
Coastal numerical modelling of tides: Sensitivity to domain size and remotely generated internal tide

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Abstract:

The propagation of remotely generated superinertial internal tides constitutes a difficulty for the modelling of regional ocean tidal variability which we illustrate in several ways.

First, the M2 tidal solution inside a control region located along the Southern California Bight coastline is monitored while the extent of the numerical domain is increased (up to 512×512 km). While the amplitude and phase of sea level averaged over the region is quasi-insensitive to domain size, a steady increase of kinetic energy, predominantly baroclinic, is observed with increasing domain size. The increasing flux of energy into the control region suggests that this trend is explained by the growing contribution from remote generation sites of internal tide which can propagate up to the control region.

Increasing viscosities confirms this interpretation by lowering baroclinic energy levels and limiting their rate of increase with domain size. Doubling the grid spacing allows consideration of numerical domains 2 times larger. While the coarse grid has lower energy levels than the finer grid, the rate of energy increase with domain size appears to be slowing for the largest domain of the coarse grid simulations.

Forcing the smallest domain with depth-varying tidal boundary conditions from the simulation in the largest domain produces energy levels inside the control region comparable to those in the control region for the largest domain, thereby confirming the feasibility of a nested approach.

In contrast, simulations forced with a subinertial tidal constituent (K1) show that when the propagation of internal tide is limited, the control region kinetic energy is mostly barotropic and the magnitudes of variations of the kinetic energy with domain size are reduced.

Highlights

► We assess the sensitivity of the tidal response in a coastal region to domain size. ► The M2-superinertial tidal kinetic energy grows with domain size. ► This is due to the growing contribution from remotely generated internal tides. ► The kinetic energy growth for a subinertial tidal constituent (K1) is slower.

Keywords: Barotropic tide ; Baroclinic tide ; Internal tide ; Coastal dynamics ; Domain size sensitivity ; Energy budgets

1. Introduction

The oceanic input of tidal energy by astronomical forcing occurs at large spatial scales and the bulk of the response is a barotropic motion which sweeps over the ocean with phase speed exceeding 100 m s^{-1} . In the deep ocean the associated sea level fluctuations and depth-uniform currents are of the order of 1 m and 1 cm s^{-1} , respectively. Tide gauges and satellite altimetry have allowed a detailed mapping of the barotropic response and a better understanding of its dissipation, one third of which is due to the production of baroclinic tidal motion (Egbert and Ray, 2003).

Baroclinic tidal fluctuations are produced when barotropic currents flow across a bathymetric slope and isopycnals are disturbed (Garrett and Kunze, 2007). Guided by maps of barotropic tidal dissipation from satellite altimetry (Egbert and Ray, 2001), observational campaigns near internal tide generation hotspots and numerical simulations have improved our understanding of the generation process over the last decade (Klymak et al., 2006, Legg and Huijts, 2006 and Carter et al., 2008). A small fraction of the energy dissipates locally. Most of the energy radiates away as a low mode internal wave (Laurent and Garrett, 2002). For the semidiurnal tide, wavelengths are about 150 km and group speeds are below $<3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ (Alford and Zhao, 2007). The low mode waves can propagate over $O(1000 \text{ km})$ distances (Dushaw et al., 1995, Ray and Mitchum, 1997, Alford et al., 2007 and Zhao and Alford, 2009) and the mechanisms for their ultimate decay are a topic of ongoing debate: bathymetric scattering into higher modes (Bühler and Holmes-Cerfon, 2011), dissipation against coastal boundaries where areas with critical bathymetric slope are abundant (Nash et al., 2004, Martini et al., 2011 and Kelly et al., 2012), and nonlinear interaction with the internal wave spectrum (Hazewinkel and Winters, 2011).

Internal tide fluctuations are energetic in the coastal ocean. They are important to marine biology ([Lucas et al., 2011](#)), sediment transport (Heather-

shaw, 1985), lateral heat flux and mass transport (Inall et al., 2001; Shroyer et al., 2010), mixing (Sharples et al., 2007), and acoustic propagation (Duda and Preisig, 1999). The preceding list highlights the need for proper description and prediction of the tidal variability in the coastal domain.

The long range propagation of tidal fluctuations represents an underestimated challenge for the coastal modeling of tides. A typical study of the three-dimensional tide along the coast uses tidal sea level and current from an assimilation product based on barotropic dynamics (Kurapov et al., 2003; Rosenfeld et al., 2009; Pairaud et al., 2010; Carter, 2010). The effect of remotely generated internal tide is not taken into account, the assumption being that local generation, generally at the shelf break, dominates the variability. This assumption could be justified by the enhanced topographic roughness close to the coasts which could facilitate the reflection and/or scattering and dissipation of remotely generated baroclinic tides before reaching the area of interest. There is evidence that this is not true in general (Martini et al., 2011; Kelly et al., 2012) and it is therefore necessary to verify this assumption, potentially on a case by case basis. One would ideally extend the numerical domain in order to include all possible remote generation sites, but computational resources are ultimately limiting. The present study cannot conclude, for example, on the importance of internal wave sources located more than 1000 km away from our region of interest. Few numerical experiments have investigated the sensitivity of tidal simulations to domain size. Hall and Carter (2011) used simulations on two domains of different sizes (up to 180×180 km) and showed that energy fluxes into the Monterey Canyon are greatest with the larger domain. The present study finds similar results for a different geographical location, extending the results of Hall and Carter (2011). We additionally consider larger domains and investigate how model parameters such as grid spacing and viscosities affect the contribution from remotely generated fluctuations.

We select a control region located in the Southern California Bight offshore San Diego, California and monitor the sensitivity of the local tidal solution to model domain. Most reports on tidal variability in this area have been in depths shallower than 100 m, over the mainland continental shelf (Winant and Bratkovich, 1981; Bratkovich, 1985; Noble et al., 2009; Lucas et al., 2011). Lerczak et al. (2003) reports on observations over the shelf as well as over the shelf break down to 300 m depths. A common feature of the shelf variability is that currents do not tend to follow the spring neap cycle. Lerczak et al. (2003) describes the structure of semidiurnal shelf currents as

94 that of a partially reflected mode 1 wave. Tidal bores have been observed
 95 (Pineda, 1994). From a numerical perspective, Buijsman et al. (2012) focused
 96 on the Santa Cruz Basin, where the internal tide generation is near resonant
 97 and thus is one of the most energetic sites in the Southern California Bight.
 98 There have been few other numerical studies of the tidal variability in the
 99 area.

100 The numerical setup is described in section 2. Section 3 describes the
 101 M2 sea level response and its weak sensitivity to domain size. The M2
 102 kinetic energy is next shown to be an increasing function of the domain size
 103 size (section 4). This trend is explained by kinetic energy budgets whose
 104 inspection in section 5 reveals the growing amount of baroclinic energy fluxed
 105 into the control region when domain size is increased. This is interpreted
 106 as the contribution from remotely generated internal fluctuations, which is
 107 partially confirmed by the sensitivity of the experiment to viscosity and grid
 108 cell size (section 6). The tidal response of a subinertial constituent (K1)
 109 along with its sensitivity to domain size are finally presented in section 7.

110 2. Model setup

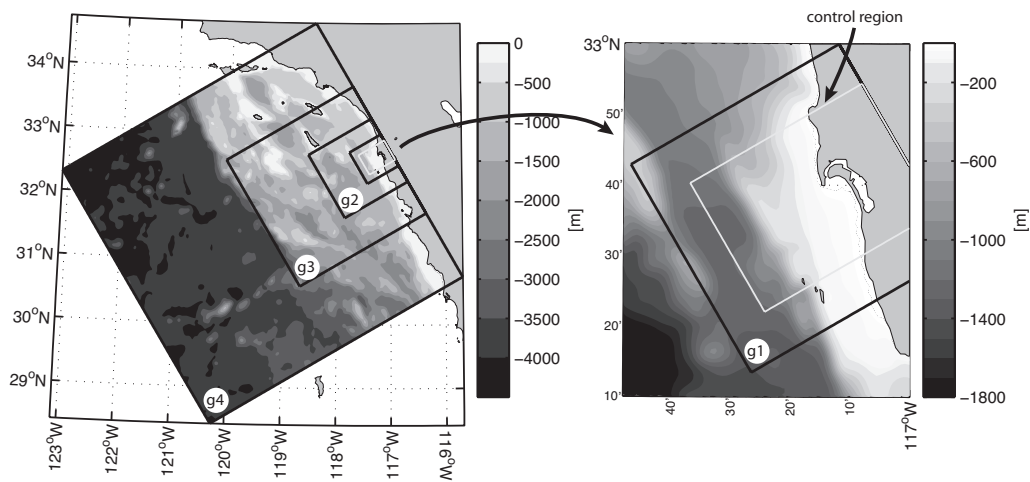


Figure 1: Numerical domains (black) and control region (white). Shading shows the water depth in meters. Right is a zoom on the control region.

111 The control region used by the present study is that of Hoteit et al. (2009),
 112 a 30 by 40 km rectangle around Point Loma in San Diego, California (white

113 rectangle in Fig. 1). The numerical calculations have used the MITgcm
114 (Marshall et al., 1997). A set of overlapping numerical domains was chosen
115 such that the eastern edge of the control region is centered on the eastern edge
116 of each domain. The size of the domain doubles from one to the next, from
117 64 by 64 km (g1, barely bigger than the target area) to 512 by 512 km (g4).
118 The model is run with spherical coordinates and the horizontal grid spacing is
119 approximately 1 km. Vertical grid spacing varies from 1 m close to the surface
120 to 30 m at depth and is the same for all grids. Because the maximum depth
121 increases with numerical domain size, the number of vertical levels varies
122 from 115 (g1) to 200 (g4). Model bathymetry is obtained from the NGDC’s
123 3 arc-second U.S. Coastal Relief Model when available. Elsewhere ETOPO1
124 (Amante and Eakins, 2009) is linearly interpolated to the model grid. The
125 overlapped grids are aligned so that grid points are collocated horizontally
126 and vertically, and bathymetry is identical in the overlapping portions of the
127 domains. Initial stratification is horizontally uniform, taken from a winter
128 average of CALCOFI station number 28 (<http://www.calcofi.org>), closest to
129 the target domain (Fig. 1). Below 500 m the temperature and salinity from
130 the 2005 World Ocean Atlas (Locarnini et al., 2006; Antonov et al., 2006) at
131 a nearby deepwater location is used to complete the profile.

132 Tidal forcing is applied at the boundaries, where the sea level is pre-
133 scribed. Along-boundary and cross-boundary currents are relaxed on the
134 boundaries to tidally fluctuating values with a 1000 s time scale. This ap-
135 proach differs from the default MITgcm open boundary conditions where the
136 flows normal and tangential to boundaries are prescribed and the sea level
137 adjusts to the flow through boundaries (no boundary values need to be pro-
138 vided for sea level). With this default treatment, the M2 sea level averaged
139 inside the control domain varies with domain size by as much as 8 cm in am-
140 plitude and 17° in phase. This is to compare with 2.5 mm and 0.3° when sea
141 level is prescribed along boundaries (see section 3.2). Note that the choice
142 of default treatment of boundary conditions or prescription of sea level does
143 not affect energy levels by more than 15%. None of the results relative to
144 energy levels presented in this manuscript are qualitatively modified if the
145 default treatment of boundary conditions had been used.

146 For the largest domain, g4, the model is forced with sea level and barotropic
147 current from the ENPAC tidal database (Spargo et al., 2003). Smaller do-
148 mains (g1 to g3) are forced by tidal-frequency sea level and currents from
149 a simulation with fixed tracers (g4_noTS see below) on the largest domain.
150 This is done to maintain, at least for the fixed tracer simulations, consis-

151 tent barotropic dynamics between experiments on different domains. When
152 tracers are freely evolving however, the barotropic dynamics adjusts to some
153 extent from one domain to the next and accommodates for the loss of energy
154 to the internal tide (see section 5.2).

155 Temperature and salinity are relaxed to initial profiles within nudging
156 layers along open boundaries. The width of these nudging layers is 5 km for
157 g1 and 10 km for g2 to g3 and the relaxation time scale is 1000 s. The value
158 of the relaxation time scale is set to be smaller than the time for a mode
159 1 baroclinic wave to cross the width of the nudging layers (~ 3000 s for a
160 width of 5 km). Sensitivity tests to the relaxation time scale with domain
161 g1 indicate that a value of 1000 s is optimal to minimize baroclinic wave
162 reflections.

163 The simulations were spun up from rest with the forcing ramped up to
164 full strength over a period of 5 days to reduce transients. The time stepping
165 of sea level is implicit with a 90 s time step. The models are run over a time
166 period of 15 days. Harmonic vertical and horizontal viscosities are constant
167 and with values of $2 \cdot 10^{-3}$ and $10 \text{ m}^2\text{s}^{-1}$, respectively. This choice aims at
168 damping grid scale noise and explicitly diagnosing viscous energy loss at the
169 expense of using viscosities much higher than realistic ocean values (Legg and
170 Klymak, 2008; Kelly et al., 2012). Other studies have used more complex
171 turbulence parametrizations (e.g. KPP, Mellor-Yamada 2.0 or 2.5) and/or
172 rather viscous advection schemes. Energy dissipation has to be estimated
173 from the residual of the energy budgets when the damping of grid scale
174 fluctuations relies on advection schemes (Kang and Fringer, 2012). In the
175 present study, horizontal and vertical diffusivities are set to 0 and a Superbee
176 flux limiting advection scheme for tracers is used (Roe, 1985). It introduces
177 numerical diffusion but minimizes the erosion of the stratification that a
178 constant diffusivity would produce even in an unforced simulation.

179 Diagnostic runs where temperature and salinity fields are held fixed are
180 also carried out. These runs are labeled with the suffix `_noTS`. They illus-
181 trate purely barotropic responses and are therefore referred to as barotropic
182 simulations in the text, as opposed to baroclinic simulations which have a
183 freely evolving buoyancy.

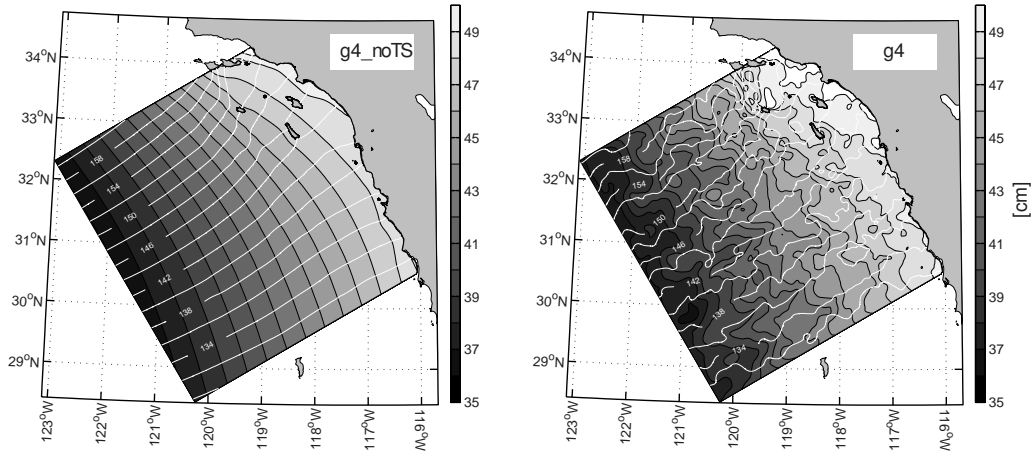


Figure 2: M2. Cotidal chart of the sea level on domain g4 for the barotropic (left) and baroclinic (right) simulations. White contours represent the phase (GMT), while shading and black contours represent the amplitude in cm.

184 3. M2 sea level response

185 3.1. Overview

186 Cotidal charts of the M2 tide in the largest computational domain (g4)
 187 provide a regional overview of the tidal sea level response and illustrate the
 188 sea level signature of internal tide (Fig. 2). The tidal fits are computed
 189 over the last five days of the runs. For the barotropic simulation, isolines of
 190 amplitude and phase are smooth. The amplitude increases toward the coast
 191 while the phase progresses with the coast to the right, which is typical of
 192 Kelvin wave propagation. The northward phase increase is about 30° over
 193 the length of g4, corresponding to a phase speed of approximately 137 m/s.
 194 For the baroclinic simulation, the overall pattern of amplitude and phase
 195 variation is similar. The difference with the barotropic simulation is due to a
 196 finer scale spatial variability in phase and amplitude isolines. These isolines
 197 are also displaced over distances of several tens of kilometers compared to
 198 the barotropic case. This variability is the manifestation of the internal tide
 199 on sea level (Carter, 2010).

200 3.2. Sensitivity to domain size.

201 When averaged over the control region, tidal amplitudes and phases of
 202 the barotropic experiments (gray lines in Fig. 3) show little sensitivity to

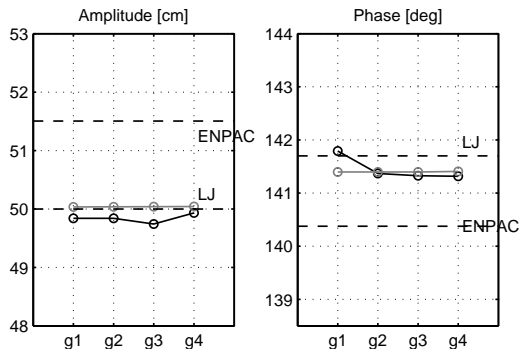


Figure 3: M2 amplitude and phase of the sea level averaged over the control region as a function of domain size. Baroclinic experiments are in black, barotropic ones in gray. Horizontal dashed lines show the M2 amplitude and phase observed at the La Jolla tide gauge (LJ) and that from the forcing barotropic model averaged inside the control region (ENPAC).

203 domain size. A close up look at the amplitude and phase shows variations
 204 on the order of 0.01 cm and 0.01° respectively. These values suggest that
 205 the barotropic response is consistent between runs with different domain
 206 sizes, as further confirmed in section 4 by an inspection of kinetic energy
 207 levels. Compared to the ENPAC forcing product, the amplitude of sea level
 208 is 1.5 cm weaker and the phase larger by approximately 1° (~ 2 min). These
 209 differences are attributed to mismatches of the bathymetry and potentially
 210 the dynamics (bottom friction for example) between ENPAC and the present
 211 numerical configuration. The magnitude of these differences could have been
 212 reduced by adjusting the forcing at the boundary.

213 The harmonic sea level of baroclinic experiments exhibit a greater sen-
 214 sitivity to domain size. This sensitivity remains weak: the tidal sea level
 215 amplitude varies around its average value by about 2 mm (0.4%). This last
 216 value is comparable to the typical tidal amplitude of scaled surface baroclinic
 217 pressure within the control region (not shown). The amplitude in baroclinic
 218 experiments is lower than that in the barotropic experiments by up to 3 mm.
 219 The phase changes with varying domain size are up to 0.45° . This value is
 220 approximately consistent with the maximum phase perturbation $\delta\phi$ that can
 221 be produced by a $\delta A = 2$ mm perturbation around sea level oscillations of
 222 amplitude $A = 50$ cm ($A \gg \delta A$) typical of the control region. The superim-
 223 position of perturbation and background sea level fluctuations can indeed be
 224 written as:

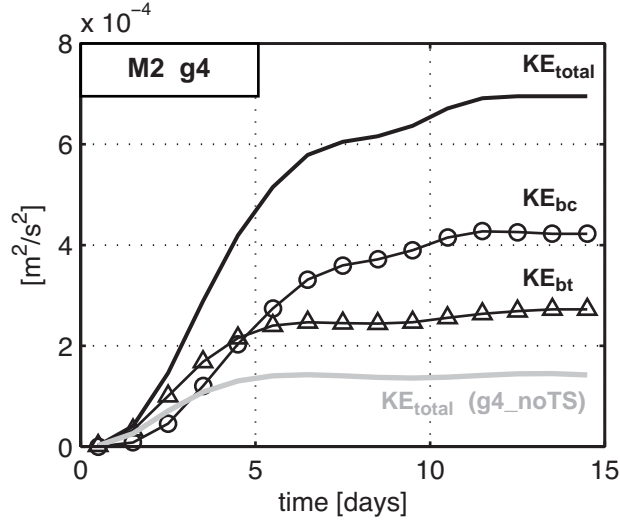


Figure 4: Volume averaged kinetic energy in the control region for runs on domain g4. A 24h running mean has been applied. Full lines are the total kinetic energy, the circled and triangled lines are the baroclinic and barotropic kinetic energy, respectively. The gray line is the total kinetic energy for the barotropic experiment.

$$A \cos(\omega t) + \delta A \sin(\omega t) = \sqrt{A^2 + \delta A^2} \cos(\omega t - \delta\phi),$$

225 where ω is the tidal frequency and $\delta\phi = \tan^{-1}(\delta A/A)$. With $\delta A = 2$ mm
 226 and $A = 50$ cm, the phase perturbation is approximately:

$$\delta\phi \sim \frac{\delta A}{A} \sim 0.23^\circ.$$

227 4. M2 kinetic energy

228 4.1. Overview

229 The kinetic energy averaged over the control region shows much more
 230 sensitivity to domain size than sea level. The time evolution of total kinetic
 231 energy (KE_{total}) during the spin-up period for domain g4 shows a rapid in-
 232 crease over the first five days to about 70% of the final value (Fig. 4) and
 233 plateaus after about 13 days. A 24h running mean was applied to remove
 234 fluctuations at the tidal frequency.

235 The barotropic (KE_{bt}) and baroclinic (KE_{bc}) contributions to kinetic en-
 236 ergy are also shown in Fig. 4. The barotropic-baroclinic decomposition of a
 237 variable ϕ follows:

$$\phi = \bar{\phi} + \phi', \quad (1)$$

238 where:

$$\bar{\phi} = \frac{1}{h} \int_{-h}^0 \phi \, dz. \quad (2)$$

239 The spin up of barotropic kinetic energy is fast with 85% of the final en-
 240 ergy reached at day 5 while baroclinic energy has reached only 57% of its
 241 final value at that time. The baroclinic energy is the reason for the slower
 242 rise of total energy, likely due to the slower propagation and equilibration
 243 of baroclinic tide inside the domain. Consistent with this interpretation,
 244 equilibrium of the baroclinic energy level is reached faster for smaller do-
 245 mains (not shown). For comparison it would take 3.6/6.7/9.9 days for mode
 246 1/2/3 internal waves with M2 frequency to propagate over the width of g4 in
 247 an ocean with uniform depth equal to g4 mean depth (~ 2500 m). Finally,
 248 Fig. 4 shows the time series of the kinetic energy of the barotropic simulation
 249 g4_noTS in gray. The spin up occurs in a fashion similar to the barotropic
 250 energy of the baroclinic experiment except that it reaches a lower equilibrium
 251 value.

252 4.2. Domain size sensitivity

253 The kinetic energy averaged over the control region and over day 15 is an
 254 increasing function of domain size (Fig. 5). With domain g4, the total energy
 255 in the control region is 3.1 times that with g1. This is largely explained by a
 256 factor of 4.2 increase in baroclinic kinetic energy, which is attributed to the
 257 growing contribution of remotely generated internal fluctuations (interpreta-
 258 tion supported by the kinetic energy budgets of section 5). Following this
 259 interpretation, approximately 80% of the baroclinic energy in the simulation
 260 on g4 can be accounted for by remote generation. For small domains (g1 and
 261 g2), the control region barotropic energy is larger than the baroclinic one
 262 and increases by only a factor of 2.1 between g1 and g4. The barotropic con-
 263 tribution to the total energy for g3 and g4 is less than that of the baroclinic
 264 energy. The increase of barotropic kinetic energy is interesting in light of the
 265 negligible domain size sensitivity of the barotropic simulation energy level
 266 (gray line in Fig. 5). It is the signature of the adjustment of the barotropic

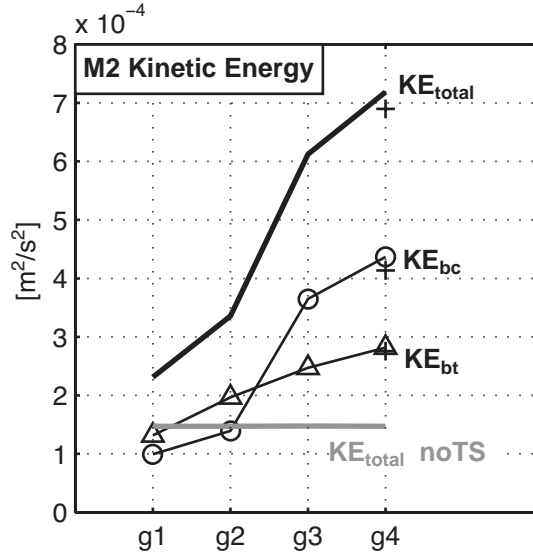


Figure 5: Control region total (full), baroclinic (circles) and barotropic (triangles) kinetic energies as a function of domain size and averaged over day 15. Black crosses (+) represent the energy of the nested experiment (see section 4.3). The gray line shows the total kinetic energy of barotropic experiments (noTS).

267 dynamics to energy exchanges with the internal tide (confirmed by energy
 268 budgets in section 5.2). The total and baroclinic energy differences between
 269 g3 and g4 are less than the energy difference between smaller domains which
 270 may be an indication that the energy eventually plateaus. Computational
 271 resources did not allow consideration of larger domains at this resolution.

272 4.3. Nested experiment

273 The feasibility of a nested approach is tested with a simulation performed
 274 in domain g1 forced by boundary conditions obtained from the tidal solution
 275 in g4. Harmonic fits to sea level, three-dimensional currents and tracers
 276 over the last five days of the g4 simulation are used to prescribe the tidally
 277 fluctuating boundary conditions. Sea level is clamped at the boundary while
 278 the horizontal flow and tracers are relaxed at the boundaries as well as within
 279 adjacent nudging layers toward tidally fluctuating values consistent with g4
 280 harmonic fits. Nudging layers are 5 km wide and the relaxation time scale
 281 is 1000 s. The energy levels averaged inside the control region of the nested
 282 experiment are comparable to that of the simulation in domain g4 (Fig. 5).
 283 The total energy is weaker by approximately 4% and reflects a decrease in

284 baroclinic energy. The control region volume-averaged squared difference
 285 between the flow from the nested simulation and that in domain g4 is about
 286 3.5%. A similar point-wise comparison for the barotropic flow indicates it
 287 is passed particularly well, to within 1% of the control region barotropic
 288 energy. The nested experiment reproduces tidal fluctuations of at least the
 289 first four baroclinic modes equally well. Projections of the flow of the nested
 290 model onto these modes are comparable to the projections of the flow in
 291 domain g4 within 3 to 5% of the spatially averaged energy represented by
 292 each mode. This experiment therefore confirms the feasibility of a nested
 293 approach provided appropriate boundary conditions are known.

294 5. M2 Kinetic Energy budget and fluxes

295 5.1. Barotropic and baroclinic energy equations

296 Budgets of the control region kinetic energy are used next to explain
 297 the kinetic energy trends described in section 4. We distinguish between
 298 barotropic and baroclinic energy budgets. Detailed derivations of the energy
 299 budget for barotropic and baroclinic flows are found in Zaron and Egbert
 300 (2006), Carter et al. (2008), and, Kelly et al. (2010). We start here with the
 301 3D linear depth-integrated kinetic energy budget (Zaron and Egbert, 2006):

$$\begin{aligned}
 \partial_t \int_{-h}^0 \rho_0 \frac{\mathbf{u}^2}{2} dz + \nabla \cdot \int_{-h}^0 (p\mathbf{u}) dz = & -p_s w(z=0) \\
 -g \int_{-h}^0 \rho w dz - \rho_0 \int_{-h}^0 \epsilon_K dz - \mathbf{u}(z=-h) \cdot \tau_b, & \quad (3)
 \end{aligned}$$

302 where $\mathbf{u} = (u, v)$, η is the sea level, p_s is the pressure at $z = 0$, ρ is the
 303 density minus its time average (which has a vertical structure), and, p is the
 304 hydrostatic pressure:

$$p = g\rho_s\eta + \int_z^0 \rho g dz. \quad (4)$$

305 From left to right, the terms involved in (3) are the time rate of change of
 306 kinetic energy, the divergence of the pressure work, the surface and interior
 307 conversions between kinetic energy and potential energy, and, the interior
 308 (ϵ_K is the local rate of viscous dissipation) and bottom stress (τ_b) dissipation
 309 of kinetic energy. The time rate of change of kinetic energy and the surface

310 conversion between kinetic and potential energy ($p_s w(z=0) = \rho_s g \partial_t \eta^2 / 2$,
 311 where ρ_s is the density at the surface) average in time to zero.

312 The barotropic kinetic energy budget is obtained after multiplication of
 313 the depth-integrated momentum equations by the depth-averaged flow:

$$\rho_0 h \partial_t (\bar{u}^2 + \bar{v}^2) / 2 + \nabla \cdot (h \bar{\mathbf{u}} \bar{p}) = -p_s \bar{w}(z=0) - g \int_{-h}^0 \rho \bar{w} dz, \quad (5)$$

314 where \bar{w} is the vertical velocity associated with the depth-averaged flow:

$$\bar{w} = (1 + z/h) w(z=0) + \frac{z}{h} \bar{\mathbf{u}} \cdot \nabla h. \quad (6)$$

315 Dissipative effects have been ignored here for simplicity. The barotropic en-
 316 ergy loss due to bottom friction and horizontal dissipation was approximately
 317 estimated from an harmonic fit on depth-averaged current which lead to val-
 318 ues of the order of 0.15 MW (5% of the baroclinic energy dissipation for g4,
 319 Fig 6). The conversion of barotropic kinetic energy into available potential
 320 energy (labeled \bar{C}) is related to a classical definition of baroclinic conversion
 321 (Kelly et al., 2010):

$$-g \int_{-h}^0 \rho \bar{w} dz = p'(z=0) \partial_t \eta + p'(z=-h) \bar{\mathbf{u}} \cdot \nabla h. \quad (7)$$

322 Subtracting (5) from (3) leads to the baroclinic kinetic energy budget:

$$\begin{aligned} \partial_t \int_{-h}^0 \rho_0 \frac{\mathbf{u}'^2}{2} dz + \nabla \cdot \int_{-h}^0 (p' \mathbf{u}') dz = \\ -g \int_{-h}^0 \rho w' dz - \rho_0 \int_{-h}^0 \epsilon_K dz - \mathbf{u}(z=-h) \cdot \tau_b. \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

323 In the preceding budget we have assumed that the total energy dissipation
 324 is due to baroclinic fluctuations, which is approximately true based on the
 325 amplitude of the barotropic energy dissipation. The conversion of available
 326 potential energy into baroclinic energy (labeled C') represents the local pro-
 327 duction of baroclinic kinetic energy and nearly equals \bar{C} . Both \bar{C} and C'
 328 can therefore be taken as measures of “baroclinic conversion” (see Zaron and
 329 Egbert (2006) for a review of the various definitions). The difference between
 330 \bar{C} and C' is due to mixing. Mixing indeed destroys available potential en-
 331 ergy (Zaron and Egbert, 2006) and the amount of energy extracted from the

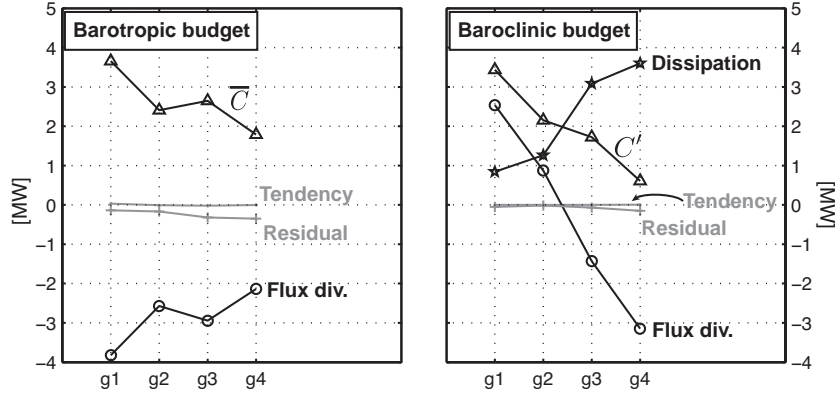


Figure 6: Barotropic (left) and baroclinic (right) kinetic energy budget for the control region. These budgets are averaged over the last 10 tidal cycles. Units are in megawatts.

332 barotropic field (measured by \bar{C}) is as a result slightly larger than the actual
 333 production of baroclinic kinetic energy (measured by C'), as seen in Fig. 6.

334 To summarize, the kinetic energy budgets can be written in the following
 335 form:

$$\text{Tendency} + \text{Flux div.} = \begin{cases} -\bar{C} & \text{(barotropic budget)} \\ C' - \text{Dissipation} & \text{(baroclinic budget)} \end{cases} \quad (9)$$

336 5.2. Kinetic energy budget

337 For the small domains (g1 and g2), there is a net outward flux of baroclinic
 338 energy (Fig. 6, right) from the control domain. The conversion C' is
 339 positive indicating a barotropic to baroclinic transfer of energy. The leading
 340 order balance is between this local conversion and its export at the bound-
 341 aries of the control region, dissipation being of smaller magnitude. For larger
 342 domains (g3 and g4), the flux of energy reverses and there is a net inflow
 343 of baroclinic energy. The conversion term is still a transfer from barotropic
 344 to baroclinic energy but its magnitude has decreased. Such a trend would
 345 tend to produce smaller baroclinic and larger barotropic kinetic energy inside
 346 the control region for larger domains. While the local changes in conversion
 347 could therefore explain the observed increase of barotropic energy with do-
 348 main size, they cannot explain that of baroclinic kinetic energy. In experi-
 349 ments g1 through g4, dissipation is proportional to baroclinic kinetic energy
 350 to within 10%, and the proportionality constant (~ 0.9 day) may be inter-
 351 preted as a damping time scale. For the two larger domains, the baroclinic

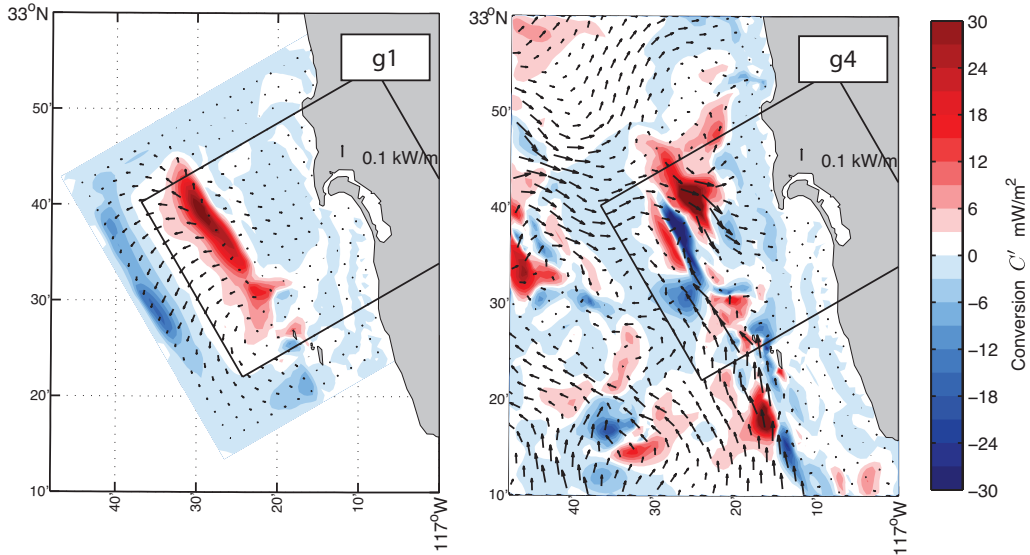


Figure 7: Baroclinic energy fluxes for domain g1 (left) and g4 (right). Color shows the conversion rate C' . Variables are averaged over the last 10 tidal cycles.

352 kinetic energy budget has changed: the leading order balance is between the
 353 net flux of energy into the control region and dissipation. These budgets
 354 support the interpretation that the contribution of remotely generated inter-
 355 nal fluctuations is growing with domain size and increases the control region
 356 baroclinic energy.

357 The control volume barotropic kinetic energy budget shows a balance
 358 between the flux divergence and conversion \overline{C} (Fig. 6, left). The magnitude
 359 of both terms is decreasing for larger domains and confirms that, within the
 360 control volume, the barotropic dynamics indeed adjusts to the production of
 361 baroclinic energy.

362 5.3. Local energy fluxes and conversion rate.

363 Maps of the baroclinic conversion rate (C') and of the depth-integrated
 364 fluxes of baroclinic energy provide further details of the domain size sensi-
 365 tivity in the neighborhood of the control region (Fig. 7). For domain g1,
 366 there is a well-defined area of baroclinic energy production located over the
 367 shelf break on the western part of the control region. Energy radiates from
 368 there and exits the control region through its western boundary. For domain
 369 g4, the distribution of baroclinic conversion is strongly modified. There is

370 now an area of negative conversion over the shelf break which explains the
 371 decrease of the conversion rate with domain size observed in Fig. 6. Pos-
 372 itive baroclinic conversion occurs at the foot of the shelf break as well as
 373 over a trough located at the north of the control region (see Fig. 1 for the
 374 bathymetry). Energy fluxes show that energy flows into the control region
 375 from several directions. Spatial structures of the conversion rate and of the
 376 fluxes are more complex than for domain g1.

377 As explained in section 5.1, C' and \bar{C} are nearly equal and their sensitiv-
 378 ity to domain size are therefore found to be comparable (Fig. 6). Changes
 379 to \bar{C} are attributed to either changes in tidal fluctuations of density, changes
 380 of barotropic vertical velocity, or, the combined changes of density and
 381 barotropic velocity. This can be seen for example from (7) and a decom-
 382 position of the local, instantaneous changes in vertical mass flux from the
 383 simulation in domain g1 to the simulation in domain g4:

$$\rho_4 \bar{w}_4 - \rho_1 \bar{w}_1 = \bar{w}_1 \delta \rho + \rho_1 \delta \bar{w} + \delta \rho \delta \bar{w}, \quad (10)$$

384 where $\delta \rho = \rho_4 - \rho_1$ and $\delta \bar{w} = \bar{w}_4 - \bar{w}_1$. From domain g1 to domain g4,
 385 \bar{C} decreases by about 1.9 MW (Fig. 6, left). Changes in density are such
 386 that they would decrease the conversion by 6.0 MW, thereby limiting the
 387 local production of baroclinic energy. This is counterbalanced by a 4.4 MW
 388 increase due to changes of the barotropic vertical velocity field. Combined
 389 changes in density and vertical velocity only account for a 0.3 MW decrease.
 390 Other studies have investigated the role of remotely generated internal tide on
 391 conversion (Kelly and Nash, 2010; Kelly et al., 2012). The present situation
 392 differs from these studies in that there is an adjustment of the barotropic
 393 dynamics which contribute to the observed changes in conversion.

394 5.4. Remote conversion rate.

395 Changes in barotropic dynamics from one simulation to another can affect
 396 the control volume baroclinic kinetic energy in several ways. First by modi-
 397 fying the local conversion of barotropic to baroclinic energy. In section 5.3,
 398 we have seen that changes of the tidal barotropic vertical velocity contributes
 399 to the total change in conversion. However, the change of conversion with
 400 increasing domain size would tend to decrease the control volume baroclinic
 401 kinetic energy, which is not what is observed (section 4.2).

402 Changes in the barotropic dynamics could also affect the remote (i.e.
 403 outside the control region) generation of baroclinic energy. To assess this

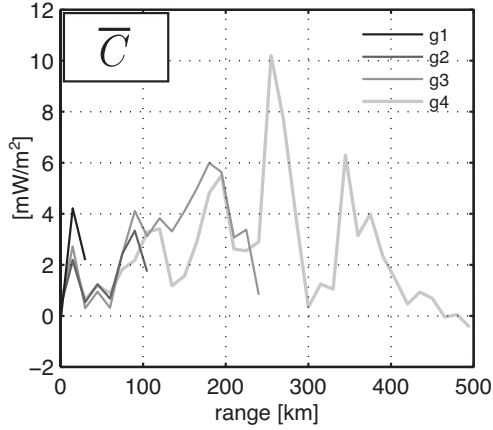


Figure 8: Conversion rate \overline{C} averaged in 15 km wide rings around the center of the control region and as a function of distance from this center. Gray levels corresponds to different numerical domain sizes.

404 issue, \overline{C} is averaged in 15 km wide rings around the center of the control
 405 volume and shown as a function of range in Fig. 8. The conversion fluctuates
 406 between 1 mW m^{-2} and 10 mW m^{-2} (spatial means are 3.0 and 3.2 mW m^{-2}
 407 for g_4 and g_3 respectively). The peak of conversion around 250 km range is
 408 the signature of the strong internal tide generation that takes place inside the
 409 Santa Cruz Basin (Buijsman et al., 2012). Conversion rates with domains
 410 g_1 , g_2 and g_3 are at most within a factor of two from the conversion estimate
 411 on grid g_4 . Between 100 and 200 km range, the magnitude of the conversion
 412 with g_4 is lower than that with g_3 . From the simulation in domain g_3 to that
 413 in domain g_4 , \overline{C} averaged over domain g_3 decreases by 0.20 mW m^{-2} . This
 414 change is the sum of contributions due to changes of fluctuations of density
 415 (-0.17 mW m^{-2}), changes of barotropic vertical velocities (-0.22 mW m^{-2})
 416 and to their combined changes (0.19 mW m^{-2}). We conclude that, while
 417 there are modest changes of the conversion rate from one grid to another, it
 418 is unlikely that the increase in baroclinic kinetic inside the control volume is
 419 due to an intensification of the conversion. It is more likely that this increase
 420 results from the growing number of internal tide generation sites included
 421 within larger domains.

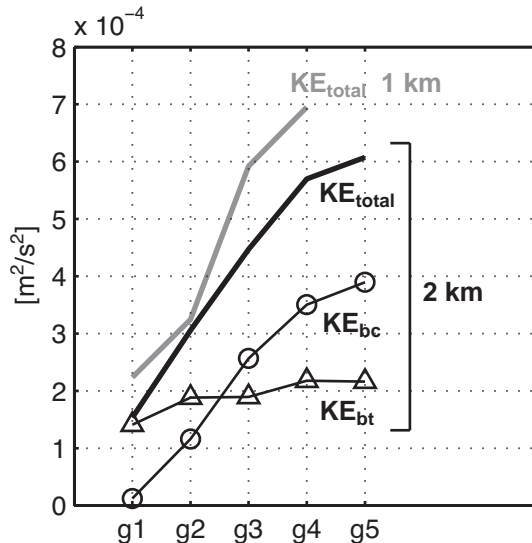


Figure 9: Control region kinetic energy as a function of domain size with a 2 km grid spacing in black and with 1 km grid spacing in gray. Total kinetic energy (full lines) and its baroclinic (circles) and barotropic (triangles) contributions are shown. Energy is averaged over the last day.

422 6. On the choice of grid cell size and viscosity.

423 6.1. Effect of a coarser grid on the M2 kinetic energy

424 In light of the continuing increase of kinetic energy, the size of the numer-
 425 ical domain should ideally be increased until no further increase was seen.
 426 The grid spacing was increased to 2 km, to allow simulations with domains
 427 up to 1024×1024 km, referred to as g5. The vertical spacing was doubled
 428 in order to keep a consistent grid aspect ratio (following Zaron and Egbert
 429 (2006)) and viscosities were increased so as to keep the ratios K_v/dz^2 and
 430 K_h/dx^2 constant. The control region is at the same geographical location as
 431 for the 1 km grid.

432 For numerical domains of comparable area, the control region kinetic
 433 energy is lower by as much as 20% with 2 km grid spacing than with 1 km
 434 spacing (Fig. 9). This is consistent with past research which has shown
 435 that the use of coarser grids reduces the production of internal tide (Zaron
 436 and Egbert, 2006; Carter et al., 2008; Zilberman et al., 2009). Indeed, the
 437 spatially averaged conversion \bar{C} with a 2 km grid spacing is 38% that with
 438 a 1 km grid spacing. On the other end of the internal tide life cycle, the

439 use of a coarser grid may also affect the internal tide propagation and decay,
440 which is believed to occur via scattering off bathymetry into small scale
441 internal waves (Müller and Bühler, 2009). Arguably, the use of a subgrid scale
442 parametrization appropriate to grid spacings comparable to the present one,
443 i.e. when internal wave breaking is not resolved, should dissipate resolved
444 scales equally well when grid spacing is varied. In the present case however,
445 the prescribed increase of viscosities with 2 km grid spacing more strongly
446 damps internal tide fluctuations of any wavelength. This ultimately limits the
447 contributions from remote baroclinic generation sites and could be another
448 explanation for the decreased energy with a 2 km grid spacing.

449 Despite the overall decrease of energy, the trends of total, barotropic and
450 baroclinic kinetic energies are comparable to that with 1 km grid spacing for
451 domains g1 to g4. The difference of total kinetic energy between g1 and g4
452 is $4.7 \cdot 10^{-4} \text{ m}^2\text{s}^{-2}$ for 1 km grid spacing against $4.25 \cdot 10^{-4} \text{ m}^2\text{s}^{-2}$ for 2 km
453 grid spacing. This slightly slower rate of increase of kinetic energy likely
454 results from the reduced internal tide production with coarser grids and the
455 stronger damping of internal fluctuations. Between g4 and g5, the increase of
456 kinetic energy is remarkably slower than for the smaller domains. Numerical
457 simulations on larger domains would be required to confirm a plateau is
458 within reach.

459 *6.2. Effect of increased viscosities on the M2 kinetic energy*

460 We conduct next a sensitivity experiment on the viscous energy loss by
461 doubling horizontal and vertical viscosities. The expectation is that it will
462 hasten the decay of remotely generated fluctuations and lead to lower levels
463 of baroclinic energy inside the control region. Reports on the effect of turbu-
464 lence parametrization for a regional tidal simulations are sparse. Niwa and
465 Hibiya (2004) found that increasing viscosities and diffusivities did not alter
466 the rate of conversion \overline{C} but increased kinetic energy dissipation in a simula-
467 tion of the East China Sea. Note that this would not happen in an enclosed
468 area where the volume averaged conversion rate has to balance dissipation.
469 Kang and Fringer (2012) find that conversion and the inferred energy dis-
470 sipation (i.e. the residual of the energy budget) is insensitive to prescribed
471 viscosities. The experiments of Kang and Fringer (2012) however differ from
472 the present ones as the bulk of their energy dissipation is numerical.

473 The total amount of energy inside the control region is less (15% for the
474 largest domain g4) than that with the base choice of viscosities (Fig. 10).
475 This decrease is the reflection of an equal drop of baroclinic energy. Along

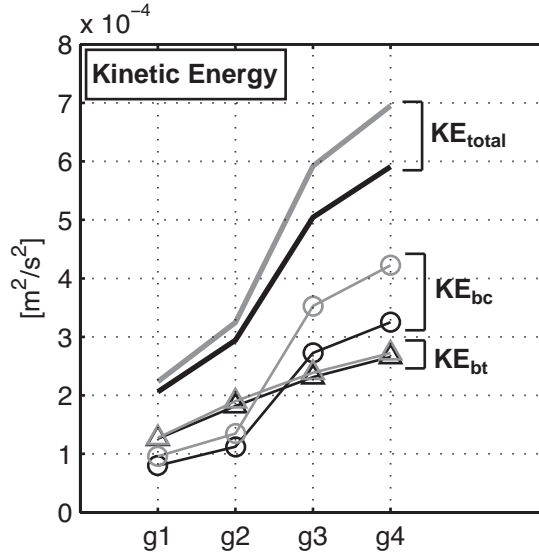


Figure 10: Control region kinetic energy as a function of domain size for the base choice of viscosities (in grey) and for doubled viscosities (in black). Total kinetic energy (full lines) and its baroclinic (circles) and barotropic (triangles) contributions are shown. The energy is averaged over the last day.

476 with the decreased baroclinic energy flux into the control region (not shown),
 477 these observations confirm the initial expectation that the decay of remotely
 478 generated internal fluctuations has been hastened by the larger viscosities.
 479 The barotropic energy, on the other hand, is not as affected by the increased
 480 viscosities. This is consistent with Niwa and Hibiya (2004), Kang and Fringer
 481 (2012), and the constancy of barotropic to baroclinic conversion when vis-
 482 cosities and/or diffusivities are increased.

483 Ideally, one would like to use viscosities and diffusivities appropriate to
 484 our choice of grid spacing (i.e. too coarse to resolve wave breaking), the
 485 regimes of internal wave activity at hand, and potentially the unresolved
 486 bathymetric distribution. Bottom boundary layers have potential importance
 487 on internal tide generation (Kurapov et al., 2010) and should also be treated
 488 more realistically. An alternative would be to greatly reduce grid sizes and
 489 resolve the breaking of internal waves but this would require an unrealistic
 490 amount of computational power. We can therefore only conclude here that,
 491 even with our base case viscosities, it is very likely that we are overestimating
 492 the damping of remotely generated internal fluctuations and that the growth

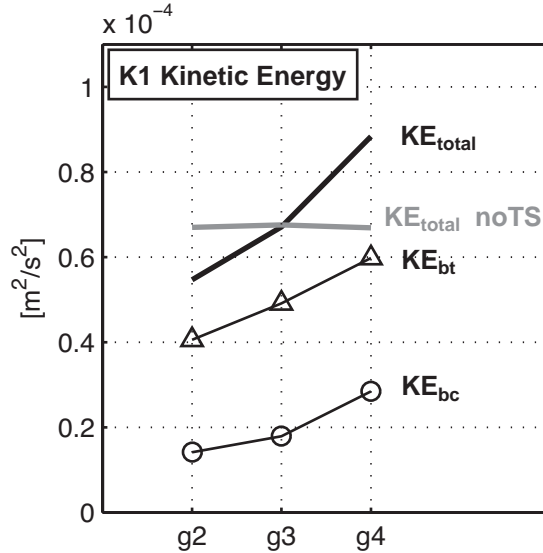


Figure 11: K1 tide. Control region kinetic energy as a function of domain size. The total kinetic energy (full lines) and its baroclinic (circles) and barotropic (triangles) contributions are shown. The kinetic energy is averaged over the last 5 days.

493 of the control region kinetic energy only stops for domains larger than those
 494 considered here.

495 **7. K1 tidal kinetic energy.**

496 Diurnal tidal frequencies such as K1 are subinertial in the Southern Cal-
 497 ifornia Bight. The nature of the tidal response is different at subinertial
 498 frequencies as internal gravity waves are trapped against topographic fea-
 499 tures and cannot propagate freely (Brink, 1991; Dale and Sherwin, 1996).
 500 This trapping can lead to amplified responses close to isolated topographic
 501 features and enhanced local mixing (Kunze and Toole, 1997; Tanaka et al.,
 502 2010). The limited propagation of diurnal internal tide should be an ad-
 503 vantage for the tidal modeling of these constituents. We check this now by
 504 forcing the model with the K1 constituent. K1 sea level fluctuations are
 505 about 34 cm in the control region (against 50 cm for M2). Despite their
 506 evanescent nature, internal fluctuations reach some distance off their gen-
 507 eration sites. As a result, a spurious interaction occurs in the baroclinic
 508 simulation in domain g1 between the western boundary nudging layer and
 509 internal fluctuations generated along the shelf break near the control domain

510 western boundary. Adjustments of the nudging layer width or the relaxation
511 time scale did not get rid of this issue and we therefore do not show results
512 in domain g1 for K1 simulations. Finally, simulations are 30 days long (com-
513 pared to 15 days for M2) in order to accommodate for a slower spin up of
514 K1 fluctuations. Kinetic energy levels are estimated over the last 5 days of
515 the simulations.

516 For barotropic runs, the control region kinetic energy (gray in Fig. 11)
517 varies very weakly with domain size, to within less than 1% of its average
518 level. For baroclinic runs, the kinetic energy is predominantly barotropic
519 inside the control region, with a ratio of barotropic to total energy between
520 67% and 73% (Fig. 11). This is a marked difference with the M2 case, where
521 the increase of baroclinic kinetic energy with increasing numerical domain
522 size produced a large variation of the ratio of baroclinic to barotropic energy
523 (see section 4.2). There is an overall increase of total kinetic energy (60%
524 of the g2 level) explained by the simultaneous growths of barotropic and
525 baroclinic energies. This increase is weaker than that for the M2 tide, as the
526 M2 total kinetic energy nearly doubles inside the control region from g2 to
527 g4 simulations (Fig. 5).

528 Barotropic kinetic energy budgets (not shown) indicate that there is some
529 adjustment of the barotropic dynamics. The barotropic energy fluxes are ap-
530 proximately parallel to the control domain western boundary but slightly veer
531 into the boundary for larger domains. There is consequently a growth of the
532 convergence of barotropic energy fluxes inside the control domain which is
533 counterbalanced by an increase of barotropic to baroclinic conversion. As in
534 the case of the M2 tide, this confirms that the barotropic tidal fluctuations
535 adjust locally to the possible conversion of barotropic to baroclinic energy.
536 The increase in the conversion C' is about 0.18 MW from g2 to g4 and
537 could explain the growth of baroclinic kinetic energy with domain size. The
538 flux of incoming baroclinic energy through the southern boundary is however
539 also increasing with domain size, albeit in a smaller extent (0.07 MW). This
540 increased flux is consistent with the signature of coastal-trapped waves (Hut-
541 nance, 1992) which can accumulate an increasing amount of energy along the
542 coastline for larger domains.

543 8. Conclusion

544 This study computed the sensitivity to numerical domain size of the tidal
545 response inside a control region along the Southern California Bight coastline.

546 Unlike sea level, which varies weakly, the kinetic energy was found to increase
547 with domain size. This coincided with increases of the incoming flux of
548 baroclinic energy through the control region boundaries, which suggests that
549 the growing contribution from remotely generated internal fluctuations is
550 responsible. Some variations of the barotropic to baroclinic conversion were
551 observed with domain size and were explained by both changes in fluctuations
552 of the density and barotropic vertical velocity. Neither local (i.e. within
553 the control region) nor remote (i.e. outside the control region) changes of
554 conversion seemed consistent with the observed increase of baroclinic kinetic
555 energy. We also showed with a nested experiment that proper knowledge of
556 the 3D tidal fluctuations along the smallest domain boundaries is sufficient
557 to reproduce the elevated energy levels obtained with the runs on the largest
558 domain.

559 Eventually we would expect the kinetic energy increase to stop when the
560 most distant fluctuations are scattered and dissipated away before reaching
561 the control region. While this follows intuition, it is unclear a priori for what
562 domain size this actually would occur. To answer that question would require
563 estimating both the intensity of the generation as well as the damping rate
564 of the fluctuations.

565 To test the proposed interpretation, viscosities were doubled, resulting
566 in lower baroclinic energy inside the control region, consistent with stronger
567 damping of remotely generated fluctuations and a decrease of their contri-
568 butions. Coarser grids allowed the use of larger domains and the increase
569 of kinetic energy with domain size slowed somewhat for the 1024×1024 km
570 domain. The present study cannot conclude on the importance of internal
571 wave sources located more than 1000 km away from the control region.

572 We expect the issue posed by contributions from remotely generated fluc-
573 tuations to be generic even though our conclusions are specific to the particu-
574 larities of the domain considered (mostly but not exclusively the surrounding
575 bathymetry). Background flow was ignored in these experiments, but could
576 affect the generation and propagation of the remotely generated baroclinic
577 tide and modulate the present results. The perturbation introduced by back-
578 ground flows are, for example, believed to be responsible for local fluctuations
579 of the observed internal tide (Chavanne et al., 2010; Kelly and Nash, 2010;
580 Zilberman et al., 2011; Kelly et al., 2012).

581 Finally, the tidal response for a subinertial constituent (K1) was com-
582 puted. Some sensitivity to domain size was found with, in particular, a
583 growth of kinetic energy inside the control region. This sensitivity is how-

584 ever reduced compared to the M2 case, which is as expected given the limited
585 propagation of internal fluctuations at subinertial frequencies.

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