

We thank the reviewer for their thoughtful suggestions and constructive criticism that have helped us improve our manuscript. Below we provide responses to reviewer concerns and suggestions in blue font.

## **Original Submission**

### **HSRL-2 Retrievals of Ocean Surface Wind Speeds**

#### **1.1. Recommendation**

##### **Major revision**

###### **1. Comments to Author:**

**Overall opinion:** This paper demonstrates the HSRL-2 retrieval of ocean surface wind speeds based on the HSRL-2 measurement principle relying on the wave-slope variance determination and dedicated campaign of comparison with the airborne and dropsonde data. The topic you cover is a key for understanding the response of ocean surface reflectivity to changing conditions of ocean and elucidates previously unknown aspects on ocean surface wind speed using HSRL. You also have nearly perfect instrumentation to address this issue. However, this study is not ready to be accepted due to the following setbacks: the plain title that carries very little information about the exact, less broad scope or the actual content of the study, the lack of quantitative information in the abstract (you are not convincing by simply reporting four numerical arguments as your main proofs), poorly structured methodology with significant gaps (did you specify the angular specifications of HSRL-2 system for instance?) within and most critically, unconvincing “results” section due to poor structural choices and omitted numerical arguments in some cases when you speak about correlation. Please revise the manuscript using the comments below.

##### **2.1. Comments:**

**Title:** The title is overly-general. It sounds like it’s a white paper on HSLR retrieval on ocean surface winds. First, I am not sure whether it is a good idea to use unexplained acronyms even in the journals like AMT oriented on a very specific niche of experts. Moreover, what have you exactly done with HSRL-2 retrievals, introduced them? Evaluated? For how long period of time, etc? Your title does not reflect this idea and is therefore not a good title choice.

Thank you for your feedback on the title. We’ve changed it to “High Spectral Resolution Lidar – generation 2 (HSRL-2) Retrievals of Surface Wind Speeds: Methodology and Evaluation” to be more specific on the paper’s aims as you suggested.

**Abstract:** The abstract is not convincing in the present form because of the following issues:

- No Justification. Why it is important to understand, for instance, sea surface reflectance or surface wind speeds over ocean using HSRL? Which research gap you will close by bringing new knowledge on this topic? The statement, explaining this aspect should start your abstract from my point of view if you think about general readers.

We appreciate you bringing up this important point. We added this justification to the beginning of the abstract.

Added: “Ocean surface wind speed (i.e., wind speed 10 m above sea level) is a critical parameter used by atmospheric models to estimate the state of the marine atmospheric boundary layer (MABL). Accurate surface wind speed measurements in diverse locations are required to improve characterization of MABL dynamics and assess how models simulate large-scale phenomena related to climate change and global weather patterns. To provide these measurements, this study introduces and evaluates a new surface wind speed data product from NASA Langley Research Center’s High Spectral Resolution Lidar – generation 2 (HSRL-2) using data collected as part of NASA’s Aerosol Cloud meTeorology Interactions oVer the western ATlantic Experiment (ACTIVATE) mission.”

- Poor structure: Unclear role of two research flights that were introduced after you reported some results in numerical form. It’s uncommon structural decision for abstract of a peer-reviewed study to juggle between the results and methodological descriptions. Both introduction and main text leaves the feeling that two sections of the scientific analysis are poorly connected to each other, please address this aspect.

We agree that the way the two research flights were introduced was confusing. The goal of these case studies is to show how the HSRL-2 can continuously sample surface wind speeds on a given flight day, even on days with clouds present. We present this information more succinctly as follows:

Revised: “Also, the high horizontal spatial resolution of the HSRL-2 retrievals (0.5 s or ~75 m along track) allows the instrument to probe the fine-scale spatial variability of surface wind speeds over time along the flight track and breaks in broken cloud fields.”

- Scientific value: You reported four numbers numerically in an abstract of the study, called “HSRL-2 retrievals”. A simple question here: can we actually make any conclusions about HSRL-2 retrievals based on four numbers? You may reconsider the structure of your manuscript by minimizing methodological information in brief way and by nailing down your numerical arguments about efficiency of HSRL-2 retrieval.

Thank you for this advice. We agree that our numerical arguments should clearly show how the HSRL-2 retrievals perform. Therefore, we include the results of the retrieval assessment when the data is separated by 1) wind speed regime and 2) season. The results of the model comparison are also included to show how the Hu et al. (2008) model performs better for surface wind speeds below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ .

Revised: “These comparisons show correlations of 0.89, slopes of 1.04 and 1.17, and y-intercepts of  $-0.13 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-1.05 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  for linear and bisector regressions, respectively and the overall accuracy is calculated to be  $0.15 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 1.80 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . It is also shown that the dropsonde surface wind speed data most closely follows the HSRL-2 distribution of wave-slope variance using the distribution proposed by Hu et al. (2008) than the ones proposed by Cox and Munk (1954) and Wu (1990) for surface wind speeds below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ , with this category comprising most of the ACTIVATE data set. The retrievals are then evaluated separately for surface wind speeds below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and between  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and show that the HSRL-2 retrieves surface wind speeds with a bias of  $\sim 0.5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and an error of  $\sim 1.5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ , a finding not apparent in the cumulative comparisons. Also, it is shown that the HSRL-2 retrievals are more accurate in the summer ( $-0.18 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 1.52 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ) than winter ( $0.63 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 2.07 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ), but the HSRL-2 is still able to make numerous, ( $N = 236$ ) accurate retrievals in the winter.”

- You implied the wind speed over ocean behind the term “wind speed” but not articulated in sufficiently for a general reader by quickly resorting to the term without mentioning “ocean”. There is no value in wave-slope parametrizations over land, right? Please either emphasize once for the entire manuscript that you mean wind speed over ocean or always stick to this term, please.

Thank you, we agree that wind speed needs to be better articulated. We now introduce the term “ocean surface wind speed” as wind speeds above 10 m above sea level, then transition (with notice to the reader) into “surface wind speed” throughout the abstract and the entire paper.

**Introduction:** Several non-critical issues here:

- You spoke about CALIPSO retrievals of surface wind speeds using Cox-Munk principle but forgot about one of the seminal works on this topic (Josset et al., 2008 about synergy of CALIPSO and cloud radar data to retrieve AOD from this relationship). So, your speculations about correction of ocean signal by available AOD information from CALIPSO should definitely point out to this study and mention please that this idea has been already proposed and utilized by researchers.

Thank you for bringing up. We now include Josset et al. (2008) when explaining the CALIPSO retrievals.

Revised: “If coincident aerosol optical depth (AOD) data are available (e.g., from MODIS in the case of CALIPSO detailed in Josset (2008)) then they may be used to estimate the intervening attenuation and transfer the calibration.”

- CM54 as a term is actually worse choice than just plainly referring to the Cox-Munk principle as ‘Cox-Munk’ or ‘Cox and Munk parametrization’ from the reader point of view. You save very little space by introducing an unnecessary acronym that has to be searched in the manuscript by a reader. Moreover, Cox-Munk principle is quite known in this expert field, so professional readers are more familiar to this term rather than CM54.

Thank you, we agree that Hu08 and CM54 are confusing terms. We also found that including the Cox-Munk parameterization with all of our results made the aim of the paper less clear, so we instead dedicate model comparison analysis to Figs. 7 and 8. When these parameterizations are mentioned, we simply say Hu and Cox-Munk instead of Hu08 and CM54.

- Equations are not common for the introduction of peer-reviewed studies, but I'll leave this decision up to the editors.

Thank you for pointing this out. To lessen confusion, we removed this equation entirely.

- CALIPSO night data have higher quality from signal-to-noise ratio standpoint, but you said that only daytime data is available for AOD retrieval for correcting ocean signal (see Line 61). Clarify this aspect please.

Thank you for bringing up this point. This aspect has been clarified as follows:

Added: "If coincident aerosol optical depth (AOD) data are available (e.g., from MODIS in the case of CALIPSO detailed in Josset, 2008) then they may be used to estimate the intervening attenuation and transfer the calibration. However, such data from passive sensors including MODIS are only available during daytime, are typically not produced in the vicinity of clouds and may have unacceptably high uncertainties for accurately accounting for aerosol attenuation."

- The indicative paragraph of the introduction is poorly structured (the last paragraph of the introduction). A reader should get a clear idea about your research aim, but this paragraph might actually confuse a reader by excessive information inserted here. Please follow the structure: methodology shortly, research aim, site/period. All aspects requiring extensive referencing can be mentioned before this paragraph.

Thank you, we agree that this paragraph is too lengthy. We revised this paragraph using the structure that you suggested (methodology shortly, research aim, site/period, sentence shortly summarizing main discussion points).

**Methodology:** This section should be revisited as well:

- Provide explicit and extensive description of your HSRL system before you introduce the concept of the ocean surface return retrieval. Without knowing the specifications of your HSRL system, it is impossible to judge whether the calculus you choose and, for instance, crude assumption about Fresnel reflectance (if we are speaking about non-nadir angles) is valid for your study or not.

Thank you for this advice. We agree that it is important to introduce the HSRL-2 system before delving into the retrieval algorithm. Therefore, we created a new section: 2.3 HSRL-2 Instrument Description.

Added: “The NASA LaRC HSRL-2 is an airborne lidar instrument designed to enable vertically resolved retrievals of aerosol properties such as aerosol backscatter and depolarization at three wavelengths (355, 532, and 1064 nm), aerosol extinction at two wavelengths (355 and 532 nm) (Hair et al., 2008; Burton et al., 2018), and aerosol classification (Burton et al., 2012). In addition to these aerosol products, other retrieval capabilities include retrievals of atmospheric mixed layer height (Scarino et al., 2014), ocean subsurface particulate backscatter and attenuation coefficients (Schulien et al., 2017), cloud optical properties (in development), and 10 m surface wind speeds, the latter of which is the focus of this study. Details of the laser receiver optics and detectors are described in detail in Hair et al. (2008). This analysis utilizes the 532 nm data channels that include a total scattering channel (both molecular and particulate scattering), molecular scattering only, and the cross polarized channel, which are internally calibrated during flight. Key to determining the optical transmission and subsurface signals is a molecular channel that filters essentially all the particulate and specular scattering using the iodine notch filter as described in Hair et al. (2008), determining both the laser transmission down to the surface and correction of the subsurface scattering contribution to the integrated surface backscatter signal. The lidar is operated in a nadir-only viewing geometry (i.e., not scanning). The laser is a custom built 200 Hz repetition rate Nd:YAG laser emitting at 1064 nm, which is converted to both the second and third harmonic wavelengths of 532 nm and 355 nm, respectively. The output laser energies are nominally 34 mJ (1064 nm), 11 mJ (532 and 355 nm each) and each is set to a divergence ( $1/e^2$ ) of approximately 0.8 mrad, giving a beam footprint diameter on the ocean surface of ~7 m for the nominal 9 km King Air flight altitude. The telescope is set to a full field of view of 1 mrad, giving a viewing footprint diameter of 9 m at the ocean surface at nominal flight altitude. All three wavelengths are transmitted coaxially with the telescope through a fused silica window in the bottom of the aircraft are actively boresighted to the receiver. The HSRL-2 incorporates high speed photomultiplier tubes (PMTs) and custom amplifiers to allow data collection at 120 MHz sampling rates with 40 MHz bandwidths. Data are sampled at 120 MHz (1.25 m in the atmosphere and 0.94 m in the ocean) with 16-bit digitizers and single-shot profiles are summed over 100 laser shots during 0.5 s which is the fundamental acquisition interval before storing to a disk. The aircraft incorporates an Applanix Inertial Navigation System (INS) to record the aircraft altitude at 0.5 s time intervals corresponding to each 100-shot data profile. For the surface wind speed calculations, data are screened to limit the pitch and roll to less than +/- 3° from the median values, which are approximately 0° for the roll and 3° - 5° for pitch on the King Air.”

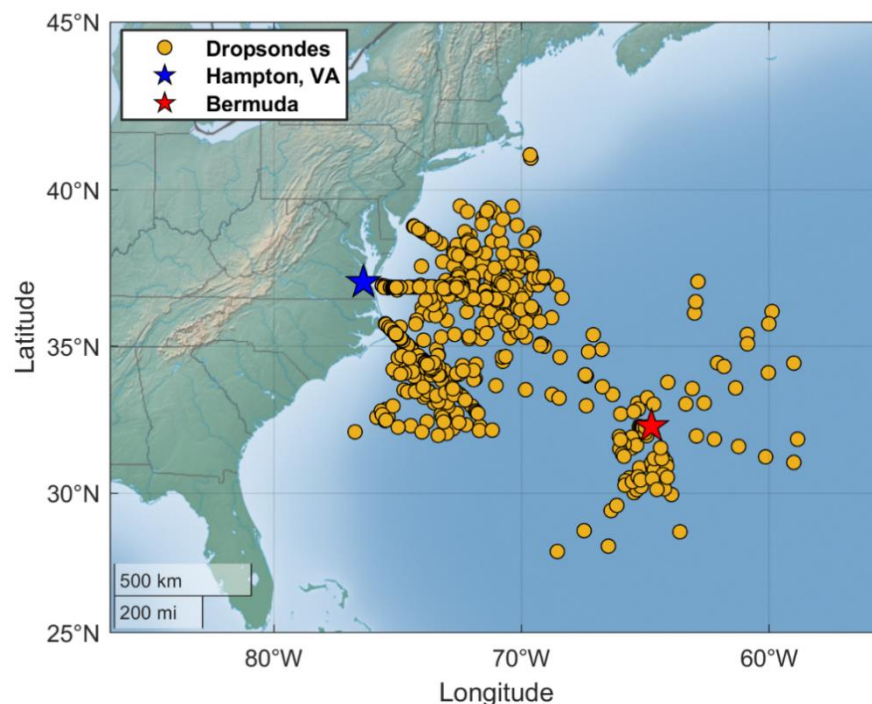
- From my point of view, the structure of your methodology should be: instrument, campaign, calculus, correction/collocation procedures. Now it's: “very short instrumental description, calculus, instrument a bit again, campaign, correction/collocation procedures, trivial statistical wiki”, but it is up to you.

We appreciate your feedback about the structure of our Methods section. We reordered Section 2 as follows: campaign, dropsonde instrument description, HSRL-2 instrument description, HSRL-2 retrieval algorithm, collocation/statistical procedures.

- I think sub-section 2.5 is redundant for the journal like AMT. These statistical approaches are common knowledge for atmospheric research.

Thank you for this comment. We decided to merge this sub-section with the collocation procedures (both are now Sect. 2.5), and removed the redundant definitions (i.e., equations for mean, STD, percentiles). We kept this section mainly because the other reviewer was quite interested in why we use OLS-bisector rather than other errors-in-variable techniques, so we expanded this discussion. We also wanted to be clear on which statistics we use (mainly for the mean error definition), which is why we provide a brief list at the end of the sub-section.

Revised: “Since wind speeds are the focus of this study, first the dropsonde wind speed data points closest to 10 m (altitude of  $11.56 \text{ m} \pm 3.19 \text{ m}$  for the 577 points) above sea level are recorded for each launch (multiple launches per flight) to allow meaningful comparison with the HSRL-2 surface wind speeds. Since one data point was taken per dropsonde for each flight, there are 160 recorded dropsonde measurements for 2020, 245 measurements for 2021, and 335 measurements for 2022. Then, the HSRL-2 wind speed retrieval closest in space and time to the corresponding dropsonde measurement is recorded. Collocation between the HSRL-2 and the dropsondes is constrained to below 30 km horizontally and below 15 minutes temporally to remove outliers while trying to maximize the number of data points to be used in the study. Further constraining these distance and time conditions would eliminate more data points with negligible improvement to the statistics as shown by Figs. S1 and S2 in the supplement. Due to missing data in the HSRL-2 data set and the removal of outliers based on collocation constraints, 577 data points are available for comparison between the dropsondes and the HSRL-2 (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3: Map of 577 ACTIVATE dropsondes launched from the King Air between 2020 and 2022 that are used to evaluate the HSRL-2 surface wind speed retrievals introduced in this study.**

After the surface wind speed data are prepared using the procedure above, scatterplots along with the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ), linear regression, and ordinary least squares bisector regression (OLS-bisector) are used to visually demonstrate how well HSRL-2 wind speed data match dropsonde data and show any potential variability in the data. Since OLS-bisector is less common than linear regression, a brief explanation of their differences is provided. In linear regression,  $X$  is treated as the independent variable while  $Y$  is treated as the dependent variable. In other words, one observes how  $Y$  varies with changes to fixed  $X$  values. OLS-bisector is known as an errors-in-variable regression technique, where  $X$  and  $Y$  are both dependent variables and thus both subject to error. OLS-bisector regresses  $Y$  on  $X$  (standard OLS) and then regresses  $X$  on  $Y$  (inverse OLS), then bisects the angle of these two regression lines (Ricker, 1973). Although other errors-in-variable techniques exist (e.g., Deming regression, orthogonal distance regression), OLS-bisector is chosen because it calculates the error present in both data sets using the bisector rather than assuming an error a priori like the examples mentioned (Wu and Yu, 2018). After performing these regressions, histograms of surface wind speed deltas, which are defined as HSRL-2 wind speed minus dropsonde wind speed, are created to show the distribution and spread of the data more easily. The mean and standard deviation (STD), of the surface wind speed deltas are computed and then used to define the mean error (mean  $\pm$  STD). This metric is used to evaluate how accurately the HSRL-2 retrieves surface wind speeds. The mean and STD are then used to calculate the error (mean  $\pm$  STD) of the HSRL-2 wind speed product. Note that mean and bias are used interchangeably in the following discussion.”

- You mentioned MERRA-2 reanalysis (Lines 423-425), but never described this data in the methodology. If you really used this data, this is a critical oversight, making your study unreproducible and therefore not suitable for peer-review. If you did not use it, it's confusing why you suddenly show us SST background map here like it will be an important aspect of your study later.

We apologize for the confusion. We simply use the MERRA-2 data to contextualize sea-surface temperature gradients and do not use any of its surface wind speed data for the comparison analysis. This data is just used to briefly show that we can potentially track changes in sea-surface temperature using HSRL-2 surface wind speed.

Added: “Note that Fig. 4a uses SST data from Modern-Era Retrospective Analysis for Research and Applications, Version 2 (MERRA-2) (Gelaro et al., 2017) to contextualize the SST gradients present in the WNAO, and no comparisons with MERRA-2 surface wind speed data are performed in this study.”

**Results:** I am afraid that the figures 1 – 8 and corresponding description alongside the tables are nothing but chaos from peer-review study point of view. Think about readers, would it be convenient for them to comprehend the material in this way? Please follow the structure “*Description of figure 1, Figure 1, then Description of Figure 2, Figure 2, ... etc*” It does not mean you need to make every plot as a separate figure but speak out what you show us. Also,

Tables are wrongly formatted. See the AMT requirements for border formatting when it comes to tables. Also, please ensure that you report quantitative findings consistently without over-relying on qualitative terms.

Thank you, we agree that listing all the figures at once is quite confusing for the reader. We now have revised Section 3.1 with the following structure: introduce Figure X, Figure X, discussion of Figure X. We have also revised the table formatting to follow AMT requirements and report our quantitative findings from each figure.

Revised:

**Table 1: Summary of all HSRL-2 – dropsonde surface wind speed statistics shown in Figs. 6, 9, and 10. The two values for slope and y-intercept refer to those for the linear and bisector regressions, in that order. R values are the same for both linear and bisector regressions, so they are listed as one value.**

	N	r	Slope	Y-intercept [m s <sup>-1</sup> ]	Mean Error [m s <sup>-1</sup> ]
<b>Overall</b>	577	0.89	1.04/1.17	-0.13/-1.05	0.15 ± 1.80
<b>Wind Speed &lt; 7 m s<sup>-1</sup></b>	292	0.66	0.65/0.99	1.10/-0.49	-0.54 ± 1.34
<b>7 m s<sup>-1</sup> ≤ Wind Speed &lt; 13.3 m s<sup>-1</sup></b>	236	0.75	0.64/0.85	3.80/1.87	0.56 ± 1.49
<b>Winter</b>	236	0.88	0.95/1.08	1.03/-0.08	0.63 ± 2.07
<b>Summer</b>	341	0.87	1.08/1.24	-0.69/-1.68	-0.18 ± 1.52

**Conclusions:** This is a section with little value for reader in the current form. Please revisit your conclusions by thinking about two aspects: harmonizing this section of the manuscript with key aspects such as research aim, methodology, key results, etc; second, think about implications you give for future studies. Good and bad lessons are both valuable, use them in the best way to inform the reader. Specifically:

- Foremost, I think you should report your correlations for each wind speed range directly. I see correlations only over the entire ranges, which might be misleading due to highly variable correlations depending on the wind speeds. Stick to quantitative reporting please without switching to qualitative remarks, behind which, a reader cannot discern an actual low correlation for high wind speeds. Such correlations are also key, essential lessons learned from your analysis, making your study more valuable.

Thank you for this great suggestion. We agree that there is a lot of value in discussing each wind speed range directly and quantitatively in the conclusions, so we include this aspect now.

Added: “It is also observed that the dropsonde surface wind speed measurements most closely match with the Hu et al. (2008) wind speed – wave-slope variance model than the Cox and Munk (1954) and Wu (1990) models for surface wind speeds below 7 m s<sup>-1</sup>, which is an important finding because most ACTIVATE surface wind speeds fall into this category. After this overview of model performance, the HSRL-2 retrievals for surface wind speeds separated into below 7 m s<sup>-1</sup> and between 7 m s<sup>-1</sup> and 13.3 m s<sup>-1</sup> categories are



then evaluated in more detail. For surface wind speeds below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ , correlations of 0.66, slopes of 0.65 and 0.99, and y-intercepts of  $1.10 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-0.49 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  are found and the accuracy of the retrievals is found to be  $-0.54 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 1.34 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . Surface wind speeds between  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  show correlations of 0.75, slopes of 0.64 and 0.85, and y-intercepts of  $3.80 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $1.87 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and the retrieval accuracy is shown to be  $0.56 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 1.49 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . Statistics are not reported for surface wind speeds above  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  because there are too few points in this category to make meaningful comparisons. These results showcase an important observation not seen in the cumulative results, which is that the HSRL-2 estimates surface wind speeds with a bias of  $\pm \sim 0.5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and an error of  $\pm \sim 1.5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . Lastly, the data are divided into winter and summer deployments (dates denoted in Sect. 2.1) to assess how the HSRL-2 performs between seasons. The winter surface wind speed data comparisons show correlations of 0.88, slopes of 0.95 and 1.08, and y-intercepts of  $1.03 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-0.08 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and the summer data show correlations of 0.87, slopes of 1.08 and 1.24, and y-intercepts of  $-0.69 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-1.68 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  (linear and bisector regressions, respectively). The accuracy of the lidar retrievals is reported as  $0.63 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 2.07 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-0.18 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 1.52 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  for winter and summer, respectively. These findings show that HSRL-2 retrievals are more accurate in the summer than in winter, but still provide substantial ( $N = 236$ ) and accurate surface wind speed data in winter as well.”

- I suggest to remove a remark on the comparison between the efficiency of CM-54 and Hu-08 models because you never set up such research aim; there was no ultimate analysis on this, right? However, note that some other expert might think, well, once the authors state that they can actually ESTIMATE surface reflectance, why they did not go all the way by comparing Cox-Munk, Wu 90, Hu 08, Li-2010 etc, parametrizations QUANTITATIVELY if they finally get their hands on the ground truth using HSRL when it comes to sea surface reflectance?

Thank you, we greatly appreciate your advice on this. We instead perform a preliminary model analysis in Figs. 7 and 8 to show that the Hu model performs better than the Cox-Munk and Wu models for surface wind speeds below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . A more rigorous analysis as you mentioned is warranted, but the aim of our paper mainly is to evaluate our retrieval algorithm using the in situ dropsonde measurements. This detailed efficiency analysis would be good material for a second manuscript, but is beyond the scope of this paper.

Added: “Now that the HSRL-2 retrievals have been broadly evaluated, Fig. 7 shows how their accuracy varies per  $1 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  interval in surface wind speed. This plot also provides the opportunity to compare the Hu et al. (2008) model with the models proposed by Cox and Munk (1954) and Wu (1990) to see if some of the error in the HSRL-2 retrievals can be attributed to model characteristics.

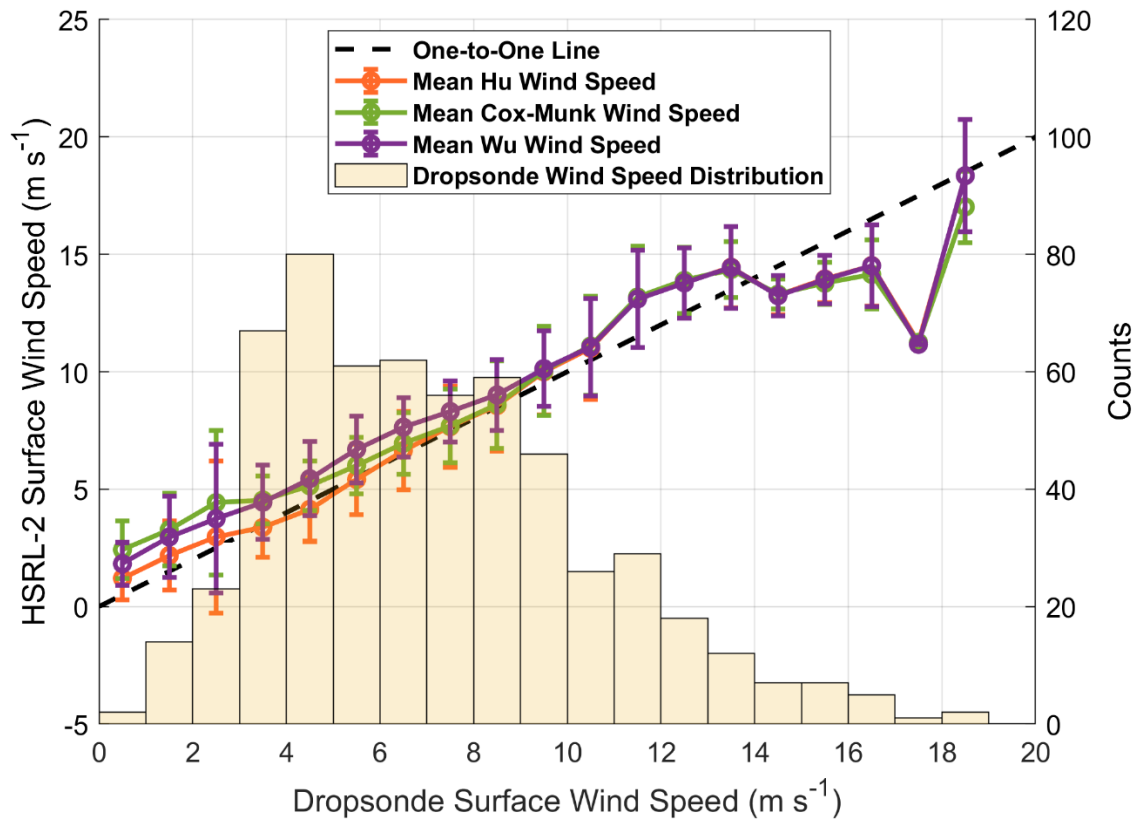


Figure 7: HSRL-2 surface wind speed using Hu, Cox-Munk, and Wu models versus mean dropsonde surface wind speed calculated per  $1 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  bin. A histogram of dropsonde surface wind speeds is also included to show their distribution.

It is seen that the mean Cox-Munk and Wu surface wind speed values are higher than the mean Hu values from  $0 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  to  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ , showing that the Cox-Munk and Wu relationships overestimate dropsonde surface wind speeds more than the Hu relationship. The variability (i.e., STD) around the mean per bin is similar between the three models, which is  $1.59 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  for Hu,  $1.43 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  for Cox-Munk, and  $1.55 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  for Wu on average. Although similar, the STD of the Hu surface wind speeds found here is  $\sim 0.4 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  lower than the one found in Fig. 6. This could be attributed to an STD not being able to be calculated for the 17 to  $18 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  bin since it only contained one point.

Although it is apparent Cox-Munk and Wu retrievals overestimate dropsonde observations for surface wind speeds below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ , it is still unclear which of the models perform better overall. Therefore, the y-axis from Fig. 7 is converted to wave-slope space and the result of this modification is shown in Fig. 8. HSRL-2 wave-slope is used because it directly reports the original measurements of surface reflectance rather than estimated values of surface wind speed. Using the original data ensures that uncertainty is coming from the actual HSRL-2 – dropsonde comparisons rather than from potential errors in the conversion from wave-slope to surface wind speed.

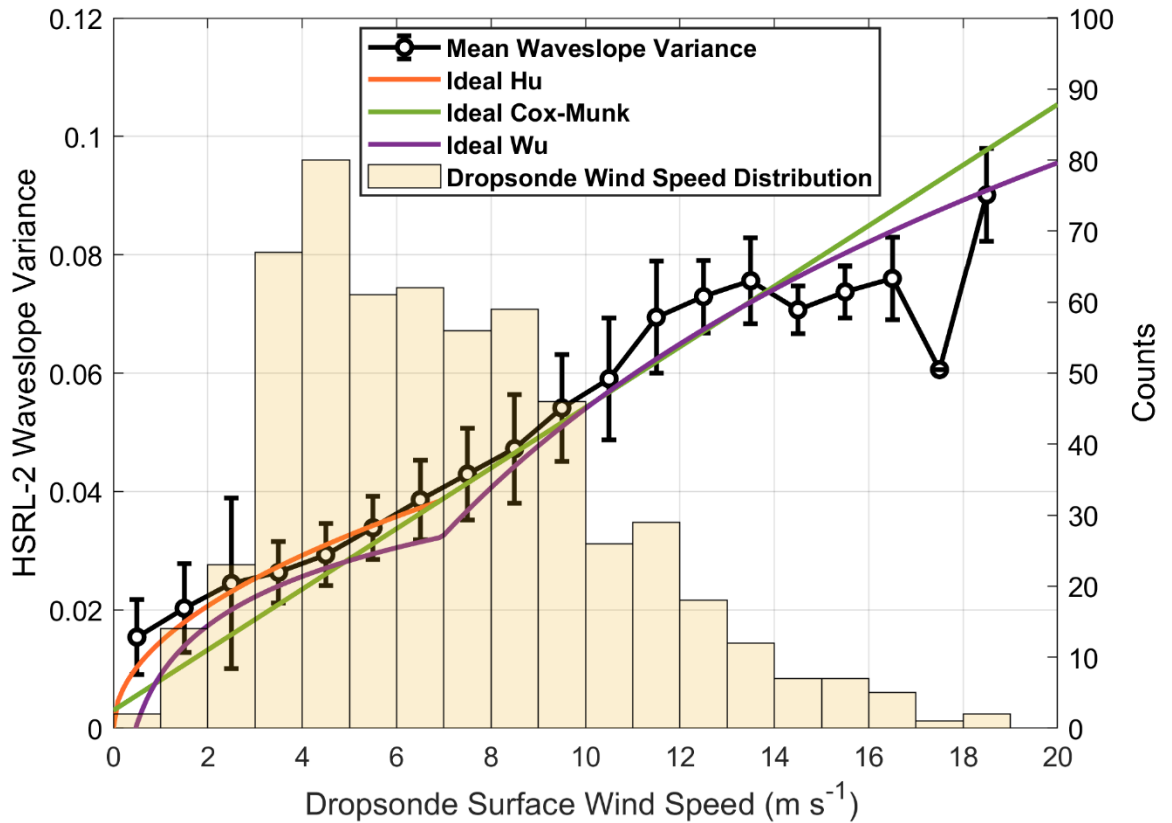


Figure 8: HSRL-2 wave-slope variance versus mean dropsonde surface wind speed calculated per  $1 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  bin. Ideal Hu, Cox-Munk, and Wu distributions are included to show how well observed dropsonde data match with each parameterization. A histogram of dropsonde surface wind speeds is also included to show their distribution.

From Fig. 8, it is more easily seen how the dropsonde surface wind speed distribution compares with Hu, Cox-Munk, and Wu parameterizations. Dropsonde surface wind speeds match quite closely to Hu and Cox-Munk parameterizations as opposed to the Wu parameterization between  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ , although some divergence is seen above  $\sim 10.5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . However, a critical observation that is more apparent in Fig. 8 than Fig. 7 is how the dropsonde data most resemble the Hu distribution for surface wind speeds below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . This improvement is substantial, especially since most of the surface wind speeds in ACTIVATE fall into this category. Surface wind speeds above  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  substantially diverge from all models, especially above  $16 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . As mentioned previously, there are few surface wind speed observations in this category, so more measurements are necessary to make meaningful comparisons between the two data sets. Overall, Figs. 7 and 8 demonstrate the benefits of using the Hu parameterization in this study and why surface wind speeds above  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  are not the main focus of the comparisons in this section. Further analysis is warranted to rigorously compare the performance of various surface reflectance models and potentially apply corrections (i.e., whitecap correction for surface wind speeds above  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ), but the aim of this paper is to evaluate LARC's HSRL-2 surface wind speed retrieval algorithm using the available ground-truth dropsonde measurements."

Line 496. A very strange remark appeared here. You used the word “novel” for the first time in the conclusions, you never ever articulate it before the conclusive remark is made. Which leads to conclusion, have you been surprised that your method is novel once you reached conclusions? Explain the novelty of your method in a comment below and provide required explanations in abstract as well.

Thank you for pointing this out. What we meant is that this is a new ocean surface wind speed product that LaRC’s HSRL-2 team developed, so this is now reflected throughout the paper. As a result, we remove the “word” novel from this line.

Revised: “This retrieval method offers a new path forward in airborne field work for the acquisition of surface wind speed data at a high spatial (~75 m along track) and time (0.5 s) resolution, as demonstrated with two case study flights (Research Flight 29 on 28 August 2020 and Research Flight 14 on 1 March 2020).”

Minor comments:

- Line 64 Errors can create errors is a bad word choice.

We agree. Line now reads: “Estimation of the attenuation from the lidar data alone requires an assumption of the aerosol extinction-to-backscatter ratio (or “lidar ratio”), so errors in the assumed value can lead to an incorrect estimate of attenuation, especially when AOD is high.”

- Line 99 Section 1 = Introduction

This line has been removed entirely to decrease the length of the indicative paragraph of the Introduction.

- Line 104 This approach, as well as Hu-08 piece-wise approach for U derivation; both will not work with non-nadir lidar systems (see works of Josset et al 2010; about the equation for non-nadir retrieval of ocean surface reflectance and ongoing works of Labzovskii et al., on non-nadir retrievals of ocean surface reflectance from Aeolus which measures at >35 degree incidence).

Thank you for pointing this out. We add that we use a nadir-only viewing geometry in the instrument description (Sect. 2.3), which is why we use the approaches of Josset et al. (2010b) and Hu et al. (2008).

Added: “The lidar is operated in a nadir-only viewing geometry (i.e., not scanning).”

- Line 108 Is your system similar to CALIPSO to assume this Hu approach works with your HSRL system?

Thank you for this question. We assume that we can use the Hu approach with the HSRL-2 system because the measurement channels we introduce in Eqs. 4.1 and 4.2 are said to

be similar to CALIPSO's 532 nm channels in that they both measure the attenuated backscatter from molecules and particles. However, there is a limitation in using the Hu relationship for surface wind speeds above 13.3 m s<sup>-1</sup> due to some significant differences between CALIPSO and HSRL-2, which is discussed in the whitecaps section at the end of Sect. 2.4.

Added: "The equations for the HSRL-2 532-nm measurement channels are:

$$P_{mol}(r) = G_{mol} \frac{1}{r^2} F(r) \beta_m^{\parallel}(r) T^2(r), \quad (4.1)$$

$$P_{tot}(r) = G_{mol} G_{iz} \frac{1}{r^2} \left[ \left( \beta_p^{\parallel}(r) + \beta_m^{\parallel}(r) \right) + G_{dep} \left( \beta_p^{\perp}(r) + \beta_m^{\perp}(r) \right) \right] T^2(r) \quad (4.2)$$

where  $P_x$  is the total measured signal per sampling interval by the lidar and  $r$  denotes the range from the lidar. Here the *mol* subscript denotes the measured signal on the molecular channel, for which all particulate backscatter and the surface return is blocked by an iodine vapor filter. The *tot* subscript denotes the "total" backscatter calculated from the sum of two measurement channels, the co-polarized channel and the cross-polarized channel. These channels are essentially elastic backscatter lidar channels similar to the 532 nm channels on CALIPSO, in that they measure attenuated backscatter from both molecules and particles."

Added: "In addition to the specular reflection from the surface, whitecaps or sea foam can increase the lidar backscatter signal. As noted in Josset et al. (2010b), the contribution of scattering by the whitecaps on the ocean surface has been treated as Lambertian scattering. There is a wavelength dependence of the scattering at longer wavelengths due to the water absorption, based on measurements presented by Dierssen (2019) covering wavelengths from 0.4 – 2.5 μm. Measurements presented here are at 532 nm, a region of the visible spectrum where scattering from foam is relatively constant with wavelength. The contribution of whitecaps is typically modeled with a constant average reflectance and an effective area weighted fraction that varies with surface wind speed (Whitlock et al., 1982; Koepke, 1984; Gordon and Wang, 1994; Moore et al., 2000). Following Moore et al. (2000), we have estimated the average reflectance due to the whitecaps as a function of surface wind speed and the difference becomes > 1 m s<sup>-1</sup> for surface wind speeds > 15 m s<sup>-1</sup> based on this relationship. As presented below, there are limited data (49 data points) above 13.3 m s<sup>-1</sup> that can be compared to the dropsonde surface wind speeds to evaluate this relationship. Moreover, since the correction depends on surface wind speed, an iterative calculation is required to use this relationship as the backscatter is dependent on wind speed.

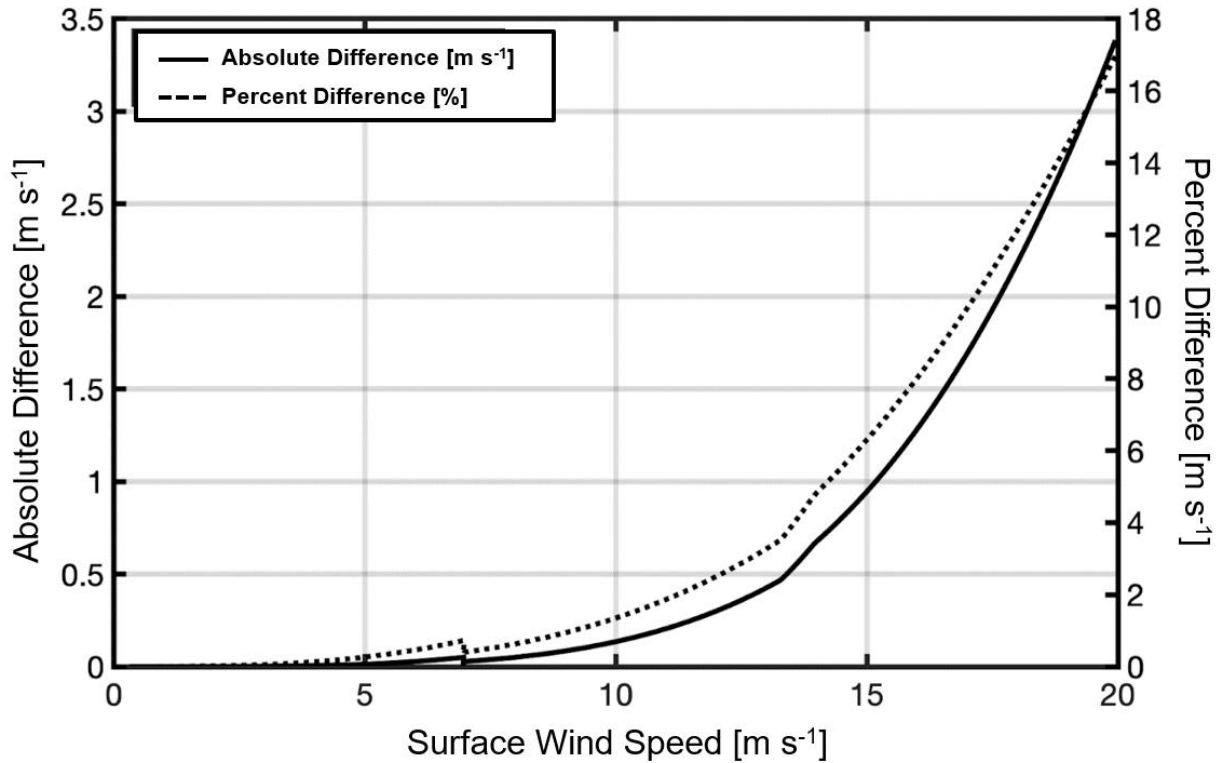


Figure 2. Estimated absolute difference in calculated surface wind speed if reflectance from whitecaps is not included. The lidar surface backscatter is higher than the specular reflectance if whitecaps are present, which results in a lower estimated surface wind speed if not accounted for in the retrieval.

Alternatively, Hu et al. (2008) used a full month of CALIPSO integrated surface depolarization ratio (ratio of the integrated cross polarized channel to the integrated co-polarized channel across the surface) and applied an empirical correction to the reflectance that was determined using AMSR-E data as the ground-truth data set to increase the correlation of the data sets. The correlation was based on much more data than the ACTIVATE matchups between HSRL-2 and dropsondes, limiting the utility of a similar analysis with the HSRL-2. In addition, there are significant differences in the configurations of CALIPSO and HSRL-2 that limit implementation of the same empirical relationship. First, CALIPSO's integrated surface depolarization includes the subsurface contributions due to its 30 m vertical resolution, whereas the HSRL-2 surface depolarization is integrated over only a few meters as shown in Fig. 1. Second, the CALIPSO data is based on global data, which is dominated by oligotrophic (clear) waters, whereas a significant fraction of the HSRL-2 - dropsonde comparisons are from eutrophic and mesotrophic waters near the coast and along the shelf. Third, there is a significant difference in footprint size between HSRL-2 and CALIPSO (8 m versus 90 m), with HSRL-2's instantaneous footprint area being greater than 2 orders of magnitude smaller and, considering HSRL-2's along-track averaging (100 laser shots) compared to CALIPSO's single shot data, greater than one order of magnitude smaller in terms of area over which surface depolarization is integrated."

- Line 115 Structural setback of your methodology is evident here. You talk about HSRL, then calculus, then HSRL again. Can you first extensively discuss your HSRL system and only then, to justify that Hu/Josset/... etc approaches demonstrated for CALIPSO are applicable in your case?

Thank you, we extensively discuss the HSRL-2 instrumentation in Sect. 2.3 (paragraph added in previous comment about providing extensive description of the HSRL-2 instrument) as you suggested to show that we can apply the CALIPSO methodology to the HSRL-2.

- Line 128. Broken out = separated?

Thank you, we changed “broken out” to “separated” for clarity.

- Line 159 “Arb units”?

Thank you for pointing this out. We’ve revised Fig. 1 to say  $\text{m}^{-1}\text{sr}^{-1}$  instead of “arb units”.

Revised:

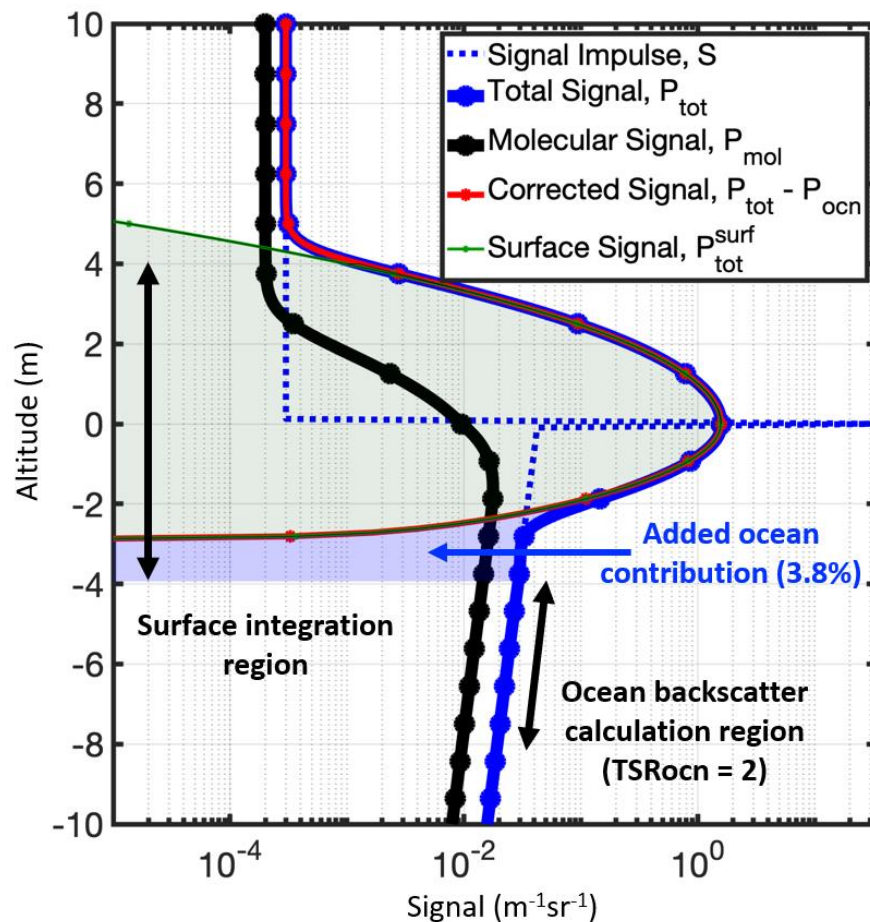


Figure 1: Visualization of HSRL-2 measurement signals as described in Eqs. 6 – 8. Dashed line denotes ideal total backscatter signal from the atmosphere, surface reflection, and the ocean subsurface. Blue and black lines denote measured signals from total and molecular scattering channels, respectively. Red and green lines show the ocean corrected signal and the ocean surface backscatter, respectively. Dots indicate the altitudes of digitized samples. The sampling rate is 120 MHz, resulting in a vertical spacing of 1.25 m in the atmosphere and 0.94 m in the ocean.

- Line 165 Please address this structural setback here and elsewhere in the manuscript. In peer-reviewed studies you normally first describe the figure, and then show it below.

We appreciate this advice. We moved the sentence “Figure 1 illustrates the vertical distributions of the measured signals  $P_{tot}$  (black) and  $P_{mol}$  (blue) along with the  $P_{tot}^{surf}$  (green) component of  $P_{tot}$ . Note that zero altitude is the location of the ocean surface.” before Fig. 1 and followed this structure throughout the rest of the figures.

Revised: “Figure 1 illustrates the vertical distributions of the measured signals  $P_{tot}$  (black) and  $P_{mol}$  (blue) along with the  $P_{tot}^{surf}$  (green) component of  $P_{tot}$ . Note that zero altitude is the location of the ocean surface.

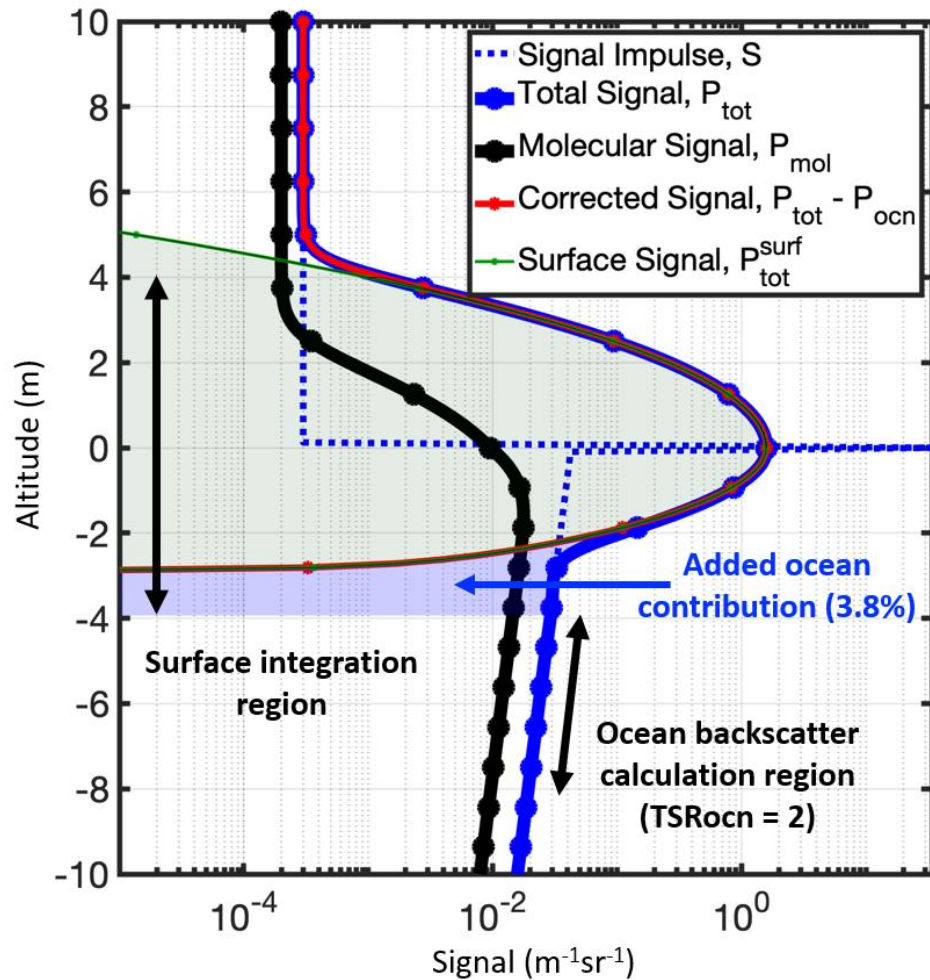


Figure 2: Visualization of HSRL-2 measurement signals as described in Eqs. 6 – 8. Dashed line denotes ideal total backscatter signal from the atmosphere, surface reflection, and the ocean subsurface. Blue and black lines denote measured signals from total and molecular scattering channels, respectively. Red and green lines show the ocean



corrected signal and the ocean surface backscatter, respectively. Dots indicate the altitudes of digitized samples. The sampling rate is 120 MHz, resulting in a vertical spacing of 1.25 m in the atmosphere and 0.94 m in the ocean. It is seen from Fig. 1 and Eq. 8b that the surface component  $P_{tot}^{surf}$  of the measured signal  $P_{tot}$  is not localized to the surface but is instead spread above and below the surface via convolution with the system response function...”

- Line 170 Here, your structural setbacks become critical, please split your methodology into: description of HSRL and explanation of the calculus + if needed, correction procedures for HSRL.

Thanks for the suggestion to include an instrument description and we agree. We have added a short instrument description that gives the relevant information of the instrument and its configuration in Sect. 2.3 as mentioned in previous comments and then transition into the retrieval methodology.

- Line 175. Not true, it also depends on the wavelength and the incidence angle of lidar (see works of Li et al., 2010 on pre-launch Aeolus demonstrator; Josset et al., 2010 work on non-nadir retrieval of Beta\_surf and Labzovskii et al. ongoing Aeolus works on applying this principle to Aeolus setup with UV wavelength and >35 angle incidence). Add references if needed for justification and readers’ interest.

The magnitude of the subsurface scattering (i.e., hydrosol scattering) within the integration window around the surface does rely on the amount and type of the particulates in the ocean. The magnitude of the subsurface scattering does depend on the wavelength and to a lesser extent the angle. We also agree that the surface scattering will depend on the angle of incidence and the wavelength. As suggested by both reviewers, we added a short description of the HSRL-2 instrument (paragraph shown in previous comments) that provides the specific geometry implemented on the aircraft and the wavelength used for this analysis. As now noted, the system has three wavelengths (355, 532, and 1064 nm) and we are using 532 nm due to the unique capabilities of the receiver filter to separate the Mie scattering signal accurately. The system is not scanning and points nominally nadir as clarified in a previous comment. The aircraft altitude dictates the angular changes relative to the surface. To limit rapid changes in the aircraft altitude, we have limited the angles of the pitch and roll to be less than 3° from the nominal values during straight and level legs. This will capture the level legs of the flight and limit turns where the angles change rapidly over the 0.5 s data integration times.

- Line 176. Once again, this assumption depends on the setup of your lidar system which is a mystery after the incomplete methodological description. Not true for non-nadir systems (sensitivity starts from  $U = 12$  m/s if your incidence is > 30 degrees according to Aeolus pre-launch works of Li et al. 2010 for instance).

Thank you, we hope that our added instrument description (shown in previous comment) clears this line up.

- Line 180. This is unsupported surmise because (a) we do not see any results, confirming this statement, (b) nor a reference, where a reader can get familiarized with this common expert knowledge.

We have reworded this sentence to be clearer based on your comment. The statement simply refers to the ocean subsurface contribution that would contribute to the total integrated backscatter signal if not corrected. This is simply stating that a larger attenuation in the ocean results in less contribution of the integrated signal. The intent of including this is to highlight that the subsurface contribution is higher for clear water compared to more turbid regions and results in a larger bias if not accounted for in the calculation of the surface backscatter. In summary, this simply states that the faster the ocean subsurface signal decays, the contribution becomes less which is the blue shaded region in Fig. 1.

Revised: “Therefore, the ocean subsurface contribution is higher for clear water compared to turbid water. For example, in the case illustrated in Fig. 1, the seawater particulate and molecular scattering are equal, resulting in a contribution of only 3.8% to the integrated surface backscatter as compared to the no particulate scattering noted above of 5.7%. The atmospheric signal contribution is much less (~100 times smaller) than the ocean subsurface signal and therefore its contribution is considered negligible. Fortunately, the high vertical resolution of the HSRL-2 instrument enables the ocean subsurface contribution to be estimated.”

Line 188 Do you need to account for aerosol transmittance as well or you mean only molecular transmittance?

Thanks for the comment on being clear here. This accounts for the total attenuation but is determined from the molecular channel.

Revised: “The two-way total (particulate and molecular attenuation) transmission...”

- Line 198 “Unique to the HSRL-2...” rephrase this sentence please, it is ambiguous in the current form. Below, “to do so” -> replace to any structure, more common for academic English.

Thank you for this advice on grammar.

Revised: “A benefit of the HSRL-2 retrieval algorithm is that one can use the molecular channel signal to determine the ocean signal near the surface (see Fig. 1). To determine the near-surface ocean signal, an estimate of the total ocean scattering ratio (TSR) is employed, which is the ratio of molecular + hydrosol backscatter divided by molecular backscatter.”

- Line 205 Is it actually true, can TSR be constant in real conditions over considerable spatio-temporal range??

Thanks for the comment and we have made some clarifying comments on this assumption. From the lidar measurements, one can only assess the homogeneity near the surface (> 5 m) due to the fact that the surface contribution is present within 5 m of the surface. We are

only requiring it to be vertically homogeneous from the surface to the depth (5 - 8 m), where the TSR is calculated. This is difficult to assess even with in situ backscatter measurements done aboard ships. However, given the ocean mixed layers are generally > 8 m in the open oceans, this assumption is reasonable for the small (0 - 6% contribution to the integrated signal).

Revised: “Here the assumption is that the TSR is vertically constant near the surface over the 0.5 s (~75 m horizontal resolution) integration of the lidar signals.”.

- Line 213 Ideal -> replace to some other word or justify why it is “ideal” here.

Revised: “The HSRL-2 ocean surface wind speed product is assessed during the ACTIVATE campaign, which is a NASA Earth Venture Suborbital-3 (EVS-3) mission.”

- Line 380 I think you mean that CM54 and Hu08 demonstrate high bias, no? Also, why to report all-range-encompassing results, while you literally made piece-wise detailed analysis for every range? Please explain. I think this without this aspect, you can more clearly report bias/correlations/any other issues between HSRL and dropsondes right in your abstract as well without being confused to make additional comments on higher or lower correlation at some wind speed range. I hope my comment is clear here.

Thank you for this comment. We now clearly report the statistics of the 1) cumulative, 2) wind speed range, and 3) seasonal results in the abstract as mentioned in a previous comment. The wind speed range results show that the HSRL-2 retrievals underestimate surface wind speeds for those below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and overestimate them for those in between  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ , which is an important result that was not reflected in the previous manuscript.

- Line 395 What is winter and summer for you?

We apologize for this confusion. We define these definitions at the end of the first paragraph in Sect. 2.1: “Winter deployments included the following date ranges: 14 February – 12 March (2020), 27 January – 2 April (2021), 30 November 2021 – 29 March (2022). Summer deployments were as follows: 13 August – 30 September (2020), 13 May – 30 June (2021), 3 May – 18 June (2022).”

The seasonal deployments tended to take place in different months year to year, which is why we list it this way.

- Lines 400... I did not see where you discuss the complete lack of correlation at high wind speeds seen at Figure 8b for instance. Can you navigate me please?

Thank you for this comment. We now remark starting in the discussion of Fig. 8 that dropsonde surface wind speeds above  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  substantially differ from Hu, Cox-Munk, and Wu wind speed - wave-slope distributions. Also, there are few points in this category, so it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the HSRL-2 retrievals and the

dropsonde measurements. Therefore, we no longer show comparisons in the Results section due to the complete lack of correlation for such few points.

Added: “Surface wind speeds above  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  substantially diverge from all models, especially above  $16 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . As mentioned previously, there are few surface wind speed observations in this category, so more measurements are necessary to make meaningful comparisons between the two data sets. Overall, Figs. 7 and 8 demonstrate the benefits of using the Hu parameterization in this study and why surface wind speeds above  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  are not the main focus of the comparisons in this section.”

- Line 424. Which day, can you reiterate in the text as well for convenience?

Thank you, 1 March 2020 is now reiterated for clarity and convenience: “This flight along with the associated morning flight on 1 March 2020 have been the subject of several studies owing to its coincidence with cold air outbreak conditions.”

- Line 427 (and also 440, 456). “Significant” is a statistical term for peer-reviewed studies; it requires some arguments on statistical significance. If you did not mean that, use “substantial” as your word instead. Also, add a reference about common surface temperature gradient in this area. Think about general readers and argumentation, please.

Thank you, we changed instances of “significant” to “substantial” throughout the paper. Also, Painemal et al. (2021) is added to show what common SST gradients in the WNAO look like.

Added: “These conditions allow for the examination of how the high horizontal spatial resolution of the HSRL-2 ( $\sim 75 \text{ m}$  along track as mentioned in Sect. 2.4) influences its retrievals and how the data can be used to track sea surface temperature (SST) gradients common to the WNAO (Painemal et al., 2021) as seen in Fig. 3.”

- Line 430 Sounds like this flight should have been described in the methodology or?

We decided to explain this flight here because we thought these details were too specific for the ACTIVATE mission description. We also decided against a Case Study section in the Methods since these flights are more for context on potential uses of the surface wind speed data. Therefore, no changes to the Methods are made concerning the case studies.

- Line 436 Explain to a general reader which physical principle is the fundament of this HSRL ability please. Mention actual spatial resolution which is used to resolve such gradient.

This is an important point. We now add that the  $0.5 \text{ s}$  or  $\sim 75 \text{ m}$  along-track resolution is what allows us to resolve these gradients first in the 28 August 2020 research flight discussion and throughout the Case Study section in general.

Added: “These conditions allow for the examination of how the high horizontal spatial resolution of the HSRL-2 (~75 m along track as mentioned in Sect. 2.4) influences its retrievals and how the data can be used to track air-sea interaction dynamics such as sea surface temperature (SST) gradients as seen in Fig. 3... these observations show that the HSRL-2 has the high horizontal spatial resolution needed to probe the fine-scale variability of surface wind speeds and has the potential to improve atmospheric modeling of MABL processes.”

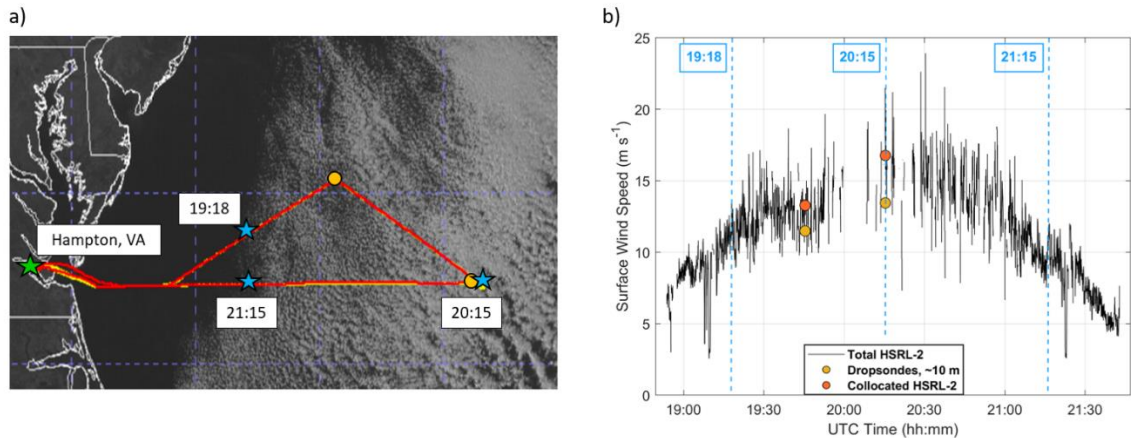
- Line 443 One would argue that 3.32 m s<sup>-1</sup> is not agreement but discrepancy, e.g. substantial bias, no?

Thank you, this comment along with others inspired us to restructure the 28 August 2020 case study to show what 1 March 2020 originally was intended to communicate. Instead of focusing on the biases seen between the collocated points, we wanted to show how we can use the HSRL-2 surface wind speed data in general and how the high spatial and time resolutions allow us to track changes in surface winds over time throughout a flight day.

- Line 447. Yes, it might be difficult during high cloud fraction conditions. Thus, this method is also constrained like Hu et al. 2008 method relying on clear atmospheric conditions for retrieving surface reflectance from ocean?

Based on this comment and feedback from Reviewer 2, we removed the 11 January 2022 case study and use 1 March 2020 to show that the HSRL-2 can still make some retrievals on days with broken cloud scenes. Therefore, we show that we do not need to rely on aerosol- and cloud-free conditions exclusively like in Hu et al. (2008) for the HSRL-2 to retrieve surface reflectance.

Added: “Next, Research Flight 14 is shown in Fig. 5 to demonstrate the ability of the HSRL-2 to sample in broken cloud scenes. This flight along with the associated morning flight on 1 March 2020 have been the subject of several studies owing to its coincidence with cold air outbreak conditions (see cloud streets in Fig. 5a) and a flight strategy that allowed for detailed characterization of the evolving aerosol-cloud system as a function of distance offshore (Seethala et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022; Tornow et al., 2022; Sorooshian et al., 2023). The morning flight focused on a location with very detailed characterization including stacked level flight legs (i.e., termed a “wall”) with the Falcon flying below, in, and above clouds, with the King Air flying aloft to further characterize the same region. The afternoon flight consisted of both aircraft flying back to that same location, adjusting the sampling strategy to fly along the boundary layer wind direction in a quasi-Lagrangian fashion to keep studying the evolution of the air mass characterized in the morning. The afternoon flight is chosen because it shows the full range of cloud conditions from clear to completely overcast. Therefore, the HSRL-2 surface wind speed retrievals are able to be evaluated in this range of conditions.



**Figure 5:** a) Flight map of the King Air (red line), Falcon (yellow line), and dropsondes (dark yellow circles) overlaid onto Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite (GOES-16) cloud imagery for Research Flight 14 on 1 March 2020. Blue stars represent time stamps where the King Air crosses over from cloud-free to cloudy areas. b) Time series of surface wind speed data from HSRL-2 and dropsondes for the same flight, where lines signify total HSRL-2 surface wind speed data and circles collocated surface wind speed data points. Blue dashed lines represent time stamps of interest as indicated in a).

As the aircraft approaches the cloud scene at 19:18, there is a noticeable and steady increase of HSRL-2 surface wind speeds. The reverse observation is seen when the aircraft approaches 21:15, where the HSRL-2 surface wind speeds start to decrease steadily. As highlighted in the 28 August 2020 case study, the high horizontal spatial resolution of the HSRL-2 retrievals enables these spatial gradients to be observed. Another important takeaway is the HSRL-2 is still able to sample the surface in cloud scenes, as seen by the almost complete surface wind speed profile in Fig. 5b. Although a gap in data occurs at 20:15 where cloud cover is most substantial, some retrievals are still present in that area. The reason is that the HSRL-2 can probe the surface through gaps between clouds, allowing for the surface wind speed retrievals to take place. Although the HSRL-2 retrievals would be unavailable in overcast cloud scenes, the ability of the instrument to sample the surface in broken cloud fields and not just aerosol- and cloud-free scenes is a significant benefit of the lidar and the HSRL technique.”

- Line 477 Perhaps, you might be even more assertive here? Do you think we really can use HSRL-2 wind speed retrievals in such conditions? I mean fair, transparent recommendation would work the best for your own benefit here from my point of view. This is important lesson learned, very valuable.

We agree that we needed to be more explicit on whether the HSRL-2 could make retrievals on cloudy days, which is why we refocused the 1 March 2020 and removed 11 January 2022 like we mentioned in the previous comment (discussion added in previous comment). We now say that the HSRL-2 method can detect the surface in between clouds, showing that it does not rely exclusively on cloud-free conditions for the retrieval to work.

- Line 485/6 “Results being compared”, can you simplify the wording here and elsewhere in conclusions please. Scientific analysis encourages brevity and clarity over vagueness and wordiness.

Thank you, we agree that the wording in the conclusions should have been more simplified to promote clarity. The “results being compared” sentence has been removed, but the entire Conclusions section is revised to be more succinct.

Revised: “This study introduces the High Spectral Resolution Lidar – generation 2 (HSRL-2) surface wind speed retrieval method, demonstrates its use, and evaluates its accuracy using NCAR AVAPS dropsonde data collected during the NASA ACTIVATE field campaign. ACTIVATE featured the joint deployment of the HSRL-2 and AVAPS dropsondes during six deployments from 2020 to 2022, enabling the accuracy of the HSRL-2 surface wind speed retrievals to be assessed using the coincident dropsonde measurements. Comparisons of HSRL-2 and dropsonde surface wind speeds show correlations of 0.89, slopes of 1.04 and 1.17, y-intercepts of  $-0.13 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-1.05 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  for linear and bisector regressions, respectively. The accuracy of the HSRL-2 retrievals, as denoted by mean error, is calculated to be  $0.15 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 1.80 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . It is also observed that the dropsonde surface wind speed measurements most closely match with the Hu et al. (2008) wind speed – wave-slope variance model than the Cox and Munk (1954) and Wu (1990) models for surface wind speeds below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ , which is an important finding because most ACTIVATE surface wind speeds fall into this category. After this overview of model performance, the HSRL-2 retrievals for surface wind speeds separated into below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and between  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  categories are then evaluated in more detail. For surface wind speeds below  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ , correlations of 0.66, slopes of 0.65 and 0.99, and y-intercepts of  $1.10 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-0.49 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  are found and the accuracy of the retrievals is found to be  $-0.54 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 1.34 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . Surface wind speeds between  $7 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  show correlations of 0.75, slopes of 0.64 and 0.85, and y-intercepts of  $3.80 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $1.87 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and the retrieval accuracy is shown to be  $0.56 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 1.49 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . Statistics are not reported for surface wind speeds above  $13.3 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  because there are too few points in this category to make meaningful comparisons. These results showcase an important observation not seen in the cumulative results, which is that the HSRL-2 estimates surface wind speeds with a bias of  $\pm \sim 0.5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and an error of  $\pm \sim 1.5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . Lastly, the data are divided into winter and summer deployments (dates denoted in Sect. 2.1) to assess how the HSRL-2 performs between seasons. The winter surface wind speed data comparisons show correlations of 0.88, slopes of 0.95 and 1.08, and y-intercepts of  $1.03 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-0.08 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and the summer data show correlations of 0.87, slopes of 1.08 and 1.24, and y-intercepts of  $-0.69 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-1.68 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  (linear and bisector regressions, respectively). The accuracy of the lidar retrievals is reported as  $0.63 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 2.07 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  and  $-0.18 \text{ m s}^{-1} \pm 1.52 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  for winter and summer, respectively. These findings show that HSRL-2 retrievals are more accurate in the summer than in winter, but still provide substantial ( $N = 236$ ) and accurate surface wind speed data in winter as well.

This retrieval method offers a new path forward in airborne field work for the acquisition of surface wind speed data at a high spatial ( $\sim 75 \text{ m}$  along track) and time (0.5 s) resolution, as demonstrated with two case study flights (Research Flight 29 on 28 August 2020 and Research Flight 14 on 1 March 2020). The high horizontal spatial resolution of the HSRL-2 allows it to probe the fine-scale variability of surface wind speeds over time. As a result, the instrument provides near-continuous profiles of surface wind speeds over time that correspond to MABL phenomena such as SST dynamics and cloud evolution. Another

important conclusion about the HSRL-2 surface retrievals is that the instrument can detect the surface in broken cloud scenes and are not limited to aerosol-free conditions like in Hu et al. (2008). Overall, having such data can benefit model assimilation efforts and consequently several scientific applications related to air-sea interactions such as estimating heat fluxes, gas exchange, sea salt emissions and aerosol transport, and cloud life cycle.

Forthcoming work will continue assessments of surface wind speed measurements during ACTIVATE by comparing dropsonde data to in situ measurements taken by the Turbulent Air Motion Measurement System (TAMMS) onboard the Falcon aircraft at its various altitude flight legs (between 120 m and 5 km) (Thornhill et al., 2003). Additional work is also warranted to assess the surface wind speed retrievals performed by ACTIVATE's other remote sensor, the Research Scanning Polarimeter (RSP), to fully demonstrate ACTIVATE's remote sensing capabilities.”