero ($b = 0$ in Eq.
 110 (2)) [Coronado *et al.*, 2007; Kench, 1998; Kraines *et al.*, 1999; Lowe *et al.*, 2010; Taebi *et*
 111 *al.*, 2011]. Such a flushing time will therefore represent the minimum time for flushing to
 112 occur. However, *Herdman* [2012] found re-entrainment rates in a large-scale tropical coral
 113 reef system in Moorea (Polynesia), where circulation is driven by buoyancy and waves, to be
 114 23-50% suggesting that re-entrainment would substantially increase the true flushing time.

115 Accurate estimates of b in Eq. (2) can be difficult to obtain in the field because flow
 116 re-entrainment can only be directly measured in a Lagrangian reference frame where flow
 117 pathways are tracked. To overcome this, it is common to evaluate re-entrainment using
 118 Lagrangian approaches (such as GPS-tracked drifters or dye), which has been frequently
 119 applied in the study of rip currents along beaches [Austin *et al.*, 2010; Brown *et al.*, 2015;
 120 Hally-Rosendahl *et al.*, 2014; MacMahan *et al.*, 2010b; R Jak McCarroll *et al.*, 2018; Reniers
 121 *et al.*, 2009; Spydell *et al.*, 2007]. These sandy beach environments are often characterized by
 122 having shore-parallel sand bars, over which water moves shoreward, and defined channels,
 123 through which water returns seaward [Castelle *et al.*, 2016; Dalrymple *et al.*, 2011]. In these
 124 studies, the cross-shore exchange has typically been expressed in terms of an exit rate (or its
 125 opposite property, the retention rate). This exit (or retention) rate is defined by the number of
 126 drifters leaving (or remaining within) the surf zone indefinitely, relative to the total number
 127 of drifters initially seeded [Reniers *et al.*, 2009]. Thus, drifters that recirculate and ultimately
 128 remain inside the surf zone are accounted for in this definition. In beach environments, the
 129 exit rate has been found to correlate with the so-called ‘exit parameter’, which is a function of
 130 the surf zone width and the incident wave forcing [Reniers *et al.*, 2009]. This exit rate can be
 131 enhanced by geomorphic features such as headlands [Castelle and Coco, 2013; R. Jak

132 *McCarroll et al.*, 2014] and by intermittently spaced rip channels and rip head shoals
133 [*Castelle et al.*, 2014], but can be reduced due to the presence of alongshore currents and
134 obliquely incident waves [*Spydell*, 2016; *Winter et al.*, 2014].

135 While the nearshore circulation patterns of barred beaches have some analogies to the
136 flows in fringing reef systems, there can be a number of key differences, for example: (1) reef
137 systems can have much larger spatial scales [see *Falter et al.*, 2013], so that the impact of
138 parameters that describe the reef geometry, such as channel spacing, may differ; (2) bed
139 roughness over reefs [*Reidenbach et al.*, 2006] as well as bathymetry gradients are often
140 much greater than over sandy bottoms; and (3) incident waves break on a forereef, which has
141 typically a steeper slope than a sandy beach, so that the width of the surf zone can be much
142 narrower and less variable [*Symonds et al.*, 1982]. It remains unclear how these differences
143 will affect ocean-reef water exchange rates.

144 **3 Field Experiment**

145 3.1 Site description

146 A two-week field study was conducted during the austral winter (May-June) of 2014
147 along a 600 m stretch of Garden Island in southwestern Australia (Figure 1a). The beach is
148 fronted by several ~1 m deep limestone reefs, which is typical for much of the southwest
149 coast of Australia. A shore-attached reef platform is located near the center of the site and is
150 flanked to the south by another reef and by a deeper (2-3 m) lagoon (Figure 1c). To the north
151 this group of reef platforms is bounded by a channel and to the south by a more pronounced
152 and deeper channel, which is orientated in a southwesterly direction. The bathymetry of the
153 region was surveyed in 2009 using aerial bathymetric LiDAR with 5 m horizontal resolution
154 and ± 0.45 m uncertainty in the vertical [*Department of Transport Western Australia*, 2009].
155 In addition, a detailed bathymetric survey was conducted during the experiment using a

156 single beam echosounder and RTK-GPS system by small boat and a backpack mounted
 157 RTK-GPS system near the shoreline with an estimated uncertainty in the vertical of 0.1 m for
 158 surveys by boat [MacMahan, 2001] and 0.05 m by foot, respectively [Barnard *et al.*, 2012].
 159 The dimensions of the reef platforms and the lagoon are typical of many rocky coastlines as
 160 well as many nearshore fringing coral reefs, but smaller than those of some previously
 161 studied coral reef systems [e.g. Herdman, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2012]. The effect of reef scale
 162 on flow re-entrainment is discussed in section 5.1.3.

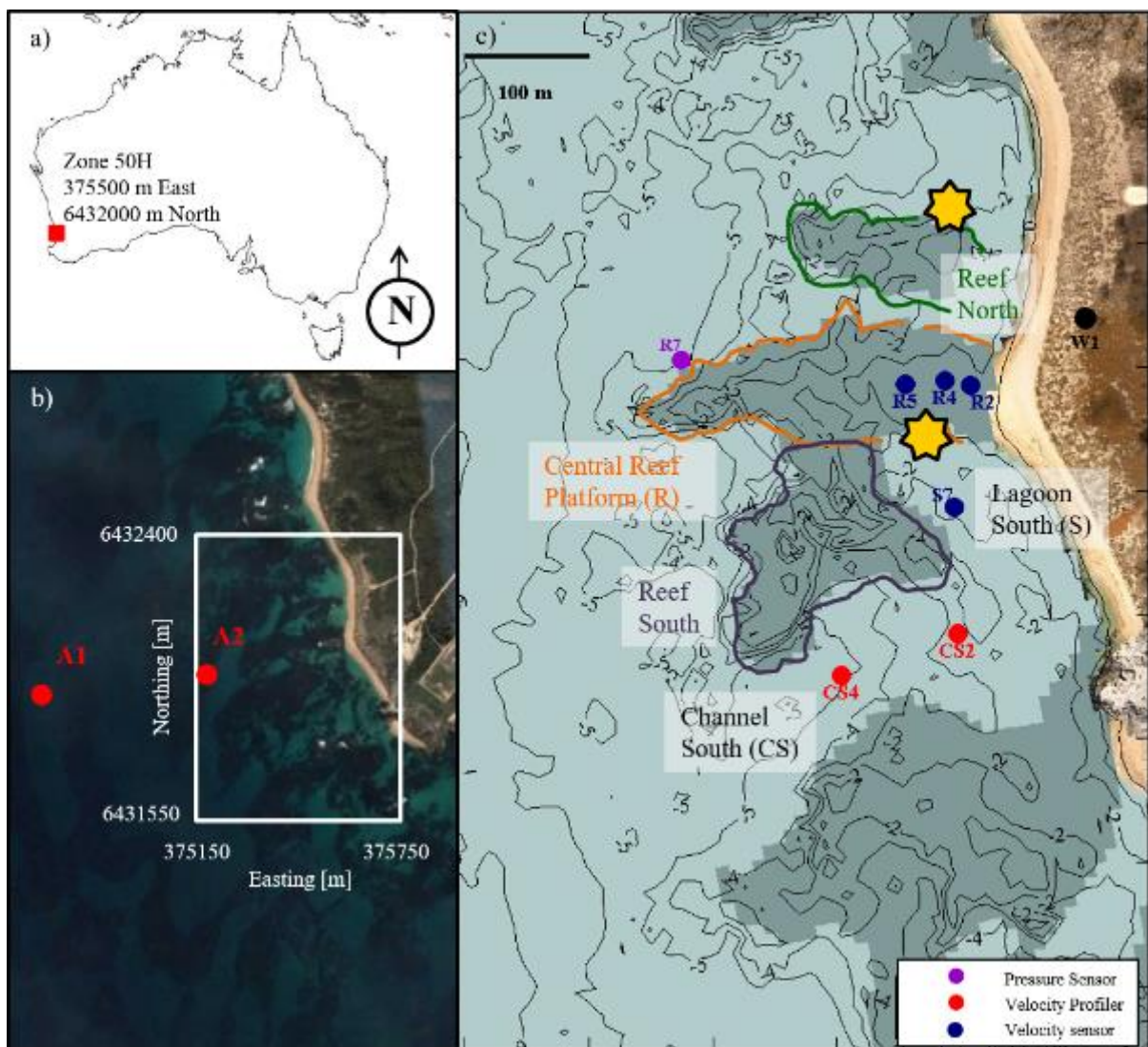


Figure 1. a) Location of the Garden Island study site within southwestern Australia, b) aerial image (Google Earth) of the field site and the locations of the Acoustic Wave and Current meters (AWAC) A1 and A2, c) locations of velocity profilers (red dots), velocimeters (blue

dots) and the anemometer (black dot) as well as drifter release locations in the southern and northern channel (stars). Dark shaded areas in c) indicate submerged reef structures.

163 The southwest coast of Australia is a micro-tidal environment and during the field
164 experiment the tidal range was between 0.3 and 0.6 m so that tidally induced currents are
165 negligible. Alongshore currents outside the reef on the inner continental shelf (depth up to 20
166 m) are predominantly driven by a balance between local wind stresses and regional
167 alongshore pressure gradients [Zaker *et al.*, 2007]. The currents can become particularly
168 strong (up to 0.3 m s^{-1}) during the summer months due to persistent southwesterly winds
169 [Gersbach *et al.*, 1999]. Episodic fluctuations in the shelf-scale pressure gradients due to
170 coastally trapped waves and eddies can enhance the variability, and episodically reverse the
171 along- and cross-shore currents on the inner shelf [Ruiz-Montoya and Lowe, 2014]. Section
172 5.1.2 discusses the impact of variable alongshore currents on flow re-entrainment. The
173 southwest coast of Australia receives the highest wave energy events in the austral winter
174 months from May to September [Bossarelle *et al.*, 2012] in the period that the experiment
175 took place.

176 3.2 Instrument Layout

177 Surf zone exit and re-entrainment rates were quantified using Lagrangian drifters,
178 similar to the design by Schmidt *et al.* [2003], over 8 days during the experiment. When
179 floating freely, all but the uppermost ~5 cm of the drifter bodies were submerged. Based on a
180 similar drifter design, wind drift was estimated at 1% of the wind speed measured 0.5 m
181 above the water surface [Schmidt *et al.*, 2003] and therefore is not expected to affect the
182 drifters during this experiment (expected drift due to windage $< 0.05 \text{ ms}^{-1}$). Drifter positions
183 were recorded at 10 Hz by a Qstarz BT-Q1000eX GPS logger placed in the top of each
184 drifter. For each of the 8 deployment days, 12 to 15 drifters were released for two to four
185 hours at a time (Table 1). Drifters were deployed in clusters, mostly inside the southern

186 lagoon (8 of the 11 deployments), with the remaining deployments inshore of the northern
 187 channel (yellow stars in Figure 1c). This manuscript focuses primarily on the deployments in
 188 the southern lagoon because the lagoon connects to the better defined southern channel.
 189 During each deployment, any drifters that beached or exited the reef-system were retrieved
 190 and redeployed at the initial release location. Data recorded by the GPS loggers were initially
 191 averaged in 1 Hz blocks to remove noise. Short wave motions were then removed by
 192 applying a moving average filter of 25 s so that only infragravity and slowly varying mean
 193 current motions were preserved in the recorded drifter tracks. The low-pass filtered positions
 194 were numerically-differentiated to determine the velocities of the drifters. The velocity and
 195 vorticity of all drifter observations was averaged over cells of 20 m by 20 m.

Table 1. Drifter deployments: Number of drifters deployed on each day, total duration of each drifter deployment, offshore wave conditions, observed return flow regime (only in the southern channel) and deployment location.

Day	Number of drifters	Duration (hours)	H_{m0} [m]	T_p [s]	θ_p [°N]	Water depth on the reef [m]	Along-shelf current [m s ⁻¹]	Return flow regime in the southern channel	Deployment location
1	12	3:40	1.66	14	266	1.00	0.04	Re-entrainment	Southern lagoon
2	15	4:24	1.49	13	265	0.99	0.05	Re-entrainment	Southern lagoon
3	15	2:28	1.48	14	262	0.96	-0.02	Combination	Southern lagoon and northern channel
4	15	1:46	1.24	14	268	1.21	-0.06	Exiting	Southern lagoon
5	15	2:56	1.31	13	261	1.21	-0.1	Exiting	Southern lagoon and northern channel
6	15	3:58	1.13	12	261	1.11	-0.05	Re-entrainment	Southern lagoon
7	15	3:22	1.24	18	267	1.09	-0.05	Exiting	Southern lagoon
8	14	2:47	1.40	15	266	1.06	-0.02	Re-entrainment	Southern lagoon and

									northern channel
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196 In addition to the drifters, acoustic Doppler velocimeters and profilers measured
 197 velocities and wave conditions throughout the experiment at six sites within the reef-lagoon
 198 system (Table 2 and Figure 1c). For instruments in the shallow reef-lagoon system (depths <5
 199 m), the velocities were low-pass filtered to remove fluctuations shorter than 15 minutes, and
 200 in the case of the velocity profilers, the velocities were depth-averaged. On the inner shelf
 201 (site A1 in 11 m water depth, Figure 1b), an Acoustic Wave and Current meter (AWAC)
 202 recorded offshore waves and currents. Drifter deployments were conducted at similar tidal
 203 water levels of 0.25 m above Australian Height Datum (AHD, approximately mean sea level)
 204 during falling tide (Figure 2a). During the deployments the incident significant wave heights
 205 at A1 ranged from $H_{m0} = 1.0\text{--}1.8$ m, peak periods from 12–18 s and directions from 260–270°
 206 (Figure 2b–d). At sites A1 and A2 the hourly mean velocities were averaged over the
 207 uppermost 1.5 m of the water column, where they were usually strongest. At site A1, the
 208 surface currents varied between -0.1 m s^{-1} and 0.05 m s^{-1} during the deployments (Figure 2e).

Table 2. Instruments and sampling configuration. “A” denotes offshore instruments, “CS” instruments in the southern respectively, “R” instrument on the reef platform and “S” south of it.

Site	Instrument	Depth	Sampling configurations	H_{m0} (RMSE, bias, WS)	u (RMSE, bias, WS)	v (RMSE, bias, WS)
Offshore						
A1	Nortek AWAC	10.5 m	Pressure and surface velocities in hourly bursts of 2048 s at 2 Hz, velocity profile hourly in 0.5 m bins			
Within the reef-lagoon system						
CS2	Nortek ADP High Resolution (HR)	3.1 m	Pressure and velocity profile at 1 Hz continuous in 0.05 m bins	0.42 m, 0.42 m, 0.58	0.02 m s^{-1} , 0.00 m s^{-1} , 0.95	0.11 m s^{-1} , -0.11 m s^{-1} , 0.86
CS4	RDI ADCP	5.4 m	Pressure and velocity profile at 1	0.35 m, 0.35 m, 0.64	0.06 m s^{-1} , 0.05 m s^{-1} , 0.90	0.11 m s^{-1} , -0.11 m s^{-1} , 0.88

			Hz continuous in 0.1 m bins			
R2	Nortek ADV	1.2 m	2 Hz continuous	0.08 m, -0.07 m, 0.91	0.08 m s ⁻¹ , -0.07 m s ⁻¹ , 0.90	0.09 m s ⁻¹ , 0.08 m s ⁻¹ , 0.90
R4	Nortek ADV	1.0 m	2 Hz continuous	0.04 m, -0.02 m, 0.97	0.12 m s ⁻¹ , -0.10 m s ⁻¹ , 0.84	0.13 m s ⁻¹ , 0.12 m s ⁻¹ , 0.85
R5	Nortek ADV	1.2 m	2 Hz continuous	0.09 m, -0.09 m, 0.91	0.13 m s ⁻¹ , -0.07 m s ⁻¹ , 0.78	0.12 m s ⁻¹ , 0.10 m s ⁻¹ , 0.86
R7	RBR Virtuoso	5.2 m	1 Hz continuous	0.13 m, 0.11 m, 0.92	-	-
S7	Nortek ADV	2.3 m	2 Hz continuous	0.13 m, 0.12 m, 0.82	0.05 m s ⁻¹ , 0.05 m s ⁻¹ , 0.93	0.05 m s ⁻¹ , -0.03 m s ⁻¹ , 0.95
On land						
W1	Young Ultrasonic Anemometer 85106	10 s average				

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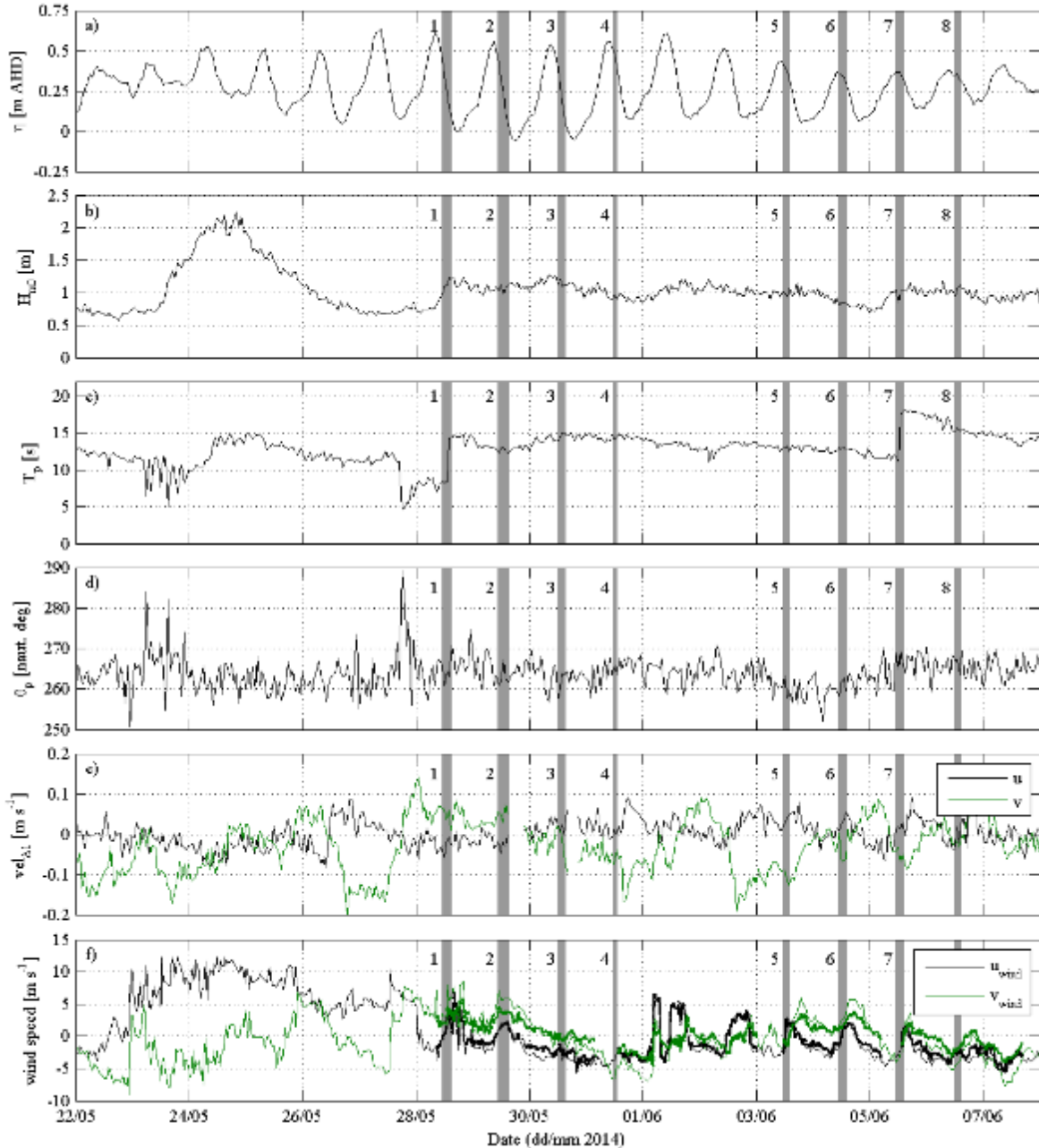
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Wind was measured on the dune near the salient with an ultrasonic anemometer (Young 85106) that sampled average wind speeds at 10 s intervals. This anemometer did not sample continuously due to power interruptions and missing data were filled in by wind speeds and directions sampled half-hourly 700 m inland from the field site [*Bureau of Meterology Commonwealth of Australia*, 2014]. In the overlapping periods, the locally measured wind data correlated well with the inland measurements ($R^2 = 0.90$ and $R^2 = 0.94$ for cross-shore and alongshore wind speeds, respectively). During the deployments, wind speeds varied between 2–5 m s⁻¹ and came from a range of directions (Figure 2f).



218 Figure 2. Site A1: a) Tidal water level relative to AHD, b) significant wave height at, c) peak
 219 wave period at A1, d) peak wave direction at A1, e) cross- and alongshore currents in the
 220 most upper 1 m of the water column at A1. Site W1: f) cross-shore and alongshore wind
 221 speed measured at W1 (thick lines) and by the *Bureau of Meterology Commonwealth of*
 222 *Australia* [2014] (thin lines). Positive cross-shore (u) and alongshore (v) velocities are
 223 directed shoreward and northward, respectively. Grey shaded areas denote the times of drifter
 224 releases and the numbers from 1 to 8 denote the day of drifter deployment. See Figure 1 for

225 the locations of sites A1 and W1.

226 3.3 Quantifying re-entrainment

227 To provide a quantitative measure of flow re-entrainment, we evaluated the exchange
228 rate between lagoon and ocean waters using two different definitions of the exit rate, based
229 on either excluding or including the effect of re-entrainment. Both these exit rates were
230 calculated for the drifters deployed in the field as well as those simulated in the numerical
231 model XBeach (Section 4). The first exit rate E_1 is based on the commonly used minimum
232 flushing time described by Eq. (1) and is defined as the ratio of the number of drifters that
233 leave the reef-lagoon system in seaward direction (L) and the total number of drifters initially
234 seeded (N), i.e.

$$E_1 = \frac{L}{N} \quad (3)$$

235 The offshore boundary of the reef-lagoon system is defined as the cross-shore position where
236 the alongshore-averaged roller energy (as calculated in XBeach) exceeded 10% of the
237 maximum roller dissipation in accordance with studies on rip-channeled beaches [e.g.
238 *Reniers et al.*, 2009].

239 The second exit rate definition (E_2) accounts for re-entrainment and thus corresponds
240 to a more realistic estimate of the amount of flushing. The exit rate E_2 is defined as the ratio
241 of drifters retrieved outside the reef-lagoon system at the end of the deployment over the total
242 number of drifters released within the reef system (N). The total number of drifters outside
243 the reef-lagoon system is the difference between the number of drifters that left the lagoon
244 seaward through the channel (L) and the number of drifters that return back to the reef-lagoon
245 system (B):

$$E_2 = \frac{L - B}{N} \quad (4)$$

246 This definition is similar to the definition used in surf zone exchange studies on beaches
 247 [MacMahan *et al.*, 2010a]. When the drifters were released, the number of drifters outside the
 248 reef-lagoon system (E_2) typically increased and then fluctuated around a constant value (see,
 249 for example, Figure 4, Day 1 and 6). These fluctuations were related to groups of drifters
 250 simultaneously exiting and re-entering the lagoon. We note that this exit rate definition E_2
 251 does not distinguish between re-entrained drifters and drifters that remained inside the reef-
 252 lagoon system, i.e. there is no difference between low exchange rates due to stagnant flow
 253 and due to energetic recirculating flow [similar to the residence time approach in *Zhang et*
 254 *al.*, 2012]. E_2 is thus not a suitable measure to quantify the return flow regime of water that
 255 exits the channel.

256 A parameter that specifically describes the return flow regime is the flow re-
 257 entrainment b (Eq. (2)), which is defined as the number of drifters re-entering the lagoon (B)
 258 divided by the number of drifters that have exited the channel (L), and was quantified by
 259 combining Eqs. (3) and (4):

$$b = \frac{B}{L} = \frac{E_1 - E_2}{E_1} \quad (5)$$

260 We note that water exiting the channel may be mixed with the surrounding ocean water
 261 through lateral dispersion and that b may also be smaller than estimated from Lagrangian
 262 drifter measurements or simulations. Numerical modelling indicates that sub-grid mixing
 263 using the *Smagorinsky* [1963] model accounted for less than 5% in the momentum balance
 264 equation and was negligible. Hence, advection is the dominant process to transport material
 265 offshore or to re-entrain it back into the reef-lagoon system.

266 3.4 Field Observations

267 The drifter pathways displayed two main patterns over the course of the study: (i)
 268 complete drifter re-entrainment (Figure 3a and b), (ii) complete drifter ejection offshore
 269 (Figure 3c and d), and a combination of pattern (i) and (ii).

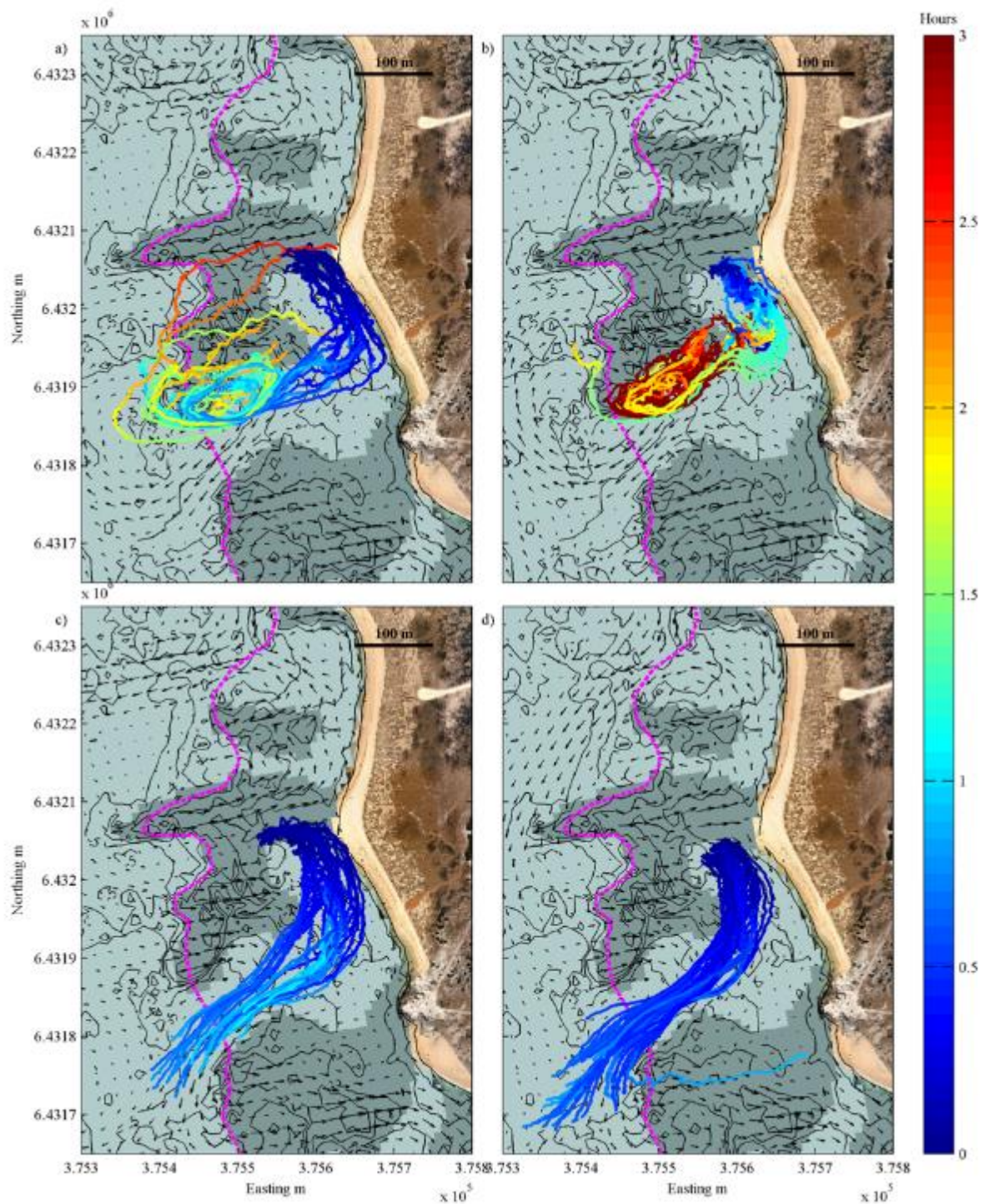


Figure 3. Examples of observed drifter trajectories that become re-entrained on a) Day 1 and

b) Day 2 and drifters that exit the reef system on c) Day 5 and d) Day 7. The colors indicate time in hours since individual drifter deployment and the vectors are mean velocities obtained from the model. The pink line marks the outer edge of the surf zone defined as the cross-shore position where the roller energy exceeds 10%, which was derived from the XBeach results. The surf zone has been interpolated across the channels where no wave breaking occurred.

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271 In flow pattern (i), drifters released in the southern lagoon drifted southward parallel
272 to the shore, turned sharply seaward in the middle of the embayment and then floated
273 offshore along the edge of the channel. Most of the drifters turned north outside the channel
274 and re-entered over the reef in a tight circulation cell. In flow pattern (ii), drifters floated
275 seaward along the center of the channel and exited in a southwesterly direction. Drifters
276 typically left the reef system within an hour or less after their deployment inside the southern
277 lagoon (see colors in Figure 3c and d). In contrast, re-entrained drifters remained within the
278 reef lagoon system for two hours or more (see colors in Figure 3a and b). We classified the
279 eight drifter deployments into predominantly exit or re-entrainment flow patterns. Day 1, 2,
280 3, 6 and 8 were characterized by (partial) drifter re-entrainment. Initially, all drifters were
281 seeded inside the reef-lagoon system (green areas, Figure 4). Drifters then exited the reef
282 system (yellow) and re-entered so that at any point in time a proportion of drifters was inside
283 and the remaining drifters were outside the reef-lagoon system. On Day 1, drifters circulated
284 in a wide eddy so that at any given time $E_2 \sim 50\%$ of all drifters were offshore of the breaker
285 zone (Figure 4). All of these drifters re-entered the lagoon and the re-entrainment rate b was
286 100%. On Day 2, drifters remained mostly onshore of the breaker line and thus E_2 was low
287 (10%). Drifters were retrieved gradually inside the lagoon after circulating numerous times,
288 hence the gradual decrease of total drifters. On Day 3, a large number of drifters ($E_2 = 76\%$)
289 exited the reef-lagoon system indefinitely and only a small number of drifters ($b = 26\%$)

290 recirculated. Similarly, on Day 6 only 46% of the drifters were re-entrained. Exiting drifters
 291 were retrieved and redeployed again inside the lagoon so that the total number of drifters
 292 floating freely fluctuated. On Day 4, 5 and 7, all drifters exited the reef system, were
 293 retrieved offshore and re-deployed all at once within the lagoon. On Day 8, part of the drifters
 294 left the reef system, mostly re-entered the lagoon and were retrieved both outside and inside
 295 the reef-lagoon system.

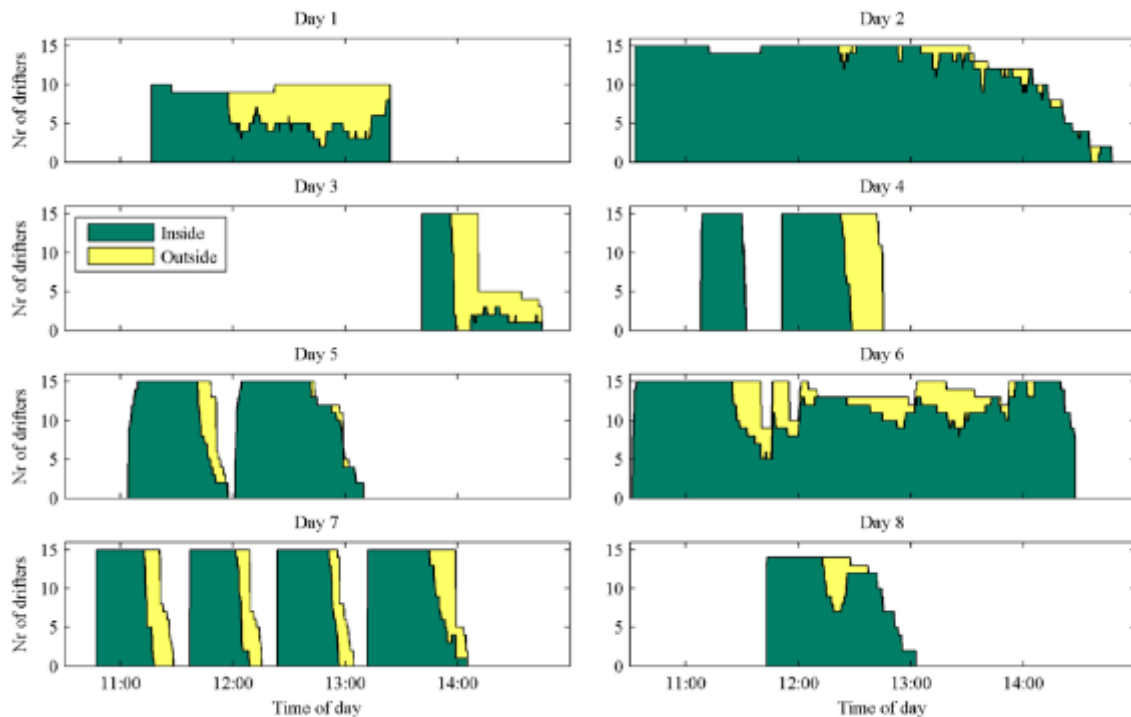


Figure 4. Number of drifters inside (green) and outside (yellow) the reef-lagoon system as a function of time for each day. Day 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8 were characterized by (partial) drifter re-entrainment and Day 4, 5 and 7 by drifter exits.

296

297 In general, drifters were more likely to re-enter the lagoon when they floated
 298 alongside the channel edge where they were caught in an eddy (marked by the high vorticity
 299 in Figure 5a) than when they floated along the center of the channel in a south-westerly
 300 direction (Figure 5b). The re-entrainment pattern was dominant when wave heights were
 301 large, water levels were low and alongshore velocities were directed northward and thus

302 favoring drifters returning over the reef to the north of the southern channel (Table 1).

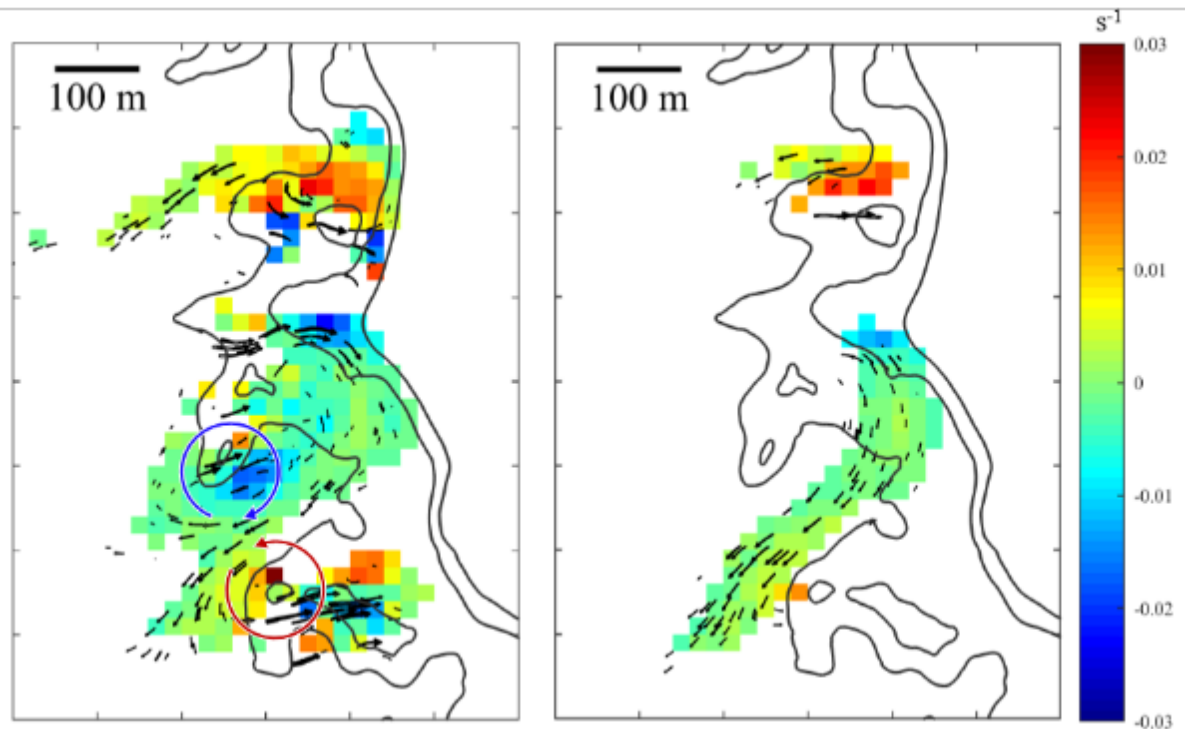


Figure 5. Drifter velocity (black arrows) and vorticity (colours) averaged over all drifter deployments, in which retention dominated (left) and in which exits dominated (right) interpolated on a 20 m x 20 m grid. Red (blue) circles in the left panel indicate eddies rotating in clockwise (anti-clockwise) direction. In the right panel, information on drifter velocity is mostly absent along the channel edges because drifters generally floated along the centre of the channel in exit dominated flow regimes.

303

304 The qualitative observations of drifter behavior and flow patterns over the course of
 305 the field experiment motivated a numerical sensitivity study of re-entrainment in an idealized
 306 reef to understand and predict the response to varying wave height, alongshore current and
 307 variable reef geometry (section 4.3).

308 4 Numerical Model

309 4.1 Model description

310 The general influence of reef geometry parameters and offshore hydrodynamic
311 conditions on water exchange rates were further investigated using the numerical model
312 XBeach configured in a short wave-group (surf beat) mode (refer to *Roelvink et al.* [2009] for
313 details of the model). This model couples a module describing the wave-group varying wave
314 energy with a non-linear shallow water wave module to describe wave-averaged flow,
315 including wave setup, infragravity waves and wave-current interactions, and has been
316 successfully used in other two-dimensional reef studies [*van Dongeren et al.*, 2013] as well as
317 numerical experiments on drifter retention on rip channeled beaches [*Castelle et al.*, 2014].

318 The analysis of the model output was conducted in two stages. Firstly, to gain
319 confidence that the model is capable of accurately reproducing drifter exits and retention, we
320 performed hindcast simulations of the drifter observations based on the bathymetry of the
321 field site at Garden Island. The model was forced by JONSWAP spectra on the offshore
322 boundary (~11 m depth) that represented the significant wave height, peak period, directional
323 and frequency spreading of the frequency-direction variance density spectra measured at the
324 offshore AWAC A1 (Figure 1b). Bathymetry within the model domain was derived from the
325 aerial LiDAR and single beam echosounder surveys. Wave breaking was simulated using the
326 dissipation formulation proposed by *Roelvink* [1993] with $\gamma = 0.7$, which is similar to
327 previous reef hydrodynamic models [*Lowe et al.*, 2010] and provided better results than other
328 values of γ tested in this study within the typical range from 0.5 to 0.7 [*van Dongeren et al.*,
329 2013]. The wave forcing that generates wave setup and currents within the flow module
330 included radiation stresses due to short waves and wave rollers. Sub-grid turbulence was
331 modelled using the *Smagorinsky* [1963] turbulence closure model. The domain consisted of

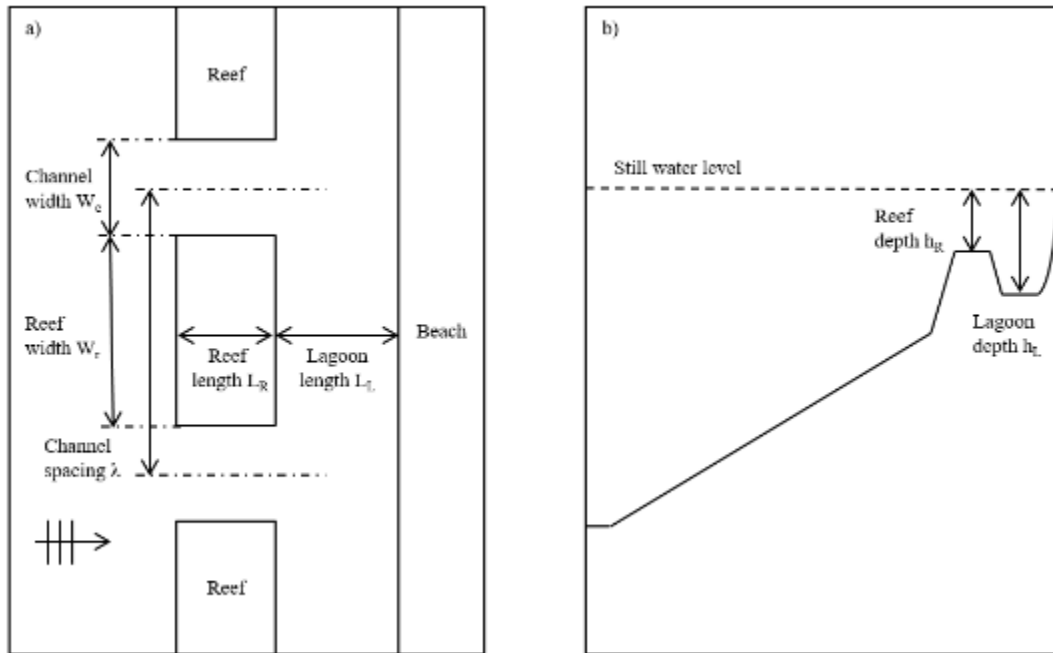
332 190 grid cells in the alongshore by 103 cells in the cross-shore with a resolution of 6 x 6 m in
 333 the areas of interest over the reef and in the lagoon. Each simulation was allowed one-hour
 334 spin-up time, which was adequate to establish a steady state wave-driven reef circulation, and
 335 the subsequent hourly output was used to calculate time-averaged flow and wave quantities.
 336 For computational efficiency, the hindcasts were performed for specific one-hour periods
 337 each day coinciding to daily maximum and minimum water levels (diurnal high and low tide)
 338 as well as intermediate tide stages. This resulted in 64 hindcast simulations (four per day),
 339 which were used to assess the model performance for variable wave and water level
 340 conditions.

341 Bottom friction was modeled as [Feddersen *et al.*, 2000; Ruessink *et al.*, 2001]:

$$\tau^b = c_f \rho \sqrt{(1.16u_{rms})^2 + (u_E + v_E)^2} \quad (6)$$

342 where τ^b is the bottom friction, c_f is the depth-independent friction coefficient, ρ the water
 343 density, u_{rms} the root-mean-squared orbital wave velocity and u_E and v_E are the depth-
 344 averaged cross-shore and alongshore velocities. Within the sandy areas (i.e. lagoon, channels
 345 and offshore), we assumed that bed friction was comparable to typical values reported at
 346 beaches using an equivalent friction formulation [Feddersen *et al.*, 2000] and set the bed
 347 friction coefficient to $c_f = 0.003$ [e.g. Feddersen *et al.*, 1998]. Based on initial model testing
 348 we calibrated the bed friction over the reef areas (darker shades in Figure 3) to $c_f = 0.01$,
 349 which is lower than values reported for coral reefs using an equivalent friction
 350 parameterization (values have typically been found to range from 0.009-0.027 over reefs; see
 351 Table 1 in Rosman and Hench [2011]). This lower friction coefficient is conceivable for a
 352 weathered limestone reef with algae cover. Wind stresses were applied in the model based on
 353 the measured wind velocities and a quadratic wind drag coefficient of $C_D = 0.002$ [Large and
 354 Pond, 1981]. However, including wind forcing terms did not affect the model skill even

355 during the storm event, when the wind speed exceeded 12 m s^{-1} because the wind stress terms
 356 were an order of magnitude smaller than the dominant wave and pressure forcing terms.
 357 Along-shelf currents offshore of the reef were simulated by imposing an alongshore pressure
 358 gradient to reproduce the weak, moderate or strong north- or southward directed currents
 359 observed in the surface layer at A1.



360 Figure 6. Schematized reef dimensions: a) top view and b) cross-sectional view. The
 361 default values for channel width, reef length and depth as well as lagoon length and depth
 362 were $W_C = 100 \text{ m}$, $L_R = 150 \text{ m}$, $h_R = 1.5 \text{ m}$, $L_{Lag} = 150 \text{ m}$ and $h_{Lag} = 3 \text{ m}$, respectively.

363

364 In the second stage of the analysis, we simplified the bathymetry to isolate the impact
 365 of various hydrodynamic parameters and reef geometries on flow re-entrainment. For this
 366 analysis, the bathymetry at Garden Island was schematized with rectangular reefs that were
 367 intersected by regularly spaced channels (Figure 6). This geometry was similar to the reef-
 368 fringed lagoon to the south of the platform, where most of the drifters were deployed. In a
 369 series of simulations, parameters of the idealized reef system (channel spacing and reef

370 friction) and hydrodynamic forcing (offshore wave height and along-shelf current) were co-
 371 varied, while other parameters were kept constant. The model reef was 150 m wide in the
 372 cross-shore and was located 150 m from the shoreline. The lagoon and channel were 3 m
 373 deep and connected to a beach face with a concave profile $z = Ax^{2/3}$ [Dean, 1977; González
 374 *et al.*, 1999], where x is the cross-shore coordinate, and A was set to 0.15. All simulations
 375 were forced at the offshore boundary by waves comprised of a JONSWAP spectrum of
 376 normally incident waves with peak period $T_p = 14$ s (the average observed during the
 377 experiment at Garden Island), a peak enhancement factor of $\gamma_{jonswap} = 3.3$ and a directional
 378 spreading of $\sigma = 25^\circ$. Simulations with the same wave height were forced by identical time
 379 series. After a one-hour spin-up time, 2121 uniformly spaced drifters were seeded as passive
 380 particles inside the reef-lagoon system and their tracks were simulated for three hours using
 381 Lagrangian particle tracking.

382 The reef parameters (channel spacing and reef friction) and hydrodynamic forcing
 383 (offshore wave height and along-shelf current) were varied independently according to Table
 384 3, resulting in a total of 320 simulations. The choice of hydrodynamic parameters was
 385 motivated by the field observations (see section 3.4) and the reef parameters were chosen
 386 based on initial parameter tests and also varied to cover a range of typical fringing reef
 387 dimensions with channel spacing from 300 m to 700 m [Falter *et al.*, 2013] and roughness
 388 values, which have been previously reported to range from $c_f = 0.009$ to 0.027 [Rosman and
 389 Hench, 2011].

Table 3. Parameters (see also Figure 6) and parameter values used in the sensitivity test.

Parameter values for the default case are highlighted in bold.

Parameter	Values
<i>Variable</i>	
Channel spacing λ	300, 400 , 500, 600, 700 m
Reef friction $c_{f,R}$	0.003, 0.01 , 0.03, 0.1
Significant offshore wave height H_{m0}	1.0, 1.5 , 2.0, 2.5 m
Alongshelf current	0 , 0.05, 0.10, 0.15 m s ⁻¹

<i>Constant</i>	
Reef length L_R	150 m
Reef depth h_R	1.5 m
Channel width W_C	100 m
Forereef slope m	1:40
Lagoon depth h_{Lag}	3 m

390

391 To determine the exit and re-entrainment rates the modelled drifters were first allowed
392 to propagate for an hour through the reef-lagoon system. As drifters exited and re-entered the
393 lagoon in groups, the number of drifters offshore from the reef fluctuated. To eliminate the
394 effect of these fluctuations, the exit rate E_2 was averaged over the last two hours of each
395 simulation. This time was sufficient for drifters to finish at least one circulation cycle even in
396 large lagoons. This approach is similar to the time averaged values used by *Castelle et al.*
397 [2014], *Castelle and Coco* [2013] and *Reniers et al.* [2009].

398 4.2 Hindcast Model Results

399 The overall model performance was quantified in terms of the root mean square error
400 (RMSE), bias and the Willmott skill (WS) [*Willmott et al.*, 1985], which are defined as:

$$RMSE = \sum_{i=1}^N \sqrt{|X_{mod} - X_{obs}|^2} \quad (7)$$

$$bias = \sum_{i=1}^N X_{mod} - X_{obs} \quad (8)$$

$$WS = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N |X_{mod} - X_{obs}|^2}{\sum_{i=1}^N (|X_{mod} - \bar{X}_{obs}| + |X_{obs} - \bar{X}_{obs}|)^2} \quad (9)$$

401 where X_{mod} and X_{obs} are the modelled and observed values (here sea-swell wave height H_{m0} ,
402 u_{mean} and v_{mean}), the overbar indicates time averaging of these values and N is the number of
403 samples ($N = 64$, four simulations per day).

404 At sites inside the lagoon (S7), offshore from the reef (R7) and on the reef platform
405 (R2), the wave heights were accurately predicted over the duration of the experiment (RMSE
406 = 0.08 – 0.13 m, bias = -0.07 – 0.12 m and WS = 0.82 – 0.92, Table 2). However, in the
407 channel at CS2 and CS4 the model overestimated wave heights consistently by 20%. This
408 may be due to visually observed bathymetric features inside the channel, which are smaller
409 than the resolution of the LiDAR bathymetry (~5 m), and thus not resolved in the model.
410 Further, wave diffraction may play a role at this site, which is not in the model. The
411 alongshore velocities in the channel at CS2 and CS4 were consistently overestimated by ~0.1
412 m s⁻¹ but followed the trends in the observations well. This resulted in a flow that was
413 directed slightly more alongshore in the model, despite the total velocity magnitude being
414 predicted well (not shown). Overall, the RMSE for the modelled velocities ranged between
415 0.05 and 0.13 m s⁻¹, the bias between -0.11 and 0.12 m s⁻¹ and the WS was between 0.78 and
416 0.95 (Table 2).

417 The model results were predominantly compared spatially to the observed drifter
418 tracks as for the objectives of this study the spatial patterns were most important. The model
419 produced a circulation cell to the north of the channel, which is in agreement with the
420 observed drifter re-entrainment (Figure 3a, b). However, the modelled re-entrainment cell had
421 a somewhat wider radius than in the field observations, which is most likely due to the
422 combination of bathymetry and model resolution not being able to capture the very steep bed
423 level gradient from the channel to the reef resulting in a more alongshore directed flow. The
424 model also reproduced the southwesterly trajectory of flow exiting the southern channel
425 (Figure 3c, d). Overall, the model was able to replicate the flow magnitudes, directions and
426 patterns with reasonable accuracy and was able to qualitatively reproduce the observed flow
427 patterns.

428 4.3 Effect of hydrodynamic and reef geometry parameters

429 The primary goal of the numerical model was to identify the parameters and
 430 mechanisms that control flow re-entrainment. For each simulation with varying reef geometry
 431 and hydrodynamic forcing the exit rates E_1 and E_2 (Eq. (3) and (4), respectively) and re-
 432 entrainment b (Eq. (5)) were calculated. The mean offshore and onshore velocity across all
 433 reef channels and reef structures, respectively, were determined at the cross-shore location
 434 where the offshore current in the channel was maximum. This location was typically just
 435 offshore from the channel exit.

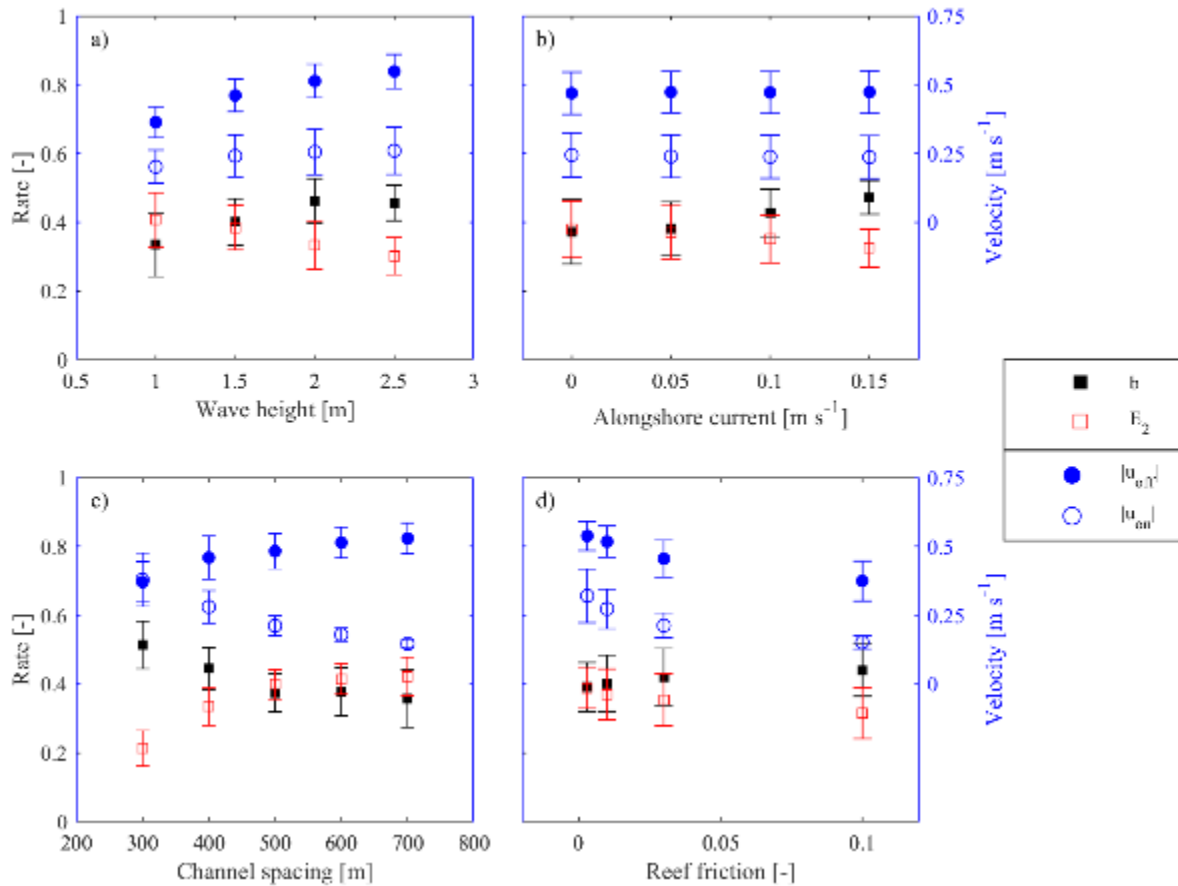


Figure 7. Re-entrainment b , exit rate E_2 , average offshore velocity in the channel and average onshore velocity at the reef edge as functions of variations in a) wave height, b) alongshore current outside the reef, c) channel spacing and d) lagoon length. The circle marks the mean value of all simulations and the black bar indicates the range in which 50% of the simulation

results fall within.

436

437 The drifter re-entrainment b increased (exit rate E_2 decreased) with increasing wave
438 height (Figure 7a) and increasing alongshore current outside the reef (Figure 7b). Large
439 waves caused the maximum offshore flow velocity in the channel and the onshore flow
440 velocity over the reef to increase (Figure 7a) while the alongshore velocity outside the reef
441 had no impact on the cross-shore velocities (Figure 7b). With large channel spacing re-
442 entrainment b decreased (exit rate E_2 increased) while the onshore velocities decreased and
443 the offshore velocities increased (Figure 7c). Large bed roughness is a characteristic feature
444 of many (or most) reefs that distinguishes these systems from analogous rip-channeled beach
445 environments. Large reef friction equally reduced the onshore velocities over the reef and the
446 offshore velocities in the channel. Drifters were thus neither more likely to exit offshore nor
447 to return onshore over the reef and the re-entrainment of the drifters remained unchanged
448 (Figure 7d).

449 **5 Discussion**

450 The dynamics of wave-driven flows in reef environments and ocean-reef exchange
451 have been either studied in a Eulerian reference frame that quantifies the incoming water flux
452 across the reef platform and the offshore flux exiting the reef channels [e.g. *Hench et al.*,
453 2008; *Hoeko et al.*, 2011; *Lowe et al.*, 2009; *Taebi et al.*, 2011] or by tracking simulated
454 particles [*Zhang et al.*, 2012]. These approaches have not allowed to identify the governing
455 drivers of reef exchange processes. For estuarine exchange processes, the drivers of
456 recirculation have been identified to be tidal residual currents and baroclinically driven
457 currents [*see Geyer and MacCready, 2014, for a review*]. This study provides insight into the
458 processes related to reef geometry and forcing conditions that control the proportion of water

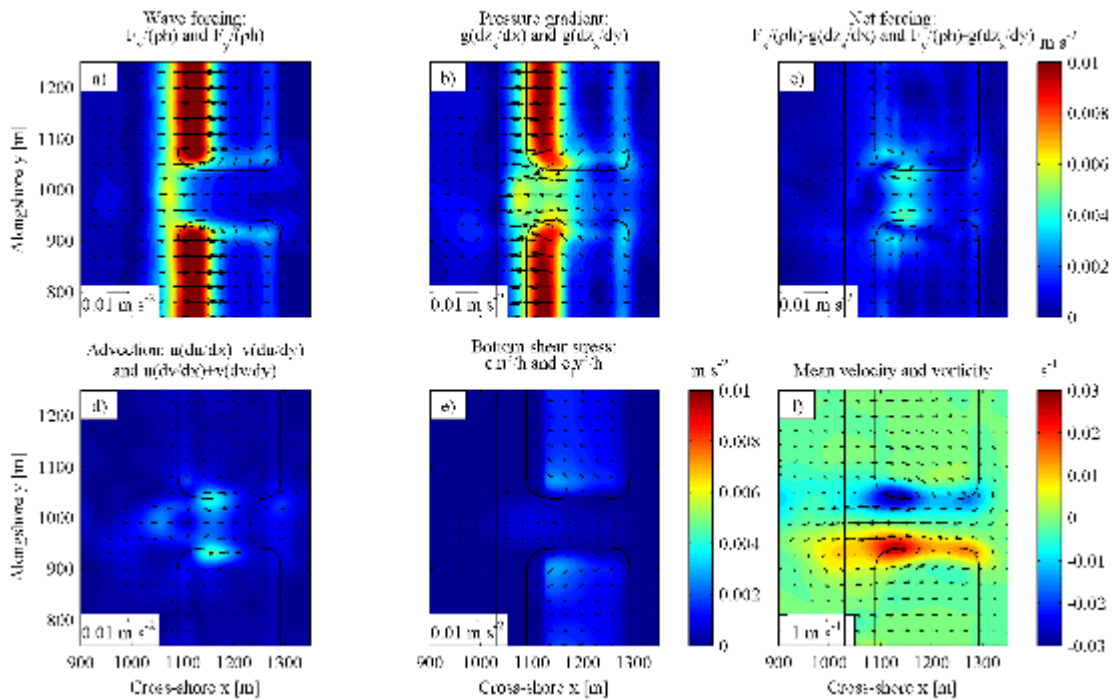
459 that recirculated in a reef system.

460 Field observations suggest that re-entrainment can vary substantially due to variations
461 in hydrodynamic forcing conditions alone (incident wave heights and along-shelf currents).
462 This is consistent with the numerical model that assessed the effect of a range of reef
463 geometries along with a larger range of variable hydrodynamic conditions, so that re-
464 entrainment varied between 7% and 73%. Importantly, these results demonstrate that the
465 definition of the exit rate E_1 (Eq. (3)), which ignores the effect of re-entrainment and counts
466 all drifters that flow seaward through the channel as exiting, was consistently higher over the
467 range of tested parameters. This definition is analogous to flushing time estimates commonly
468 used with Eulerian velocity measurements obtained using fixed (moored) instruments [e.g.
469 *Taebi et al.*, 2011]. Our results suggest that flushing time estimates purely based on the
470 offshore velocity are not always representative because they discount the effect of flow re-
471 entrainment. In the following, we investigate the effect of a number of hydrodynamic and
472 geometric parameters on reef re-entrainment to determine the conditions and environments in
473 which flow re-entrainment is an important process to consider.

474 5.1 Influence of hydrodynamic and reef geometry parameters on flow dynamics

475 To further investigate how the physical mechanisms responsible for re-entrainment
476 are controlled by reef geometry parameters and hydrodynamic forcing conditions, we first
477 assessed the momentum balances (Appendix A) across the reef-lagoon system for the default
478 simulation that was forced with 1.5 m waves. The channels were spaced 400 m apart and no
479 alongshore current was imposed outside the reef (Table 3). In this case, 71% (E_1) of all
480 seeded drifters floated offshore through the channel and 43% (E_2) remained outside of the
481 reef-lagoon system. Of the drifters that floated offshore 40% (b) were re-entrained back into
482 the reef system. The wave forcing induced by wave breaking on the forereef and the reef

483 platform (Figure 8a) was balanced mostly by cross-shore pressure gradients (Figure 8b, see
 484 also, e.g. *Symonds et al.*, 1995; *Taebi et al.*, 2012). The net forcing, which we refer to as the
 485 sum of the offshore directed pressure gradient and onshore directed wave forcing, is directed
 486 onshore over the reef platform (Figure 8c), where it drives the cross-reef current that
 487 contributes to a relevant bottom shear stress over shallow and rough reefs (Figure 8e). Near
 488 the channels, the net forcing is balanced by advection (Figure 8d) and generates counter-
 489 rotating eddies (Figure 8f) that, together with the onshore flow over the reef, were responsible
 490 for re-entrainment (see also Figure 5). The following sections assess how this momentum
 491 balance changes, particularly the strength of the net forcing term, when hydrodynamic
 492 forcing or reef geometry are altered.



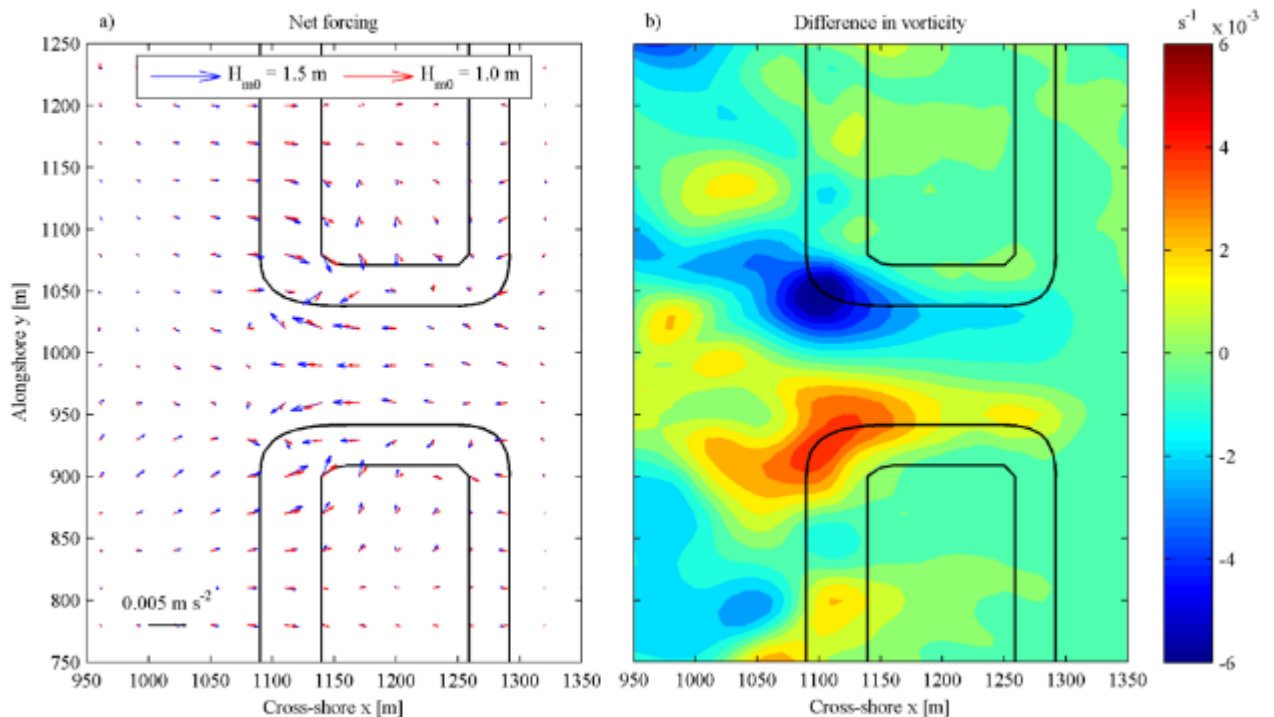
493

494 Figure 8. Simulated magnitude and direction of the momentum terms (cross- and alongshore,
 495 see Eq. A1-2) for the default case. From top left to bottom right, the contributions from: a)
 496 wave forcing, b) pressure gradient, c) sum of wave forcing and pressure gradient, d) non-
 497 linear advection, e) bottom shear stress and f) mean velocity with Stokes drift (vectors) and
 498 vorticity (colors). Viscosity terms were negligible and are not shown. Black contour lines
 499 indicate the -2.5 m and -1 m isobaths. For clarity only every third vector is shown in cross-

500 and alongshore direction.

501 5.1.1 Wave height

502 In both the field observations and the numerical model, the re-entrainment increased
 503 with larger offshore wave heights. Larger waves strengthen the net forcing responsible for the
 504 wave-driven flows (i.e., the difference between the wave forcing and pressure gradient) just
 505 offshore from the reef ($x = 1050\text{m}$, Figure 9a) and on the parts of the reef near the channel
 506 from where the offshore flow is primarily fed [Svendsen *et al.*, 2000]. This net forcing drives
 507 a stronger onshore flow just outside the reef and a stronger offshore flow in the channel
 508 (Figure 7a), which also enhances the strength of the channel vortices (Figure 9b) that
 509 ultimately re-entrain water back into the reef-lagoon system. Therefore, although larger
 510 waves drive a stronger seaward flow out the channel (Figure 7a), which was also observed at
 511 the field site ($r^2 = 0.89$ between offshore waves and seaward flow velocities) and other reef
 512 sites [e.g. Lowe *et al.*, 2009], larger waves also enhance flow re-entrainment.



513 Figure 9. a) Modeled net forcing as the sum of the pressure gradient and wave forcing for a

514 simulation during small waves ($H_{m0} = 1.0$ m, $b = 24\%$, red arrows) and the default case
515 ($H_{m0} = 1.5$ m, $b = 38\%$, blue arrows). b) Difference in vertical vorticity between the two
516 simulations.

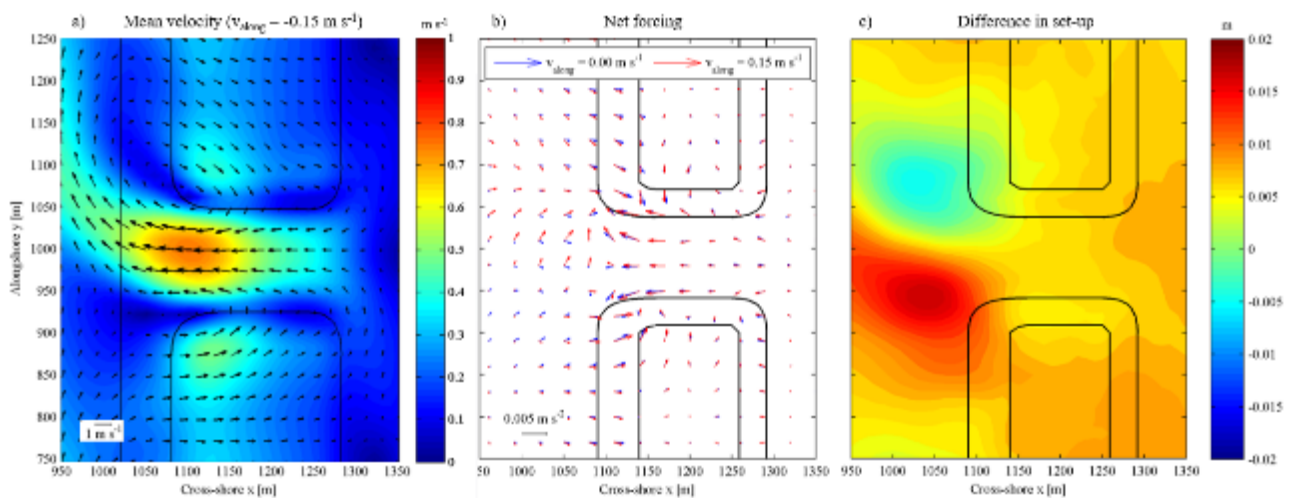
517

518 The increase of drifter re-entrainment with increasing wave height causes the exit rate
519 E_2 to decrease, which is consistent with field observations and modeling studies on rip-
520 channeled beaches [Castelle *et al.*, 2014; Scott *et al.*, 2014]. These studies have linked the
521 decrease in exit rate to: (1) increased onshore flow over the sand bars, which transports
522 drifters back towards shore [Scott *et al.*, 2014], and to (2) wider surf zones [Castelle *et al.*,
523 2014; Reniers *et al.*, 2009]. However, the surf zone width depends largely on the forereef
524 slope and varies less on steep forereefs. Here, we attribute the increased flow- re-entrainment
525 to the stronger onshore mass flux over the reef. An increase of re-entrainment with larger
526 waves implies that large storm waves may be increasingly less efficient in flushing coastal reef
527 systems.

528 5.1.2 Alongshore current

529 In the presence of an inner-shelf alongshore current, the offshore current in the
530 channel is redirected towards the downdrift direction (Figure 10a). The cross-shore current
531 locally blocks the alongshore current resulting in a local increase in the water level updrift of
532 the channel and conversely a local decrease in the water level downdrift of the channel
533 (Figure 10). The modified pressure gradient, and thus the net forcing, are redirected towards
534 the downstream reef (Figure 10). This allows water to be transported towards the reef and
535 then back shoreward by the wave-driven cross-reef flow such that the re-entrainment b
536 increases and the exit rate E_2 decreases. This is consistent with the field observations at
537 Garden Island where drifters returned via the reef to the north of the channel when the

538 alongshore current outside the reef was directed northward. *Herdman* [2012] observed similar
 539 dynamics at a large-scale coral reef where it was found that more drifters returned over a
 540 downdrift reef in the presence of an increasing alongshore current. Similar observations have
 541 been made on rip-channeled beaches where drifter re-entrainment increased in the presence
 542 of alongshore currents associated with tidal flows [*Winter et al.*, 2014].



543 Figure 10. a) Mean velocity field for a simulation with a strong alongshore current
 544 ($v_0 = 0.15 \text{ ms}^{-1}$). b) Net forcing as the sum of the pressure gradient and wave forcing for a
 545 simulation with strong alongshore current ($v_0 = 0.15 \text{ ms}^{-1}$, $b = 62\%$, red arrows) compared to
 546 the default case (without alongshore current, $b = 38\%$, blue arrows). c) Setup difference
 547 between those simulations (red colors indicate greater setup in the simulation with strong
 548 alongshore current).

549 5.1.3 Channel spacing

550 As the channel spacing increases, the ratio of channel width to alongshore reef width
 551 decreases. To balance the volume of water flowing across the reef into the lagoon with the
 552 volume of water flowing out through the channel, the seaward velocity in the channel
 553 increases for larger channel spacing while the maximum onshore velocity over the reef

554 decreases (Figure 7c). Hence, water is advected further offshore rather than back towards the
 555 reef. Drifter retention also decreases with increasing channel spacing on rip-channeled
 556 beaches [Castelle *et al.*, 2014]. However, this study shows that this effect weakens with
 557 larger channel spacing until a limit is reached where re-entrainment becomes approximately
 558 constant (i.e. in larger-scale reef systems, re-entrainment becomes insensitive to the channel
 559 spacing). Within the parameter space that we tested, this limit was ~500 m. Our results are
 560 consistent with observations of less re-entrainment in large reef systems at Moorea, where
 561 reef channels are 4 to 5 km apart and re-entrainment was less than 50% [Herdman, 2012].
 562 Thus, small-scale reef systems appear to promote large re-entrainment rates.

563 5.2 A predictor for re-entrainment and its implications for flushing times

564 Based on the sensitivity of re-entrainment b to the tested reef geometry and
 565 hydrodynamic parameters, we define a re-entrainment predictor variable R as:

$$R = \frac{H_{m0}}{h_{reef}} \frac{W_c}{\lambda} \quad (10)$$

566 Here the ratio of the offshore significant wave height to the water depth over the reef
 567 (H_{m0}/h_{reef}) provides an indication of the intensity of wave dissipation on the reef; whereas
 568 the ratio of the channel width to the channel spacing (W_c/λ) provides a measure for the
 569 relative cross-sectional areas available for onshore and offshore mass transport. Both of these
 570 ratios affect the balance between onshore flow velocity over the reef and offshore flow
 571 velocity inside the channel. Stronger onshore flow over the reef favors drifter-re-entrainment
 572 and stronger offshore flow transports drifters further offshore from where they are less likely
 573 to be re-entrained. The alongshore current is considered separately because the re-
 574 entrainment mechanism is fundamentally different (see section 5.1). An alongshore current
 575 does not affect the cross-shore flow velocities but enhances flow re-entrainment because it

576 transports drifters towards an area of onshore flow.

577 We found that the exit rate E_2 decreases with R ($r^2 = 0.70$ in the absence of alongshore
578 currents) following a negative reciprocal function while re-entrainment (b) increases with
579 increasing values of R and plateaus with high values of R following a positive reciprocal
580 function. In the absence of an alongshore current, b and the reciprocal of parameter R are
581 correlated ($r^2 = 0.73$). With increasing alongshore current outside the reef the correlation
582 between R and b reduces, i.e. when the current outside the reef is 0.15 m s^{-1} , the correlation
583 coefficient drops to $r^2 = 0.25$ and re-entrainment is consistently higher across all values of R
584 (Figure 11). The alongshore current outside the reef then dominates the re-entrainment
585 process. For large values of R (>0.4), re-entrainment is less sensitive to the alongshore
586 current outside the reef and the re-entrainment rates converge for all tested alongshore current
587 magnitudes. To summarize, R and the alongshore current both increase re-entrainment, but
588 when the alongshore current is strong it reduces the sensitivity to variations of R and vice
589 versa.

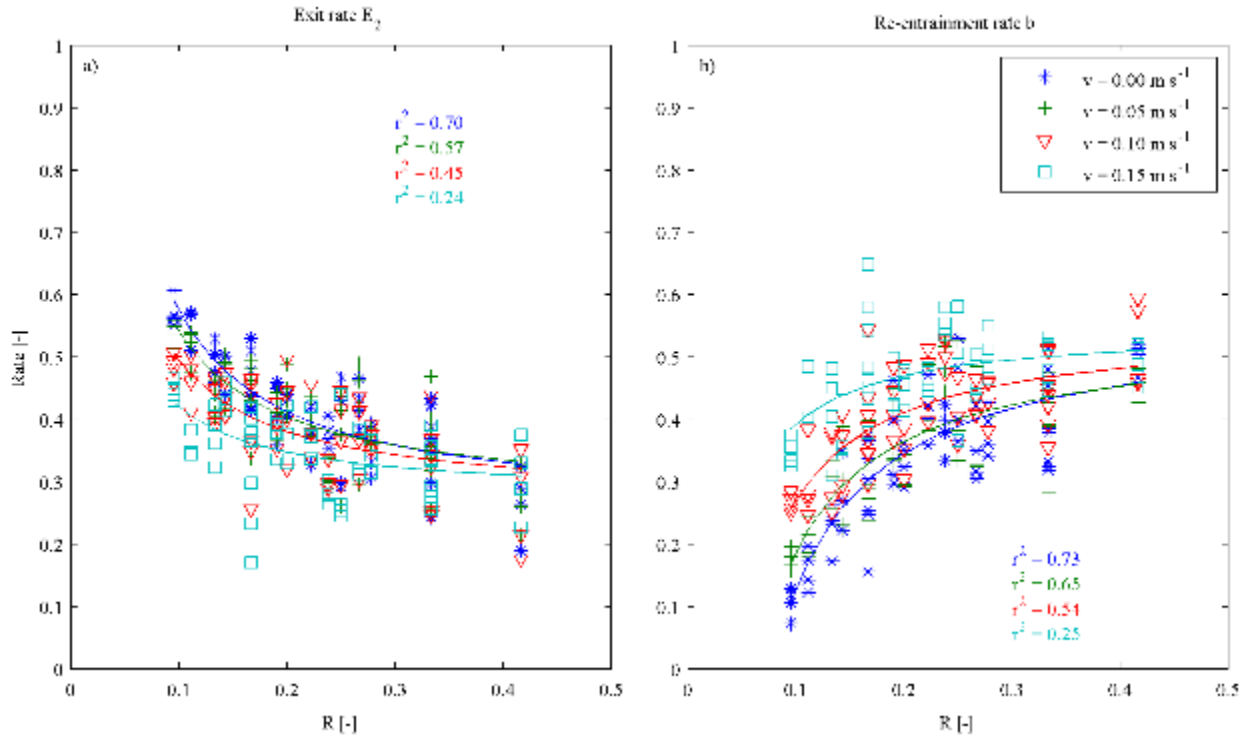


Figure 11. Exit rate E_2 (a) and re-entrainment b (b) versus the re-entrainment prediction parameter R for all simulations. The different marker colors denote variable alongshore currents outside the reef.

590

591 To demonstrate the implications of the large variability in re-entrainment (b) for reef
 592 flushing times, we calculated the flushing time with re-entrainment (Eq. (2)) and without re-
 593 entrainment (Eq. (1)). In many simulations, the inclusion of b in the estimate substantially
 594 increased the flushing time compared to an estimate without re-entrainment: for 58% of the
 595 simulations the flushing time increased by more than a factor of 1.5 and in 17% of the
 596 simulations by more than two. The largest increase (greater than three times) was observed
 597 for the simulations with large R (a combination of short channel spacing $\lambda = 300$ m and wave
 598 heights of $H_{m0} > 2$ m) and strong alongshore currents. In contrast, there was little difference
 599 between the two flushing times in simulations with small R (channel spacing $\lambda > 500$ m and
 600 $H_{m0} = 1$ m) and no alongshore current.

601 **6 Conclusions**

602 This study examined the processes responsible for re-entrainment in wave-dominated
603 reef systems. Drifter observations in a wave-dominated rocky limestone reef in southwestern
604 Australia illustrated two distinct flow patterns of either complete drifter ejection or drifter re-
605 entrainment. These observations motivated an idealized numerical study that investigated the
606 effect of reef channel spacing and reef roughness along with offshore wave height and
607 alongshore currents on flow re-entrainment. The model demonstrated that large waves and
608 strong alongshore currents outside the reef enhance flow re-entrainment. The model results
609 further showed that large reef channel spacing reduces flow re-entrainment, while the reef
610 roughness had no effect. A single re-entrainment prediction parameter R is proposed, which
611 incorporates the effect of wave forcing and reef geometry. For large values of R (i.e. large
612 offshore wave height and small channel spacing) and strong alongshore currents outside the
613 reef flow re-entrainment is important to consider in reef flushing time estimates. Large wave
614 heights can dominate the re-entrainment mechanism and reduce the positive effect of an
615 alongshore current outside the reef and vice versa.

616 The present study demonstrates that re-entrainment rates can be large and highly
617 variable among reefs, and thus should be included when assessing flushing times and material
618 exchange of reef systems with the surrounding ocean. High re-entrainment rates may limit the
619 ability of a reef to exchange material with both the surrounding ocean and other reef systems,
620 and thus further emphasizes the need to accurately quantify flow re-entrainment to make
621 robust estimates of, for example, larval dispersal, reef connectivity [*Cowen et al.*, 2000; *Teske*
622 *et al.*, 2016] and reef water quality [*Falter et al.*, 2013; *Lowe and Falter*, 2015]. Flow re-
623 entrainment is generally important for reefs that are frequently intercepted by channels and
624 reefs that are exposed to large waves and strong alongshore currents outside the reef.

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641 **Appendix A. Momentum equations**

642 Output from the idealized XBeach simulations was used to assess the relative
643 importance of the terms of the steady ($d/dt = 0$) depth and time (wave) averaged momentum
644 balances in cross (x)- and alongshore (y) direction including the wave (radiation stress)
645 forcing, F_x and F_y , as source term and pressure gradients, advection, turbulent mixing, and
646 bottom shear stress, as sink terms:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{F_x}{\rho} - g(\eta + h) \frac{\partial \eta}{\partial x} - (\eta + h) \left(u \frac{\partial u}{\partial x} + v \frac{\partial u}{\partial y} \right) - \nu_H (\eta + h) \left(\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial y^2} \right) \\ - \frac{\tau_x^b}{\rho} = 0 \end{aligned} \quad (\text{A1})$$

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{F_y}{\rho} - g(\eta + h) \frac{\partial \eta}{\partial y} - (\eta + h) \left(u \frac{\partial v}{\partial x} + v \frac{\partial v}{\partial y} \right) - \nu_H (\eta + h) \left(\frac{\partial^2 v}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 v}{\partial y^2} \right) \\ - \frac{\tau_y^b}{\rho} = 0 \end{aligned} \quad (\text{A2})$$

647 where ρ is the water density, η is setup, h the still water depth, u and v are the cross- and
 648 alongshore velocities, ν_H the horizontal viscosity and τ_x^b and τ_y^b are the bottom shear stresses
 649 in cross- and alongshore direction. The wave forcing is calculated from the radiation stress
 650 gradients S_{ij} as follows:

$$F_x = - \left(\frac{\partial(S_{xx} + S_{xx,roller})}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial(S_{xy} + S_{xy,roller})}{\partial y} \right) \quad (\text{A3})$$

$$F_y = - \left(\frac{\partial(S_{yx} + S_{yx,roller})}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial(S_{yy} + S_{yy,roller})}{\partial y} \right) \quad (\text{A4})$$

651

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