

1 **21st century trends in mixing barriers and eddy**
2 **transport in the lower stratosphere**

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5 **Key Points:**

- 6 • Subtropical jet winter mixing barriers extend upward in response to climate change.
- 7 • Eddy transport in the subtropical lower stratosphere is enhanced in the summer
- 8 hemisphere.
- 9 • Ozone hole recovery weakens austral polar mixing barrier in spring and summer.

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Abstract

Future trends in isentropic mixing in the lower stratosphere remain largely unexplored, in contrast with other aspects of stratospheric tracer transport. This study examines trends in effective diffusivity (κ_{eff}), a measure of the potential of the flow to produce isentropic mixing, in recent chemistry-climate model simulations. The results highlight substantial reduction of κ_{eff} in the upper flanks of the subtropical jets from fall to spring, which are strengthened in response to greenhouse gas increases. This contrasts with stronger eddy transport, associated with increased wave drag in the region, peaking in summer near the critical lines. The key role of changes in tracer meridional gradients in addition to transport barriers for isentropic mixing trends is evidenced. The projected ozone recovery leads to enhanced κ_{eff} in polar austral spring and summer, associated with a weaker and shorter-lived austral polar vortex by the end of the 21st century.

1 Introduction

The zonal mean tracer transport in the stratosphere, known as the Brewer-Dobson circulation (BDC), determines the distribution and variability of the chemical compounds in the stratosphere, including the radiatively active species such as ozone or water vapor. The BDC is divided into two components, the mean meridional or residual circulation, which tends to increase meridional tracer gradients between low and high latitudes, and two-way quasi-isentropic mixing, which tends to compensate for this effect and flatten out the tracer contours (Plumb, 2002). Both transport processes are closely associated with breaking waves. On one hand, Rossby and gravity wave breaking force the residual circulation by transfer of momentum to the zonal mean flow combined with the Coriolis force. On the other hand, as large-scale waves break, they lead to stirring of the air masses and quasi-isentropic mixing of chemical compounds.

A relatively large number of studies have investigated the effects of climate change on the BDC in general and on the residual circulation in particular. The results are robust across models and climate change scenarios, revealing an acceleration of the residual circulation, resulting in a reduction of the mean age of stratospheric air (Butchart, 2014). This acceleration is associated with a strengthening of the upper flanks of the subtropical jets, which modifies the conditions for wave propagation and dissipation (Garcia & Randel, 2008) by shifting the critical lines (Shepherd & McLandress, 2011). Such changes in the subtropical jets result mainly from enhanced warming of the tropical upper tro-

42 posphere (WMO (World Meteorological Organization), 2018). Specifically, thermal wind
43 balance translates the decrease in the (positive) meridional temperature gradient in the
44 subtropics into a weaker (negative) zonal wind shear, hence strengthening the upper flanks
45 of the jets.

46 In addition to these climate change effects, recent works have highlighted an im-
47 portant role of ozone depletion and recovery on the BDC trends. In particular, it has
48 been shown that the formation of the ozone hole contributed substantially to the accel-
49 eration of the BDC over the last decades of the 20th century (Abalos et al., 2019). The
50 ozone hole affects the BDC by modulating the strength and duration of the austral po-
51 lar vortex. Ozone accumulated in the polar lower stratosphere during winter absorbs so-
52 lar radiation in spring and summer, warming the polar cap and weakening the vortex.
53 As ozone was severely depleted over the last decades of the 20th century, the austral po-
54 lar stratosphere became colder and the vortex stronger and more persistent. The west-
55 erly trends in the summer polar stratosphere shifted the critical lines upward into the
56 stratosphere, contributing to strengthen the residual circulation. The opposite effect is
57 expected in the ozone recovery period (Oman et al., 2009; McLandress et al., 2010), and
58 consistently the Southern Hemisphere (SH) polar downwelling decelerates after the year
59 2000 (Polvani et al., 2018, 2019).

60 On the other hand, there is no published study to date on the future changes in
61 isentropic mixing. The value of assessing long-term trends in isentropic mixing in ad-
62 dition to residual circulation advection is highlighted by recent works revealing their key
63 role on age of air trends (Ploeger et al., 2015; Eichinger et al., 2019). Another example
64 is the current debate regarding the transport mechanism behind the decrease in observed
65 lower stratosphere northern midlatitude ozone over the last decades (Ball et al., 2018;
66 Chipperfield et al., 2018), as the role of isentropic mixing versus vertical advection re-
67 mains unclear (Wargan et al., 2018; Orbe et al., 2020). Abalos et al. (2017) and (Abalos
68 et al., 2020) examined 21st century trends in transport of a tropospheric and stratospheric
69 tracers, respectively, and found increased quasi-horizontal eddy transport above the sub-
70 tropical jets. Isentropic mixing of a tracer can be thought of as a diffusion term in the
71 tracer continuity equation, in which the diffusion coefficient provides a spatio-temporal
72 distribution of the efficiency of the flow to generate isentropic mixing. In this sense, the
73 effective diffusivity (κ_{eff}) introduced by (Nakamura, 1996) quantifies the changes in micro-
74 scale diffusion due to the large-scale stirring of tracer contours (Haynes & Shuckburgh,

2000). Abalos et al. (2019) showed that κ_{eff} trends over 1980-2000 were strongly influenced by the effect of the ozone hole in austral summer, both in a chemistry climate model and in reanalyses. In this study we provide the first assessment of the 21st century trends in κ_{eff} in the lower stratosphere, separating the effects of climate change and ozone recovery.

2 Data and Methods

We use simulations of the Community Earth System Model (version 1), which has the Whole Atmosphere Community Climate Model (WACCM version 4) as the atmospheric component with interactive chemistry, fully coupled to ocean, land, and sea ice components. The horizontal resolution of WACCM is 1.9° in latitude and 2.5° in longitude, and the vertical resolution ranges from ~ 1.2 km near the tropopause to ~ 2 km near the stratopause, and the model top is around 140 km. The baseline version of is detailed in Marsh et al. (2013), with later improvements to stratospheric heterogeneous chemistry and to orographic gravity wave forcing (Garcia et al., 2017). The model version reproduces accurately the ozone hole (Solomon et al., 2015).

We analyze three types of simulations over the 21st century, which are different scenarios proposed by the International Global Atmospheric Chemistry / Stratosphere-troposphere Processes and their Role in Climate (IGAC/SPARC) Chemistry-Climate Model Initiative (CCMI) (Morgenstern et al., 2017). For each type of simulation we consider an ensemble of 3 members in order to better extract the forced signal by averaging the ensemble members. The first ensemble is the REF-C2 of CCMI, which follows the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) (2011) A1 scenario for ozone depleting substances (ODS) (WMO, 2011), and the RCP 6.0 for the other greenhouse gases (GHG), tropospheric ozone precursors and aerosol emissions (Meinshausen et al., 2011). This is our control ensemble. The second ensemble is the sensitivity experiment SEN-C2-fODS2000 of CCMI, and it is identical to REF-C2, except for the fact that ODS are fixed at 2000 levels. Therefore, in the SEN-C2-fODS2000 simulations there is a large ozone hole that does not recover in the 21st century. The third ensemble follows the RCP8.5 scenario for GHG emissions instead of the RCP6.0, and the WMO A1 scenario for ODS. We note that all results discussed here are robust in all ensemble members.

105 The effective diffusivity (Nakamura, 1996; Haynes & Shuckburgh, 2000), κ_{eff} , is a
 106 diffusion coefficient defined in equivalent latitude coordinates that reflects the elonga-
 107 tion of tracer contours associated with irreversible diffusion across the contour. In this
 108 study, we will work with the normalized equivalent length squared, which is a non-dimensional
 109 quantity proportional to the effective diffusivity, $\Lambda_{\text{eq}} = \kappa_{\text{eff}}/\kappa$, where the diffusion co-
 110 efficient κ depends on the resolution of the model and the hyperdiffusion scheme employed.
 111 For simplicity, because we are interested only in trends and not in the exact magnitude,
 112 we will refer to our results as effective diffusivity, or κ_{eff} . However, note that in all fig-
 113 ures, the plotted magnitude is the natural logarithm of Λ_{eq} , which is a dimensionless quan-
 114 tity. While κ_{eff} is ideally computed from a passive tracer advected by the non-divergent
 115 flow on isentropes (Nakamura, 1996), in the present study we use the distribution of po-
 116 tential vorticity (PV), assuming that it behaves reasonably similar to a passive tracer
 117 in the stratosphere (see Abalos, Legras, & Shuckburgh, 2016; Abalos, Randel, & Birner,
 118 2016, for a discussion on this assumption).

119 3 Results

120 Figure 1 shows the annual mean trends in κ_{eff} for the ensemble mean of the ref-
 121 erence simulation over the 21st century (contours), as well as the climatology for the first
 122 30 years (shading). The climatology highlights regions of weak κ_{eff} corresponding to the
 123 tropical pipe in the stratosphere and the core of the subtropical jets. The location of the
 124 polar night jets (around 60° S and poleward of 60° N) can also be distinguished as bands
 125 of reduced κ_{eff} . Negative trends are observed on the equatorward and upper flank of the
 126 subtropical jets. The location of the negative trends in a region of climatologically strong
 127 mixing above the subtropical jets implies an upward extension of the transport barriers.
 128 On the other hand, positive trends are observed in the boundaries of the tropical
 129 pipe, most significantly in the lowermost stratosphere but extending to the entire alti-
 130 tude range in consideration (up to 800 K, or approximately 10 hPa). Finally, there are
 131 positive κ_{eff} trends in the SH lower stratosphere polar cap below 600 K, and negative
 132 trends in SH middle latitudes above that level. In the next 2 subsections we analyze the
 133 trends around the subtropical jets and the SH polar region in more detail.

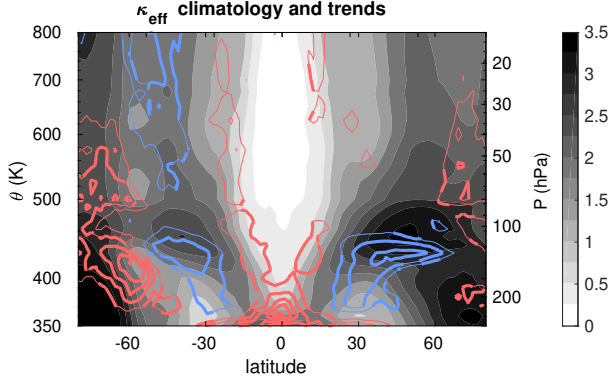


Figure 1. Climatology (shading) and trends (contours; contour interval: 0.01 decade^{-1} ; red/blue: positive/negative) of κ_{eff} for the ensemble mean of RCP6.0 simulations for the annual mean 2002-2099. Thick contours denote statistically significant trends with 95% confidence level using a Student t test. Approximate pressure levels are included for reference.

134 3.1 Trends around the subtropical jets

135 There is a strong connection between the trends in κ_{eff} and the trends in the zonal
 136 wind. Figure 2a shows that the reduced κ_{eff} in the lower stratosphere subtropics and mid-
 137 latitudes coincides with the strengthening of the upper flanks of the subtropical jets (black
 138 contours). These trends extend from fall to spring in each hemisphere, and are collocated
 139 with a tightening of potential vorticity (PV) contours, shown by the PV gradient trends
 140 in Fig. 2a (magenta contours). Hence, the trends in κ_{eff} are closely coupled to the strength-
 141 ening of the subtropical transport barriers in the upper part of the climatological jets.

142 As mentioned in the Introduction, in association with the subtropical jet trends
 143 there is an upward and equatorward shift of the critical lines for Rossby waves (Shepherd
 144 & McLandress, 2011). Figure 2b shows the trends in meridional eddy PV flux on isen-
 145 tropic coordinates, which are almost identical to the trends in the Eliassen-Palm flux di-
 146 vergence (see Andrews, Holton, & Leovy, 1987) and thus depict changes in wave drag.
 147 It is clear from Fig. 2b that the seasonality of the trends in the eddy PV flux (or wave
 148 drag) is different, and largely out of phase, with respect to that in κ_{eff} . The wave drag
 149 is enhanced (i.e. negative trends) in the subtropics and middle latitudes in summer of
 150 each hemisphere, when the background wind is weak and near-stationary Rossby waves
 151 meet their critical lines (the position of the zero wind line is included for reference in Fig.
 152 2b). In the other seasons, positive (negative) eddy PV flux trends are seen on the pole-

153 ward (equatorward) side of the westerly trends, implying an equatorward shift of wave
 154 drag. The seasonality seen at this level for κ_{eff} and the eddy PV flux is representative
 155 of the general behavior in the lower stratosphere, as shown in Figures S1 and S2 of the
 156 supplementary material.

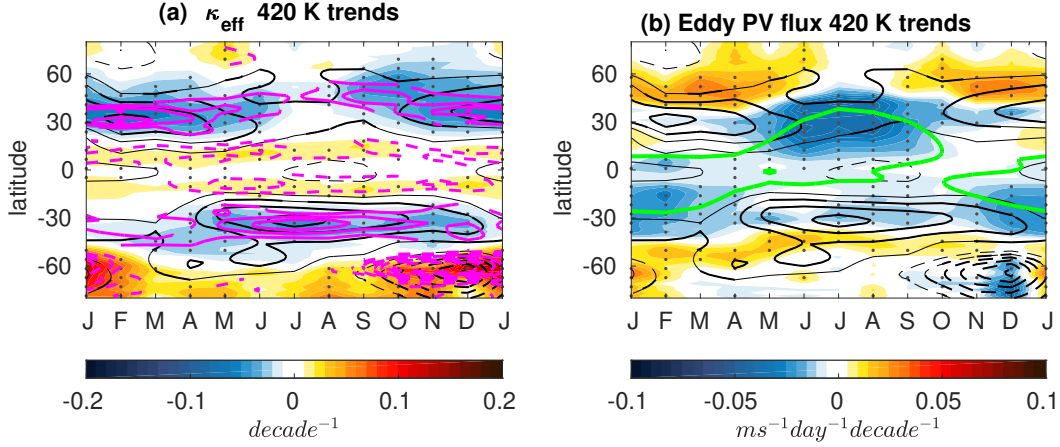


Figure 2. Latitude- month evolution at 420 K of trends in (a) κ_{eff} (shading), zonal wind (black; ci: 0.1 m/s/decade, solid: positive, dashed: negative) and PV gradient (magenta; ci: 0.25×10^{-7} PVU/m/decade, solid: positive, dashed: negative); (b) meridional eddy PV flux (shading) and zonal wind (black). The climatological zonal wind zero line is shown in green. Dots indicate statistically significant trends in shaded variables.

157 Figure 2 emphasizes that κ_{eff} trends respond to the enhanced PV gradients and
 158 associated transport barriers (stronger in winter) rather than to the trends in wave drag
 159 (stronger in summer). However, enhanced wave breaking leads to more frequent irreversible
 160 contour elongation, and thus potentially to enhanced molecular mixing and increased
 161 κ_{eff} . To further explore the connection between wave drag and κ_{eff} trends, it is useful
 162 to refer to the eddy diffusivity K_{yy} , a diffusion coefficient of the flow based on the flux-
 163 gradient relationship (Plumb & Mahlman, 1987; Garcia, 1991):

$$164 \quad K_{yy} = -\frac{\overline{\langle \sigma \hat{v} \hat{P} \rangle}}{\overline{\langle \partial \hat{P} / \partial y \rangle}},$$

165 In this definition, angle brackets indicate time averages, which in this case are car-
 166 ried out over one year. $\hat{A} = \overline{\sigma A} / \bar{\sigma}$, where σ is the density on isentropes and overbars
 167 indicate zonal average. This expression therefore connects K_{yy} to the meridional eddy
 168 PV flux, closely related to the wave drag. Importantly, the term connecting the two is
 169 the meridional PV gradient, which reflects the strength of the jet. While both K_{yy} and

170 κ_{eff} are defined to capture the regions of the flow potential to mix air masses, their very
 171 different methods of calculation imply they do not necessarily coincide. This is especially
 172 true for highly transient situations such as sudden stratospheric warmings (see de la Cámara
 173 et al., 2018), given that κ_{eff} is a lagrangian quantity and K_{yy} is an eulerian-mean diag-
 174 nostic. However, the long-term averaged K_{yy} has been shown to provide a reasonable
 175 approximation of the main features of κ_{eff} (Abalos, Legras, & Shuckburgh, 2016).

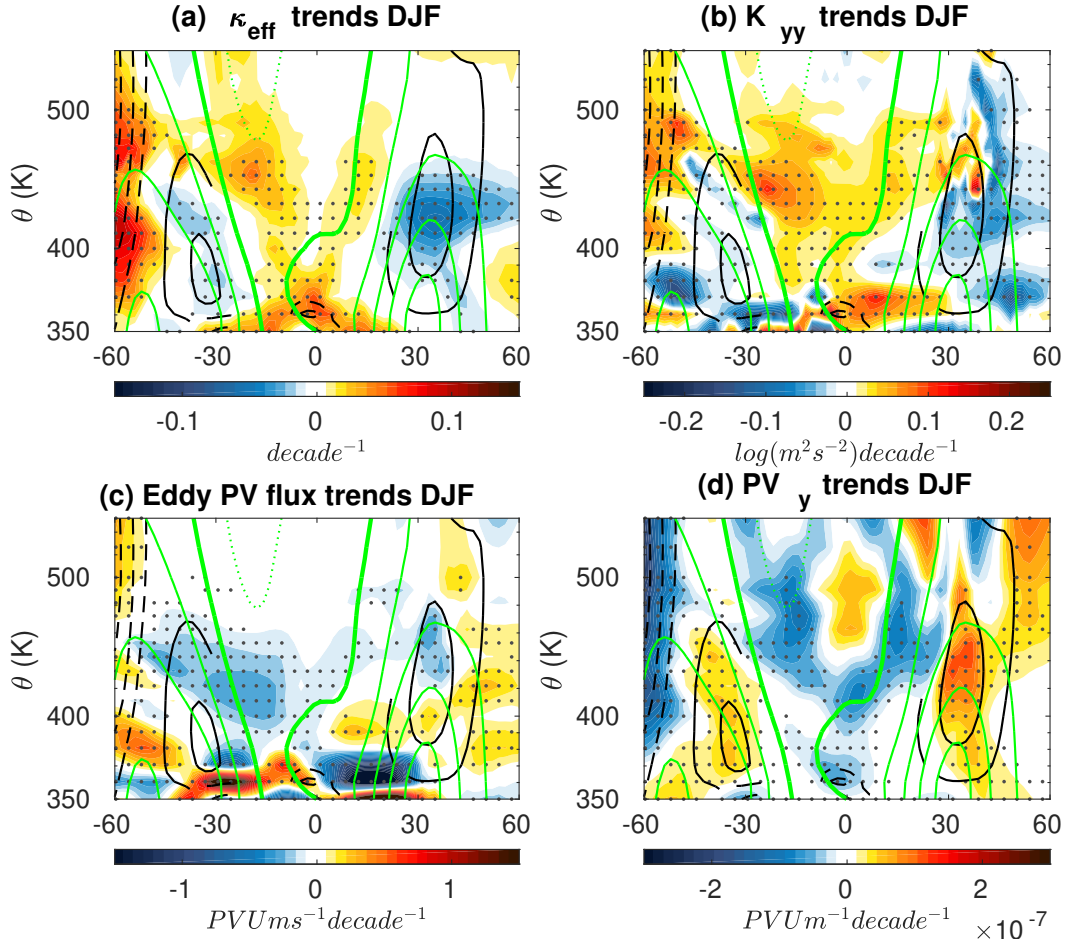


Figure 3. DJF trends in (a) κ_{eff} , (b) K_{yy} , (c) eddy PV flux, and (d) PV meridional gradient. Dots indicate statistically significant trends. Black contours: zonal wind trends (ci: 0.1 m/s/decade; only statistically significant trends shown; solid: positive, dashed: negative). Green: climatological zonal wind (ci: 10 m/s; thick contour: 0 m/s).

176 Figure 3 shows the DJF trends in κ_{eff} , K_{yy} , PV flux and PV gradient, overlaid by
 177 the zonal wind climatology and trends. The results for JJA are generally equivalent, ex-
 178 changing hemispheres (Fig. S3). The trends in K_{yy} (Fig. 3b) exhibit qualitative sim-

179 ilarities to κ_{eff} (Fig. 3a), in particular negative trends in the upper flanks of the subtrop-
 180 ical jets extending into middle latitudes (strongest in winter), and positive trends in the
 181 tropics, around the zero wind lines. The eddy PV flux trends (Fig. 3c) are negative, im-
 182 plying increased downgradient flux or wave drag, in the upper and equatorward flanks
 183 of the subtropical jets (strongest in summer), extending into the tropics around the zero
 184 wind lines. Positive trends are seen poleward and at lower levels with respect to the neg-
 185 ative trends. These trends reflect the expected upward and equatorward shift in wave
 186 breaking, associated with the shift of critical lines (Shepherd & McLandress, 2011). What
 187 has not been highlighted before is that the enhanced wave drag maximizes in the sum-
 188 mer lower stratosphere, when the climatological zero wind lines are lower. Moreover, the
 189 annual maximum wave drag increase is found in the boreal summer subtropics (Figs. 2b,
 190 S2, S3). On the other hand, the PV gradient trends (Fig. 3d) are positive in the region
 191 of westerly trends and maximize in winter (cf. Fig. 2a). In contrast, they are negative
 192 in the tropics around the zero wind lines, forming a dipole that reflects the upward and
 193 equatorward shift of the background PV structure.

194 The combined trends in both terms explain the sign of K_{yy} trends, and by anal-
 195 ogy help interpret the sign of κ_{eff} trends. We note that, while changes in κ_{eff} may in turn
 196 cause changes in the PV gradients in general, here they primarily respond to the exter-
 197 nal forcing (GHG increase), and thus we neglect this feedback to first order. In the win-
 198 ter subtropics ($\sim 30^\circ\text{N}$) the PV gradient increase dominates over the weak increase in
 199 (negative) PV flux, such that K_{yy} is reduced. Poleward of the jet, the (negative) PV flux
 200 decreases and thus both terms contribute to decrease K_{yy} . In the summer subtropics ($\sim 30^\circ\text{S}$),
 201 despite the strengthening of the eddy PV flux, the increase in PV gradients dominates
 202 resulting in weak negative K_{yy} trends. In contrast, in the tropics around the zero wind
 203 line in both hemispheres, the PV gradient decreases and both terms contribute to in-
 204 crease K_{yy} (and thus κ_{eff}).

205 Therefore, the analogy between κ_{eff} and the eddy diffusivity K_{yy} confirms that κ_{eff}
 206 trends are controlled to a large extent by trends in PV gradient. Importantly, this im-
 207 plies that κ_{eff} trends above the subtropical jets provide information on the changes in
 208 transport barriers, but not on the eddy fluxes. In particular, the effect of strengthened
 209 transport barriers does not translate into reduced two-way mixing because it is compen-
 210 sated by the concomitant strengthening of PV gradients. Consistently, annual mean isen-
 211 tropic eddy transport in the lower stratosphere increases for tracers of tropospheric and

212 stratospheric origin (Abalos et al., 2017, 2020). The trends in eddy tracer and PV fluxes
 213 show the same strong seasonality, not found in the κ_{eff} trends (cf. Fig. 2).

214 To explore the dependency of the results of this section on the pathway of GHG
 215 emissions throughout the century, we examined the trends in a more extreme scenario,
 216 the RCP8.5. The trends around the subtropical jets of both hemispheres are qualitatively
 217 consistent and stronger than those in RCP6.0 (not shown). In particular, the wind, κ_{eff}
 218 and eddy PV flux trends are larger by approximately a factor of 2 in the more extreme
 219 climate change scenario (Figure S4).

220 **3.2 Trends in the Antarctic lower stratosphere**

221 Figure 1 highlights a region of positive annual mean κ_{eff} trends in the polar aus-
 222 tral lower stratosphere, and a region of negative trends in the middle stratosphere. Here
 223 we demonstrate that these trends are due to the ozone hole recovery. Figures 4a and 4b
 224 show the trends in κ_{eff} and eddy PV flux, respectively, averaged over the SH polar cap
 225 as a function of time and altitude. To examine the impact of ozone recovery on these
 226 trends, Figures 4c and 4d show the difference between the trends in the ensemble mean
 227 of the reference simulations minus that of the simulations with ODS fixed to 2000 lev-
 228 els. It is clear by comparing the top and middle panels that the net trends in this region
 229 are dominated by the effect of ODS. As ODS are phased out in the 21st century thanks
 230 to the Montreal Protocol, ozone concentrations rise and the polar stratosphere warms
 231 more rapidly in spring, which leads to a weaker and shorter-lived polar vortex. The ten-
 232 dency towards an earlier vortex spring breakdown is seen in the negative wind trends
 233 overlaid to the climatological seasonal weakening of the vortex in Fig. 4a-d.

234 Associated with this weakening trends of the vortex, there is enhanced κ_{eff} (Fig.
 235 4a,c). The κ_{eff} trends extend throughout the column in September-December, and are
 236 confined to lower levels as the season progresses, peaking in the lower stratosphere from
 237 November to February. This downward progression follows the seasonal weakening of the
 238 background wind, with easterlies appearing above 600 K in December-January. The shift
 239 towards an earlier polar vortex breakup is evidenced in the wave drag at upper levels,
 240 which is strengthened in October-November and reduced in December-January (Fig. 4b,d).
 241 In addition, there is enhanced wave drag in the lower stratosphere, which forms a dipole
 242 with the reduced drag at upper levels in December-January, consistent with inhibited

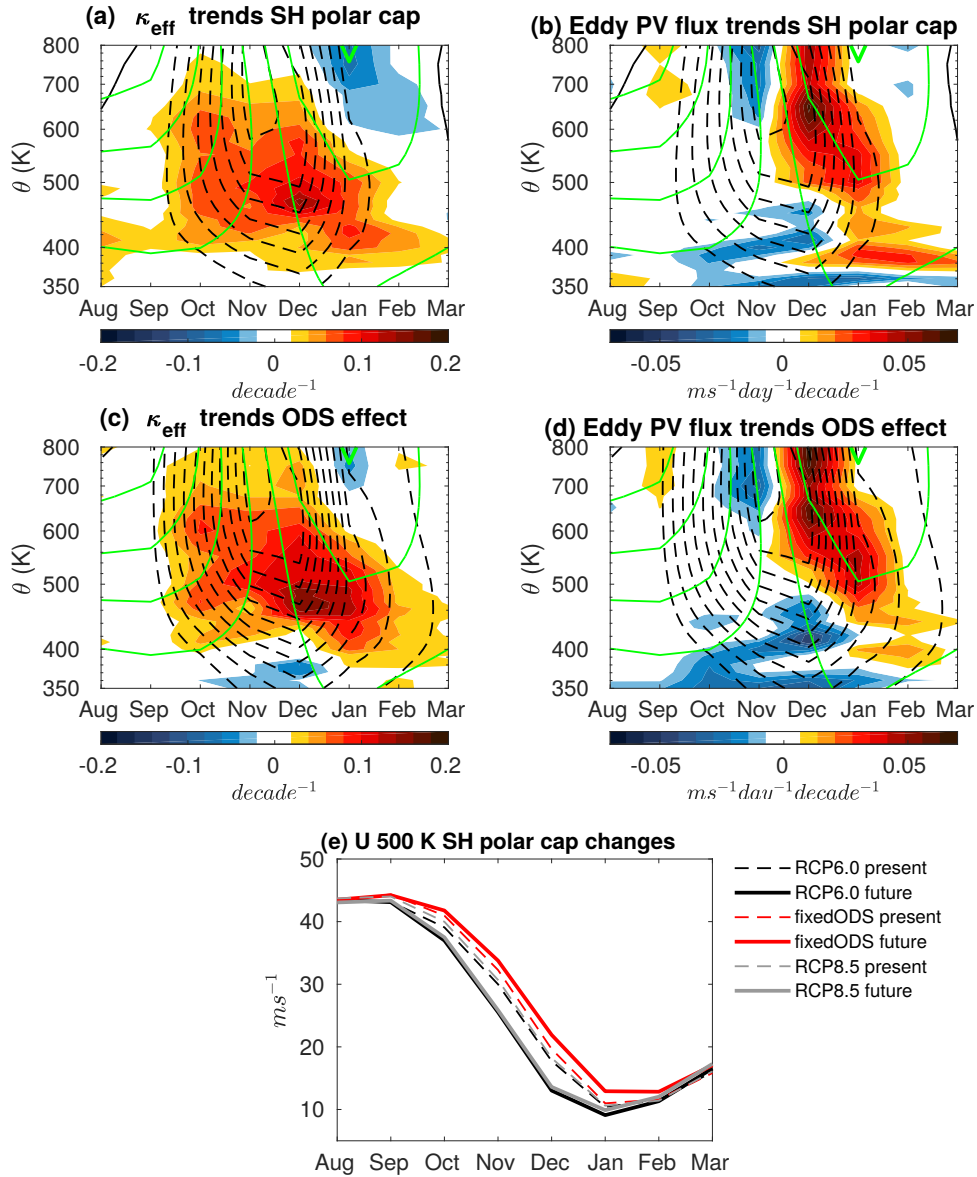


Figure 4. Trends in κ_{eff} (a and c) and eddy PV flux (b and d) averaged over (90°S-50°S) for RCP6.0 (a and b) and for the difference RCP6.0 minus SEN-C2-fODS2000 (c and d). Green: climatological zonal wind (ci: 10 m/s/decade) Black: zonal wind trends (ci: 0.1m/s/decade). Solid: positive, dashed: negative). e) SH polar vortex strength in the first (present) and last (future) 20 years of the 21st century.

243 upward Rossby wave propagation as critical lines descend. Coherently, κ_{eff} features positive
 244 trends below 600 K and negative trends above that level near the zero wind con-
 245 tour (Fig. 4b,d). The negative κ_{eff} trends are strongest in middle latitudes above 600
 246 K (Fig. S1a). Therefore, wave drag and κ_{eff} trends in the Antarctic polar stratosphere

247 both respond to the descent of the critical lines for Rossby wave breaking associated with
248 the ozone hole recovery in austral summer. This behavior is consistent with that shown
249 in Abalos et al. (2019), where mirror but opposite sign κ_{eff} trends were found for the ozone
250 hole formation period. Recent work has shown that increasing GHG strengthen the SH
251 polar vortex and delay its breakdown (Ceppi & Shepherd, 2019). To contrast the im-
252 pacts of GHG and ODS, Figure 4e shows the 21st century change in zonal wind speed
253 in the lower stratosphere SH polar cap for the ensemble means of RCP6.0, fixed-ODS-
254 2000 and RCP8.5 scenarios. By the end of the century, the vortex wind speeds are no-
255 tably higher in the simulation without ozone recovery than in the other two. Hence, the
256 weakening effect of ODS outweighs the strengthening effect of GHG on the SH polar vor-
257 tex. Moreover, this is also true in the more extreme climate change scenario RCP8.5, where
258 the vortex strength is reduced almost as much as in RCP6.0.

259 4 Conclusions

260 We have shown that the subtropical transport barriers extend to higher levels in
261 the 21st century in response to the strengthening of the upper flanks of the subtropical
262 jets. Nevertheless, isentropic eddy transport is enhanced at the edges of the tropical pipe
263 in the lower stratosphere, due to the upward and equatorward shift in wave drag follow-
264 ing the critical lines, consistent with the mechanism proposed by Shepherd and McLan-
265 dress (2011). While enhanced Rossby wave breaking is potentially associated with larger
266 tracer contour elongation, we find little correspondence between κ_{eff} and eddy PV flux
267 trends, especially in terms of seasonality. Eddy transport is enhanced mostly in the sum-
268 mer lower stratosphere, where the critical line effect is dominant due to the vicinity of
269 the zero wind line. κ_{eff} trends are tightly coupled to those in zonal wind and PV gra-
270 dients in the upper flanks of the winter mixing barriers, which extend from fall to spring.
271 In the tropical lower stratosphere, near the climatological zero wind lines, both κ_{eff} and
272 wave drag are enhanced in the annual mean. The recent CCMi multi-model study by
273 Eichinger et al. (2019) examines K_{yy} annual mean trends and concludes that they re-
274 flect the upward and equatorward shift in wave drag. Here, we show that the dipolar pat-
275 terns in the trends of κ_{eff} and eddy PV flux actually feature different seasonality. This
276 discrepancy highlights the important role of tracer gradients in addition to transport bar-
277 riers for understanding two-way mixing trends.

278 In addition to the response to climate change in the subtropical lower stratosphere,
279 a strong signal is identified in the SH polar stratosphere, linked to the ozone hole recov-
280 ery in the 21st century. κ_{eff} in the SH polar cap is enhanced from September to Febru-
281 ary as the polar vortex recovers its shorter and weaker character as compared to the be-
282 ginning of the century. The effect of the ozone hole recovery extends to the SH polar and
283 middle latitudes, where changes in wave drag associated with the descent of the criti-
284 cal line lead to weaker κ_{eff} above 600 K, and viceversa. This effect of ozone recovery over-
285 comes the opposing effect of GHG on the vortex strength and breakdown date recently
286 discussed by Ceppi and Shepherd (2019), even in the strong GHG emissions scenario RCP8.5.

287 The present work sheds light on the largely unexplored isentropic mixing trends,
288 and the results highlight the usefulness of combining complementary transport diagnos-
289 tics. The use of lagrangian and eulerian diagnostics emphasizes the complex interplay
290 between wave drag, transport barriers and tracer gradients. Evaluation of these processes
291 against observations can help improve the representation of tracer variability and trends
292 in chemistry climate models.

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