



Submesoscale barriers to horizontal mixing in the ocean from current measurements and aerial-photographs

H. Gildor (1), E. Fredj (2), J. Steinbuck (3), and S. Monismith ()

(1) Weizmann Institute, Environmental Sciences, Rehovot, Israel (hezi.gildor@weizmann.ac.il), (2) The Jerusalem College of Technology, Israel, (3) Stanford University, USA

Ocean submesoscale (~2-20 km) mixing processes play a major role in ocean dynamics, in physical-biological interactions (e.g. in the dispersion of larvae), and in the dispersion of pollutants. We investigate horizontal mixing on a scale of a few km, from observations of surface currents, using highly resolved (300 m) high-frequency radar. Our results show the complexity of ocean mixing on scales of a few km and the existence of temporary barriers to mixing that can affect the dispersion of biological materials and pollutants. These barriers are narrow ($O(100m)$) and can survive for a few days. The existence of these barriers is verified in simultaneous aerial-photographs. The barriers observed here may require a new approach to the way horizontal mixing is parameterized in ocean and climate models.