EVALUATION OF AN IN SITU ABSORPTION AND BEAM ATTENUATION METER IN CLEAR OPEN OCEAN WATER

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RESEARCH GOALS

Our goal is to assess and characterize in situ inherent optical property (IOP) observations in the clear natural waters of the Sargasso Sea. In situ IOP determinations are difficult in clear waters due to the fact that the signals are extremely small relative to the “pure” water used to calibrate the instrument. The emphasis of our research is to develop methods for making accurate and precise IOP measurements made with a WETLabs AC-9 spectral absorption and beam attenuation meter in the clear natural waters of the Sargasso Sea and to validate these measurements against independent, in situ apparent optical property (AOP) and in vivo IOP determinations. The development of methodologies for making accurate IOP profiles for this highly demanding environment will lead to an increased understanding of this important instrument for all waters.

OBJECTIVES

Our near-term objectives are to 1) characterize the precision of in situ IOP determinations by examining inter- and intra-cruise variations in the measured beam attenuation and absorption spectra, 2) determine the accuracy to which the in situ IOP measurements can be made by comparing with other relevant data sets, 3) evaluate the temporal-depth patterns in IOP values at U.S. JGOFS Bermuda Atlantic Time-series Study (BATS) site and 4) address the relationship between in situ IOP values and simultaneously observed biogeochemical property variations.

APPROACH

Our approach is to deploy a WETLabs AC-9 instrument on all BATS cruises when detailed in vivo IOP, AOP and biogeochemical determinations are made. We have developed data processing tools to collect, process, correct and analyze AC-9 IOP values concurrently with other measurements made at the BATS site. We also perform “pure”
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water and air calibrations before and after each 4 day cruise. This extensive data set will give us enough data to distinguish natural and instrument signals. We evaluate the consistency of the in situ IOP signals by comparing them with the in vivo IOP determinations. We also assess the in situ IOP signals using the HYDROLIGHT radiative transfer model (Mobley, 1995) as a basis of comparing with the AOP determinations.

TASK COMPLETED

We have made monthly in situ IOP profile observations on all BATS cruises for the past two years (a total of 35 cruises in total). All data are analyzed and merged with the BBOP AOP data set using the BBOP data processing system (Siegel et al. 1995a). In April 1996, we installed a “pure” water calibration system in Bermuda working WETLabs personnel. Since then we have been making pre, post, and inter cruise air and water calibrations with the WETLabs AC-9. We have conducted many of the direct comparisons with the ancillary data sets. The master's thesis of Mr. Eric Brody is almost complete (should be finished by December 1, 1997) and we expect to have a manuscript submitted on our primary results by February 1998.

SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

Accurate in situ IOP determinations are difficult to obtain in clear waters due to the fact that the IOP signals are extremely small relative to “pure” water used to calibrate the instrument. Hence, we have found it difficult to employ our pre- and post-cruise pure water calibrations to the in situ data set. Differences in “pure” water calibrations have been observed as large as 0.05 m$^{-1}$ which are larger than the magnitude as the natural IOP signals we are attempting to measure!! Hence, we have developed new methods for "vicariously calibrating" the AC-9 signals using the BBOP AOP and physical oceanographic data set (Brody, 1997). After applying these new corrections, we have collected and analyzed depth and time distributions of in situ a($\lambda$), c($\lambda$) and, by difference, b($\lambda$) spectra for the open ocean. These observations are the among first of their kind and we are presently working on a manuscript describing the vicarious calibration method and the interpretation of the in situ a($\lambda$), b($\lambda$), and c($\lambda$) spectra (see Brody et al. 1996; Brody, 1997).

Examples of the time-depth distribution of in situ IOP's are shown in figure 1a for the non-water absorption coefficient (a'(440) = a(440) - a$_{w}$(440)) and in figure 1b for the non-water beam attenuation coefficient (c'(440) = c(440) - c$_{w}$(440); see also Brody et al. 1996). First, values of c'(440) are always greater than a'(440). Second, the time-depth patterns of a'(440) follow the chlorophyll pigment distributions (see Siegel et al. 1995b). Third, the c'(440) patterns have higher values near the sea surface, but decay below the
depth of the seasonal thermocline. In all, the basic time-depth patterns are as expected. We are now in the process of validating these data against independent data and interpreting them in
Figure 1: Time-depth distribution of the non-water absorption coefficient \(a'(440) = a(440) - a_w(440)\) and the non-water beam attenuation coefficient \(c'(440) = c(440) - c_w(440)\) for the three years of BBOP observations. Plus signs on the bottom of each plot indicate when IOP profiles are taken.
relation with the independent AOP observations. Consistent spectral patterns for the *in situ* IOP’s are also observed. Spectral absorption derived from AC-9 resemble the corresponding *in vivo* spectra \((a_p(\lambda)+a_g(\lambda))\) with chlorophyll peaks at 440 and 675 nm in the upper 50 m. At deeper depths, declining exponential shape of absorption is observed.

As described previously, one of our primary goals is to assess the accuracy and precision of the WETLabs AC-9 instrument. We can show this by assessing *intra*cruise and *inter*cruise variability at depth (200 m) where we expect the smallest natural IOP variability. The average *intra*cruise precision of the AC-9 signals is 0.007 and 0.002 m\(^{-1}\) for \(c(440)\) and \(a(440)\), respectively. This indicates that the corrected AC-9 signals are routinely precise measures of the inherent optical properties. However, *inter*cruise variations at depth are much larger (0.013 and 0.015 m\(^{-1}\) for \(c(440)\) and \(a(440)\), respectively). Fortunately, this is similar in magnitude to intercruise variations in the *in vivo* absorption coefficient for colored dissolved organic materials (\(~0.01 m\(^{-1}\)\) measured at the same time. These and other comparisons are encouraging indicating that the AC-9 spectral absorption and beam attenuation meter produces reasonable IOP estimates in clear waters if the data sets are properly cared for. This work is on-going and *in situ* IOP and other data will be continued to be collected at BATS.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

To date, we have obtained, calibrated, processed, analyzed and validated *in situ* profiles of spectral attenuation, absorption and scattering coefficients for data collected over a three year period in the clear natural waters off Bermuda. Potential sources of uncertainty have been identified and a "vicarious calibration" procedure has been developed based which requires simultaneous AOP and physical oceanographic observations. Using the final IOP data set, the temporal, depth and spectral variations of the *in situ* IOP parameters exhibit realistic variations. We are in the process of assessing these observations in the context of the simultaneous AOP and biogeochemical observations collected at BATS and BBOP.

**REFERENCES**


