

## ***Interactive comment on “Assimilation of passive microwave AMSR-2 satellite observations in a snowpack evolution model over North-Eastern Canada” by Fanny Larue et al.***

**Fanny Larue et al.**

[fanny.larue@usherbrooke.ca](mailto:fanny.larue@usherbrooke.ca)

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Dear Editor-in-chief,

Please find attached to this letter the revisions to this manuscript. We would like to thank the reviewers for their detailed comments which were useful in producing an improved manuscript. We carefully responded to all the questions and comments. As requested by the reviewers, the manuscript was checked by a native English professional reviewer to correct language issues and grammar mistakes. We put in advance a tiny mistake in the assimilation algorithm. This was not significant, we, nevertheless, recalculate all the simulations. As expected, the difference compared to previous re-

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sults are not important, but we present all the new results in this revised version, as this is more rigorous. It doesn't change the conclusion of the paper. Note that since the first submission of this paper, our paper previously submitted and explaining in details the assimilation scheme used in this paper is now published in Water Resources Research (Larue, F., Royer, A., De Se<sup>l</sup>Áve, D., Roy, A., Picard, G., Vionnet, V., & Cosme, E.: Simulation and assimilation of passive microwave data using a snowpack model coupled to a calibrated radiative transfer model over northeastern Canada. Water Resources Research, 54, 4823-4848, <https://doi.org/10.1029/2017WR022132>, 2018). Moreover, a strong effort has been made to facilitate a deeper understanding of this paper (flow chart modified, methodology better described. . .). A new table was added to describe all acronyms and experiments. We think that this new version is significantly improved compared the previous submission.

Please, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or comments, or if anything is missing from the submission of the revised manuscript.

Regards,

Fanny LARUE

Please also note the supplement to this comment:

<https://www.hydrol-earth-syst-sci-discuss.net/hess-2018-95/hess-2018-95-AC3-supplement.pdf>

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Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., <https://doi.org/10.5194/hess-2018-95>, 2018.

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## ***Interactive comment on “Assimilation of passive microwave AMSR-2 satellite observations in a snowpack evolution model over North-Eastern Canada” by Fanny Larue et al.***

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General comments of the reviewer:

RC1. This paper evaluates the assimilation of AMSR-2 brightness temperature observations at 11 GHz, 19GHz and 37GHz into the Crocus/DMRT-ML models to analyse snow water equivalent. Results are evaluated against in situ data obtained from 12 sites representing different land cover types in Québec, Eastern Canada. This study is very relevant for the scientific community as assimilating radiances to analyse snow conditions in physical snowpack models is of high interest for hydrology and numerical weather prediction applications. The paper shows promising results for moderate veg-

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etation cover and the method opens larger scale applications possibilities. The text has a number of language issues and grammar mistakes, some of which are listed below. The manuscript should be checked by a native English speaking colleague.

AC1: The paper was checked by a native English speaking colleague.

RC2. However the paper is very well organised, results are presented with appropriate figures and tables, and very interesting discussion and conclusion sections are provided. I suggest this paper to be accepted for publication in HESS after the comments below are accounted for.

Page 9 lines 11-12: " To generate a three hourly-continuous meteorological forcing database for running Crocus, successive GEM forecasts were taken from the +09 forecast hour to the +18 forecast hour provided at the 00 and 12 UTC analysis time of each day." It is not clear to me what it means. Did the authors take forecasts at 00 UTC steps covering 09UTC to 12UTC and at 12UTC steps covering 18UTC to 21 UTC? Does it match the AMSR2 pass at 1pm local time? The authors should clarify in the text and also it would be clearer to use UTC everywhere, also when describing the AMSR data both UTC and local time could be provided (page 5 section 2.2 and page 7 section 3.1.1).

AC2: We deleted this part since it was already introduced in the previous section, Page 5, line 20: 'The three hourly-continuous atmospheric forcing database provided by the Global Environmental Multiscale weather prediction model (referred to as 'GEM'; Coté et al., 1998) was used to drive the multi-layer Crocus snowpack model (described in Sect. 3.2.1).' This section 3.2.1 focuses on the coupling Crocus/DMRT-ML, and the GEM inputs used are well detailed in Larue et al., 2018 (section 2.2): 'It provides forecasts of meteorological variables every 3 hr and can make predictions of up to 48 hr. Forecasts are updated daily at 00 and 12 UTC analysis times. To generate a 3-hourly continuous meteorological forcing database for running Crocus, successive GEM forecasts were taken from the +09 forecast hour to the +18 forecast hour provided

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at the 00 and 12 UTC analysis time of each day.'

The GEM forecasts were taken in order to match the 1 pm local time. We replaced hours in UTC everywhere. Section 2.2, page 6, line 1: " The Crocus model updates the snowpack every 15 minutes by interpolating meteorological inputs, but in this study we used daily Crocus outputs (SWE, snow depth, density, etc.) computed at 14:00 local time (19:00 UTC), in agreement with the AMSR-2 pass (Sect. 3.1.1)."

RC3. Page 10 lines 18-20: " Hence, as soon as a snowfall is detected with GEM precipitation data, the IL firstly added on the top of the surface was positioned 4 cm from the surface in the simulated snow profile. The maximum number of detected IL was fixed at two. In this case, the first detected IL was 20 positioned at 8 cm from the surface and the second at 4 cm after a snowfall was detected." please clarify/reformulate this part. From the first sentence the reader understands that the first IL is at 4cm depth, but from the second and third sentences it is indicated that the first one is at 8cm depth and the second at 4cm.

AC3: This section 3.1.2 was rewritten, Page 10, line 12: " In this study, an IL was added on the top of the simulated snowpack if the AMSR-2 PR(11) was above 0.06 (Roy, 2014). This IL was represented as a 1-cm layer with a density of 900 kg m<sup>-3</sup> and with snow grain radius set to zero (Roy et al., 2016). The difficulty is to know how to evolve this IL in the snowpack. The Crocus snowpack model has not yet been adapted to integrate the formation of ILs and evolve them in a coherent way (Quéno et al., 2016). Nevertheless, it was shown in Larue et al. (2018) (from field measurements) that an IL of 1 cm located at 4 cm from the surface of the simulated snowpack minimized the bias of DMRT-ML simulations due to the presence of an IL (regardless of its real location in the snow profile). Hence, the IL first added at the surface of the snowpack was moved to 4 cm from the surface as soon as a snowfall was detected with GEM precipitation data or, if not, after five days to take into account the snowpack transformations (percolations, sublimations, etc.). The maximum number of detected IL was fixed at two. When a second IL was detected (IL2), IL2 was added at the surface

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while the first detected IL (IL1) was left at 4 cm. After the next snowfall (or after five days otherwise), IL1 was moved to 8 cm from the surface and IL2 to 4 cm. For instance, during winter 2014-2015, one IL was detected at sites 1 and 12 (22 December 2014 and 15 December 2014). At Site 9, two ILs were detected: one on 10 December 2014 and another on 1 January 2015. "

RC4. In section 3.4.2 it would be very useful to include a table with the list of experiments with a short name for each and indicating in the caption the experiment period and sites. So that the reader would have centralised in the table the experiment set-up information. For example experiment names like "DA1\_TB19-37", "DA2\_TB19-37,TB11-19", "DA3\_TB\_11,19,37". Using these short names in Section 4 when presenting the results would be much clearer.

AC4: We added a new Table (table 3) with acronyms. We used the new acronyms in section 4 to be clearer.

RC5. Also the first sentence of the section 3.4.2 starts with "In a first step,...", it should be followed by "In a second step," probably page 15, line 17 when introducing the experiment on all sites. It is not a problem to reveal the fact that the best configuration will be DA of TB11,19,37 at this stage, it will only make the paper clearer. Page 18: section 4.2.1, first paragraph: there is no need to repeat in the results section the experiments that were conducted: please remove the first sentence of section 4.2.1.

AC5: Done, these sections were checked to be clearer and the first sentence of section 4.2.1 was removed to avoid repetitions.

RC6. Finally, even the last experiment, with free snow stickiness and forest parameter, presented in Section 5, should be described in Section 3.4.2 and included in the experiment list table. It is surprising for the reader to be informed in Section 5 that another experiment was conducted. In other words, the paper should not necessarily follow the chronology of the research developments. It should present the experiments and the results/discussion without holding new experiment description for the results and

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discussion sections.

AC6: Done, we moved it in the result section, and introduced it in the method as the 'experiment C'. see new section 3.4.2.

RC7. Page 20 line 6 and Figure 6: The way it is formulated page 20 and in the caption, it is not straightforward to understand the meaning of "SWE ensemble obtained with the DA of the three frequencies (referred to as 'SWEDA')". The reader may wonder why this one is called SWEDA whereas the DA of TB 11, 19 37 GHZ had no specific name. Please use experiment names and provide a table in section 3 (see comment above).

AC7: Done, we used experiment names introduced in new table 3 (section 3).

Minor comments of the reviewer:

RC8. table 1 Caption: replace: "Characteristics of the nivometric stations: SWE (in kg m-2) data, Latitude (Lat.),..." by "Characteristics of the nivometric SWE stations: Site number, Latitude (Lat.),"

AC8. Done

RC9. Table1 caption: GEM is used here but only defined later in section 2.2. So, define it on its first occurrence in Table 1's caption.

AC9. Done

RC10. Page 5, line 11: remove "further"

AC10. Done

RC11. Page 5 line 13: replace "1pm" by "1pm local time"

AC11. Done

RC12. Page 5 last paragraph: make sure tenses are consistent: line 12: "Crocus computes" and line 13-14: "The DMRT-ML ... was used to "

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AC12. Done

RC13. Page 6 line 13: ".." -> "."

AC13. Done

RC14. Page 8, table 2, caption: clarify if the winter period January to March as indicated in the caption, or if it is 1 January to 1 March as indicated in the text page 7 line 18.

AC14. Done

RC15. Page 8 line 17 "formulations in" -> "formulations of"

AC15. Done

RC16. Page 10 line 24: reformulate by something like: "The PMW brightness temperature (TB) emitted at the scale of the AMSR-2 product can be written as (2) for each grid cell as"

AC16. Done

RC17. Page 11 line 15: "the expression of TB TOA in boreal areas was described by the Eq. (2)" for consistency please update Eq 2 (page 10) by replacing "TB=" by "TB TOA="

AC17. Done

RC18. Page 12 line 3: remove "throughout the year"

AC18. Done

RC19. Page 12 line 7: "In the Eq.7"-> "In Eq. 7"

AC19. Done

RC20. Page 12 lines 17-20: update the text to ensure tenses consistency. For example lines 17-18: "Forest parameters (I, \_) depend on the forest characteristics, such as the

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biomass and the structure of the canopy for each site. To take into account the temporal variations of these characteristics, the forest parameters were linked to the LAI." can be replaced by: "Forest parameters ( $\omega$ ,  $\sigma$ ) depend on the forest characteristics, such as the biomass and the structure of the canopy for each site. They also depend on LAI which allows to account for the seasonal cycle in the forest emission". Also check the rest of the paragraph.

AC20. Done

RC21. Page 12 line 31: replace "value couple" by "set of values", replace "(considered constant in frequency)" by ", defined at each frequency (11 GHz, 19 GHz and 37 GHz)", and replace "for each frequency (at 11, 19 and 37 GHz) in V-pol" by "at V-pol".

AC21. Done

RC22. Page 12 line 32 / page 13 line 1: This sentence is not clear, it should be reformulated. Do you mean that the parameters were optimised also at H-pol or that the V-pol set of parameters were tested at H-pol?

AC22. Done; We used V-pol only since H-pol is very sensitive to the stratigraphy of the snowpack and to the presence of ILS. Section 3.4.2: "We used V-pol TB because H-pol TB is more sensitive to the stratigraphy of the snowpack and to the presence of ILS (Mätzler, 1987)". Moreover, this section was rewritten to be clearer, Page 12, new line 29: ' the two frequency-dependent parameters ( $\eta\nu$ ,  $\beta\nu$ ) and two frequency-invariant parameters ( $\omega$ ,  $\sigma$ s) were inverted with a two-stage calibration by permuting all possible combinations of the two frequency invariant parameters. Specifically,  $\omega$  values varied from 0.02 to 0.16 in steps of 0.01, and  $\sigma$ s varied from 0.01 to 1.1 in steps of 0.05. This yields a total of 300 possible combinations of the frequency invariant parameters. Then, for each possible combination of the frequency-invariant parameters, a calibration of the frequency-dependent parameters,  $\eta\nu$  and  $\beta\nu$ , was performed for each frequency. A total of 900 frequency-dependent calibrations were thus computed. Finally, for each possible combination of the frequency-invariant parameters, the total post-calibration

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TB RMSE across all three frequencies was computed. The combination of frequency-invariant parameters resulting in the lowest TB RMSE was chosen.'

RC23. Page 13 lines 9-12: the 3 sentences on observation errors and ensemble inflation technics should be removed because they are not well formulated and the description given on the next page (page 14) is very clear.

AC23. Done

RC24. Page 14, lines 19-21: This sentence repeats lines 12-13: " Hence, to avoid a 20 degeneracy problem, the weight of the 25-th selected particle (wekeep) must always be larger or equal to the inverse of the ensemble size (N=150)." Please update the text to avoid repeating sentences.

AC24. Done

RC25. Page 15, first paragraph, last sentence: this statement should be placed earlier in the paragraph, before the three experiments are described.

AC25. Done

RC26. Page 14 line 30 and page 15 line 8: The information on the DA experiments length and period should not be spread in the text. It should be clearly stated once.

AC26. Done. This section was rewritten.

RC27. Page 16 line 5: remove "(constant in frequency, Sect. 3.3.3)"

AC27. Done

RC28. Page 16, section 4.1: update the text to use consistent tenses.

AC28. Done, we checked all the tenses in the text.

RC29. Page 18 line 19: replace "according to the studied period" by "for the studied period"

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AC29. Done

RC30. Page 27 lines 14-15: replace "explain" by "explains" and "up to" by "larger than".

AC30. Done

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Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., <https://doi.org/10.5194/hess-2018-95>, 2018.

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General comment of the R1:

Review of “Assimilation of passive microwave AMSR-2 satellite observations in a snowpack evolution model over North-Eastern Canada”, by Larue et al. The authors present an excellent case study, using a particle filter to do radiance assimilation for snow for the first time in the literature. They build on a previous synthetic study, and validate at 12 sites with in situ stations in Quebec. Overall, I highly recommend publication in HESS. This is excellent work. However, I think the presentation could be much improved. The standard of English usage is a little bit short of the HESS standard;

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I flagged some of the problems below, but there are many more. There are places where the symbols are undefined, or things are not explained well. A bit more work would greatly improve some of these things. The only other comment is that overall, the authors find (in my summary) that they run at 12 sites, and find a quite marginal improvement in RMSE: from 45 kg m<sup>-2</sup> to 43.1 kg m<sup>-2</sup> over all sites. Given the small sample size, those may be statistically indistinguishable. There’s a lot of encouraging results too: the bias present in the openloop runs is much reduced, and is essentially zero over the eight sites with less than 75% forest cover. The authors start the results presentation with a deep dive on three sites that do quite well. They ought to give a rationale there, to avoid looking like they are “spinning” the results too much. The authors should acknowledge the small sample sizes involved; they start with 12 and then split things out into low and high forest cover, so they are looking very few sites. This is understandable, but it does mean they need to acknowledge that sample sizes are perhaps not statistically large enough to be able to make all of the claims they might want to.

General comment from the author:

It is not only 12 sites, it is 43 winters which were compared (see table 1 for time period of each station), and these winters were different enough to ensure to study a large range of snowpack observed in Québec. We added the following line in the ‘study area’ section : "A total of 43 winters could thus be studied (Table 1). These winters were all very different, the winter 2012-2013 had the lowest snow accumulation in ten years (165 cm) whereas the winter 2013-2014 was very snowy (379 cm) compared to the average snow accumulation (217 cm). The winter 2014-2015 was unusually cold (3 ° below the average temperatures) and the winter 2015-2016 was the warmest in 60 years (statistics can be found at <http://www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca>)." The following paragraph was rewritten and moved at the beginning in section 2.2 (page 6, line 26): " Comparing data simulated at the station against model cells involves uncertainty due to spatial variations of the snowpack and land cover. This is a well-known problem for model

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validation studies and we assume here that the high number of sites (12 SWE stations, or 43 snowpack simulations) provides a useful assessment of simulations. It is also known that the spatial localization of measurements can lead to some biases (Molotch and Bales, 2005). To diversify its measurements, Hydro-Québec has installed two SWE sensors in the forest, and not in a clearing as is the usual practice for ease of maintenance. " Answer to minor Comments

R1. Page 2, line 16: Please also cite: Andreadis, K. M., and D. P. Lettenmaier (2012), Implications of representing snowpack stratigraphy for the assimilation of passive microwave satellite observations, *Journal of Hydrometeorology*, 13(5), 1493–1506, doi:10.1175/JHM-D-11-056.1.

AC1. Done

R2. Page 3, line 9-10: Please provide a recap the main findings of this previous study, especially to the extent they bear on this paper. Recommend moving page 13, lines 4-8 up to the introduction.

AC2. Done. We moved page 13, line 4-8 to the introduction in Page 3 line 9-10.

R 3. Page 5, line 13: Here and elsewhere (e.g. Page 12, line 11): Presumably Crocus is running at a 1-hour timestep, and you are outputting daily. Please clarify.

AC3. Done. Page 6, line 1 : "The Crocus model updates the snowpack every 15 minutes by interpolating meteorological inputs, but in this study we used daily Crocus outputs (SWE, snow depth, density, etc.) computed at 14:00 local time (19:00 UTC), in agreement with the AMSR-2 pass (Sect. 3.1.1)."

R4. Page 5, line 17: "total of precipitable water". Remove "of"

AC4. Done

R5. Page 6, line 11: "the observations errors were". Grammar doesn't work here. Accepted usage should be "the observation error was" but you could also just change

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to "observation" and otherwise keep the same.

AC5. Done Page 6: "The observation error was"

R6. Page 7, line 2: "Database" should be "Data".

AC6. Done

R7. Page 8, line 14: "dense forested" should be "densely forested".

AC7. Done

R 8. Page 8, line 15: The signal is not in this case biased. I don't think you can talk about the  $T_B$  observation being biased unless e.g. AMSR-2 is measuring TOA values that are biased compared to true TOA values. Instead, I think you mean that it's contaminated or significantly affected by the forest. Treating the TOA measurement as if it were a measurement of  $T_B$  just above the snow would result in a biased comparison. Anyway, please revise.

AC8. Done. We rewrote the sentence Page 8 Line 17: " The measured TB signal can be significantly affected by the forest and the signature of the underlying snow is attenuated during the winter period in such densely forested areas. "

R9. Page 9, line 21: Crocus has several options for computing grain size. Please give the details here of how this was done for this study, even if they are already reported in the previous Larue et al. 2018 paper. As the authors know so well,  $T_B$  is more sensitive to grain size than to SWE, at least at 37 GHz. So this is a really key part of the paper.

AC9. Done. We added this new sentence, Page 9, new line 14: " In particular, the snow layers are modeled with a set of variables representing the morphological properties of snow grains (shape and size), including the specific surface area (SSA), which is one of the most sensitive variables for snowpack emission simulations. The snow microstructure evolves in time according to semi empirical laws (Vionnet et al., 2012).

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Crocus is the only model able to simulate the SSA as a prognostic variable (rather than as a diagnostic variable) by using the formulations of Carmagnola et al. (2014). "

R10. Page 10, lines 11-22. I read this a few times, but am still confused. So once detected, an IL is added at the top of the snowpack. Then on the first timestep with precipitation, it is subsequently buried 4 cm beneath the surface? So e.g. it would exist in the model at the top indefinitely as long as there is no snowfall? Why not just add it 4 cm under the surface from the time it is detected?

AC10. We do not integrate it directly at 4 cm because TBs observations are affected at least during 40h (according to satellite observations) by the formation of an IL at the top of the snowpack. We added the following sentence: "This is a simplified way to take into account the presence of IL, and further studies are needed to dynamically evolve these ILs in the snowpack and the impact on the neighboring layers. This work is particularly complex and no solution was found yet (D'Ambroise et al., 2017), in particular because measurements are difficult to take." This section has been clarified. Page 10, new line 17: " Hence, the IL first added at the surface of the snowpack was moved to 4 cm from the surface as soon as a snowfall was detected with GEM precipitation data or, if not, after five days to take into account the snowpack transformations (percolations, sublimations, etc.). The maximum number of detected IL was fixed at two. When a second IL was detected (IL2), IL2 was added at the surface while the first detected IL (IL1) was left at 4 cm. After the next snowfall (or after five days otherwise), IL1 was moved to 8 cm from the surface and IL2 to 4 cm."

R11. Section 3.3, pages 10-12. Overall, I found the notation and presentation to be confusing enough to be distracting here. I would start out the section with an equation that includes both forest and atmosphere; it is frustrating that it starts with an equation neglecting the atmospheric contribution, given the title of the section. I also find it confusing that the atmospheric contributions are presented in a section entitled "Vegetation contributions." Please revise.

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AC11. Done, we moved the explanation of the TB, ATM in the section 3.3.

R12. Page 11, line 12. I believe that "simple" should be "single", correct?

AC12. Done

R 13. Page 12, line 5. What does 0.1 represent? Probably better to define as a symbol, and give the value in the text.

AC13. Done

R 14. Page 12, section 3.3.2. Overall I think that you ought to be able to read the section on soil contributions and know which of the parameters are dependent on frequency, and which are frequency invariant. You'll need to revise 3.3.3 a bit too, I think, to avoid duplicating too many explanations.

AC14. Done. See new section 3.3.3

R 15. Page 12, line 6. What is the definition of  $r_H$  in equation 8?

AC15. Done

R 16. Page 12, line 8. Is the "." supposed to represent multiplication? If so, please remove, and just take advantage of implied multiplication, writing e.g.  $\sigma_s = k \sigma$ .

AC16. Done

R 17. Page 12, line 9-11. Is  $\Gamma$  frequency-dependent?

AC17. yes, we rewrote the sentence

R 18. Page 12, line 12-13. I think I see now that you are using  $\nu$  to note frequency-dependent variables, and to distinguish from those that are frequency-invariant. However, it took me a while to work this out. Can you reword this, maybe: "Note that we will often use " $\nu$ " subscript to denote quantities that are dependent on frequency, hereafter."

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AC18. Done

R19. Page 12 line 15. Sometimes the process of backing out model parameters is referred to as “calibration” and sometimes as “inversion” in this paper. Later (in the results) it’s referred to as “optimizations” (Page 17, line 8-9, e.g.). Please just pick one of those two names and use it at all times, to avoid confusion. Else readers wonder if you are referring to the same thing, or to something they missed somewhere in the paper.

AC19. Done, we adjusted the word ‘inversion’ everywhere.

R 20. Section 3.3.3, pages 12-13. This section required far too long to parse. I found it to be unnecessarily opaque. If this is the same procedure as Roy et al. 14, I would just say that you used the same procedure as that paper. If not, can I recommend a thorough rewrite? Something like: "We thus have two frequency-dependent parameters ( $\eta_{\text{nu}}$ ,  $\beta_{\text{nu}}$ ), and two frequency-invariant parameters ( $\omega$ ,  $\sigma_{\text{s}}$ ). We perform a sort of two-stage calibration. We permute all possible combinations of the two frequency invariant parameters. Specifically we varied  $\omega$  from 0.02 to 0.16 in steps of 0.01, and varied  $\sigma_{\text{s}}$  from 0.01 to 1.1 in steps of 0.05. This yields a total of 300 possible combinations of the frequency invariant parameters. Then, for each possible combination of the frequency-invariant parameters, we performed a calibration of the frequency-dependent parameters,  $\eta$  and  $\beta$ , for each frequency; thus a total of 900 frequency-dependent calibrations are performed. Finally, for each possible combination of the frequency-invariant parameters, we compute the total post-calibration  $Tb\_RMSE$  across all three frequencies. The combination of frequency-invariant parameters resulting in the lowest  $Tb\_RMSE$  is chosen."

AC20. Done, we rewrote the section page 13.

R21. Page 13, lines 9-12. Is the implication that everything is identical to the previous paper except for the covariance inflation? If so, please make this explicit. If not, then no need to highlight covariance inflation prior to beginning the first subsection, in my

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opinion.

AC21. We clarified this section Page 13. In this paper we add a new inflation technique of the covariance matrix. It was not performed in the first paper (not necessary with synthetical observations)

R 22. Page 14, line 14. I think ideally you’d have the observation error be larger than 2 K. It really represents all mis-match between observation and model: i.e. what error is expected if the model in its current form is run with “correct” inputs? Of course, this is only a sort of initial value, since you are using covariance inflation. May want to make that explicit here.

AC22. Done. Page 14, new line 20: " Note that in reality it was probably larger since it represents all mismatches between observations and simulations obtained if the model was run with ‘correct’ inputs. This observation error cannot be easily estimated (low spatial resolution, representativeness, etc.), but it is only a sort of initial value here, since we used a covariance inflation to adjust it."

R 23. Page 14, line 22. Can you clarify that observation error covariance here is just observation standard deviation squared times the identity matrix?

AC23. the R matrix is the observation standard deviation squared times the identity matrix. We clarified it: Page 15, new line 12: " In this study, we developed a new technique to avoid a degeneracy problem, which consists in the online adjustment of the R matrix (i.e. observation standard deviation squared times the identity matrix) such that the weight of the 25-th selected particle (wekeep) is at least equal to  $1/N$ ."

R 24. Page 15, line 25. I don’t think it is 15% for CoreH2O for shallow snow. I think the requirement was given in absolute SWE (mm) for shallow snow, and a percentage for deep snow. Please double check.

AC24. Rott et al. 2013 detailed the objectives of the CoreH2O mission for SWE estimates, and fixed the wanted accuracy to: 3 cm for SWE < 30cm, and 10% for SWE >

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30 cm.

R 25. Page 15, line 21. What do you mean by “punctual”? Please reword.

AC25. We mean data simulated at the station. This sentence was removed in page 6 line 16.

R 26. Page 15, line 32. I believe there are twelve total sites. Please make that explicit. Usually you want >20 for e.g. large-sample statistics to hold, right?

AC26. The sentence was clarified. We have 10 SWE stations followed for 4 winters (2012 to 2016), 1 station followed for 2 winters and 1 station followed for one winter, i.e. 43 winter simulation. The winters were very different from each others (2015-2016 was the warmest from 15 years, and 2014-2015 the coldest from 6 years). The 43 winter simulations were studied together to better represent the different snowpack observed in Québec.

Note that GMON instruments are expensive and daily SWE data are often sparse. This is the first time that the snowpack in Eastern Canada are studied with so much data. 12 other GMON stations were added in 2018.

R 27. Page 15, line 33. Why do you think the site selections are random? In the Western US mountains (albeit a very different environment), it is assumed that logistics of site selection end up leading to a highly biased spatial distribution. E.g. see Molotch, N. P., and R. C. Bales (2005), Scaling snow observations from the point to the grid element: Implications for observation network design, Water Resources Research, 41(W11421), doi:10.1029/2005WR004229.

AC27. This part was rewritten: Page 6, line 26. " This is a well-known problem for model validation studies and we assume here that the high number of sites (12 SWE stations, or 43 snowpack simulations) provides a useful assessment of simulations. It is also known that the spatial localization of measurements can lead to some biases (Molotch and Bales, 2005). To diversify its measurements, Hydro-Québec has installed

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two SWE sensors in the forest, and not in a clearing as is the usual practice for ease of maintenance. "

R 28. Page 16, line 4. I recommend retitling the first subsection “Results of model calibration”.

AC28. Done

R 29. Page 16, line 5-7. This entire first paragraph is methods. It must NOT be in the results section. Please move it to the methods section, probably §3.3.3. Also please see my suggestions for reworking §3.3.3.

AC29. Done. See new section 3.3.3.

R 30. Page 17, line 10. I thought you were not calibrating over the winter? Please clarify. Is this using the optimal parameters you obtained over the summer and combining with the open loop model run? Or are you also calibrating over the winter? Recommend describing the winter error statistics very carefully; to be honest, I think having them in there is not worth the added confusion it brings to the reader. The calibration should really be in the background, here, as it has been done in many previous papers. The focus should be on the assimilation results.

AC30. Done: Section 3.3 was rewritten to be clearer and to well separate method and results. We removed the column with winter RMSE data in the table.

R 31. Page 17, line 12, and elsewhere. “Pluri-annual” is not common English usage. Please reword.

AC31. We replace dit by ‘multi-year’

R 32. Page 21, line 12. What is meant by the 48 kg/m<sup>2</sup> limit? This seems to appear from nowhere, and additionally represents very shallow snow.

AC32. we added the following information, but it was explicitly detailed in sect 2.3.4: "Performance is estimated for SWE up to 48 kg m<sup>-2</sup> (about 20 cm of snow depth,

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derived from measurements, see Sect. 3.4.2)"

R 33. Page 22-23. Recommend simply removing these sub-section headers. They are fairly clear from context, and the sections are not too long. AC33. We think that the headers help to clarify the presentation of results. Several data are presented here and it can be hard to follow. Moreover, the section is quite long (2 pages).

R 34. Page 22. I don't think you can claim  $0.79 > 0.78$  without doing a rigorous statistical test; they seem basically the same to me. The offset is a definite change; I would highlight that.

AC34. done. The sentence was rewritten (Page 22, line 19) " Correlation between SWEDA simulations and SWE measurements gives a similar R coefficient to the one obtained with SWECrocus simulations ( $R = 0.79$  and  $R = 0.78$ , respectively), but the offset is significantly reduced with SWEDA compared to SWECrocus (offset =  $10 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  and  $29 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$ , respectively). "

R 35. Page 22, line 25. Recommend giving RPE here instead / in addition, since that's what is being discussed earlier in the paragraph.

AC35. Done: RPE GLOBSNOW = 39.5%

R 36. Page 23, Table 5. Recommend redoing notation. Why are italics used in random places? Why aren't "obs" and "sim" subscript?

AC36. Done, see new table 5.

R 37. Page 24, line 8. Recommend introducing "wet snow" as an issue in the introduction. Add some text maybe on how passive microwave won't give additional information about snow once the snow is wet, but can help correct earlier biases, etc. It is only mentioned once in the methods, and is quite easy to miss.

AC37. We added the following sentence in the introduction (page 3, line 2): " However, the assimilation of PMW must be used with care, and a good understanding of the in-

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teractions between the properties and microwave emission of the snowpack is crucial to avoid degrading the SWE estimates. For instance, the assimilation of passive microwave in wet snow conditions can introduce large uncertainties since the presence of liquid water in the snowpack increases TBs, whereas increases in snow grain size decrease the brightness temperature independent of any change in SWE (Klehmet et al., 2013)."

R 38. Page 25, Figure 8. Can you show the  $SWE_{\{DA\}}$  posterior ensemble spread, as in the other graphs? I think we should see it get larger when liquid is present, which should enrich the discussion in this section.

AC38. Done, a new Fig 8 was recomputed with the spread of ensembles.

R 39. Page 26, line 27. Do you mean "However", instead of "Nevertheless"?

AC39. Yes, we corrected this sentence.

R 40. Page 27, Figure 9. Is this for posterior or open loop?

AC40. This is before data assimilation as written in the caption.

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# Assimilation of passive microwave AMSR-2 satellite observations in a snowpack evolution model over North-Eastern Canada

Fanny Larue<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Alain Royer<sup>1,2</sup>, Danielle De Sève<sup>3</sup>, Alexandre Roy<sup>1,2,4</sup>, Emmanuel Cosme<sup>5</sup>

1 CARTEL, Université de Sherbrooke, Québec, Canada

2 Centre d'Études Nordiques, Québec, Canada

3 IREQ, Hydro-Québec, Québec, Canada

4 Département de Géographie, Université de Montréal, Québec, Canada

5 Institut des Géosciences de l'Environnement, IGE, UGA-CNRS, Grenoble, France

**Corresponding author:** Fanny Larue ([fanny.larue@usherbrooke.ca](mailto:fanny.larue@usherbrooke.ca))

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**Abstract.** Over northeastern Canada, the amount of water stored in a snowpack, estimated by its snow water equivalent (SWE) amount, is a key variable for hydrological applications. The limited number of weather stations driving snowpack models over large and remote northern areas generates great uncertainty in SWE evolution. A data assimilation (DA) scheme was developed to improve SWE estimates by updating meteorological forcing data and snowpack states using-with passive microwave (PMW) satellite observations and without using any surface-based data. In this DA experiment, a particle filter with a Sampled Importance Resampled algorithm (SIR) was applied and an inflation technique of the observation error matrix was developed to avoid ensemble degeneracy. The Advanced Microwave Scanning Radiometer – 2 (AMSR-2) brightness temperatures ( $T_B$ ) observations were assimilated into a chain of models composed of the Crocus multi-layer snowpack model and radiative transfer models. The microwave snow emission model (Dense Media Radiative Transfer – Multi-Layers (DMRT-ML)), the vegetation transmissivity model ( $\omega$ - $\tau_{opt}$ ), and atmospheric and soil radiative transfer models were calibrated to simulate the contributions from the snowpack, the vegetation and the soil, respectively, at the top of the atmosphere. DA experiments were performed over-for 12 stations where daily continuous SWE measurements were acquired during-over 4 winters (2012-2016). Best SWE estimates are obtained with the assimilation of the  $T_{Bs}$  at 11, 19 and 37 GHz in vertical polarizations. The overall SWE bias is reduced by 7684% compared to the original SWE simulations, from 23.7 kg m<sup>-2</sup> without assimilation to 6.97.5 kg m<sup>-2</sup> with the assimilation of the three frequencies. The overall SWE relative percentage of error (RPE) is 14.61% (19% without assimilation) for sites with a fraction of forest cover below 75%, which is in the range of accuracy needed for hydrological applications. This research opens the way for global applications to improve SWE estimates over large and remote areas, even when vegetation contributions are up to 50% of the PMW signal.

30

**Keywords:** passive microwave, Crocus snowpack evolution model, DMRT-ML radiative transfer model, vegetation contributions, SWE retrievals, Eastern Canada, Assimilation scheme, Particle Filter

## 1 Introduction

In Québec, Eastern Canada, snowmelt runoff has become a major economic issue and plays a considerable role in flood events (Perry, 2000). Good forecasting of this water supply is essential ~~to-in~~ ~~optimizinge~~ ~~the~~ ~~management~~ ~~of~~ hydroelectric dam ~~managements~~. The amount of water stored in a snowpack is estimated by the snow water equivalent (SWE). Accurately  
5 predicting the evolution of the SWE is challenging over large and remote areas due to the high spatial and temporal variability of the snowpack and to the lack of *in situ* data, which are time-consuming and expensive to measure. Current operational hydrological forecasting models used by Hydro-Québec, one of the larger energy producers in North America, rely on ~~the~~ ~~interpolation~~ ~~of~~ surface snow surveys ~~measurements~~ ~~interpolation~~ (Tapsoba et al., 2005, ~~Brown et al., 2018~~). It has been shown that the highest uncertainties in hydrological forecasting related to snow result from a lack of accurate estimates of the amount  
10 of snow accumulated ~~over a large area~~ during the winter season ~~over large area~~ (Turcotte et al., 2010). To ~~have a~~ ~~better~~ ~~knowledge~~ ~~determine~~of the spatial distribution of the SWE, many approaches use snowpack models to simulate the evolution of the snow cover in response to meteorological conditions (Brun et al., 1989; Jordan, 1991; Lehning et al., 2002). ~~Nevertheless~~ ~~However~~, ~~the~~ ~~use~~ ~~of~~ ~~using~~ ~~these~~ models is challenging due to ~~the~~ ~~imperfect~~ ~~knowledge~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~incomplete~~ meteorological forcing data ~~for~~ ~~remote~~ ~~areas~~ ~~where~~ ~~weather~~ ~~stations~~ ~~are~~ ~~scarce~~ (Raleigh et al., 2015) ~~(because~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~low~~ ~~number~~ ~~of~~ ~~weather~~ ~~stations~~ ~~in~~ ~~remote~~ ~~areas)~~ and ~~the~~ ~~snow~~ ~~physics~~ simplifications ~~of~~ ~~snow~~ ~~physics~~ used in the models (Foster et al., 2005).

The assimilation of satellite observations is a promising approach ~~for~~ ~~reducing~~ ~~used~~ ~~to~~ ~~reduce~~ ~~these~~ uncertainties related to the lack of *in situ* data (Pietroniro and Leconte, 2005; Durand et al., 2009; Touré et al., 2011; De Lannoy et al., 2012; DeChant and Moradkhani, 2011; ~~Andreadis and Lettenmaier, 2012~~; Kwon et al., 2017). In particular, passive microwave (PMW)  
20 satellite observations, which measure brightness temperatures ( $T_B$ ), are sensitive to the volume of snow and provide information at a good temporal and spatial coverage (Hallikainen, 1984; Chang et al., 1996; Tedesco et al., 2004). It has been shown that the assimilation of PMW satellite data into snow models ~~add~~ ~~sed~~ valuable information ~~in~~ ~~order~~ to compensate for initialization errors and ~~to~~ improve SWE simulated by snow model (Sun et al., 2004). These approaches appear to be very promising to evaluate and predict water resources but are still under development ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~for~~ further use ~~ind~~ ~~for~~ operational  
25 hydrological applications (Xu et al., 2014). Larue et al. (2017) ~~has~~ ~~shown~~ ~~showed~~ that the GlobSnow-2 SWE product (Takala et al., 2011), which assimilates both  $T_B$  satellite data and local snow depth observations, was not accurate enough for hydrological modeling, mainly because of its dependence on *in situ* data in remote areas.

The main difficulty in the assimilation of PMW satellite observations in boreal forest areas is ~~to~~ ~~quantify~~ ~~ingy~~ all the contributions that affect the measured signal. PMW satellite observations have a low spatial resolution ( $\sim 10 \times 10 \text{ km}^2$ ) and  
30 ~~satellite~~ ~~sensors~~ ~~measure~~ many contributions ~~are~~ ~~measured~~ ~~by~~ ~~satellite~~ ~~sensors~~, in addition to the PMW emission from the volume of the snowpack (vegetation canopy, ice crust, frozen/unfrozen soil, lakes, moisture in the snow, topography, etc.) (Kelly et al., 2003; Koenig & Forster, 2004). In boreal areas, the PMW emission from the forest canopy within a pixel can contribute up to half of the PMW signal measured by satellite sensors (Roy et al., 2012, 2016). This contribution does not only

depend on the fraction of forest cover, but also on the biomass (liquid water content), the vegetation volume and the [canopy](#) structure ~~of the canopy~~ (stem, leaf, trunk) (Franklin, 1987). To adjust snowpack model simulations, several studies suggest using radiative transfer models, coupled to a snowpack model, to take into account the different contributions to the PMW signal at the top of the atmosphere and to directly assimilate PMW satellite observations (Brucker et al., 2011; Durand et al., 2011; Langlois et al., 2012; Roy et al., 2016). However, the assimilation of PMW must be used with care, and a good understanding of the interactions between the snowpack properties and its microwave emission of the snowpack is crucial to avoid degrading the SWE estimates. For instance, the assimilation of passive microwave in wet snow conditions can introduce large uncertainties since the presence of liquid water in the snowpack increases  $T_B$ , whereas increases in snow grain size decrease the brightness temperature independent of any change in SWE (Klehmet et al., 2013). The assimilation of PMW thus can help to adjust the modeled snowpack states during the winter, but it cannot be used at the beginning and at the end of the season (snowmelt periods).

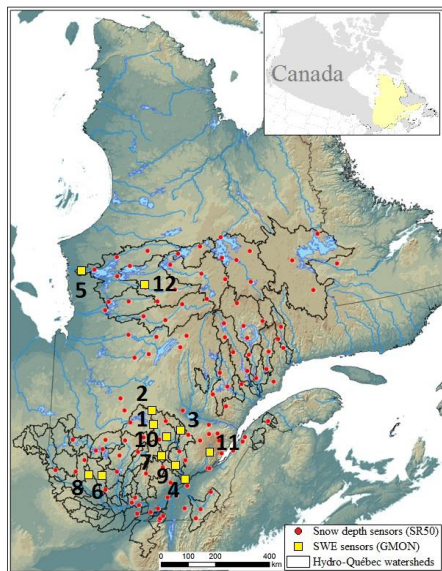
This paper aims at developing and validating the assimilation of PMW satellite observations for SWE improvements over Québec by adjusting meteorological forcing data and simulated snowpack states without using any surface-based observations. AMSR-2 satellite sensors provide the  $T_B$  observations at 11, 19 and 37 GHz. The data assimilation scheme (DA) is a Sequential Importance Resampling Particle filter (referred to as PF-SIR). The PMW emission from the snowpack is computed by using the Crocus snowpack model (Brun et al., 1989) coupled to a microwave snow emission model, the Dense Media Radiative Transfer - Multi Layers model (DMRT-ML) (Picard et al., 2013). This scheme is further referred as the Crocus/DMRT-ML chain and ~~has been~~ previously calibrated over Québec (Larue et al., 2018). As a first step, the previous study of Larue et al. (2018) tested the feasibility of the DA scheme in a controlled environment by using synthetic  $T_{B\text{snow}}$  observations, obtained by running the Crocus/DMRT-ML chain (Fig. 2) with one perturbed meteorological forcings data. The results showed -SWE ensemble-RMSE reduced by 82% with the multi-variate assimilation of differences between  $T_B$  at 37,  $T_B$  at 19-37 GHz and 19-11 GHz in vertical polarizations, compared to SWE ensemble-RMSE without assimilation ('open loop runs'). In the present study, the same DA setup as described in Larue et al. (2018) was implemented except that real satellite observations were used. This implementation was first validated in Larue et al. (2018) by using synthetic observations. For the assimilation of satellite data, the challenge is to accurately simulate the  $T_B$  measured at the top of the atmosphere ( $T_{B\text{TOA}}$ ) by including contributions other than snow (i.e. soil, vegetation and atmosphere). The vegetation transmissivity model ( $\omega\text{-}\tau_{\text{opt}}$ ), the [Wegmüller and Mätzler \(1999\)](#) soil emission model of [Wegmüller and Mätzler \(1999\)](#) and the [Liebe \(1989\)](#) atmospheric emission model of [Liebe \(1989\)](#) ~~are were~~ added and calibrated to simulate the PMW emission of satellite observations (Roy et al., 2015).

The specific objectives of this paper ~~are were~~ thus to: 1) calibrate the soil and the vegetation radiative transfer models coupled with the Crocus/DMRT-ML chain to simulate  $T_{B\text{TOA}}$  over several years (2012 to 2016); and 2) evaluate the performance of the assimilation of PMW data in Crocus using SWE measurements obtained over twelve reference nivometric stations from 2012 to 2016 (43 winters). This paper opens the way to a functional spatialized method for improving SWE estimates over large and remote areas without using surface-based data.

## 2 General framework

### 2.1 Study area and evaluation database

Figure 1 shows the region of interest located in the province of Québec, Eastern Canada [area](#) (46-56°N). This area includes the [watershed of La Grande \(LG\) watershed](#), in [the middle-north-central](#) of Québec (below 56°N); [and the watersheds of the](#) 5 [Outaouais and of the Mauricie watersheds](#) in [the central-southwestern and south-central area](#) of Québec, [respectively](#) (46-48°N, see Fig. 1), which are equipped with SWE and snow depth sensors for hydrological purposes. Québec is characterized by different eco-climatic conditions, [a high percentage of mainly constituted of forested area](#) (dense boreal forests [with and mixed](#) coniferous and deciduous), and a flat topography.



10 Figure 1. SWE measurement stations with the ‘GMON’ SWE sensors (yellow squares, see Table 1 [for details](#)) in the province of Québec, [Eastern Canada](#). The red circles are the snow depth sensors (‘SR50’) used by Hydro-Québec for hydrological purposes, overlaid on a relief map (from blue-low to brown-higher altitudes) and watershed contours (black lines). [The LG watershed is located in the north-central/middle north of Québec, and the Outaouais and the Mauricie watersheds are in southwestern and south-central Québec, respectively.](#) 15

To evaluate SWE simulations, SWE measurements were [taken-acquired](#) from 2012 to 2016 by [twelve-twelve](#) nivometric stations (see numbered stations on Fig. 1), located through a north-south gradient in Québec. This [SWE](#) database ([coordinates](#),



~~sensors, operating period, etc.)~~ ~~is-was~~ fully described in Larue et al. (2018). Table 1 describes the main station characteristics, including the mean maximum SWE ~~measured~~-values over operating periods. Daily SWE measurements ~~are-were~~ derived from gamma ray SWE sensors (Campbell Scientific CS725, 'GMON') with an average error of +5% (Choquette et al., 2008). Two stations (Nos. 5 and 12) ~~are-were~~ located in the subarctic eco-climatic zone (53-54°N, James Bay area), eight in the coniferous boreal zone (46-48°N) and two (Nos. 4 and 11) in a mixed forest area in southern Québec (45.3°N). Sensors were calibrated by Hydro-Québec from numerous field measurement campaigns during the first year following their installation.

A total of 43 winters were studied (Table 1). These winters were all very different; ~~the-w~~ Winter 2012-2013 had the lowest snow accumulation in ten years (165 cm) whereas ~~the~~ winter 2013-2014 was very snowy (379 cm) compared to the average snow accumulation (217 cm). ~~The-W~~ Winter 2014-2015 was unusually cold (3-° below ~~the~~ average temperatures), and ~~the~~ winter 2015-2016 was the warmest in 60 years (statistics can be ~~found~~ at <http://www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca>).

Table 14. Characteristics of the nivometric SWE stations: Site number, SWE (in  $\text{kg m}^{-2}$ ) data, Latitude (Lat.), Longitude (Long.) and Elevation (El., a.s.l. in meters) of stations, Dist. GEM-station is the distance between the station and the center of the associated GEM grid cell (with GEM: Global Environmental Multiscale weather prediction model, Section 2.2), time period of observations, average of the maximum observed data over the studied period, and data providers (HQ: Hydro-Québec, U. Sherb: Université de Sherbrooke, U. Laval: Université Laval).

Sites #	Lat.	Long.	El.	Dist. GEM-station (km)	Time period	Mean maximum SWE value ( $\text{kg m}^{-2}$ )	Data provider
1	48.3	-74.1	100	3.4	2012-2016	272	HQ
2	48.9	-74.2	100	4.9	2012-2016	277	HQ
3	47.9	-72.9	100	4.7	2012-2016	252	HQ
4	46.6	-72.8	136	4.2	2012-2016	253	HQ
5	53.7	-78.2	103	4.2	2012-2016	213	HQ
6	46.7	-76.0	229	2.3	2012-2016	161	HQ
7	47.0	-74.3	469	3.3	2012-2016	235	HQ
8	46.9	-76.4	330	1.8	2012-2016	212	HQ
9	46.9	-73.7	372	1.9	2012-2016	180	HQ
10	47.7	-73.6	398	3.5	2012-2016	202	HQ
11	47.3	-71.2	669	2.6	2015-2016	396	U. Laval
12	53.4	-75.0	389	4.0	2014-2016	211	U. Sherb
Mean				3.4	2012-2016	237	

## 2.2 General setup

Figure 2 shows the general methodology developed to simulate and to assimilate AMSR-2 satellite observations into the snowpack model.

To simulate the signal measured by satellite sensors at the top of the atmosphere ( $T_{B\text{TOA}}$ ), a chain of models was implemented and calibrated over Eastern Canada. The three hourly-continuous atmospheric forcing database provided by the Global Environmental Multiscale weather prediction model (referred to as ‘GEM’; Coté et al., 1998) was used to drive the multi-layer Crocus snowpack model (described in Sect. 3.2.1 further). Each GEM grid cell has a spatial resolution of  $10 \times 10 \text{ km}^2$ , which is on the same order as the observation scale. ~~In this study The Crocus model updates the snowpack everyach 15 minutes by interpolating meteorological inputs, but in this study, we used the Crocus model computes the daily Crocus output evolution of the snowpack (SWE, snow depth, density, etc.) each day computed at 14:00+2 pm local time (19:00h- UTC), in agreement with the AMSR-2 observation timepass (Sect. 3.1.1).~~ The DMRT-ML radiative transfer model (Sect. 3.2.1), driven with Crocus outputs, was used to simulate the PMW emission from the modeled snowpack (referred to as ‘ $T_{B\text{snow}}$ ’) at 11, 19 and 37 GHz, at vertical and horizontal polarizations (‘V-pol’ and ‘H-pol’, respectively). The contribution of the atmosphere was estimated

by using an atmospheric model (Liebe, 1989) driven with the total ~~of~~ precipitable water integrated over 28 atmospheric layers and provided by GEM (Sect. 3.3). The surface emissivity for a rough soil was deduced by calibrating the [Wegmüller and Mätzler \(1999\)](#) soil model ~~of Wegmüller and Mätzler (1999)~~ and ~~the vegetation contributions of the vegetation~~ were quantified with the  $(\omega - \tau_{\text{opt}})$  radiative transfer model (Sect. 3.3). To take into account [canopy emissivity](#) ~~the variability of the canopy emissivity~~, the ~~calibration~~ ~~inversions~~ of the  $(\omega, \tau_{\text{opt}})$  parameters were linked to the 4-day leaf area index (LAI) product from MODIS data ( $1 \times 1 \text{ km}^2$ ), averaged for each AMSR-2 grid cell ( $10 \times 10 \text{ km}^2$ ) (Sect. 3.3-3). These ~~inversions~~ ~~calibrations~~ of soil and vegetation parameters were performed over the summer period to avoid ~~the~~ bias due to the presence of the snowpack. The brightness temperatures ( $T_{\text{Bs}}$ ) measured by AMSR-2 satellite sensors were assimilated in a ~~data assimilation (DA)~~ scheme (see Sect. 3.4). Raleigh et al. (2015) have shown that meteorological forcing data ~~are~~ ~~were~~ the major sources of errors in snow model simulations. Hence, we assume here that the uncertainties of GEM meteorological forcing data are the only sources of errors in the  $T_{\text{B}}$  modeling. ~~It is very difficult to quantify the modeling errors due to physical simplifications inside the model is very difficult due to the spatial scale of the observations spatial scale.~~ Further studies are needed to estimate these errors over the study area and to take it into account in the DA experiment. The observations error ~~wass~~ ~~were~~ assumed to be known and the modeling errors were estimated by perturbing selected meteorological forcing variables. An ensemble of 150  $T_{\text{B}}$  simulations was obtained and the distribution of these ‘prior estimates’ represent the modeling error in response to GEM uncertainties. ~~A Particle filter with an SIR algorithm was used in the DA scheme to update the simulated  $T_{\text{B TOA}}$  over the winter by adjusting meteorological forcing data and snowpack states (posterior estimates) when an observation was available (Fig. 2).~~

Several configurations of the DA scheme were tested over three evaluation sites representing different environmental conditions. ~~T and the best configuration of the DA scheme~~ was evaluated over the ~~12~~ validation reference sites from 2012 to 2016 ~~(for 43 winters, Sect. 3.4).~~

Comparing data simulated at the station against model cells involves uncertainty due to spatial variations of the snowpack and land cover. This is a well-known problem for model validation studies and we assume here that the high number of sites (12 SWE stations, or 43 snowpack simulations) provides a useful assessment of simulations. It is also known that the spatial localization of measurements can lead to some biases (Molotch and Bales, 2005). To diversify its measurements, Hydro-Québec has ~~taken care to~~ installed two SWE sensors in the forest, and not in a clearing as is the usual ~~ease~~ ~~practice~~ for ease of maintenance.

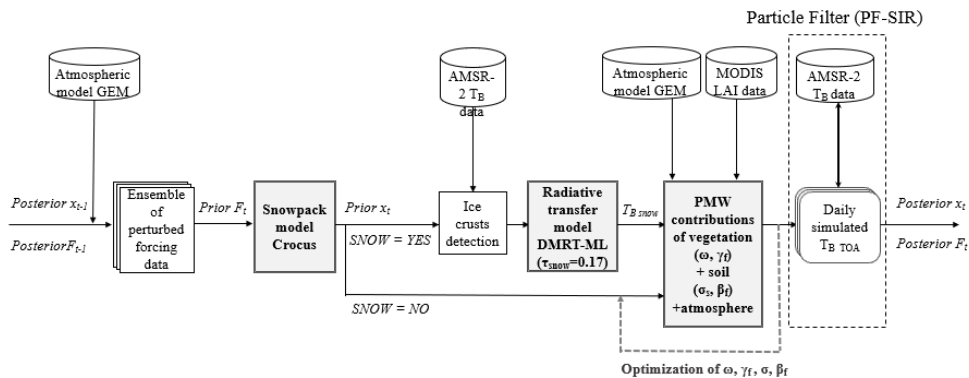


Figure 2. Methodological scheme describing the DA scheme in the chain of models for SWE retrievals by updating perturbed atmospheric forcing data and snowpack states (' $F_i$ ' and ' $x_i$ ', respectively, see Sect. 3.4).

### 3 Materials and methods

#### 5 3.1 Database

##### 3.1.1 AMSR-2 observations

AMSR-2 satellite sensors (Imaoka et al., 2010) provide PMW satellite observations on the 11 (10.7), 19 and 37 GHz channels at V-pol and H-pol. Images produced by AMSR-2 are freely available on the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) website. This study used the Level 3 Version 2 product, which provides daily  $T_{BS}$  normalized on a North Hemisphere polar stereographic projection with a spatial resolution of  $10 \times 10 \text{ km}^2$  (see <http://gcom-w1.jaxa.jp> for the specifications of the projection), from 1 August 2012 to 1 July 2016.  $T_{BS}$  from AMSR-2 are computed twice a day: ~~at around 13:30 local time pm, or 17:30 UTC~~ (ascending pass), and ~~at around 01:30 am local time, or 5:30 UTC~~ (descending pass). Only the ascending pass was used in this study (~~about 13:00 local time~~) since the snowpack was computed once a day at ~~02:00 pm~~ (local time). The use of the ascending pass allowed avoiding the nighttime refreeze process. To reduce observation errors due to the daytime melting process, the approach was evaluated during the dry snow period, from December to mid-March. This aspect is further discussed in Sect. 5.1.

##### 3.1.2 LAI MODIS data

The 4-day LAI product provided by MODIS TERRA data (MOD15A3; Myneni et al., 2002) was used to characterize the vegetation contributions ~~on the to the~~ total emissivity (Fig. 2). The product has a spatial resolution of  $1 \times 1 \text{ km}^2$  and was resampled on the AMSR-2 grid of  $10 \times 10 \text{ km}^2$  by averaging all LAI data within each AMSR-2 grid cell (referred to as

‘LAI<sub>AMSR-2</sub>’). For each site, Table 2 describes the summer and winter average values (‘LAI<sub>summer</sub>’ and ‘LAI<sub>winter</sub>’) calculated using LAI<sub>AMSR-2</sub> from 1 July to 31 August and from 1 January to 1 March over the 2012 to 2016 time period, respectively (Roy et al., 2014).

Table 2.  $LAI_{summer}$  is the mean of the LAI provided by MODIS for the ~~July-August~~ **summer-time** period (1 July to 31 August) and averaged over the AMSR-2 grid cell (10 x 10 km<sup>2</sup>),  $LAI_{winter}$  is the mean LAI for the ~~January-March~~ **winter** time period (1 January to 1 March).  $f_{cover}$  is the fraction of forest cover within the AMSR-2 grid cell extracted from the land cover map Circa 2000 (see Sect. 3.1.3). The percentages of coniferous, deciduous and water areas are the percentages distributed within the  $f_{cover}$ . Sites are ranked in the increasing order of  $f_{cover}$ . The three highlighted sites (gray cells) are the sites selected to test the configuration of the DA scheme in Sect. 4.2.3.4.3.

Site #	$LAI_{summer}$	$LAI_{winter}$	$f_{cover}$ (%)	Coniferous (%)	Deciduous (%)	Water (%)
#12	1.07	0.04	24.2	77.6	14.4	4.9
#5	1.07	0.08	31.5	66.5	25.9	7.0
#4	2.63	0.06	47.6	8.5	70.3	1.4
#7	3.13	0.28	59.3	49.9	45.8	4.0
#10	2.47	0.17	61.8	67.3	30.1	2.4
#1	2.96	0.28	63.7	41.6	55.8	2.2
#3	3.69	0.25	65.5	44.6	52.1	3.3
#2	1.99	0.12	66.6	79.4	16.6	3.5
#8	4.11	0.22	72.1	15.5	80.2	4.3
#11	2.43	0.19	74.5	52.5	46.6	0.5
#6	2.82	0.11	81.5	18.1	75.3	6.5
#9	3.65	0.43	84.0	60.9	36.1	2.9

### 3.1.3 Land cover map of Canada

10 The land cover map of Canada Circa 2000 (available at <http://www.geobase.ca/geobase/en/data/landcover/index.html>) (referred to as 'LCC') was used to extract the fraction of forest cover ( $f_{cover}$ ) within each AMSR-2 grid cell. This product provides the percentage of coniferous, herbaceous, deciduous and water areas with a spatial resolution of 1 x 1 km<sup>2</sup> and was resampled to generate average values within each 10 x 10 km<sup>2</sup> AMSR-2 grid cell. Table 2 shows the fractions of forest cover provided by the LCC and resampled over AMSR-2 grid cells for each site. As expected, Sites 5 and 12, which ~~are~~ **are** located in the subarctic area (Fig. 1), have a low  $f_{cover}$  (below 32%). The other sites in boreal areas have an  $f_{cover}$  of up to 60%. Sites 6 and 9 are in particularly densely forested areas, with a high  $f_{cover}$  (up to 80%). ~~The measured  $T_B$  signal can be significantly affected by the forest. In such and dense forest areas, the signature of the underlying snow can be significantly attenuated during the winter period in such densely forested areas and bias the measured  $T_B$  signal. To test the configuration of the DA scheme for several environmental conditions, the  $T_B$  assimilations for Site 12 ( $f_{cover}=24.2\%$ ), Site 1 ( $f_{cover}=63.7\%$ ) and Site 9~~

~~( $f_{\text{cover}} = 84.0\%$ ) were analyzed in a preliminary experiment. The sensitivity of the DA scheme to the  $f_{\text{cover}}$  was analyzed for sites with a  $f_{\text{cover}}$  above and below 75% (Sect. 4.2.1).~~

Moreover, the presence of lakes can affect the PMW signal. Lake ice (when snow cover is absent) increases the PMW signal at high frequencies, and, at low frequencies, the contribution of water bodies acts as a reflector and the emissivity remains low (De Sève et al., 1999). With snow cover on lakes, the different snow states on the lakes compared to snow cover under forest also modified the emitted signal (see Derksen et al., 2012, 2014). Nevertheless, we made the hypothesis that these impacts were negligible over our studied sites, which have lake water fractions under 7% within their AMSR-2 grid cells (Table 2) (masks are generally applied for water fractions of up to 20%, Takala et al., 2011).

### 3.2 Simulation of the PMW emission from the snowpack

#### 3.2.1 Coupling of Crocus and DMRT-ML

The chain of models developed to simulate  $T_{\text{Bsnow}}$  is identical to that of Larue et al. (2018), so only a brief description of the approach is detailed here (see Fig. 2).

~~To generate a three hourly continuous meteorological forcing database for running Crocus, successive GEM forecasts were taken from the +09 forecast hour to the +18 forecast hour provided at the 00 and 12 UTC analysis time of each day.~~ The Crocus snowpack evolution model (Brun et al., 1989, 1992; Vionnet et al., 2012) is coupled with the ISBA land surface model within the SURFEX interface (Surface Externalisée, in French) (Decharme et al., 2011; Masson., 2013). SURFEX/ISBA/Crocus (hereafter referred to as “Crocus”) computes the evolution of the physical properties of the snowpack and the underlying ground (soil). In particular, ~~Crocus the snow layers are represents the detailed snow microstructure evolution in time modeled with a set of variables representing the morphological properties of snow grains (shape and size), including the specific surface area (SSA), which is one of the most sensitive variables for snowpack emission simulations. The snow microstructure evolves in time according to semi empirical laws (Vionnet et al., 2012). Crocus is the only model able to simulate the SSA as a prognostic variable (and no rather than as a diagnostic variable) by using the formulations of Carmagnola et al. (2014), through the formulations in Carmagnola et al. (2014).~~ The number of snow layers is dynamic and evolves according to with physical properties updated at each time step. The maximum number of simulated snow layers was fixed at 15 in this study, as a compromise between accuracy and computing time (not shown). Configuration and initialization of the Crocus snowpack model are the same as described in Larue et al. (2018).

$T_{\text{Bsnow}}$  was computed by driving the radiative transfer model DMRT-ML with Crocus outputs. The DMRT-ML model is well-detailed in the literature (Tsang et al., 1992; Tsang and Kong, 2001; Picard et al., 2013), so only the calibration is described here. Snow grain size, and more generally snow microstructure, are factors that most affect the accuracy of simulated PMW emission from a snowpack as they determine the strength of scattering mechanisms in the snowpack at the high frequencies used (Roy et al., 2013; Leppänen et al., 2015; Sandells et al., 2017; Larue et al., 2018). In DMRT-ML, snow grains are

represented as spheres of ice with variable interactions between them. The potential formation of clusters of grains, which increases the effective snow grain size, is not taken into account, generating uncertainties (Picard et al., 2013). Several studies have shown that DMRT-ML needed an effective scaling factor to represent the stickiness between snow grains and to correct the snow microstructure representation (Brucker et al., 2011; Roy et al., 2013; Royer et al., 2017). Larue et al. (2018) have shown that a mean snow stickiness parameter ( $\tau_{\text{snow}}$ ) of 0.17 was optimal to simulate  $T_{\text{Bsnow}}$  over boreal snow in Québec (RMSE of 27 K) when DMRT-ML is driven by Crocus snow profiles. This constant  $\tau_{\text{snow}}$  value was thus used in the implemented chain of models (Section ...). Nevertheless, this effective parameter could change with snow type (Royer et al., 2017; Larue et al., 2018). Hence, the use of the  $\tau_{\text{snow}}$  parameter as a free variable in the quality of the DA scheme is with the use of the  $\tau_{\text{snow}}$  parameter as a free variable was discussed in Sect. 5.2.

### 3.12.2 Ice lens detection algorithm

Since ice lenses ('IL') within a snowpack significantly reduce  $T_{\text{B}}$  mainly at H-pol (Montpetit et al., 2013; Roy et al., 2016), ice layers must be detected and added in the simulated Crocus snow profiles to improve  $T_{\text{Bsnow}}$  simulations.  $T_{\text{B}}$  in H-pol are much more attenuated by the presence of an IL than  $T_{\text{B}}$  in V-pol, since the coefficient of reflectivity is stronger in H-pol (Montpetit et al., 2013). Therefore, by following the daily evolution of the PMW emission from the snowpack with AMSR-2 observations, the formation of an IL can be detected by using a threshold on the polarization ratio PR defined by Cavalieri et al. (1984) for a given frequency ( $\nu$ ),

$$PR(\nu) = \frac{T_{\text{B}}(\nu, V\text{-pol}) - T_{\text{B}}(\nu, H\text{-pol})}{T_{\text{B}}(\nu, V\text{-pol}) + T_{\text{B}}(\nu, H\text{-pol})} \quad (1).$$

In this study, an IL was inserted-added on the top of the simulated snowpack if the AMSR-2 PR(11) was above 0.06 (Roy, 2014). To integrate the IL in the snow profile, this IL was represented as a 1-cm layer with a density of 900 kg m<sup>-3</sup> and with snow grain radius set to zero was first added at the surface of the snowpack when it was detected (Roy et al., 2016). The difficulty-difficulty is to know knowing how to evolve this IL in the snowpack. The Crocus snowpack model has not yet been adapted to integrate the formation of ILs and evolve them in a coherent way (Quéno et al., 2016). Nevertheless, it was shown in Larue et al. (2018) (from field measurements) that an IL of 1 cm located at 4 cm from the surface in-of the simulated Crocus snowpack-profile minimized the bias of DMRT-ML simulations due to the presence of an IL in the snowpack (regardless of its real location in the snow profile). Hence, as soon as a snowfall is detected with GEM precipitation data, the IL firstly added on-at the top-surface-of the surface of the snowpack was positioned-moved at 4 cm from the surface; as soon as a snowfall was detected with GEM precipitation data or, if not, after five days to take into account the snowpack transformations (percolations, sublimations, etc.) in the simulated snow profile. The maximum number of detected IL was fixed at two. In this ease When a second IL was detected (IL2), the IL2 was added at the surface while the first detected IL firstly detected (IL1) was left at 4 cm. After the next snowfall (or after five days otherwise), the first detected IL1 was positioned-moved to 8 cm from the surface and the second IL2 to 4 cm after a snowfall was detected. For instance, during winter 2014-2015, one IL



was detected at sites 1 and 12 (22 December 2014 and 15 December 2014). At Ssite 9, two ILs were detected: one on 10 December 2014 and another on 1 January 2015.

This is a simplified way to take into account the presence of ILs, and further studies are needed to dynamically evolve these ILs in the snowpack and to model the impact on the neighboring layers. This work is particularly complex, and no solution has yet been found yet (D'Ambrose et al., 2017), in particular because measurements are difficult to take.

### 3.3 Simulation of the PMW emission at the top of the atmosphere

The PMW brightness temperature ( $T_{B\_TOA}$ ) emitted at the scale of the by a AMSR-2 grid-cell product can be written as (2) for each grid cell as,

$$T_{B\_TOA} = \frac{f_{season} \cdot T_{B\_forest} + (1 - f_{season}) \cdot T_{B\_open}}{f_{season} \cdot T_{B\_forest} + (1 - f_{season}) \cdot T_{B\_open} + T_{B\_atm}} \quad (2)$$

where  $T_{B\_atm}$  is the ascending atmospheric contribution, estimated using the Liebe (1989) model implemented in the Helsinki University of Technology (HUT) snow emission model (Pulliainen et al., 1999). The model considers radiative transfer through the atmospheric layers and provides  $T_{B\_atm}$  values at the satellite sensor level (Liebe, 1989) according to the precipitable water integrated for all atmospheric layers provided by GEM.  $f_{season}$  is the seasonal (winter or summer) fraction of forest cover in the AMSR-2 grid cell,  $T_{B\_forest}$  is the PMW emission with vegetation contributions and  $T_{B\_open}$  is the PMW emission without vegetation contributions.

The  $f_{cover}$  values provided by the LCC area 2000 map are were constants whereas these fractions of forest evolve according to with the season. To take into account the temporal evolution of the forest cover for the winter and summer periods (defined as the time period with and without snow, respectively) and to estimate the  $f_{season}$  used in Eq. (2),  $f_{cover}$  was linked respectively to  $LAI_{winter}$  and to  $LAI_{summer}$  by comparing the  $f_{cover}$  map to the two resampled maps (both resampled on the AMSR-2 projection) throughout Québec area (not shown). The seasonal fraction of  $f_{cover}$  are were related to seasonal LAIs with the Eq. (3) and (4) for summer and winter respectively,

$$f_{summer} = 0.9 * (1 - \exp(-2.7 * LAI_{summer}))^{3.2} \quad (3)$$

$$f_{winter} = 0.9 * (1 - \exp(-16.0 * LAI_{winter}))^{0.3} \quad (4)$$

The linear correlation between the  $f_{summer}$  values estimated from the LCC and the  $f_{summer}$  values fitted to LAI data with the Eq. (3) had a coefficient correlation  $r$  equal to 0.94 and a  $p$ -value below 0.01. For the LCC  $f_{winter}$  values and the  $f_{winter}$  values fitted to the LAI data (see Eq. (4)), the coefficient correlation  $r$  was equal to 0.95 and the  $p$ -value was below 0.01.

#### 3.3.1 Vegetation contributions

The PMW emission from the vegetation varies according to with the forest characteristics, such as the biomass, the structure of the vegetation or the liquid water content of the canopy. In this study, the vegetation contribution was modeled according to with the simplified radiative transfer model ( $\omega - \tau_{opt}$ ) (Mo et al., 1982), where the parameters are were estimated by fitting the

simulated  $T_{Bs}$  with observations (Grant et al., 2008; Roy et al., 2012). The  $\omega$  is the ~~simple-single~~ scattering factor of the albedo. Given the incidence angle  $\theta = 55^\circ$  of AMSR-2 satellite sensors, the optical thickness of the vegetation  $\tau_{opt}$  ~~was~~ is a function of the forest transmissivity ( $\gamma$ ) such that  $\gamma = \exp(-\tau_{opt}/\cos\theta)$ . The forest transmissivity ~~which varies according to~~ with the frequency ( $\nu$ ) used and is further called  $\gamma_\nu$ . At the satellite sensor, the expression of  $T_{B\ TOA}$  in boreal areas was described by the

5 Eq. (2), which can be detailed with ~~the~~Eq. (5) and (6) (see Roy et al., 2012),

$$T_{B\ forest} = \left[ \gamma_\nu \cdot e_{surf} \cdot T_{surf} + (1 - \omega) \cdot (1 - \gamma_\nu) \cdot T_{veg} + \gamma_\nu \cdot (1 - e_{surf}) \cdot (1 - \omega) \cdot (1 - \gamma_\nu) \cdot T_{veg} + (1 - e_{surf}) \cdot \gamma_\nu^2 \cdot T_{B\ atm1} + (1 - \gamma_\nu) \cdot \omega \cdot T_{B\ atm1} \right] \cdot \gamma_{atm} + T_{B\ atm1} \quad (5)$$

$$T_{B\ open} = \left[ e_{surf} \cdot T_{surf} + (1 - e_{surf}) \cdot T_{B\ atm1} \right] \cdot \gamma_{atm} + T_{B\ atm1} \quad (6)$$

10 where  $T_{surf}$  is the surface temperature,  $e_{surf}$  is the surface emissivity under the canopy (with or without snow) for a given frequency,  $T_{veg}$  is the temperature of the vegetation (taken as equal to the air temperature at 2 meters, provided by GEM).  $T_{B\ atm1}$  ~~and  $T_{B\ atm2}$  are~~ respectively the descending ~~and ascending~~ atmospheric contributions, and  $\gamma_{atm}$  is the transmittance of the atmosphere. These atmospheric contributions were modeled using the Liebe (1989) model, ~~as for~~ were the  $T_{B\ atm1}$  values implemented in the Helsinki University of Technology (HUT) snow emission model (Pulliainen et al., 1999). The model considers radiative transfer through the atmospheric layers and provides values  $T_{B\ atm1}$ ,  $\gamma_{atm}$  and  $T_{B\ atm2}$  at the satellite sensor level (Liebe, 1989) according to the precipitable water integrated for all atmospheric layers provided by GEM (Dolant et al., 2016). Thus, for snow free conditions, only forest ( $\omega$ ,  $\gamma_\nu$ ) and soil ( $e_{surf}$ ) parameters ~~are~~ were unknown and needed to be adjusted for each site by fitting the ~~model outputs of the model according to~~ the observations.

### 3.3.2 Soil contributions

20 To deduce the surface emissivity for a rough soil ( $e_{surf,p}$  for a given polarization p), the Wegmüller and Mätzler (1999) soil model of Wegmüller and Mätzler (1999) was used to calculate the surface reflectivity for of a rough soil throughout the year under the canopy ( $r_{surf,p}$  for a given polarization p), with or without snow by using the Eq. (7) and (8),

$$r_{surf,H} = 1 - e_{surf,H} = \Gamma_{Fresnel,H} \cdot \exp(-\sigma_s^2 \sqrt{\alpha^2 + \cos^2\theta}) \quad (7)$$

$$r_{surf,V} = 1 - e_{surf,V} = r_{surf,H} \cdot \cos^2\theta \quad (8)$$

25  $r_{surf,p}$  mainly depends on the surface roughness and Fresnel coefficients ( $\Gamma_{Fresnel,H}$ ). In the Eq. (7), the simplified parameter  $\sigma_s = k \cdot \sigma$  was used, where k is the wave number and  $\sigma$  the standard deviation of the surface height (in meters).  ~~$\alpha$  is a constant parameter fixed to 0.1~~ (Wegmüller and Mätzler (1999). For frozen ~~When the soil is frozen~~, parameters derived from Montpetit et al. (2018) were used (see Sect. 4.1). For thawed ~~When the soil is not frozen~~,  $\Gamma_{Fresnel,H}$  was estimated from the dielectric constant calculated with the Dobson (1985) equations according to the soil moisture and the soil temperature. These variables ~~are~~ were daily computed with the Crocus model, coupled to the ISBA land surface model, and extracted daily (at 2 pm, as the

other variables). The soil reflectivity in vertical polarization also depends on a parameter  $\beta_v$  (Montpetit et al., 2018), which describes the polarization of the signal and ~~varies according to the frequency used~~ is frequency-dependent. Note that we will often use 'v' subscript to denote quantities that are dependent on frequency, hereafter.

Hence, the soil parameter  $e_{\text{surf}}$  ~~is was~~ linked to the ~~couple-set of values~~  $(\sigma_s, \beta_v)$  and mainly evolved ~~according to with~~ soil moisture and soil temperature.

### 3.3.3 Inversions of vegetation and soil parameters

The inversion of forest  $(\omega, \gamma_v)$  and soil  $(\sigma_s, \beta_v)$  parameters was carried out in summer to avoid the bias due to the presence of a snowpack. Forest parameters  $(\omega, \gamma_v)$  depend on the forest ~~characteristics~~ characteristics, such as the biomass and the structure of the canopy ~~for at~~ each site. They also depend on LAI, which allows the season forest emission cycle to be accounted for the seasonal cycle in the forest emission. To take into account the temporal variations of these characteristics, the forest parameters were linked to the LAI. It also allowed a realistic continuity of the  $(\omega, \gamma_v)$  calibration for the winter period. Using the vegetation water content equation defined by Pampaloni and Paloscia (1986), the parameter  $\gamma_v$  ~~is was~~ related to the 4-day LAI for a given frequency  $\nu$  with the relation (9),

$$\gamma_v = e^{-b.k^a.(\exp(\frac{LAI}{3})-1)/\cos\theta} \quad (9)$$

where  $a$  and  $b$  are two constants to calibrate. To reduce the number of unknown variables, ~~the Eq. (9) has been was~~ simplified to use only one constant  $\eta_v$  such as  $\eta_v = e^{-b.k^a}$ .

The vegetation and soil parameters were inverted by minimizing the difference between ~~simulated~~  $T_{B \text{ TOA}}$  simulations ~~and compared to~~  $T_{B \text{ TOA}}$ , measured with AMSR-2 sensors at 11, 19 and 37 GHz in vertical polarizations. ~~The We used the same same approach was developed in by~~ Roy et al. (2014) ~~since it was well adapted for PMW emission in boreal areas; and adapted for PMW emission in boreal areas. the two frequency-dependent parameters  $(\eta_v, \beta_v)$  and two frequency-invariant parameters  $(\omega, \sigma_s)$  were inverted with a two-stage calibration by permuting all possible combinations of the two frequency invariant parameters. Specifically,  $\omega$  values varied from 0.02 to 0.16 in steps of 0.01, and  $\sigma_s$  varied from 0.01 to 1.1 in steps of 0.05. This yields a total of 300 possible combinations of the frequency invariant parameters. Then, for each possible combination of the frequency-invariant parameters, a calibration of the frequency-dependent parameters,  $\eta_v$  and  $\beta_v$ , was performed for each frequency. A total of 900 frequency-dependent calibrations were thus computed. Finally, for each possible combination of the frequency-invariant parameters, the total post-calibration  $T_{B \text{ RMSE}}$  across all three frequencies was computed. The combination of frequency-invariant parameters resulting in the lowest  $T_{B \text{ RMSE}}$  was chosen.~~

~~It has been shown that the soil and vegetation contributions are strongly linked and can not be decoupled. Moreover, the two parameters  $(\omega, \sigma_s)$  have been shown to be constant in frequency in previous studies. Pellarin et al. (2006) have shown a  $\omega = 0.06$  for coniferous forest at 6.6 and 11 GHz and Meissner and Wentz (2010) have shown that the increase of  $\omega$  from 6.6 to 19 GHz was weak. Therefore, for each site and for each  $(\omega, \sigma_s)$  value couple (considered constant in frequency), optimal  $(\eta_v, \beta_v)$  values were optimized for each frequency (at 11, 19 and 37 GHz) in V pol. Optimizations of  $(\eta_v, \beta_v)$  parameters have been~~

tested in H-pol and V-pol and parameters were assumed to be constants in polarizations (not shown). These ( $\eta_v$ ,  $\beta_v$ ) optimizations were carried out for each couple ( $\omega$ ,  $\sigma_s$ ) values, which varied iteratively with a step of 0.01 (from 0.02 to 0.16) and 0.05 (from 0.01 to 1.1), respectively (Roy et al., 2014).

$T_{B\_TOA}$  were simulated from 2012 to 2016. The inversion was not very sensitive to  $\sigma_s$  (not shown) and Figure 3 shows the optimal overall  $T_{B\_TOA}$  RMSE between simulated and measured  $T_{B\_TOA}$  for the 12 sites and for the summer period according to  $\omega$  values. Over the summer period, a  $\omega$  value at 0.07 and a  $\sigma_s$  value at 0.2 cm gave best results for  $T_{B\_TOA}$  simulations, with a minimum overall RMSE equal to 9.0 K. These parameters were previously optimized over the same study area by Montpetit et al. (2018). A value of  $\omega=0.07$  was coherent with the literature for dense boreal forest areas (Pellarin et al., 2006; Meissner and Wentz, 2010; Roy et al., 2012). For this optimal ( $\omega$ ,  $\sigma_s$ ) set of values, the mean optimal values of the  $\eta_v$  and  $\beta_v$  factors were estimated, by considering the soil contribution constant if the soil was frozen.

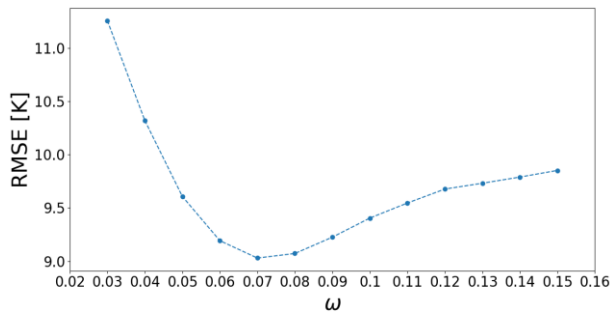


Figure 3. Overall  $T_B$  RMSE (at 11, 19 and 37 GHz, for the 12 sites and for the summer period) between the simulated and measured  $T_{B\_TOA}$  as a function of the values of  $\omega$ . A  $\sigma_s$  value at 0.2 cm gives the best results but  $T_B$  RMSE is not very sensitive to this variable. The parameters  $\beta_v$  and  $\eta_v$  were optimized for each ( $\omega$ ,  $\sigma_s$ ) couple according to the frequency used.

### 3.4 Data assimilation setup

As a first step, the previous study of Larue et al. (2018) tested the feasibility of the DA scheme in a controlled environment by using synthetic  $T_{B\_obs}$  observations, obtained by running the Crocus/DMRT-ML chain (Fig. 2) with one perturbed meteorological forcing data. The results showed an SWE ensemble RMSE reduced by 82% with the multi-variate assimilation of differences between  $T_{B\_a}$  at 19-37 GHz and 19-11 GHz in vertical polarizations, compared to SWE ensemble RMSE without assimilation ('open loop runs'). In the present study, the same DA setup as described in Larue et al. (2018) was implemented except that real satellite observations were used. The DA setup is the same as the one developed in Larue et al. (2018) except that we added an inflation technique of the covariance matrix of observation errors (R matrix) to avoid ensemble degeneracy, i.e. when an ensemble collapses to a unique particle. The observation errors are difficult to quantify due to the difference

~~between model and observation representativeness. A poor parameterization of observation error statistics quickly leads to ensemble degeneracy, i.e. an ensemble collapsing to a unique particle. To avoid ensemble degeneracy, an inflation technique of the covariance matrix of observation errors (R matrix) is developed and implemented.~~

#### 3.4.1 DA framework

5 The DA scheme ~~is~~ a particle filter with a Sequential Importance Resampling algorithm (~~hereafter referred to as~~ 'PF-SIR') that is well-documented in Van Leeuwen (2009, 2014) and Gordon et al. (1993) and relatively easy to implement with a snowpack model (Dechant and Moradkhani, 2011; De Lannoy et al., 2012; Charrois et al., 2016; Larue et al., 2018). The PF-SIR represents the probability density function (pdf) of the model state with an ensemble of states (called particles), which is updated when an observation is available. An ensemble approach ~~was~~ preferred because of the non-linearity of the system.

10 Moreover, the particle filter approach can cope with the variable number of state variables resulting from the changing number of snow layers in Crocus. The created ensemble represents uncertainty in SWE and in  $T_B$  simulations due to the uncertainties of meteorological inputs (Fig. 2).

~~Assuming that the meteorological forcing data were the only source of uncertainties, the ensemble of  $T_B$  was created by running the chain of models described in Fig. 2 with an ensemble of perturbed inputs. The assimilation was performed daily and the ensemble was composed of 150 members, which was found to be an adequate size in (Larue et al., 2018).~~ The daily ensemble of meteorological forcing data was created by perturbing selected GEM data (air temperature, wind speed, precipitation and short and long wave radiations) according to their respective uncertainties estimated in Larue et al. (2018). Meteorological forcing perturbations ~~are were evolved-propagated~~ in time following a first-order autoregressive process to simulate their realistic temporal variations (Charrois et al., 2016). Precipitation, wind speed and short-wave radiations (' $SW_{down}$ ') were perturbed by a multiplicative factor centered at 1. Perturbation boundaries were fixed at -0.9 and 0.9. The air temperature was perturbed by an additive factor, with boundaries fixed at -3 K and +3 K. Perturbed long wave radiations (' $LW_{down}$ ') ~~was~~ estimated ~~according to~~ with perturbed  $T_{air}$  from a linear regression estimated in Larue et al. (2018). In order to maintain physical consistency in the simulations,  $SW_{down}$  was limited to  $200 \text{ W.m}^{-2}$  when there was precipitation (presence of clouds) (Charrois et al., 2016). ~~The ensemble was composed of 150 members, which was found to be adequate in Larue et al. (2018).~~

25

~~The observation error standard deviation associated with AMSR-2 observations was assumed to be 2 K (Durand & Margulis, 2006, 2007). Note that in reality it was probably larger since it represents all mismatches between observations and simulations obtained if the model was run with 'correct' inputs. This observation error cannot be easily estimated (low spatial resolution, representativeness, etc.), but it is only a sort of initial value here, since we used a covariance inflation to adjust it.~~

30 ~~DA experiments were applied between 1 November and 1 May. To avoid wet snow conditions, which increases the emissivity of the snowpack whereas the SWE does not change, the DA was not performed when a liquid water content was observed in the modeled snowpack. This variable was computed by Crocus, driven with original meteorological forcing data. SWE values~~

were evaluated over both the dry snow period (from 1 December to 15 March) and the whole winter (when a snowpack was detected).

### 3.4.2 DA and inflation technique

The snowpack prior state  $x_t$  at time  $t$  is computed according to with the updated past state of snowpack simulations at time  $t-1$  (posterior state  $x_{t-1}$ ) and to the prior perturbed meteorological forcing data  $F_t$  from time  $t-1$  to  $t$  (see Fig. 2). The predicted observation is computed with

$$y_t^i = h(x_t^i) \quad (10)$$

where  $y_t^i$  is  $T_{B\ TOA}$  predicted from particle  $i$  ( $i=0..N$ , with  $N$  the ensemble size). The observation operator  $h$  is the  $\tau_{\text{snow}}$ -calibrated DMRT-ML model and the calibrated radiative transfer models estimating soil, atmosphere and vegetation contributions. In the analysis step, the new posterior distribution is updated by weighting each particle  $x_t^i$  according to the distance between  $y_t^i$  and the AMSR-2  $T_B$  observation. With the SIR algorithm, the pdf is resampled by duplicating particles with **highlarge** weights (i.e., close to observations) and **dropping taking off these** with negligible weights (far from observations). With the Arakawa procedure used here for ensemble resampling (Arakawa, 1996; same as Charrois et al, 2016), a particle is definitely selected if its weight is **higherlarger** or equal to the inverse of the ensemble size ( $N=150$ ).

~~The observation error standard deviation associated with AMSR-2 observations was assumed to be 2 K (Durand & Margulis, 2006, 2007).~~

Ensemble resampling considerably reduces the risk of degeneracy, but does not eliminate it. Degeneracy starts when only a few particles have significant weights. These particles are selected many times, leading to a loss of diversity of the posterior ensemble. After several assimilation steps, the ensemble quickly reduces to a single particle. Ensemble degeneracy can be detected when the number of selected particles (those with high weights) is below an effective limit number  $N_{\text{keep}}$ , here fixed at 25 as a compromise between the quality of the DA scheme and the size of the ensemble (not shown). ~~Hence, to avoid a degeneracy problem, the weight of the 25-th selected particle ( $w_{\text{keep}}$ ) must always be larger or equal to the inverse of the ensemble size ( $N=150$ ).~~ In this study, we developed a new technique to **avoid a degeneracy problem ensure this**, which consists in the online adjustment of the ~~observation error covariance~~R matrix (i.e. **observation standard deviation squared times the identity matrix**) such that ~~the weight of the 25-th selected particle ( $w_{\text{keep}}$ )~~ is at least equal to  $1/N$ . The rationale here is that, because the weights are nonlinear functions of the observation error covariance matrix, a larger matrix tends to flatten the distribution of weights and favours the selection of more particles. This adjustment is performed with an inflation of the initial matrix, and the detailed algorithm is provided in Appendix A. Ensemble degeneracy is often caused by extreme precipitation events resulting in very high  $T_B$  values difficult to represent with the model. The online adjustment technique mitigates the consequences of this model deficiency on the snow simulations over the rest of the season. The other side of the coin is that a “good” observation can be ruled out if the model is not able to reproduce it, thereby reducing the accuracy of the snowpack estimation.

Mis en forme : Normal

Mis en forme : Non Surlignage

Mis en forme : Non Exposant/ Indice

### 3.4.3 3.4.2 Experimental setup

To study the sensitivity and the quality of  $T_B$  assimilation for SWE improvements, three experiments were performed.

- ~~In a first step~~ Experiment A:

To test the feasibility of the DA scheme for several environmental conditions, and to find the best DA configuration to apply,

$T_B$  assimilation for three representative sites was performed in a preliminary experiment for winter 2014-2015. Following a North-south gradient, we selected site 12 ( $f_{cover} = 24.2\%$ , northern coniferous area), site 1 ( $f_{cover} = 63.7\%$ , coniferous area) and site 9 ( $f_{cover} = 84.0\%$ , mixed forest area), each representing a different environmental condition. Over these three sites, we

estimated the quality of the DA scheme ~~three DA experiments were tested over sites 1, 9 and 12 for winter 2014-2015 (Sect. 3.1.3) to analyze the sensitivity of the DA scheme for SWE improvements~~ according to the assimilated frequencies: a)

assimilation of the  $T_B$  differences between 19 and 37 GHz and between ~~49-11 and 41-19~~ 11 and 19 GHz, in V-pol (referred to as ' $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$ ' and ' $\Delta T_{B,4911,41-19}$ ', respectively); b) assimilation of  $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$  only; c) assimilation of the three  $T_B$ s at 11, 19 and 37 GHz in V-pol ( $T_{B,11}$ ,  $T_{B,19}$ ,  $T_{B,37}$ ). Table 3 summarizes the experiment set-up information. ~~Here we used V-pol  $T_B$  because H-pol  $T_B$  is more sensitive to the stratigraphy of the snowpack and to the presence of ILs (Mätzler, 1987).~~

While the DA of  $T_B$ s at 11, 19 and 37 GHz in V-pol should give the best results since this combination of frequencies imposes more constraints, the risk

of encountering a degeneracy problem is higher. The combination of both  $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$  and  ~~$\Delta T_{B,11,19}$~~   $\Delta T_{B,49,41}$  is commonly used in the literature for SWE retrievals (Chang et al., 1987; Tedesco et al., 2004; Tedesco & Nervekar, 2010). The assimilation of the  $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$  only was also studied to analyze the sensitivity of  $T_B$  assimilation for deep snowpack when  $T_{B,37}$  saturates for a SWE

up to about 150 mm (Mätzler et al., 1994) and to evaluate the supply of information from 11 GHz in the assimilation of ~~both~~ ~~both~~  $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$  and  $\Delta T_{B,11,19}$  for SWE improvements. ~~Here we used V-pol  $T_B$  because H-pol  $T_B$  is more sensitive to the stratigraphy of the snowpack and to the presence of ILs (Mätzler, 1987).~~

~~DA experiments were applied between 1 November and 1 May. To avoid wet snow conditions, the DA is not performed when a liquid water content is observed in the modeled snowpack. This variable is estimated from Crocus, driven with original meteorological forcing data. SWE were evaluated over both the dry snow period (from 1 December to 15 March) and the whole winter (when a snowpack is detected).~~

To quantify the performance of the DA scheme, the daily RMSEs of ensembles of simulated SWE obtained with and without the DA scheme were compared by using the Eq. (11),

RMSE<sub>t</sub> =  $\sqrt{\left(\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (X_{sim\ i,t} - X_{Obs\ t})^2\right)}$  (11)

where N is the ensemble size,  $X_{sim\ i,t}$  is the simulated variable from the member i at time t, and  $X_{Obs\ t}$  is the diagnostic variable at time t obtained from AMSR-2 observations.

- Experiment B:

The best configuration of the DA scheme (DA of the three  $T_B$ s at 11, 19 and 37 GHz in V-pol) was ~~then~~ applied ~~over the 42 sites, over the 43 winters (from 2012 to 2016 see Table 1).~~ To estimate the accuracy for hydrological applications, the median of the SWE ensemble obtained with ~~the DA b TB\_11, 19, 37 experiment (see Table 3 for acronyms, called 'SWE<sub>DA</sub>' further)~~

was compared to SWE measurements. The median was used instead of the mean to reduce the potential impact of extreme perturbations. The evaluation of the DA scheme ~~is~~ was performed by comparing  $SWE_{DA}$  RMSE and the relative percentage of error ('RPE') values to the original SWE simulations ( $SWE_{Crocus}$ ), obtained by driving Crocus with original meteorological forcing data. The relative percentage of error ('RPE') is defined as,

$$5 \quad RPE = 100 \cdot \frac{|Bias|}{MEANObs} \quad (12).$$

The mean bias of SWE and  $SWE_{max}$  estimates obtained without and with assimilation were also compared. Performance was estimated for SWE higher than  $48 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  (about 20 cm of snow depth), derived from measurements, to attenuate problems of shallow snow cover variability or heterogeneity in the AMSR-2 gridcells. To analyse the impact of the vegetation, results were separated according to the fraction of  $f_{cover}$ : moderate  $f_{cover}$  ( $f_{cover} < 75\%$ , 10 sites) and high  $f_{cover}$  ( $f_{cover} > 75\%$ , 2 sites) (see Table 2 for  $f_{cover}$  site information).

The accuracy needed for hydrological applications is a SWE RPE lower than 15% (Vachon, 2009; Larue et al., 2017), which is the same performance objective as the CoreH2O project (10% for  $SWE > 30 \text{ cm}$  and 3 cm for  $SWE < 30 \text{ cm}$ , Rott et al., 2010) and the GlobSnow2 product (Luoju et al., 2014). This error threshold corresponds to a RMSE of about  $45 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  for a measured average Québec snowpack about  $300 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  of SWE. The ability to accurately estimate the annual SWE maximum ( $SWE_{max}$ ) was also studied since it is one of the most important variables for hydrological applications. It allows the amount of water stored in the snowpack before the spring snow melt to be described. To avoid extreme values, the  $SWE_{max}$  is estimated as the average of the SWE for a time period of  $\pm 2$  days around the detected  $SWE_{max}$ .

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- Comparing punctual data against model cells involves uncertainty due to spatial variations of the snowpack and land cover. This is a well known problem for model validation studies and we assume here that the large number of sites and the random spatial localization of measurements within the pixels provide a useful assessment of simulations. Only snowpacks with a SWE higher than  $48 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  (about 20 cm of snow depth), derived from measurements, were used for model evaluation to attenuate problems of shallow snow cover variability or heterogeneity. Experiment C:

The quality of the PMW DA scheme could strongly depend upon the choice of state variables. In the A and B experiments, we chose to pre-calibrate forest and soil parameters and to use a constant snow stickiness parameter ( $\tau_{snow}$ ) fixed at 0.17 (Larue et al., 2018). Nevertheless, these calibrations are empirical and should be adjusted for each site. It depends on several parameters

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that are difficult to measure at a  $10 \times 10 \text{ km}^2$  spatial scale (snow grains, canopy, biomass, etc.). The forest parameter  $\omega$  strongly affects the PMW emission from the vegetation, which can represent more than 60% of the signal measured by satellite sensors (see discussion in Sect. 5.2). Kwon et al. (2017) has have shown that the contribution of  $T_{B\_veg}$  to  $T_{B\_TOA}$  was better represented by considering  $\omega$  free in the DA scheme, and improvements in the resulting SD were evident for the forest land-  
 5 cover type (about 5% with DMRT-ML). In the Experiment C experiment, the DA scheme was thus tested using  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{snow}$  as free variables in the assimilation process. The DA c TB 11,19,37 experiment is identical to the DA b TB 11,19,37 experiment (over the 43 winters), only the states variables were changed. The  $\omega$  parameter was perturbed with Gaussian noise, centered on 0.07 (as calibrated) with a standard deviation of 0.02 and bounded by 0.05 and 0.12 (reasonable range of  $T_{B\_TOA}$  RMSE values, Fig. 3). The snow stickiness parameter was perturbed by Gaussian noise, centered on 0.17, with a standard  
 10 deviation of 0.15 and bounded by 0.1 and 0.46. These limits correspond to the range of  $\tau_{snow}$  values extracted from Larue et al. (2018) over the same study area. The ensemble size was kept to 150 members in the DA experiment.

**Table 3. Experiment set-up information. Exp. is the experiment identifier numbering of the experiment (see text).**

<u>Exp.</u>	<u>State variables</u>	<u>Sites</u>	<u>Time period</u>	<u>Assimilated frequencies</u>	<u>Acronyms</u>
<u>A</u>	<u>T<sub>air</sub>, Wind, Precipitation, SW<sub>down</sub>, LW<sub>down</sub></u>	<u>1, 9, 12, one winter</u>	<u>1 November 2014 to 1 May 2015</u>	<u><math>\Delta T_{B,19-37}</math></u>	<u>DA1 DTB19-37</u>
				<u><math>\Delta T_{B,19-37}</math> and <math>\Delta T_{B,11-19}</math></u>	<u>DA2 DTB19-37,DTB11-19</u>
				<u><math>T_{B,11}, T_{B,19}, T_{B,37}</math></u>	<u>DA3 TB 11,19,37</u>
<u>B</u>	<u>T<sub>air</sub>, Wind, Precipitation, SW<sub>down</sub>, LW<sub>down</sub></u>	<u>12 sites, 43 winter simulations</u>	<u>From 1 November to 1 May, winters 2012 to 2016</u>	<u><math>T_{B,11}, T_{B,19}, T_{B,37}</math> (V-pol)</u>	<u>DA b TB 11,19,37</u>
<u>C</u>	<u>T<sub>air</sub>, Wind, Precipitation, SW<sub>down</sub>, LW<sub>down</sub>, <math>\omega</math>, <math>\tau_{snow}</math></u>	<u>12 sites, 43 winter simulations</u>	<u>From 1 November to 1 May, winters 2012 to 2016</u>	<u><math>T_{B,11}, T_{B,19}, T_{B,37}</math> (V-pol)</u>	<u>DA c TB 11,19,37</u>

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## 4 Results

### 4.1 Simulations of $T_{B-TOA}$ Results of model inversions

For each iteration of couple value  $(\omega, \sigma_s)$  (constant in frequency, Sect. 3.3.3), a couple of  $(\eta_v, \beta_v)$  values was calibrated at each frequency (11, 19 and 37 GHz) in V-pol according to the daily LAI.  $T_{B-TOA}$  are simulated from 2012 to 2016 and optimizations are performed over the summer period (see Sect. 3.3) for each site independently. The inversion is not very sensitive to  $\sigma_s$  (not shown) and Figure 3 shows the optimal overall  $T_{B-TOA}$  RMSE between simulated and measured  $T_{B-TOA}$  for the 12 sites and for the summer period according to the  $\omega$  values. Over the summer period, a  $\omega$  value at 0.07 and a  $\sigma_s$  value at 0.2 cm give best result for  $T_{B-TOA}$  simulations, with a minimum overall RMSE equal to 9.0 K. For this optimal  $(\omega, \sigma_s)$  couple, the mean optimal values of the  $\eta_v$  and  $\beta_v$  factors are detailed in Table 3 (for unfrozen ground). If the soil is frozen, the soil contribution is constant and the  $(\sigma_s, \beta_s)$  soil parameters are given in Table 3. They were previously optimized over the same study area by Montpetit et al. (2017). A value of  $\omega=0.07$  is coherent with the literature for dense boreal forest areas (Pellarin et al., 2006; Meissner and Wentz, 2010; Roy et al., 2012)

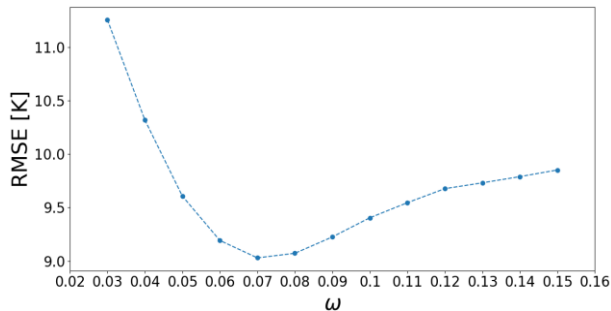


Figure 3. Overall  $T_{B-TOA}$  RMSE (at 11, 19 and 37 GHz, for the 12 sites and for the summer period) between the simulated and measured  $T_{B-TOA}$  as a function of the values of  $\omega$ . A  $\sigma_s$  value at 0.2 cm gives the best results but  $T_{B-TOA}$  RMSE is not very sensitive to this variable. The parameters  $\beta_v$  and  $\eta_v$  were optimized for each  $(\omega, \sigma_s)$  couple according to the frequency used.

The mean optimal values of the  $\eta_v$  and  $\beta_v$  factors were estimated for the optimal  $(\omega, \sigma_s)$  set of values (0.07 and 0.2, respectively, see Table 4). The  $(\sigma_s, \beta_s)$  soil parameters are given in Table 4 and are used to estimate the  $T_{B-TOA}$  RMSE obtained with the calibrated chain of models.

Table 3. Effective parameters calibrated for the 12 studied sites to quantify soil contributions  $\epsilon_{soil}$  (calibrated surface roughness  $\epsilon_{cal}$ ,  $\sigma_s$  and calibrated polarization ratio  $\epsilon_{cal}$ ,  $\beta_v$ ) and vegetation contributions (controlled by the calibrated  $(\omega, \eta_v)$  parameters  $\epsilon_{cal}$ ,  $\omega$  and  $\epsilon_{cal}$ ,  $\eta_v$ ) according to the daily LAI measured at the top of the atmosphere. The parameterization of frozen ground was estimated by Montpetit et al. (2017).  $\epsilon_{eff}$  is the effective dielectric constant estimated with the permittivity of frozen and unfrozen soils derived from the Dobson's equations (1985). Annual and seasonal  $T_{B-TOA}$  RMSE estimated for the summer and the winter period ( $RMSE_{summer}$  and  $RMSE_{winter}$ ) are calculated from 2012 to 2016 with the calibrated parameters.

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Without ~~parameter optimizations~~~~inversions~~, the annual mean RMSE of the original  $T_{B_s}$  simulations varies from 12.9-47.1 K for the three frequencies (not shown). With ~~parameter inversion~~~~optimizations, for over~~ the summer period, the three frequencies have a similar  $T_B$   $RMSE_{summer}$  (8.6-10.1 K, Table 34), while over the ~~winter period~~~~year (using parameters inverted over the summer period)~~ the annual  $T_{B_{TOA}}$   $RMSE_{winter}$  significantly increases at 37 GHz due to the presence of the snowpack (7.6-35.226.0 K). The ~~inversions~~~~calibrations~~ make it possible to reduce the annual  $T_{B,37}$  RMSE by ~~12-21.1~~ K. Figures 4a, 4b and 4c show the ~~pluri-annual~~~~multi-year~~  $T_{B_{TOA}}$  variations for Sites 12, 1 and 9, respectively, from 2012 to 2016 and at 37 GHz. At this frequency, the simulated  $T_{B_{TOA}}$  is strongly underestimated when a snowpack is observed. This is likely due to an overestimation of the SWE or snow grain sizes since  $T_{B,37}$  are attenuated in the snowpack as snow grains act as diffusers while the  $T_{B,19}$  and  $T_{B,11}$  are relatively ~~not-un~~affected by snow grains ( $RMSE_{summer}$  similar to  $RMSE_{winter}$  at 11 and 19 GHz, Table 2). Simulated SWE were overestimated by 16% and 20.2% compared to SWE measurements for Sites 1 and 9, respectively, for the winter 2014-2015. The objective of  $T_B$  assimilation is to reduce these overestimations. Note that the SWE simulated at Site 12 is underestimated by 19%. The underestimation of  $T_{B,37}$  can also be caused by an underestimation of the vegetation contributions. This aspect is further discussed in Sect. 5.2.

By integrating ILs within the snowpack when the ~~PR19-PR11~~ is above 0.0456, the ~~overall-annual~~  $T_{B_{TOA}}$  RMSE at 37 GHz is reduced ~~during the winter period~~ and goes from ~~38.528.9~~ K to ~~26.035.2~~ K.

In winter, the overall  $T_{B_{TOA}}$  RMSE (all frequencies) is equal to ~~4817.40~~ K from 2012 to 2016 (not shown), similar to the overall RMSE estimated for the  $\tau_{snow}$ -calibrated DMRT-ML driven by in situ measurements in an open area and equal to 19.9 K compared to surface-based radiometric measurements in Québec (Larue et al., 2018).

**Table 43.** Effective parameters calibrated for the 12 studied sites to quantify soil contributions  $\epsilon_{surf}$  (calibrated surface roughness 'cal.  $\sigma_s$ ' and calibrated polarization ratio 'cal.  $\beta_s$ ') and vegetation contributions (controlled by the calibrated ( $\omega$ ,  $\eta_v$ ) parameters 'cal.  $\omega$ ' and 'cal.  $\eta_v$ ' according to the daily LAI) measured at the top of the atmosphere. The parameterization of frozen ground was estimated by Montpetit et al. (2018).  $\epsilon_{eff}$  is the effective dielectric constant estimated with the permittivity of frozen and unfrozen soils derived from the Dobson's equations (1985). Annual and seasonal  $T_{B_{TOA}}$  RMSE estimated for the summer and the winter period ( $RMSE_{summer}$  and  $RMSE_{winter}$ ) are calculated from 2012 to 2016 with the calibrated parameters.

Frequency (GHz)	Frozen soil			Unfrozen soil		Cal. $\omega$	Cal. $\eta_v$	Mean $RMSE_{summer}$ (K)	Mean annual RMSE (K)
	$\epsilon_{eff}$	$\sigma_s$ (cm)	$\beta_s$	Cal. $\omega$	Cal. $\beta_s$				

				$\sigma_s$ (cm)					
<u>11</u>	<u>3.18</u> <u>0.006134j</u>		<u>1.08</u>		<u>0.69</u>		<u>0.01</u>	<u>8.6</u>	<u>8.45</u>
<u>19</u>	<u>3.42</u> <u>0.00508j</u>	<u>0.19</u>	<u>0.72</u>	<u>0.2</u>	<u>0.60</u>	<u>0.07</u>	<u>0.05</u>	<u>8.7</u>	<u>9.41</u>
<u>37</u>	<u>4.47</u> <u>0.32643j</u>		<u>0.42</u>		<u>0.67</u>		<u>0.23</u>	<u>10.1</u>	<u>26.86.0</u>

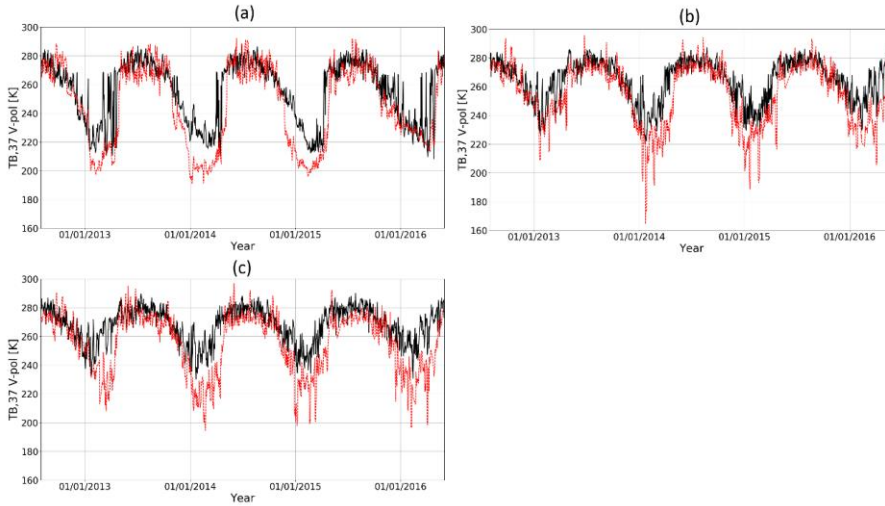


Figure 4. **Pluri-annual**/**Multi-year** variations of simulated  $T_{B\ TOA}$  (red dotted lines) and measured  $T_{B\ TOA}$  (black full lines) from 2012 to 2016 at 37 GHz in vertical polarization: (a) Site 12 ( $f_{cover}$  of 24%); (b) Site 1 ( $f_{cover}$  of 64%); (c) Site 9 ( $f_{cover}$  of 84%).

#### 4.2 Results of AMSR-2 data assimilation (DA)

##### 4.2.1 Data-assimilation experiments Experiment A

Three DA scenarios were first tested on three sites (Site 12 ( $f_{cover}$  of 24.2%), Site 1 ( $f_{cover}$  of 63.7%) and Site 9 ( $f_{cover}$  of 84.0%)) to determine the optimal data to assimilate: 1) both the  $\Delta T_{B,19-37}$  and  $\Delta T_{B,19-11}$ ; 2)  $\Delta T_{B,19-37}$  only; 3) and the three  $T_{B,r}$  at 11, 19 and 37 GHz in V-pol. Figure 5 shows the daily variations of the SWE ensemble RMSE (see Eq. (11)) obtained without and

with DA (prior and posterior estimates) according to the combination of frequencies used as observation ([DA1 DTB19-37](#), [DA2 DTB19-37](#), [DTB11-19](#) and [DA3 TB 11,19,37](#) experiments, see Table 3). Table 4-5 summarizes these averaged SWE ensemble RMSEs according to the studied period (dry snow period and whole winter) for tested sites.

Over these three sites and for the dry snow period, the DA reduced the overall SWE RMSE by ~~38.043.9%~~, ~~49.145.8%~~ and ~~56.859.7%~~ with ~~scenarios 1, 2 and 3~~ the [DA1 DTB19-37](#), [DA2 DTB19-37](#), [DTB11-19](#) and [DA3 TB 11,19,37](#) experiments, respectively, compared to the SWE RMSE obtained with prior estimates (Table 45). The assimilation of the three frequencies ([DA3 TB 11,19,37](#)) helps to improve SWE simulations, giving the lowest RMSE compared to other scenarios. The same trend is observed over the whole winter and the assimilation of the three frequencies reduces the overall SWE ensemble RMSE by ~~45.647.0%~~ (SWE ensemble RMSE of ~~22.722.1~~ kg m<sup>-2</sup>) compared to the SWE ensemble RMSE of prior estimates (SWE ensemble RMSE of 41.7 kg m<sup>-2</sup>).

In our previous work (Larue et al., 2018), we have shown a reduction of 82% of the SWE ensemble RMSE by assimilating both the  $\Delta T_{B,19-37}$  and  $\Delta T_{B,119-149}$  and using synthetic observation data over a dry snow period. The differences between results using synthetic and real data in DA experiments are likely due to two aspects. Firstly, the snow model does not resolve the intra-pixel surface variability. We assumed homogeneous snow cover within the pixel in open areas, thus with no interactions between snow and vegetation. Even if we compare simulations with surface-based measurements in open areas, this could introduce large uncertainties (Roy et al., 2016). Secondly, the land cover variability and heterogeneity within each pixel also induce uncertainties in the mean  $T_B$  simulation over a pixel ( $T_B$  weighted by the fraction of forest cover, see Eq. (2)).

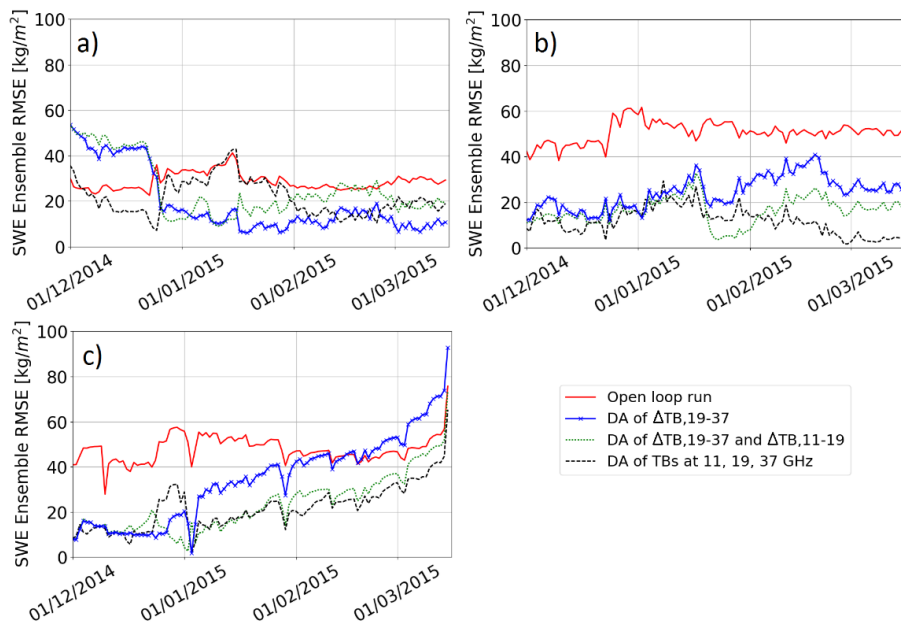


Figure 5. Variations of the SWE ensemble RMSE (Eq. (11)) obtained with and without DA for the dry snow period (from 1 December to 15 March). Experiments are performed for (a) Site 12; (b) Site 1; (c) Site 9, over the winter 2014-2015. The red line is the SWE ensemble RMSE obtained without DA (open loop runs), the blue line is the RMSE obtained with the DA1 TB19-37 experiment of  $\Delta T_{B_{w,19-37}}$  only, the green dashed line the RMSE with the DA2 TB19-37, TB11-19 experiment of  $\Delta T_{B_{w,19-37}}$  and  $\Delta T_{B_{w,11-19}}$ , and the black dotted line the RMSE with the DA3 TB 11,19,37 experiment of the three  $T_B$ . Experiments are performed for (a) Site 12; (b) Site 1; (c) Site 9, over the winter 2014-2015.

Table 54. Averaged SWE ensemble RMSE (see Eq. (11)) obtained with and without DA, according to the ~~data assimilate experiment~~ (see Sect. 4.2.13.4.3, Table 3 for acronyms) for each tested site.  $RMSE_{dry\ snow}$  is the SWE ensemble RMSE obtained from 1 December to 15 Marsh.  $RMSE_{annual}$  is estimated over the whole winter (when snowpack is detected). # correspond to the site (see Table 1).

Tested Experiments		SWE RMSE (kg m <sup>-2</sup> )			
		#1	#12	#9	Overall
$RMSE_{dry\ snow}$ (kg m <sup>-2</sup> )	Without assimilation (prior estimates)	50.7	28.6	47.8	42.4
	<del>DA1 DTB19-37</del> DA of $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$	<del>21.124</del> 4	<del>18.119</del> 2	<del>34.132</del> 4	<del>25.923</del> 8
	<del>DA2 DTB19-37,DTB11-19</del> DA of $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$ and $\Delta T_{B,11,19}$	<del>16.140</del> 4	<del>25.269</del> 4	<del>23.328</del> 2	<del>21.230</del> 6
	<del>DA3 TB 11,19,37</del> DA of $T_{B,c}$ at 11, 19 and 37 GHz (V-pol)	<del>11.810</del> 5	<del>21.519</del> 7	<del>21.721</del> 0	<del>17.18</del> 3
$RMSE_{annual}$ (kg m <sup>-2</sup> )	Without assimilation (prior estimates)	47.2	28.9	48.9	41.7
	<del>DA1 DTB19-37</del> DA of $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$	<del>24.221</del> 6	<del>23.322</del> 1	<del>42.440</del> 1	<del>30.027</del> 9
	<del>DA2 DTB19-37,DTB11-19</del> DA of $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$ and $\Delta T_{B,11,19}$	<del>18.516</del> 7	<del>28.228</del> 1	<del>31.438</del> 5	<del>26.278</del> 0
	<del>DA3 TB 11,19,37</del> DA of $T_{B,c}$ at 11, 19 and 37 GHz (V-pol)	<del>15.515</del> 1	<del>23.321</del> 9	<del>29.329</del> 1	<del>22.12</del> 7

Figure 6 illustrates the comparison between SWE measurements, the original SWE Crocus simulations ( $SWE_{Crocus}$ ) and the median of the SWE ensemble obtained with the ~~DA3 TB 11,19,37 experiment~~ DA of the three frequencies (referred to as  $SWE_{DA}$ ). The yellow envelope illustrates the SWE ensemble obtained without DA (prior estimates) and shows a large ensemble spread in response to meteorological forcing uncertainties. The gray envelope is the resampled SWE ensemble (posterior estimates). SWE simulations are very sensitive to the uncertainties of meteorological forcing data at the beginning of the winter season. If an event (melting or precipitation) is missed, a constant bias on SWE estimates is kept throughout the winter. For Sites sites 1 and 9, the DA scheme allows the correction of these uncertainties at the beginning of the season.

The SWE ensemble RMSE of posterior estimates are reduced by about 30 kg m<sup>-2</sup> at the beginning of the season, compared to the RMSE of prior estimates (Fig. 5). For these two sites, the SWE ensemble RMSE obtained with the ~~DA1 DTB19-37 experiment~~ DA of the  $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$  only increases as the snowpack becomes deeper, especially from mid-January when the snowpack becomes deeper than 100 kg m<sup>-2</sup> (Fig. 6). The PMW signal from the snowpack at 37 GHz saturates for such deep snowpack (Mätzler et al., 1982; Mätzler, 1994; De Sève et al., 1997; 2007) and the assimilation of  $\Delta T_{B,19,37}$  only does not give enough information to significantly improve SWE retrievals. For Site 9, posterior estimates are deteriorated at the end of the

season compared to prior estimates with the [DA1 DTB19-37 experiment](#) of  $\Delta T_{Bv,19-37}$ . By adding  $\Delta T_{Bv,191-149}$  ([DA2 DTB19-37.DTB11-19](#)), this effect is reduced but stays sensitive to the depth of the snowpack (Fig. 5).

Note that the gray envelope does not always include the observations (Fig. 6a and 6c). This could be due to an under-estimation of the R matrix. In the developed approach, the inflation technique of the R matrix is limited by a threshold on the  $\alpha$  factor fixed at 5 since the simulations are limited by the simplifications of physical parameters in the models and we may introduce a bias if we force them to follow the observation by perturbing meteorological forcings only. Further work is needed to quantify the model errors in order to consider it in the DA scheme and to improve the representativeness of the simulations. To represent the uncertainties about the physical processes simulated with the Crocus snow model, a new system based on snow model ensembles could be an alternative. Such an approach was recently developed by implementing different configurations estimating the physical parameters of the Crocus snow model (ESCROC, Lafaysse et al., 2017).

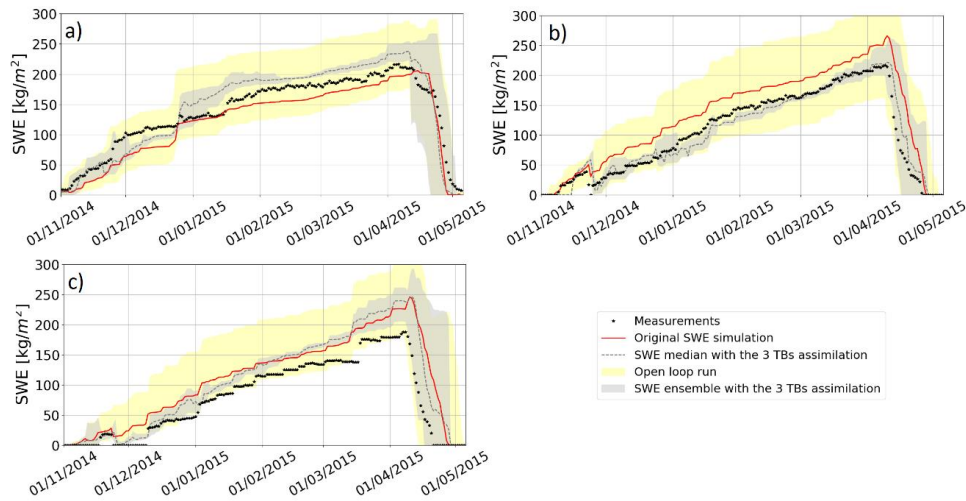


Figure 6. Evolution of SWE measurements (black points) and SWE simulations. The  $SWE_{Crocus}$  is the red line and the  $SWE_{DA}$  obtained with the DA3 TB 11.19.37 experiment is the gray dotted line. The yellow envelope is the spread of the SWE ensemble obtained with open loop runs (prior estimates). The gray envelope is the spread of the SWE ensemble obtained with the assimilation of the three frequencies (posterior estimates). Both spreads are delimited by the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles. Experiments are computed for (a) Site 12, (b) Site 1, (c) Site 9, over the winter 2014-2015.

#### 4.2.2 Results of $T_B$ assimilation using the three frequencies Experiment B

The median of the resampled ensemble of SWE obtained with the DA of the three frequencies ( $SWE_{DA}$ ) is used to estimate the global performance of the DA scheme for SWE improvements. Performance is estimated for SWE up to  $48 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  (Sect. 3.4.2).



Table 5-6 details the statistical performance of simulated SWE<sub>DA</sub> compared to measurements and to the original SWE Crocus simulations (SWE<sub>Crocus</sub>) over the 12 studied sites from 2012 to 2016 43 winters. To analyse the impact of the vegetation, results are separated according to the fraction of  $f_{cover}$  (Table 5): moderate  $f_{cover}$  ( $f_{cover} < 75\%$ , 10 sites) and high  $f_{cover}$  ( $f_{cover} > 75\%$ , 2 sites) (see Table 2 for  $f_{cover}$  site information). Figure 7 compares the SWE<sub>DA</sub>, SWE<sub>Crocus</sub> and SWE measurements (SWE<sub>obs</sub>) from 2012 to 2016 for four sites with different  $f_{cover}$  taken as an example: Site 5 ( $f_{cover} = 31.5\%$ ), 10 ( $f_{cover} = 61.8\%$ ), 1 ( $f_{cover} = 63.7\%$ ) and 9 ( $f_{cover} = 84.0\%$ ). In this section, we first analyze the overall SWE improvements obtained with T<sub>B</sub> assimilation compared to original simulations. To analyse the impact of the vegetation, results are separated according to the fraction of  $f_{cover}$  (Table 5): moderate  $f_{cover}$  ( $f_{cover} < 75\%$ , 10 sites) and high  $f_{cover}$  ( $f_{cover} > 75\%$ , 2 sites) (see Table 2 for  $f_{cover}$  site information). To have an idea of the impact of the DA scheme, the mean bias of SWE and SWE<sub>max</sub> retrieval obtained without and with assimilation are compared and the and the impact of the vegetation on the quality of the DA scheme is discussed.

- Overall SWE improvements compared to original Crocus simulations

The overall SWE<sub>Crocus</sub> RMSE, bias and RPE are of 45.0 kg m<sup>-2</sup>, 23.67 kg m<sup>-2</sup> and 22.1%, respectively (Table 56). In comparison, the overall SWE<sub>DA</sub> RMSE, bias and RPE are improved and equal to 43.41.2 kg m<sup>-2</sup>, 6.97.5 kg m<sup>-2</sup> and 18.54%, respectively. The overall bias is reduced by 47.16.2 kg m<sup>-2</sup> (72.68% of SWE<sub>Crocus</sub> bias) with the DA scheme. The DA of the three frequencies thus helps to improve SWE estimates over Québec. Moreover, the correlation between SWE<sub>DA</sub> simulations with and SWE measurements gives a similar r coefficient r of 0.79 and an offset of 10, better than to those the one obtained with SWE<sub>Crocus</sub> simulations (r = 0.79 and r = 0.78, respectively, offset = 29), but the offset is significantly reduced with SWE<sub>DA</sub> compared to SWE<sub>Crocus</sub> (offset = 10 kg m<sup>-2</sup> and 29 kg m<sup>-2</sup>, respectively). We analysed the number of cases with significant improvements for the total of 43 simulations studied (10 sites from 2012 to 2016, Site 11 from 2015 to 2016 and Site 12 from 2014 to 2016) by considering a 5% threshold on the bias and RMSE differences before and after assimilation. The SWE<sub>DA</sub> bias is significantly reduced for 265 winters (58.60% of cases) compared to original SWE simulations. However, the RMSE is significantly improved for only 35.26% of simulations, and in 49.35% of cases, RMSEs are similar.

- Evaluation of SWE<sub>max</sub> performances

The mean observed SWE<sub>max</sub> is equal to 235.6 kg m<sup>-2</sup> from 2012 to 2016, and the mean simulated SWE<sub>max</sub> is equal to 278.3 kg m<sup>-2</sup> and 264.66.8 kg m<sup>-2</sup> without and with the assimilation, respectively. Compared to original SWE simulations, the DA scheme improves 62.63% of SWE<sub>max</sub> simulations with an overall improvement of 43.612.2 kg m<sup>-2</sup>, corresponding to 98% of SWE measurements (Table 56). Such an uncertainty extended over the whole territory could have a strong impact, considering that 1 mm of SWE in the LG watershed could represent \$1M in hydroelectric power production (Brown and Tapsoba, 2007).

- SWE accuracy for sites according to the  $f_{cover}$

The overall RPE obtained with the DA scheme is below 15% (RPE=14.61%) for sites with an  $f_{cover}$  below 75% (Table 56), which is the accuracy required for hydrological applications (Larue et al., 2017). Hence, the accuracy of SWE<sub>DA</sub> retrievals, obtained without the use of any surface-based data, are very encouraging for hydrological needs in remote areas. In comparison,

the GlobSnow-2 SWE product (Takala et al., 2011), which assimilates both  $T_{Bs}$  and in situ snow depths, has a SWE ~~RMSE~~ ~~RPE~~ equal to  $94.1 \pm 20.3 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  ~~35.9 %~~ over the same area in Québec (Larue et al., 2017), twice the uncertainty of  $SWE_{DA}$ . Figures 7a and 7b (Sites 5 and 1) show that for a single site original  $SWE_{Crocus}$  simulation works well for some years but can be underestimated or overestimated over other years. The DA scheme allows a more stable solution when the overall  $f_{cover}$  is under 75% (not the case for Site 9, for example).

Nevertheless, even if the overall RMSE is improved, the DA scheme does not help to improve SWE estimates for sites with an  $f_{cover}$  above 75% (RMSE of ~~58.866~~  $55.862_0 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$ ) compared to original SWE simulations (RMSE of ~~55.862\_0~~  $58.866 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$ ). The presence of vegetation is a major source of uncertainty in  $T_{B \text{ TOA}}$  simulations. The emission of the trees is superimposed on the signal emitted by the underlying snowpack and increases the  $T_B$  measured at the satellite level (Chang et al., 1996, Brown et al., 2003). At same time, the canopy also attenuates the surface emission toward the satellite. These contributions are complex to quantify since it depends not only on the tree fraction within the pixel but also on the tree species and states which emit/attenuate a different PMW signal depending on their biomass (liquid water content), volume and structure (stem, leaf, trunk) (Franklin, 1987). Also, the presence of trees modifies snow accumulation on the ground, depending on interception, shade and sublimation effects (Dutra et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2009), which increases the spatial variability of the snowpack within the same pixel. These interactions between the vegetation and the snowpack are not taken into account with Crocus and it might induce uncertainties due to model errors. Note that SWE sensors are mostly installed in clearings, which reduces this impact in comparisons against surface-based measurements.

Kwon et al. (2016) used a similar snow radiance assimilation system to correct SD by updating the Community Land Model, version 4 (CLM4), snow/soil states and radiative transfer model (RTM) with the assimilation of the 19 and 37 GHz of AMSR-E. Over North America, it produced significant improvements of SD for tundra type, but also produced degradations for taiga snow class and forest land cover (7.1% and 7.3% degradations, respectively). In the present study, the use of a multi-layer snowpack model makes it possible to well represent PMW emission from the snowpack with DMRT-ML, and to improve overall snowpack simulations with  $T_B$  assimilation in boreal areas when the  $f_{cover}$  is below 75%. Kwon et al. (2017) obtained better results for areas with a high  $f_{cover}$  in comparison to their previous study (Kwon et al., 2016) over North America by using the vegetation parameter  $\omega$  as a free variable in the DA scheme, instead of pre-calibrating it as we chose to do. This aspect is further ~~discussed~~ ~~studied with the experiment C~~ in Sect. 5.2.

Table 65. Averaged SWE RMSE, bias and RPE (Eq. (12)) over the ~~12 studied sites from 2012 to 2016~~ ~~43 winters~~ for original SWE simulation ( $SWE_{Crocus}$ ) and assimilated  $SWE_{DA}$ . Statistical performances were estimated for  $SWE_{obs} > 48 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  (snow depth higher than  $\sim 20 \text{ cm}$ ).  $SWE_{obs}$  and  $SWE_{sim}$  are the averaged observed and simulated SWE, respectively.

	$\frac{SWE_{obs}}{SWE_{obs}}$	$SWE_{Crocus}$			$SWE_{DA}$ with the DA <del>of the three</del> <del>frequencies b TB 11,19,37</del>				
		RMSE ( $\text{kg.m}^{-2}$ )	Bias ( $\text{kg.m}^{-2}$ )	RPE (%)	$\frac{SWE_{sim}}{SWE_{sim}}$	RMSE ( $\text{kg.m}^{-2}$ )	Bias ( $\text{kg.m}^{-2}$ )	RPE (%)	$\frac{SWE_{sim}}{SWE_{sim}}$

$f_{cover < .75\%}$	<u>162.2</u> +64.4	<u>42.5</u> 42- 5	<u>17.3</u> 49- 4	<u>19.0</u> 49- 5	<u>179.4</u> 183.8	<u>37.1</u> 39- 5	<u>-1.2</u> 0-7	<u>14.1</u> 44- 6	<u>161.0</u> 465.4
$f_{cover > .75\%}$	<u>121</u> 39.06.3	<u>55.6</u> 2.0 8	<u>47.8</u> 42- 2	<u>33.9</u> 33- 3	<u>186.8</u> 468.5	<u>68.0</u> 58- 8	<u>40.2</u> 33-7	<u>38.0</u> 35- 8	<u>179.2</u> 459.9
Mean	<u>157.3</u> 157.3	<u>45.0</u> 45- 0	<u>23.7</u> 23- 7	<u>22.1</u> 22- 4	<u>181.0</u>	<u>41.2</u> 43- 4	<u>7.5</u> 6-9	<u>18.4</u> 18- 5	<u>164.8</u> 464.2

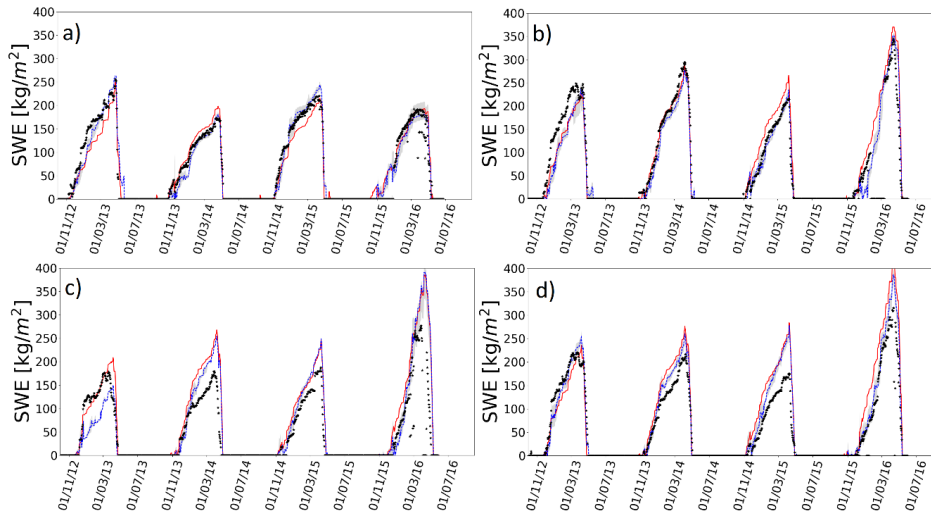


Figure 7. Evolution of SWE measurements (black points), original SWE simulations (red full line), and the median of the SWE ensemble obtained with the **DA\_b\_TB\_11,19,37 experiment** (SWE<sub>DA</sub>) (blue dotted line). The gray envelope is the spread of the SWE<sub>DA</sub> ensemble (posterior estimates). Experiments are computed for (a) Site 5 ( $f_{cover} = 31.5\%$ ), (b) Site 1 ( $f_{cover} = 63.7\%$ ), (c) Site 9 ( $f_{cover} = 84\%$ ), (d) Site 10 ( $f_{cover} = 61.8\%$ ), from 2012 to 2016.

### 4.2.3 Experiment C

Table 7 shows the statistical performances obtained with the **DA\_c\_TB\_11,19,37 experiment** (see Table 3 for definitions), where  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{snow}$  are taken as free variables in our DA scheme ('SWE<sub>DA,  $\omega$ ,  $\tau_s$</sub> ') over the 43 winters.

Table 7. Same as Table 6 but using the forest parameter  $\omega$  and the snow stickiness parameter ( $\tau_{snow}$ ) as free variables in the DA scheme to improve SWE retrievals (SWE<sub>DA,  $\omega$ ,  $\tau_s$</sub> ).

SWE <sub>DA, <math>\omega</math>, <math>\tau_s</math></sub> with the DA of the three frequencies	
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	$\overline{SWE_{obs}}$	RMSE (kg m <sup>-2</sup> )	Bias (kg m <sup>-2</sup> )	RPE (%)	$\overline{SWE_{sim}}$
$f_{cover} < 75\%$	162.2	45.6	-14.8	21.6	147.4
$f_{cover} > 75\%$	139.0	45.1	-7.1	17.5	131.9
Mean	157.3	45.5	-13.2	20.7	144.1

The overall  $SWE_{DA, \omega, \tau_s}$  RMSE, bias and RPE are equal to 45.5 kg m<sup>-2</sup>, -13.2 kg m<sup>-2</sup> and 20.7%, respectively, very close to the statistical performances of the original  $SWE_{Crocus}$  simulations. The use of  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{snow}$  as free variables does not help to improve  $SWE_{Crocus}$  simulations for sites with an  $f_{cover}$  below 75%, but the bias is significantly reduced for sites with an  $f_{cover}$  above 75% (-7.1 kg m<sup>-2</sup> and a RPE of 17.5%). In addition, the simulated  $SWE_{max}$  is improved for 86% of the 43 simulations (37 cases), with a reduction of the  $SWE_{max}$  bias of 26.6 kg m<sup>-2</sup> (17% of SWE measurements) compared to the original  $SWE_{Crocus}$  simulation.

The use of pre-calibrated parameters is justified because the parameters  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{snow}$  were not measurable and could not be directly validated. Furthermore, if parameters are added as state variables in the DA scheme, a larger ensemble size in the DA scheme would be needed to improve the representativeness of  $T_B$  uncertainties and to ensure the solution's stability (or at least to prevent a degeneracy problem). The ensemble size was kept to 150 here but this DA c TB 11,19,37 experiment should produce improved results with a larger ensemble size. However, this would require a significant computational effort. This study is a preliminary step of a PMW DA implementation for operational hydrological applications, so there was a need to limit computing time. These results suggest that the developed approach using pre-calibrated  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{snow}$  parameters helps to improve the retrievals for sites with an  $f_{cover}$  below 75%, and the use of  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{snow}$  parameters as free variables in the DA scheme should be investigated in further work for sites with more than 75% forest cover.

## 5 Discussion

In this section, we discuss a) the sensitivity of wet snow conditions for  $T_B$  assimilation, b) the impact of using the forest parameter  $\omega$  and snow microstructure (snow stickiness parameter  $\tau_{snow}$ ) as free variables in the DA scheme, and c) the percentage of surface, vegetation and atmospheric contributions in the PMW signal measured by satellite sensors.

### 5.1 Wet snow conditions

In wet snow conditions, water droplets act as emission sources (especially at frequencies above 30 GHz), and the snowpack becomes close to a black body (Brucker et al., 2011; Picard et al., 2013; Klehmet et al., 2013). The PMW observations are thus complex to use for SWE retrievals, especially at the end of the season before the spring snow melt when the SWE is maximal. Figure 8 illustrates the  $SWE_{DA}$  obtained with the DA of the three frequencies applied over the whole winter and when the snow is dry only (LWC=0 kg m<sup>-2</sup>), for Site 3 (winter 2013/2014). SWE estimates are strongly deteriorated when  $T_B$  assimilation is performed in wet snow conditions. For this example, the  $SWE_{DA}$  RMSE is equal to 31.1 kg m<sup>-2</sup> with a DA

performed over the dry snow period only and significantly increases to  $70.2 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  by assimilating  $T_B$ s over the whole winter (dry and wet snow conditions).

Here we used the Liquid Water Content (LWC) simulated by the Crocus model to detect wet and dry snow. This variable is subject to model errors and is linked to the original atmospheric forcing data. Further studies are needed to automatically detect wet snow events by using direct satellite observations. Previous studies have shown the potential to use the gradient ratio (GR= $T_{B,37}-T_{B,19}/T_{B,37}+T_{B,19}$ ) to detect Rain-on-snow events in arctic areas (Langlois et al., 2016; Dolant et al., 2017) and this approach should be investigated for boreal forest areas in further work ~~to improve the quality of the DA scheme for SWE improvements~~. The use of active microwave observations is also a promising approach with a good spatial resolution (Roy et al., 2010).

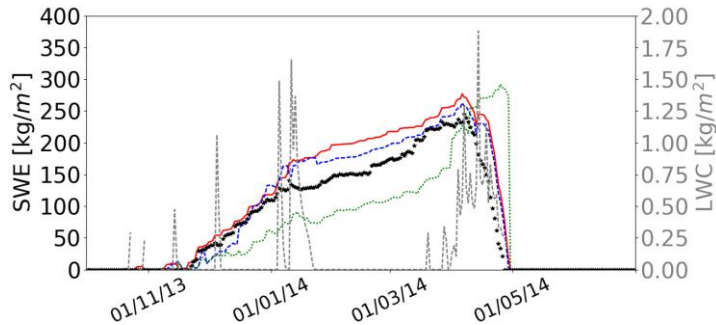


Figure 8. Evolutions of measured SWE (black points) for Site 3 from 2013 to 2014, original SWE Crocus simulation (red full line), and  $SWE_{DA}$  obtained with a DA of the three frequencies applied for the entire winter (green dotted line) and when LWC=0 only (blue full line). The simulated total Liquid Water Content (LWC) in the snowpack (dotted gray lines) is also shown.

## 5.2 Snow stickiness ( $\epsilon_{snow}$ ) and forest parameter $\omega$ as free variables

The quality of the PMW DA scheme could strongly depend upon the choice of the state variables. In this study, we chose to pre-calibrate forest and soil parameters and to use a constant snow stickiness parameter ( $\epsilon_{snow}$ ) fixed at 0.17 (Larue et al., 2018). The forest parameter  $\omega$  strongly affects the PMW emission from the vegetation, which can represent more than 60% of the signal measured by satellite sensors (see Sect. 5.3). Kwon et al. (2017) has shown that the contribution of  $T_{B,veg}$  to  $T_{B,TOA}$  was better represented by considering  $\omega$  in the DA scheme, and improvements in the resulting SD were evident for the forest land-cover type (about 5% with DMRT ML). Table 6 shows the statistical performances of  $SWE_{DA}$  obtained by considering  $\omega$  and  $\epsilon_{snow}$  as free variables in our DA scheme ( $SWE_{DA,(\omega, \epsilon)}$ ) over the 12 studied sites from 2012 to 2016. The  $\omega$  parameter was perturbed with Gaussian noise, centered on 0.07 (as calibrated) with a standard deviation of 0.02 and bounded by 0.05 and 0.12 (reasonable range of  $T_{B,TOA}$  RMSE values, Fig. 3). The snow stickiness parameter was perturbed by Gaussian noise, centered on 0.17, with a standard deviation of 0.15 and bounded by 0.1 and 0.46. These limits correspond to the range of  $\epsilon_{snow}$

values extracted from Larue et al. (2018) over the same study area. The ensemble size was kept to 150 members in the DA experiment.

**Table 6.** Same as Table 5 but using the forest parameter  $\omega$  and the snow stickiness parameter ( $\tau_{\text{snow}}$ ) as free variables in the DA scheme to improve SWE retrievals ( $\text{SWE}_{\text{DA}, \omega, \tau}$ ).

	$\overline{\text{SWE}_{\text{Obs}}}$	$\text{SWE}_{\text{DA}, \omega, \tau}$ with the DA of the three frequencies			
		RMSE ( $\text{kg m}^{-2}$ )	Bias ( $\text{kg m}^{-2}$ )	RPE (%)	$\overline{\text{SWE}_{\text{Sim}}}$
$f_{\text{cover}} < 75\%$	164.4	47.2	-13.9	21.6	150.5
$f_{\text{cover}} > 75\%$	126.3	48.4	17.4	26.3	143.7
Mean	157.3	47.4	-8.1	22.4	149.2

Mis en forme : Anglais (Canada)

Mis en forme : Anglais (Canada)

The overall  $\text{SWE}_{\text{DA}, \omega, \tau}$  RMSE, bias and RPE are equal to  $47.4 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$ ,  $-8.1 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  and  $22.4\%$ , respectively, very close to the statistical performances of the original  $\text{SWE}_{\text{Crocus}}$  simulations. The use of  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{\text{snow}}$  as free variables in the DA scheme does not help to improve  $\text{SWE}_{\text{Crocus}}$  simulations for sites with an  $f_{\text{cover}}$  below 75%, but the bias is significantly reduced for sites with an  $f_{\text{cover}}$  above 75% ( $17.4 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$ , or 11% of SWE measurements). In addition, the simulated  $\text{SWE}_{\text{max}}$  is improved for 86% of the 43 simulations (37 cases), with a reduction of the  $\text{SWE}_{\text{max}}$  bias of  $36.2 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$  (23% of SWE measurements) compared to the original  $\text{SWE}_{\text{Crocus}}$  simulation.

We chose to use pre-calibrated parameters because the parameters  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{\text{snow}}$  were not measurable and could not be directly validated. Furthermore, if we add parameters to the state variables, a larger ensemble size in the DA scheme would be needed to improve the representativeness of  $T_{\text{B}}$  uncertainties and to ensure the solution's stability (or at least to prevent a degeneracy problem). The ensemble size was kept to 150 here but this DA experiment should produce improved results with a larger ensemble size. Nevertheless, this would require a significant computational effort. This study is a preliminary step of a PMW DA implementation for operational hydrological applications, so there was a need to limit computing time. These results suggest that the developed approach using pre-calibrated  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{\text{snow}}$  parameters helps to improve the retrievals for sites with an  $f_{\text{cover}}$  below 75%, and the use of  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{\text{snow}}$  parameters as free variables in the DA scheme should be investigated in further work for sites with more than 75% forest cover.

### 5.2.3 Land cover contributions within the simulated $T_{\text{B TOA}}$

To properly assimilate PMW satellite observations, all contributions that affect the observed signal need to be well identified and quantified. The estimation of  $T_{\text{B TOA}}$  (see Eq. (5) and (6)) can be written as the sum of the PMW contributions of the open surface ( $T_{\text{B surf}}$ ), vegetation ( $T_{\text{B veg}}$ ) and atmosphere ( $T_{\text{B atm}}$ ) according to the fraction of forest ( $f_{\text{cover}}$ , estimated with the LAI as in Eq. (2) and (3)) and open area ( $1 - f_{\text{cover}}$ ) with the Eq. (13), (14) and (15) as,

$$T_{\text{B veg}} = f_{\text{cover}} \cdot [(1 - \omega) \cdot (1 - \gamma_v) \cdot T_{\text{veg}} + \gamma_v \cdot (1 - e_{\text{surf}}) \cdot (1 - \omega) \cdot (1 - \gamma_v) \cdot T_{\text{veg}}] \cdot \gamma_{\text{atm}} \quad (13)$$

$$T_{\text{B surf}} = f_{\text{cover}} \cdot [\gamma_v \cdot e_{\text{surf}} \cdot T_{\text{surf}}] \cdot \gamma_{\text{atm}} + (1 - f_{\text{cover}}) \cdot [e_{\text{surf}} \cdot T_{\text{surf}}] \cdot \gamma_{\text{atm}} \quad (14)$$

$$T_{B\ atm} = f_{cover} \cdot \left( \left[ (1 - e_{surf}) \cdot \gamma_v^2 \cdot T_{B\ atm\ l} + (1 - \gamma_v) \cdot \omega \cdot T_{B\ atm\ l} \right] \cdot \gamma_{atm} + T_{B\ atm\ t} \right) + (1 - f_{cover}) \cdot \left( (1 - e_{surf}) \cdot T_{B\ atm\ l} \cdot \gamma_{atm} + T_{B\ atm\ t} \right) \quad (15)$$

Figure 9 illustrates the percentage of each contribution before DA at 11, 19 and 37 GHz in V-pol from 2012 to 2016, for the summer and for the winter periods (defined when a snowpack is detected) for Site 12 ( $f_{cover}$  of 24.2%), Site 1 ( $f_{cover}$  of 63.7%) and Site 9 ( $f_{cover}$  of 84.0%). The percentages of each contribution are similar at 11 and 19 GHz. The contributions from the atmosphere are weak. As expected for all frequencies, the surface contributions increase for the winter period, while the vegetation contributions decrease as the LAI decreases, especially at 37 GHz. For Site 12, the surface contributions represent more than 80% of the PMW signal in winter when the vegetation contributions represent less than 10% of the PMW signal (same magnitude as atmosphere contributions). For Site 1, the surface and the vegetation contributions are similar in winter (40-55%) whereas the vegetation contributions were more than 60% of the PMW signal in summer. For Site 9, the vegetation contributions remain the main contribution to the PMW signal in comparison to the surface contributions, even in winter (50-70% of the PMW signal for 37-10 GHz). In this dense boreal forest area, the measured snowpack emission represents less than 30% of the measured signal and SWE improvements using only  $T_B$  observations is challenging. This high vegetation contribution (emission and attenuation) explains why the developed DA scheme does not succeed to significantly improve SWE estimates for these sites with a  $f_{cover}$  up larger than exceeding to 75%.

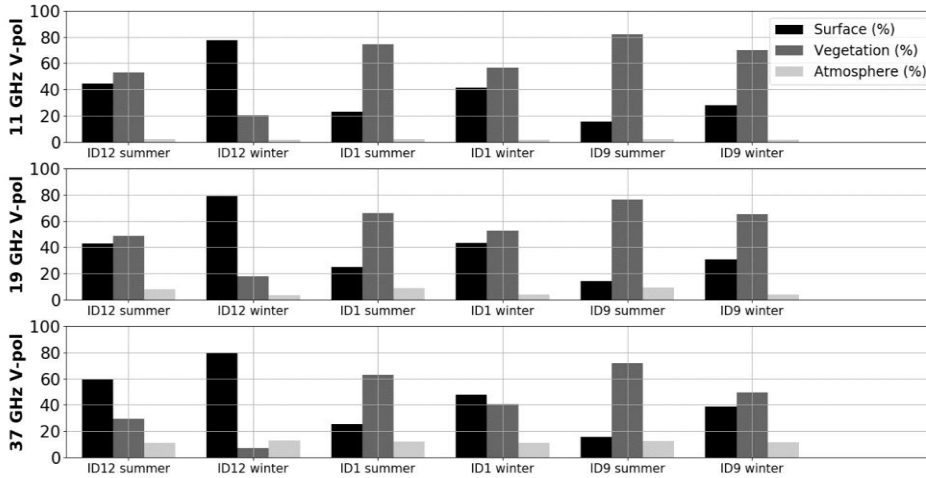


Figure 9. Percentage of surface (black), vegetation (dark gray) and atmosphere (light gray) contributions to the simulated PMW signal at the top of the atmosphere (before DA) at the three frequencies 11 (top), 19 (middle) and 37 (bottom) GHz. ID12, ID1 and ID9 are site 12 ( $f_{cover}$  of 24.2%), 1 ( $f_{cover}$  of 63.7%) and 9 ( $f_{cover}$  of 84.0%), respectively. Summer and winter periods are defined when snowpack is observed or not.

## 6 Summary and conclusion

An ensemble data assimilation (DA) scheme was implemented in a calibrated chain of models (Crocus/DMRT-ML, soil, vegetation and atmosphere radiative transfer models) to improve SWE estimates by updating forcing data and snowpack states with ~~the assimilation of the~~ AMSR-2 satellite observations. The developed approach does not use any surface-based data and was tested over a boreal forest area in Québec (Eastern Canada). The proposed DA scheme is a particle filter with a resampled SIR algorithm, using an inflation technique of the R matrix to avoid degeneracy problems. The multi-layer snowpack model Crocus, coupled to the surface land model ISBA, was used to simulate the evolution of the snowpack. The DMRT-ML, the ( $\omega$ - $\tau_{opt}$ ) model, an atmospheric model and the Wegmüller and Mätzler (1999) radiative transfer model were calibrated to simulate the PMW contributions from the snowpack, the vegetation and the soil, respectively, at the top of the atmosphere. The DA scheme was performed over 12 sites from 2012 to 2016, only in the presence of dry snow. Ice lenses were detected and integrated in the snowpack by using a thresholding approach on the polarization ratio at 19 GHz. The study shows:

- 1-  $T_{B\ TOA}$  can be well simulated with the developed chain of models. By calibrating soil and forest parameters ( $\omega=0.07$  and  $\sigma_s=0.2$  cm), the overall-annual  $T_{B\ TOA}$  RMSE (all frequencies) is equal to 18.014.5 K from 2012 to 2016 ~~over the winter period~~. This RMSE is similar to the overall RMSE estimated ~~for-with~~ the  $\tau_{snow}$ -calibrated DMRT-ML model driven by in situ measurements in an open area (19.9 K compared to surface-based radiometric measurements in Québec (Larue et al., 2018)).
- 2- The assimilation of  $T_{Bs}$  at 11, 19 and 37 GHz (V-pol) improves the SWE retrievals-estimates compared to the assimilation of  $\Delta T_{B\ 19-37}$  only (sensitive to snowpack depth) or to the assimilation of both  $\Delta T_{B\ 19-37}$  and  $\Delta T_{B\ 11-19}$ . The SWE RMSE of posterior estimates is reduced by 45.67% over the whole winter compared to the SWE RMSE of prior estimates (open loop runs).
- 3- By using calibrated  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{snow}$  parameters in the DA scheme, the overall bias (for 12 sites from 2012 to 2016) of the original SWE<sub>Crocus</sub> simulations is significantly reduced by assimilating  $T_{Bs}$  at 11, 19 and 37 GHz (from 22+23.7 kg m<sup>-2</sup> to 6-97.5 kg m<sup>-2</sup>). The bias on SWE<sub>max</sub> is reduced by 12.23-6 kg m<sup>-2</sup> (98% of SWE measurements). The overall RPE goes from 22.1% to 18.45%, which is close to the range of accuracy needed for hydrological applications (SWE RPE < 15%). This accuracy is achieved with the  $T_B$  assimilation for sites with a  $f_{cover}$  below 75%, but the DA deteriorates SWE simulations for sites with a  $f_{cover}$  above 75%. However, by using  $\omega$  and  $\tau_{snow}$  as free variables, the DA significantly improves SWE simulations for sites with a  $f_{cover}$  above 75% (RPE=17.5%).

Even with the difficulties associated with quantifying all the different factors that contribute to the PMW signal measured by satellite sensors in remote boreal areas (canopy, ice crust, frozen ground / unfrozen, presence of lakes, moisture in the snow, topography, etc.) (Kelly et al., 2003, Koenig & Forster, 2004), and even when vegetation contributions are 50% of the PMW



signal, the implementation of a DA scheme in a well-calibrated chain of models ~~allows to reduce~~ SWE uncertainties without using any surface-based data. This assimilation scheme can be easily implemented in an operational system using real satellite-borne observations, despite the relatively significant computing time required. This research opens the way for global applications to obtain more accurate SWE estimates over large and remote areas where few meteorological weather stations  
5 are present.

*Data availability.* The daily SWE data provided by Hydro-Québec are used for hydrological purposes and are not available to the public due to legal constraints on the data's availability. The SWE data, SD data and field campaign measurements provided by the University of Sherbrooke will soon be available on the GRIMP snow group website <http://www.grimp.ca/data/>.  
10 Meteorological GEM data are freely available on the Government of Canada's website [https://weather.gc.ca/grib/grib2\\_reg\\_10km\\_e.html](https://weather.gc.ca/grib/grib2_reg_10km_e.html). Other data used are listed in the references.

*Competing interests.* The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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#### **Appendix A: Online adjustment of the observation error covariance matrix R**

Online adjustment of covariance matrices in data assimilation is quite a common approach with the Ensemble Kalman filter (Dee, 1995; Miyoshi, 2001, Brankart et al., 2010, 2011) but not with the particle filter. However, in many implementations of the particle filter, the measurement pdf is considered Gaussian, so that the particle weights are computed using the observation error covariance matrix R. This matrix can therefore also be subject to adjustment in the context of the particle filter. Online adjustment can be and is often performed by tuning a simple inflation of the initial covariance matrix. This is the approach chosen here.

25 Noting  $\delta_i = y - h(x_i)$  the innovation for particle  $i$ , the weight of this particle is

$$\tilde{w}_i = \frac{w e_i}{\sum_j w e_j} \quad (A1)$$

where

$$w e_i = \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2} \delta_i^T R^{-1} \delta_i\right) \quad (A2)$$

An inflation of matrix R by a factor  $1/\alpha$  (larger than 1) can be interpreted as an exponent  $\alpha$  (smaller than 1) to  $w e_i$ . Because the weights  $\tilde{w}_i$  are nonlinear functions of R, inflating R tends to flatten their distribution. Online adjustment consists in finding a  
30 value for  $\alpha$  that flattens the distribution of weights to the point where  $N_{\text{keep}}$  particles are selected with certainty,  $N_{\text{keep}}$  being a

number to be prescribed. The number  $N_{\text{keep}}$  being fixed, if the resampling step is performed using Arakawa's procedure (Arakawa, 1996), the weight of the  $N_{\text{keep}}$ -th particle to be selected,  $\widetilde{w}e_{\text{keep}}$ , must become equal to  $\widetilde{w}e_{\text{ref}} = 1/N_{\text{keep}}$ . Consequently,

$$\widetilde{w}e_{\text{keep}} = \frac{(we_{\text{keep}})^\alpha}{\sum_j (we_j)^\alpha} = \widetilde{w}e_{\text{ref}} \quad (\text{A3})$$

or, written differently after taking the logarithm:

$$\alpha = \left( \log(\widetilde{w}e_{\text{ref}}) + \log(\sum_i (we_j)^\alpha) \right) / \log(we_{\text{keep}}) \quad (\text{A4})$$

This equation for  $\alpha$  is not solvable analytically. Instead, we find  $\alpha$  after the convergence of the series:

$$\alpha_n = \left( \log(\widetilde{w}e_{\text{ref}}) + \log(\sum_i we_j^{\alpha_{n-1}}) \right) / \log(we_{\text{keep}}) \quad (\text{A5})$$

The result of this adjustment is illustrated in Figure A1. The blue dots show the first 20 weights of a sorted distribution for an ensemble of 50 particles strongly prone to degeneracy: only 4 particles have a weight larger than  $1/50 = 0.02$ . The minimum number of particles to be selected is fixed to  $N_{\text{keep}} = 10$ . After the adjustment procedure, the identified inflation factor for matrix R is 3.6 ( $\alpha = 0.277$ ) and the weight  $we_{\text{keep}}$  of the 10<sup>th</sup> particle is exactly equal to 0.02.

Obviously, this procedure is used only if the number of selected particles is below the  $N_{\text{keep}}$  threshold with the initial weights.

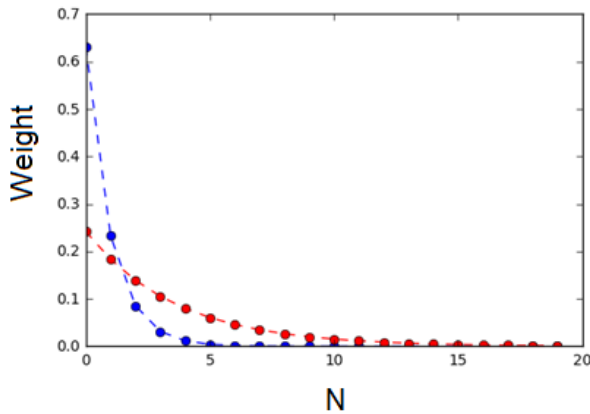


Figure A1. Weight distribution of the first 20 weights of a sorted distribution for an ensemble of 50 particles: distribution before the adjustment (blue dotted points), showing a degeneracy problem, and distribution after the adjustment procedure (red dotted points), where weight distribution is 'flattened' and significant weights are distributed around  $N_{\text{keep}}$  particles (10 particles for this example).

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