Deriving the Climatic Mass Balance Gradients of Alaskan Glaciers through the Integration of Field Measurements and Remote Sensing

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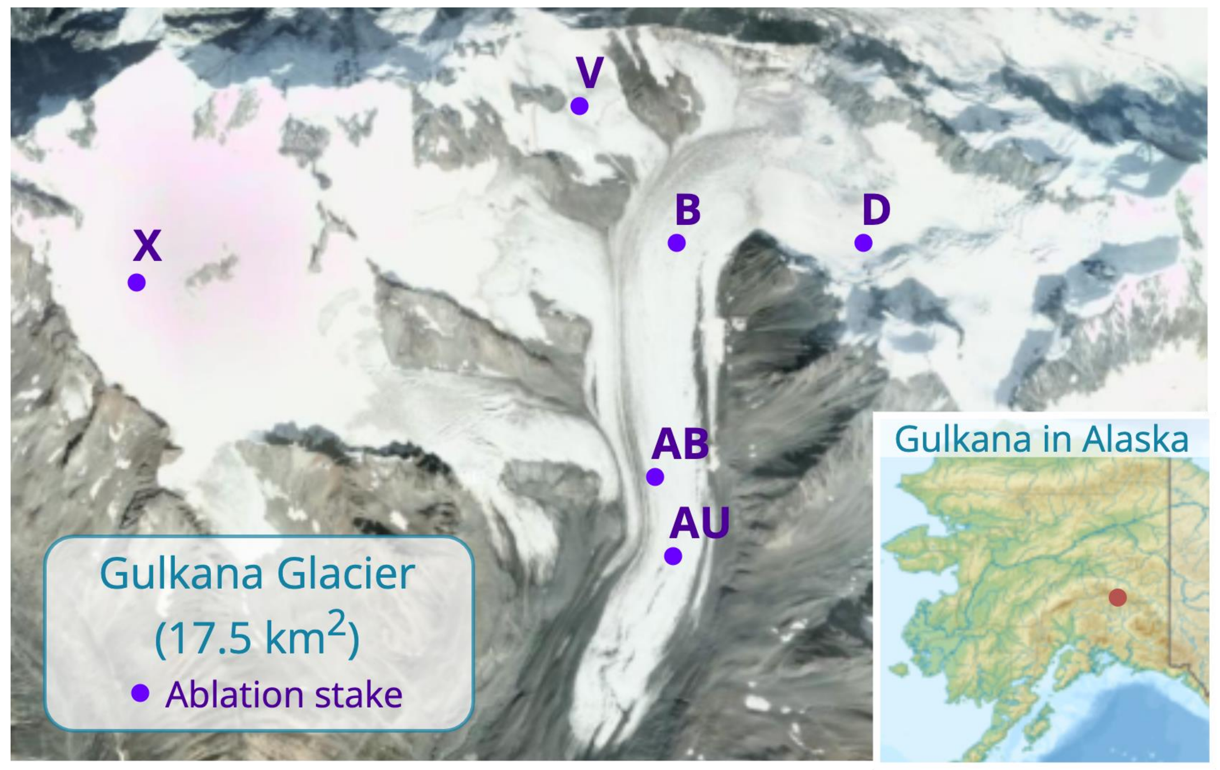
BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Roughly 25% of global mountain glacier mass loss is from Alaska. Large-scale remote sensing offers unprecedented opportunity to monitor glaciers, but in-situ observations are critical to validate remote sensing data products.

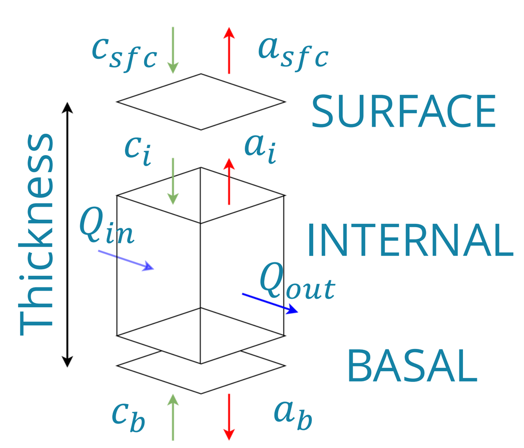
This study:

- utilizes remotely sensed and modeled surface velocity, ice thickness, and elevation change to **estimate the climatic mass balance gradient for Gulkana Glacier**
- evaluates the performance of different products compared to in-situ measurements
- begins to integrate modeled products to replace poor quality or missing data



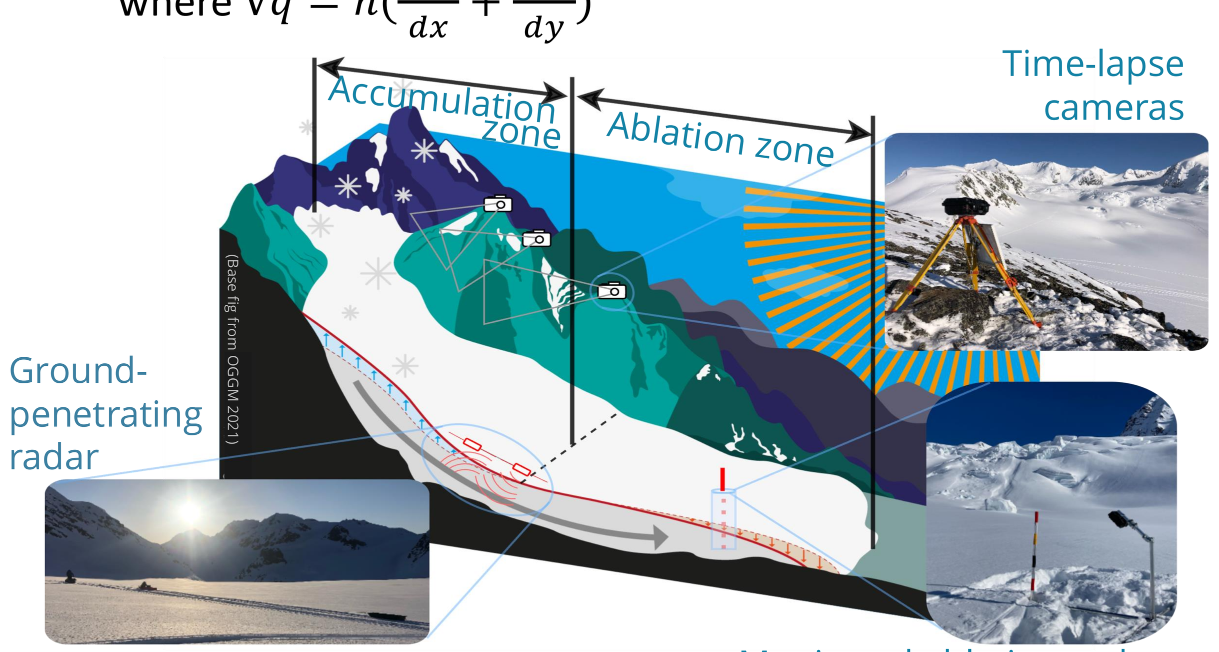
METHODS

- ***Total mass balance*** is surface elevation change, which is a combination of mass change from accumulation/ablation and ice flux.
- ***Climatic mass balance*** accounts for ice flux to reveal melt from surface processes



$$\dot{b}_{clim} = \dot{b}_{tot} + \nabla q$$

where $\nabla q = h(\frac{du_x}{dx} + \frac{du_y}{dy})$

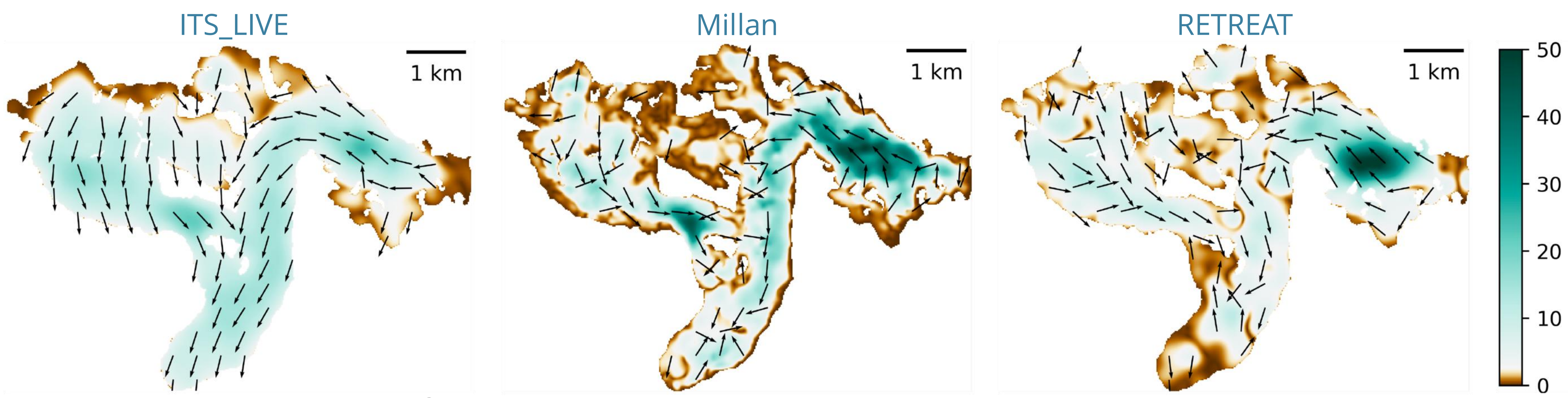


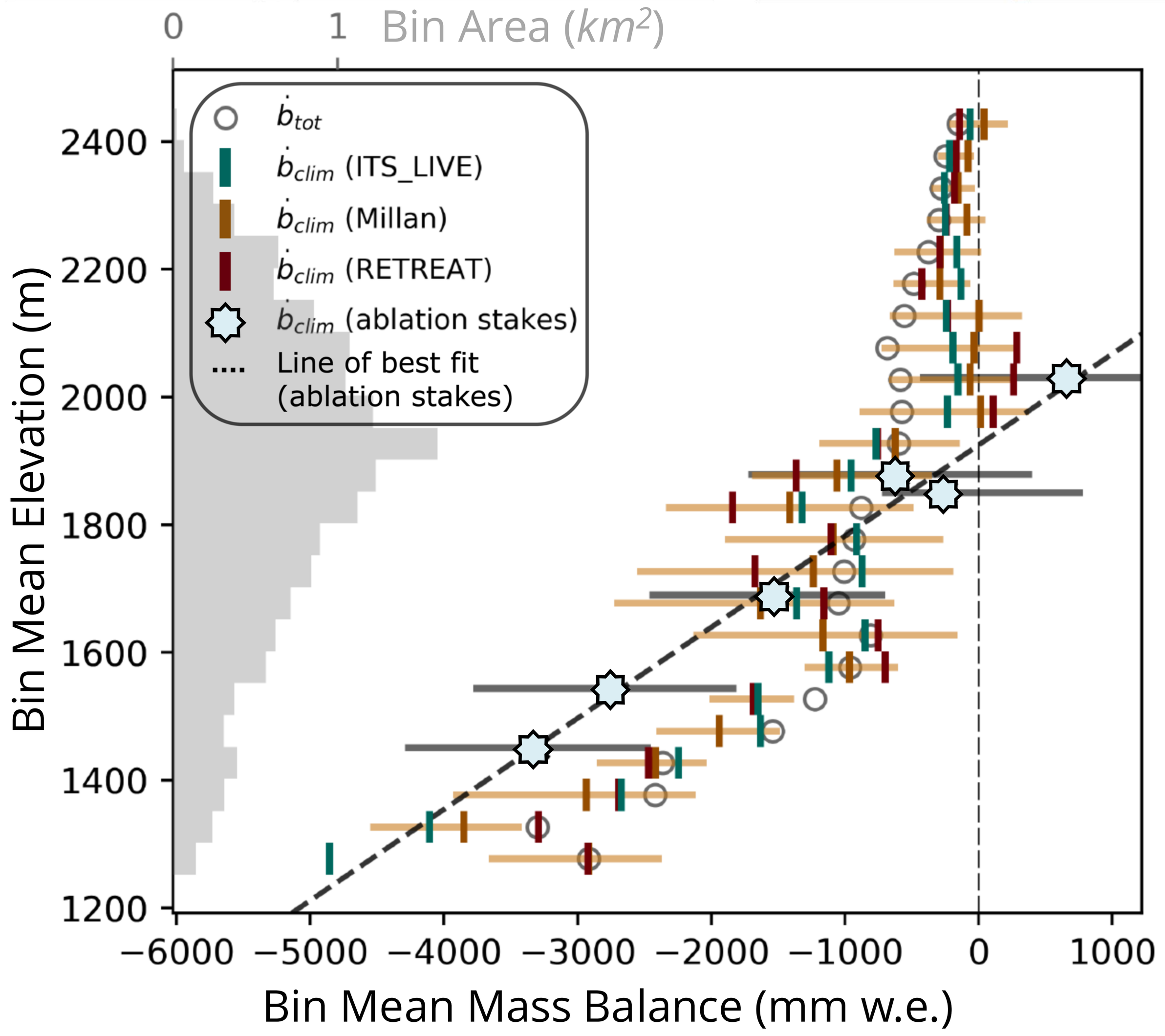
Datasets:

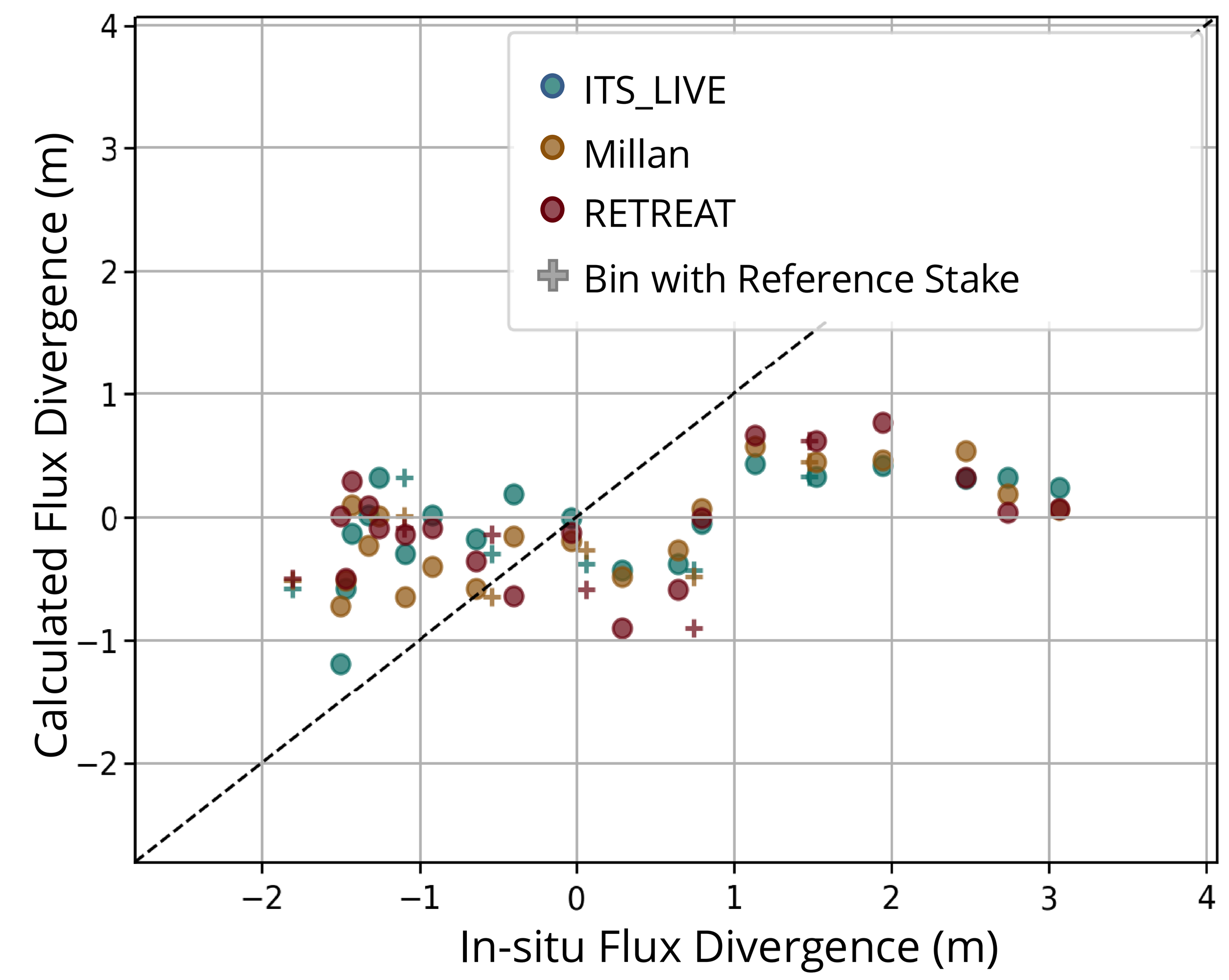
- Glacier inventory (RGI Consortium 2017)
- Elevation (Copernicus 2021, USGS 2019)
- Elevation change: 2015-2019 (Hugonnet et al. 2021)
- Surface velocity: 2017-2018 (Millan et al. 2022, MEaSUREs ITS_LIVE; NASA 2019, RETREAT 2021)
- Ice thickness (Millan et al. 2022, Farinotti et al. 2019)

REMOTE SENSING DATA

Three velocity products are used with the Millan ice thickness to estimate climatic mass balance

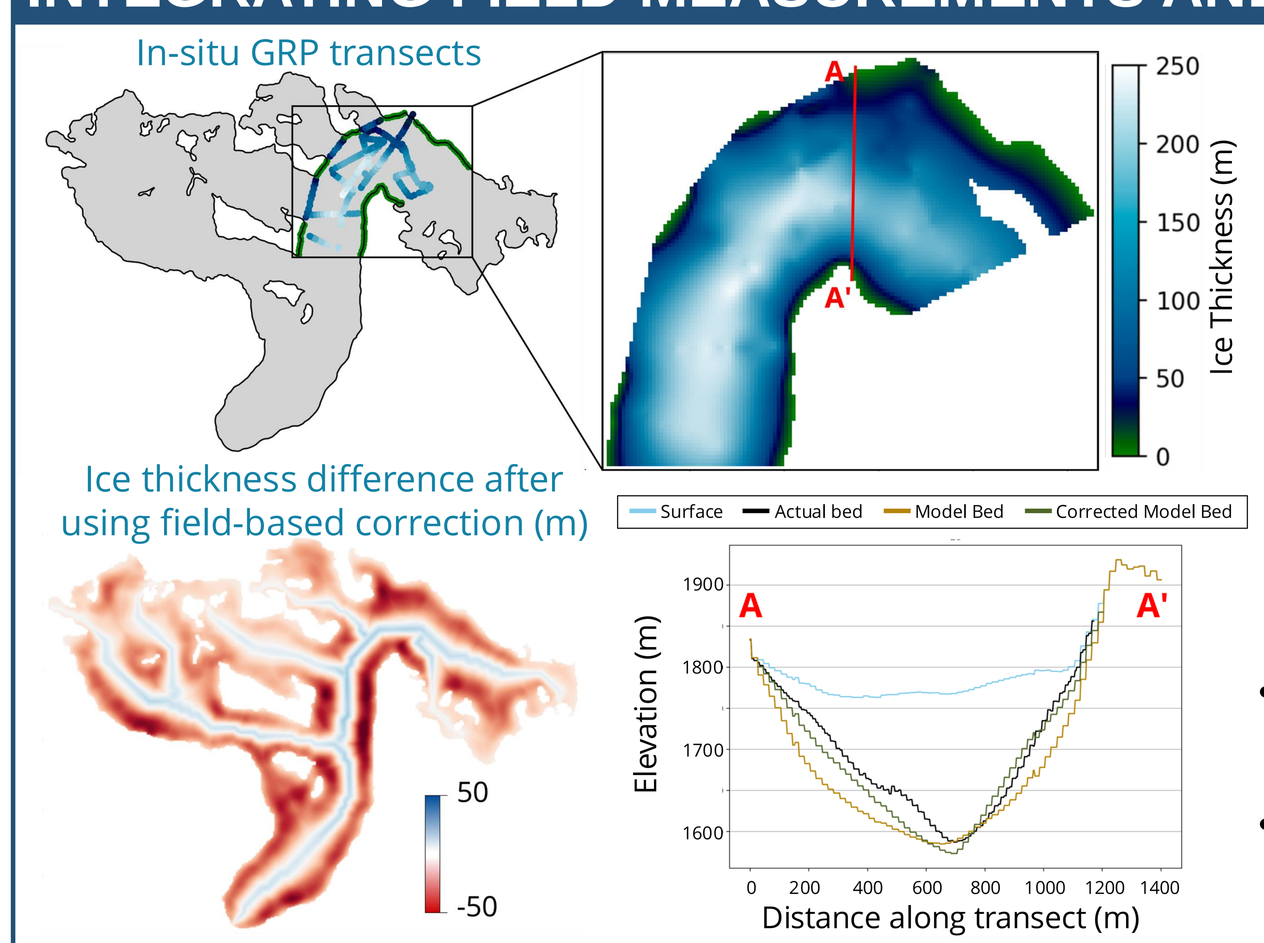






- **Surface velocity greatly impacts the flux divergence and thus the climatic mass balance**
- **However, no individual surface velocity products generate flux divergences and climatic mass balances consistent with field observations**

INTEGRATING FIELD MEASUREMENTS AND MODELS

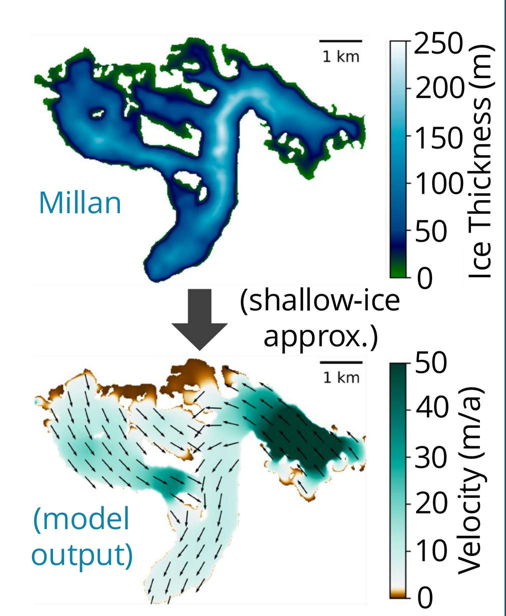


For Gulkana, ice thickness products…

- underestimate thickness along centerlines
- overestimate thickness at margins

Velocity at Ablation Stake Locations (m/a)

Data Source	AU	AB	B	D
Stake	18.5	23.9	39.7	53.9
Millan	15.9	5.3	26.3	46.7
ITS_LIVE	14.7	13.8	13.0	20.5
RETREAT	6.1	3.3	3.9	20.9
Model	10.8	10.6	13.1	61.7



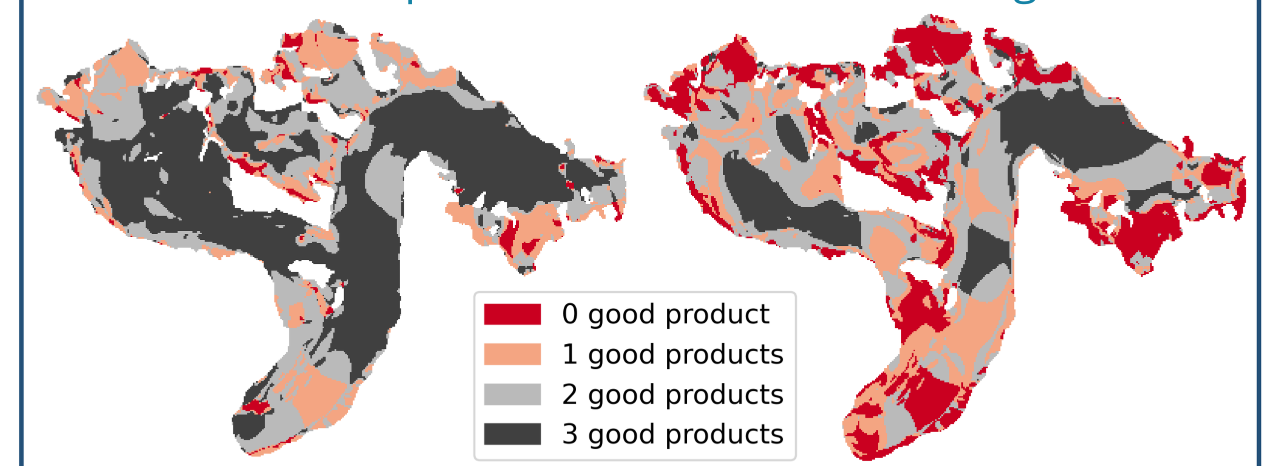
- Physical intuition and point velocities constrain realistic model outputs from Icepack (Shapero et al. 2021)
- Apply Bayesian inference for a **composite velocity**
  - use modeled velocity as prior estimate
  - use remote sensing velocities and their uncertainties as observations

Methods are still being developed; no composite exists yet

FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Climatic mass balance gradient is sensitive to velocity input
- Large disagreements between products highlight inaccuracies in subregions of glaciers (see below)
- Climatic mass balance is not as sensitive to ice thickness input, but ice thickness is essential to modeling velocity
- Results highlight the need to quality control velocity data before calculating climatic mass balance

Validity of velocity products based on aspect | Validity of velocity products based on magnitude



NEXT STEPS

- Bayesian inference for composite velocity product
- Simplify flux gate approach: climatic mass balance from few elevation bins where velocity products agree
- Assess potential effects of avalanching and wind distribution on stake observations
- Assess potential effects of firn compaction
- Integrate time-lapse cameras for in-situ elevation change and velocity fields
- Climatic mass balance gradient for other Alaska glaciers

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