

Interactive comment on “Atmospheric influences on the anomalous 2016 Antarctic sea ice decay” by Elisabeth Schlosser et al.

S. Cross

09.sarah.cross@gmail.com

Received and published: 29 November 2017

1 General Comments

Schlosser et al. explain and investigate a range of atmospheric influences that lead to the anomalous sea ice decay in Antarctica in 2016. The rate of melt in this year was much higher compared with averages from previous years, at 2 Mio. km², and there are many variables that can explain this. The paper establishes that some factors affecting the rate of ice decay include cyclonic activity, regional evolution of Sea Ice Extent (SIE) and Sea Ice Area (SIA), and atmospheric flow patterns. Mainly through analysis of the ZW3 (zonal wave 3) feedbacks and the SAM (Southern Annular Mode). This is significant as some of the research covered in this paper can be used to determine the exact

C1

atmospheric influences on sea ice decay and how anthropogenic forcing can influence this, hence giving it relevance to climate change and other major controversies. There is a clear distinction between expected outcomes and unexpected outcomes in this paper. The anomalous results were clearly explained and identified, whilst the expected results were outlined from the beginning and both were used in the discussion of the atmospheric influences on sea ice decay.

2 Specific Comments

2.1 The authors clearly outline the aim of the paper, to discuss the possible reasons for the anomalous ice decay, in the introduction. The further explanation and previous work is written in clear and scientific language, however one suggestion would be that terms should be defined earlier. The terms ZW3 and SAM are used in the introduction with no explanation, and whilst they are covered later in the text this could be initially confusing.

2.2 In addition, some alternative ideas could be discussed, for example Stuecker et al. 2017 discuss the role of greenhouse gases and ozone forcing in addition to other atmospheric influences. Although great detail would not be relevant for this paper, mentioning these factors could help to link the results to other important parts of the cryosphere and give a wider picture of the papers significance.

2.3 Although relevant figures were used and they were well referenced in the text itself, having the figures and figure captions separate at the end of the paper was a little confusing. My suggestion would be to group them together and keep them at the end of the paper for ease of access.

2.4 Finally, the paper is well referenced and a large variety of literature was used. However most of these references were from before 2010 with one even dating back to 1902. One suggestion would be to use some more up to date references, as this is especially important considering the recent advances in this field of ice decay. The older references are not necessarily invalid however conditions and attitudes at the time

C2

of these papers were much different from today, and this could be clarified within the paper.

2.5 In summary, the paper clearly analyses a wide range of available data and draws relevant hypotheses based on this, the sections are well laid out and clearly labelled and there is strong emphasis on past work and a wide range of references are cited. However, there are some minor errors that could be amended, therefore I suggest a review of the paper to correct these, after which it could be accepted.

3 Minor Corrections

3.1 Line 85- there is an unnecessary bracket (Enomoto and Ohmura (1990) should be (Enomoto and Ohmura, 1990)

3.2 Line 128- misspelled December as Dezember

3.3 Line 129- an accent is required for El Niño

3.4 Line 243- the comma after “to investigate” is unnecessary

3.5 Line 360-365- sentence is too long, needs to be broken up

3.6 Line 421- repeated word “accelerated ice melt melt”

3.7 Line 430- in my opinion this line would work better as a list of three i.e. “sea ice decay, SAM and ZW3” instead of repeating the ands

3.8 Line 445- again a matter of opinion but this could perhaps be broken into two sentences “. . . extremely zonal flow conditions. Whereas 2009 exhibited. . .”

References Stuecker M.F., Bitz C.M. and Armour K.C., 2017. Conditions leading to the unprecedented low Antarctic sea ice extent during the 2016 Austral spring season, *Geophysical Research Letters*, 44, 17, 9008-9019

Interactive comment on The Cryosphere Discuss., <https://doi.org/10.5194/tc-2017-192>, 2017.