

Interactive comment on “Creep deformation and buttressing capacity of damaged ice shelves: theory and application to Larsen C ice shelf” by C. P. Borstad et al.

Anonymous Referee #1

Received and published: 14 August 2013

I’ve read this fine manuscript and have also heard a presentation on it at a recent meeting of the IGS, and I feel that the manuscript is just about as perfect as one could expect, and that the science it reports is of high quality and will be of interest to a broad spectrum of Cryospheric scientists.

Normally I give a lot of detail in my reviews, however, this time I will be brief (due to a vicious virus that I came down with while traveling) and record only three minor comments:

1. It is important to make the distinction between “damage” as a heuristic idealization of fracture on an ice shelf, and the actual physics and material properties of fractured

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ice shelves. Damage mechanics, as I understand it, is an idealization that one adopts when one knows little else about the form of fractures. I take it that there are several key underlying assumptions and postulates that should be mentioned. One might be that it is assumed that there is so much fracture on such a fine scale that the influence is isotropic and is likely to be a linear function of the “density” of such fractures. I think making this important philosophical distinction will add credibility and a sense of elegance to the manuscript. This is accounted for in part by the first paragraph on page 3575, however it might be worth constantly reminding the reader of this in the abstract and introduction.

2. Longitudinal stress (line 25 of page 3569) should read “longitudinal tensile stress” (longitudinal stress alone could be misleading as there is the possibility of compressive stress). Also, longitudinal stress associated with the ice-shelf flow is not the only stress that exists in an ice shelf, due to the fact that the ice shelf is influenced by many other processes such as to induce wave-like motions and flexure. Hence, the distinction should be made that the manuscript is considering this form of stress as the main source of fracture in the present study.

3. I think that some statement “up front” should be given as to how the damage parameter will be computed. I take it that the parameter as shown in the figures is a result of an inverse calculation and not a result of an ab initio computation based on some underlying physics. The reader would benefit from knowing this more clearly in the introduction.

Interactive comment on The Cryosphere Discuss., 7, 3567, 2013.

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