

# HEC-RAS 2D Sediment Computation Options and Tolerances

Alex Sánchez, PhD  
Stanford Gibson, PhD

Hydrologic Engineering Center,  
Institute for Water Resources,  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S.A.



US Army Corps of Engineers



December 13, 2022

1



## Sediment Computation Options and Tolerances




The screenshot displays the HEC-RAS 6.1.0 interface. The 'Options' menu is open, showing a list of simulation options. A red arrow points to the 'Options' menu item. Another red arrow points to the 'Sediment Computation Options and Tolerances' option at the bottom of the menu. The dialog box for 'Sediment Computation Options and Tolerances' is open, showing the following settings:

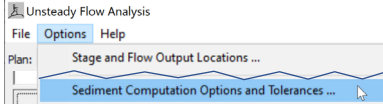
- General | 2D Computational Options
- 1D Computational Options
  - Bed exchange iterations per time step (SPI): 10
  - Min bed change before updating Cross Section (ft): 0.02
  - Min XS change before recomputation of hydraulics (ft): 0.02
  - Perform Volume Error Check/Carry Over:
  - Transport Energy Slope Method: Local:  $(Q/K)^2$
- Sediment Computation Multiplier: 1 X the hydraulic time step
- Sediment Warmup Periods:
  - Concentration (2D Only): (days)
  - Gradation: (days)
  - Bathymetry: (days)
- Dynamic Bed Roughness
  - Bed Roughness Predictor: None
  - Select Reaches to Average Bed Roughness Predictors:

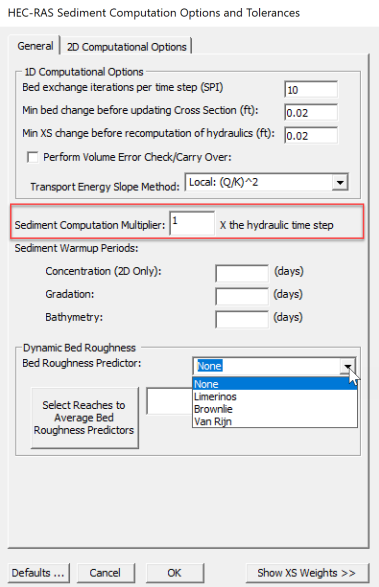
2

2



## Sediment Computation Multiplier






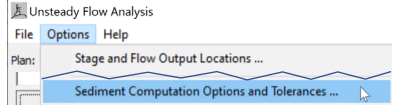

- Number of hydraulic time steps within a sediment time step
 
$$\Delta t_{Sed} = m \Delta t_{Hyd}$$
- Multiplier used in adaptive time stepping
- Uses time-average (conservative) fluxes and instantaneous hydraulics
- Output Mapping Interval enforced
- Reduces computational time
- Maximum value
  - Depends on application
  - Typically ranges from 2 to 20
  - Needs validation
- Adaptive scheme coming

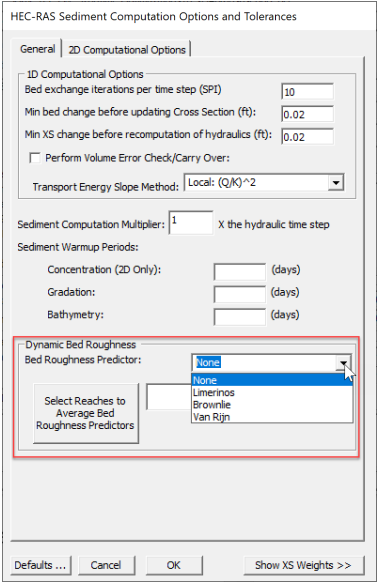
3

3



## Bed Roughness Predictor



- Limerinos (1970)
  - Based only on  $R$  and  $d_{84}$
  - Applicable to gravel and cobbles streams
- Brownlie (1983)
  - Grain size and distribution
  - Large sand rivers
  - Captures lower roughness in upper flow regimes
- Van Rijn
  - Based on bed form predictor
  - Captures higher roughness in lower regime and lower roughness in upper flow regimes

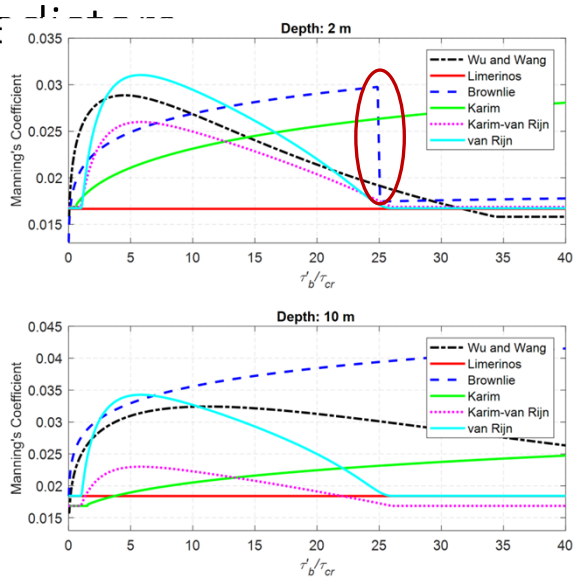
4

4



# Bed Roughness Prediction

- Discontinuity at flow regime change at shallow depths
- No flow regime change for deeper depths
- Limerinos
  - Mostly underestimates
- Van Rijn
  - Good agreement with other formulas
  - Recommended formula for 2D



5

5



# Computation Options (2D)

- Initial Conditions (Warm Up)

HEC-RAS Unsteady Computation Options and Tolerances

General | 2D Flow Options | 1D/2D Options | Advanced Time Step Control | 1D Mixed Flow Options

Use Coriolis Effects (only when using the momentum equation)

Number of cores to use in 2D computations: 8 cores

Parameter	(Default)	2D Flow Area
1 Theta (0.6-1.0):	1	1
2 Theta Warmup (0.6-1.0):	1	1
3 Water Surface Tolerance (max=0.2)(ft)	0.01	0.01
4 Volume Tolerance (ft)	0.01	0.01
5 Maximum Iterations	20	20
6 Equation Set	Diffusion Wave	Diffusion Wave
7 Initial Conditions Time (hrs)		2
8 Initial Conditions Ramp Up Fraction (0-1)	0.1	0.1
9 Number of time slices (integer value)	1	
10 Eddy Viscosity Transverse Mixing Coefficient		
11 Boundary Condition Volume Check	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 Latitude for Coriolis (-90 to 90)		

OK Cancel Defaults ...

6

6



## Sediment Warmup Periods



- Three types of Sediment Warmup Periods
  - Concentration
  - Gradation
  - Bathymetry
- Mostly there for backwards compatibility
- No output during this time period

Time Period	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Initial Conditions	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Concentration Warmup Period	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Gradation Warmup Period	Red	Red	Red	Red
Bathymetry Warmup Period	Green	Green	Green	Green

7

7



## 2D Options



The screenshot shows the HEC-RAS 6.1.0 software interface. The 'Sediment Data' menu is open, and the '2D Options' option is highlighted. The '2D Sediment Options' dialog box is also visible, showing various simulation components and settings.

**HEC-RAS 6.1.0**

File Edit Run View Options GIS Tools Help

Project: [ ]

Plan: View/Enter sediment boundary conditions

Geometry: [ ]

Steady Flow: [ ]

Unsteady Flow: [ ]

Description: [ ]

**Sediment Data -**

File Options View Help

- User Defined Grain Classes ...
- Set Cohesive Options ...
- Bed Change Options (1D)...
- Transport Methods...
- Calibrate Transport Function...
- 2D Options**
- BSTEM Options...
- Lateral Weir Options...
- Bed Mixing Options ...
- Subsidence...
- Set Pass Through Nodes ... >
- Observed Data ... >

**2D Sediment Options**

Simulation Components: All Components

Sheet and Splash Erosion: None

Erodibility: 1

Morphological Acceleration Factor: 1

Base Bed-Slope Coefficient: [ ]

Hindered Settling: No Correction

**Avalanching**

Use Avalanching

Repose Angle: 32


Maximum Iterations: 10

Relaxation Factor: 0.25

OK Cancel

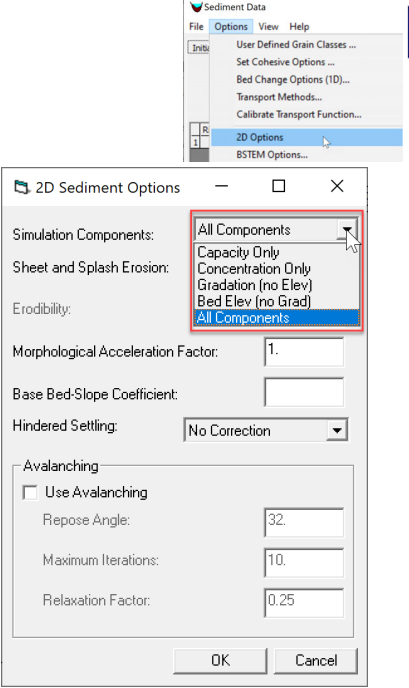
8

8




## Simulation Components

- Capacity Only
  - Extremely Fast
  - Only computed at output interval
  - Non-mobile bed Equilibrium model
- Concentration Only
  - Useful for preliminary runs or assessments
- Bed Gradations Only (No Bed Elevations)
  - Useful for bed “preconditioning”
- Bed Elevation Only (No Bed Gradations)
  - Useful for bed “preconditioning”
- All Components



9



## Splash and Sheet Erosion

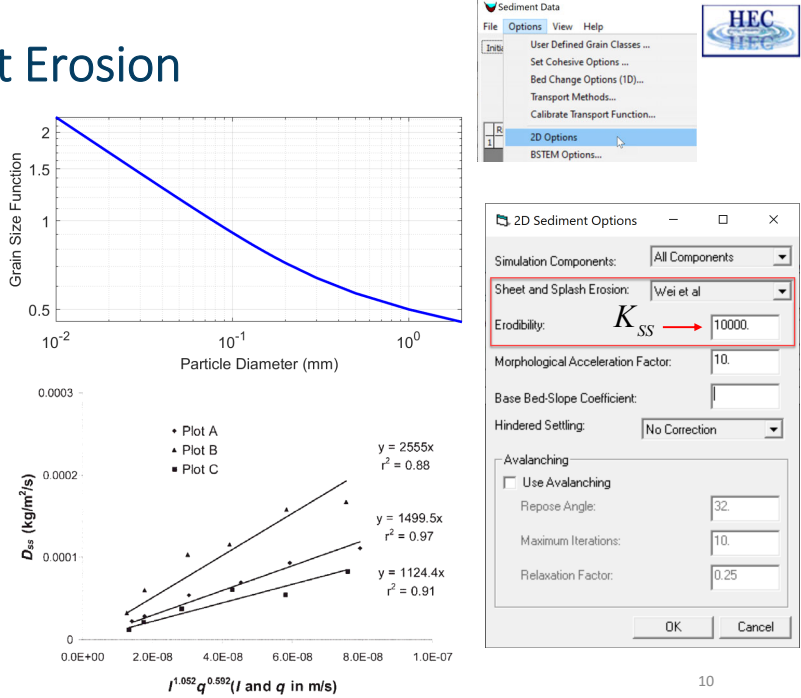
- Wei et al. (2009)

$$E_{tk}^{*SS} = \psi_{E,k} K_{SS} r^{1.052} v^{0.592}$$

$\psi_{E,k}$  : Grain size function  
 $K_{SS}$  : Erodibility coefficient  
 $r$  : Precipitation rate [L/T]  
 $v$  : Excess rate [L/T]

- Limiter

$$\hat{E}_{tk}^{*SS} = \min(E_{tk}^{*SS}, r\rho_{d1})$$



10

## Morphologic Acceleration Factor

- Useful and under-utilized parameter
- Multiplies by bed change every time step

### Approaches

1. Turn off bed change
2. Scale bed change
3. Scale time

11

11

## Base Bed Slope Coefficient

### Bed Change Equation

$$\rho_{db} \left( \frac{\partial z_b}{\partial t} \right)_k = D_{tk} - E_{tk} + \nabla \cdot (\kappa_{bk} |q_{bk}| \nabla z_b)$$


$$\kappa_{bk} = \kappa_{b0} \sqrt{\frac{\tau_{crk}}{\max(\tau'_b, \tau_{crk})}}$$

$\kappa_{b0} = 0.1 - 0.5$


$\tau'_b / \tau_{crk}$	$d = 0.5$ mm	$d = 1$ mm	$d = 2$ mm	$d = 4$ mm
0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
1	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0
2	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.0
3	0.35	0.55	0.75	0.95
4	0.25	0.45	0.65	0.85
5	0.2	0.35	0.55	0.75
6	0.15	0.3	0.45	0.65

12

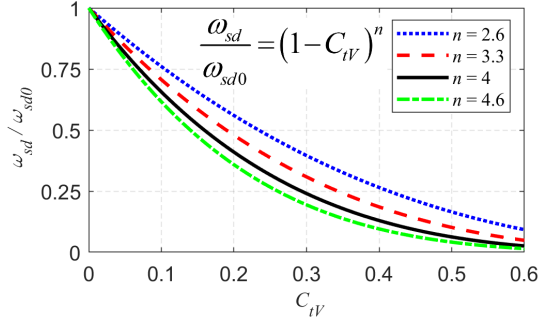
12



## Hindered Settling



- Concentrations > 3,000 mg/L
- Only for noncohesives (Cohesives treated separately)
- Richardson and Zaki (1952)
  - HEC-RAS assumes  $n = 4$

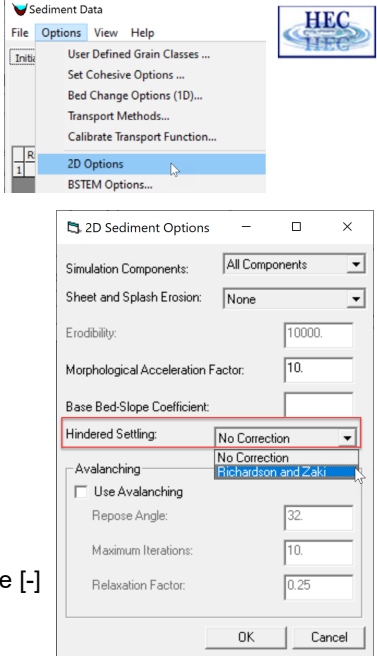


$\omega_{sd0}$ : Clear water settling velocity [L/T]


$\omega_{sd}$ : Hindered water settling velocity [L/T]

$C_{IV}$ : Total sediment concentration by volume [-]


$n$ : Calibration exponent [-]



13



## Non-Erodible Beds



- Erosion is limited over non-erodible bed

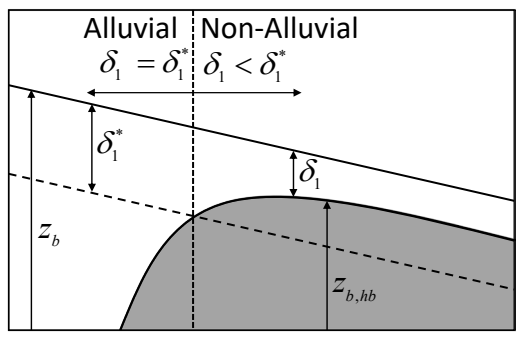
$$E'_{tk} = \min(E_{tk, hb}, E_{tk})$$

- Maximum erosion rate

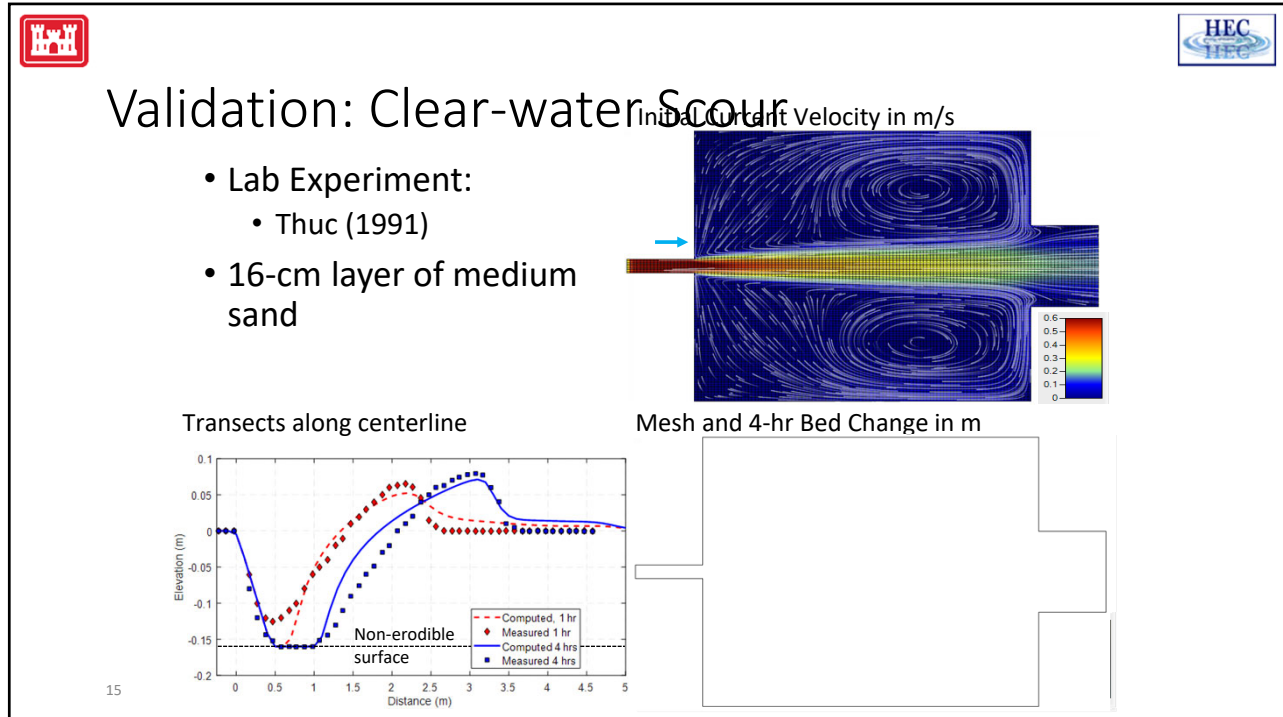
$$E_{tk, hb} = D_{tk} + \psi_{na} \frac{f_{1k} \rho_{d1}}{f_M \Delta t} (z_b^n - z_{b, hb}^n)$$

- with  $\psi_{na} = \frac{\delta_1}{\delta_1^*}$

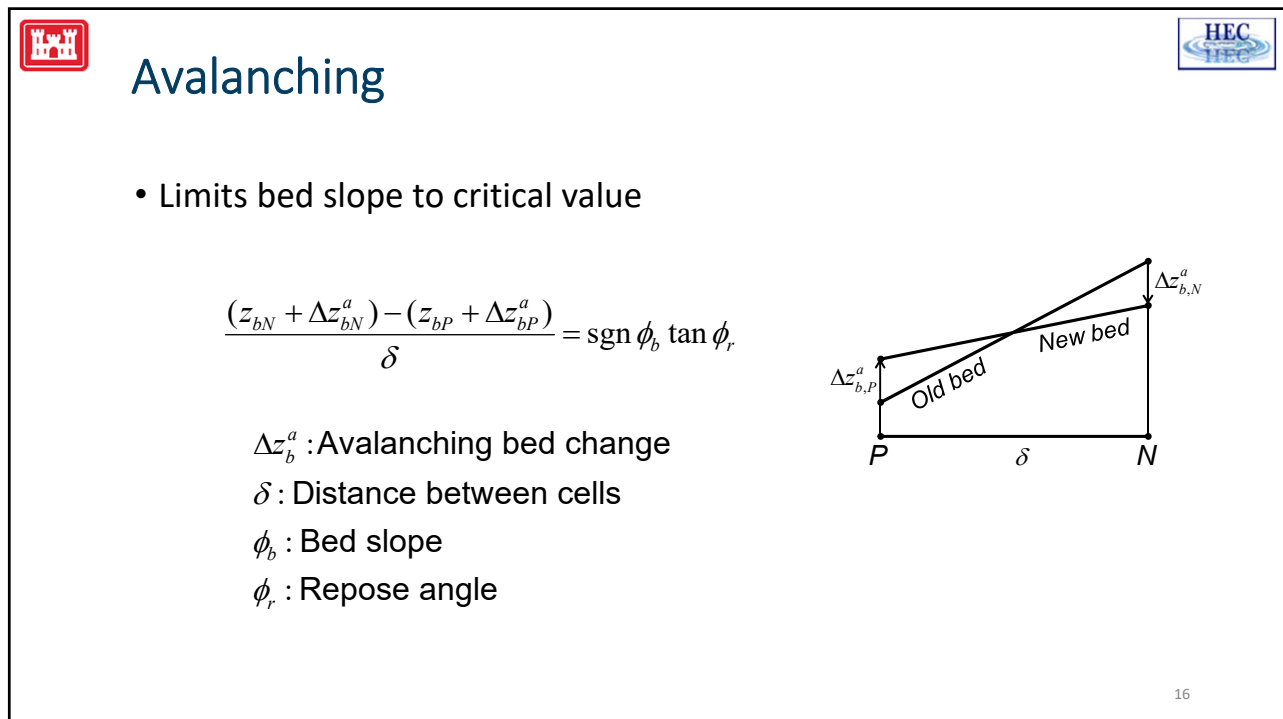
$\therefore$  if  $z_b = z_{b, hb}$  then  $E_{tk} = D_{tk}$  and  $\Delta z_b = 0$



14




15




16

16



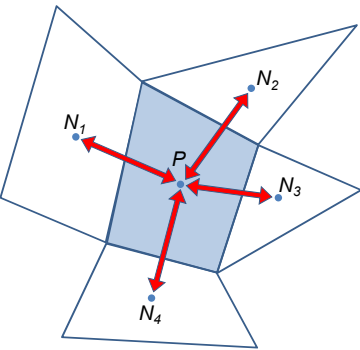


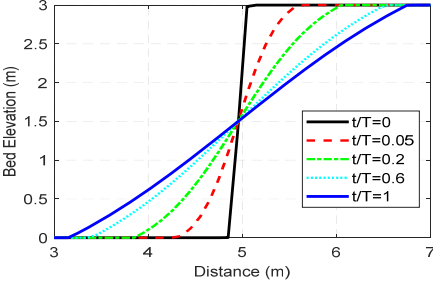
# Avalanching



- Iterative relaxation approach

$$\Delta z_{b,p}^a = \alpha_a \sum_N \frac{A_N \delta}{A_p + A_N} (\tan \phi_b - \text{sgn} \phi_b \tan \phi_R) H(|\phi_b| - \phi_R)$$





2D Sediment Options

Simulation Components: All Components

Sheet and Splash Erosion: None

Erodibility: 10000

Morphological Acceleration Factor: 10

Base Bed-Slope Coefficient:

Hindered Settling: No Correction

**Avalanching**

Use Avalanching

Repose Angle: 32


Maximum Iterations: 10

Relaxation Factor: 0.25


OK Cancel

17

17



# Bed Layering



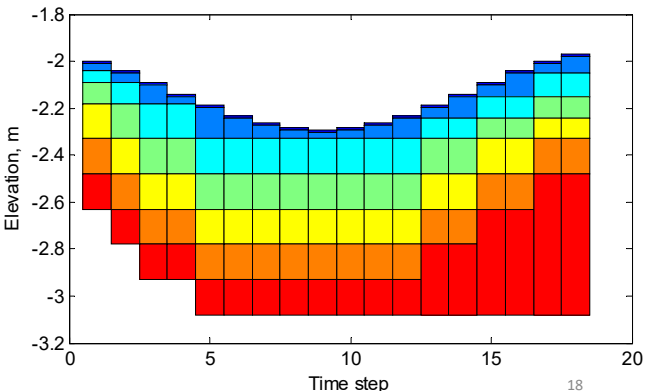
- Active Layer
 
$$\delta_{li}^{n+1} = \min \left[ \max \left( f_{1,90} d_{90,i}, 0.5 \Delta, \Delta z_{bi}, \delta_{1,\min} \right), \delta_{1,\max} \right]$$

$$\Delta z_{bi} = z_{bi}^{n+1} - z_{bi}^n$$

$\Delta$ : Bedform height
- Second Layer
 
$$\delta_{2i}^{n+1} = \delta_{2i}^n + \Delta \delta_{2i}$$

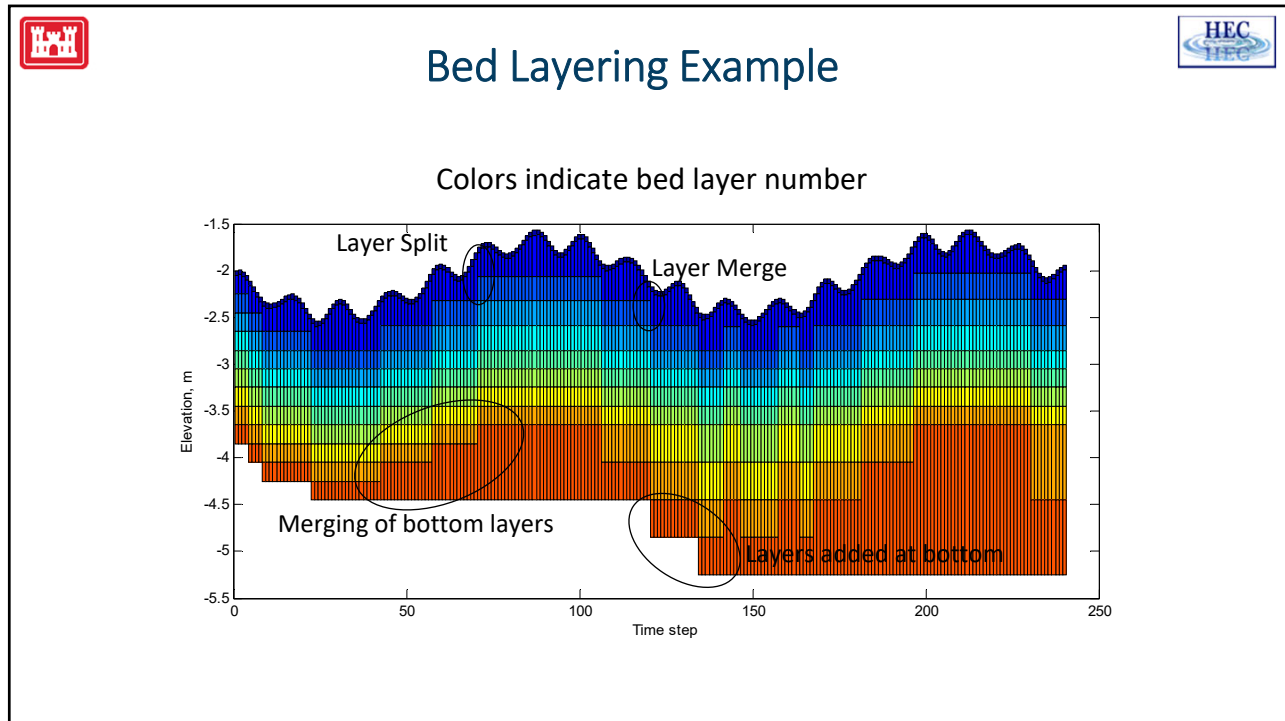
$$\Delta \delta_{2i} = \Delta z_{bi} - \Delta \delta_{1i}$$

$$\Delta \delta_{1i} = \delta_{1i}^{n+1} - \delta_{1i}^n$$

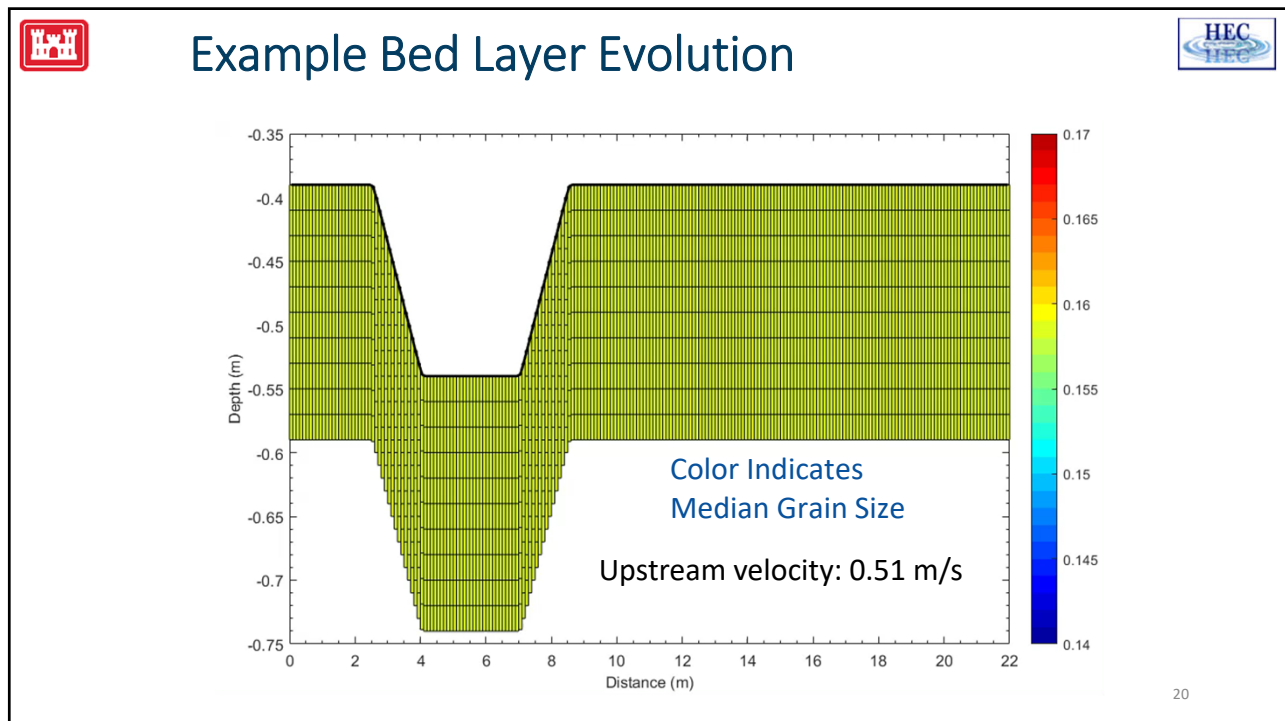


18

18



19



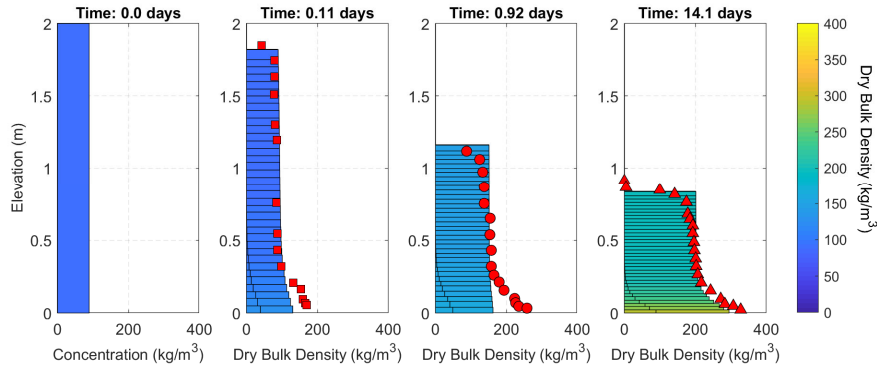
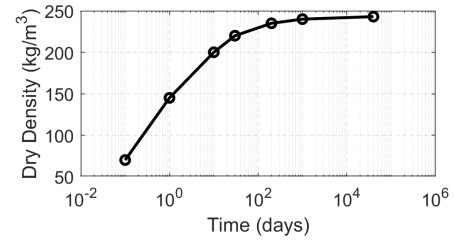
20



## Validation: Settling Column



- Lab Experiments by Toorman and Berlamont (1993)
- 3% Initial slurry concentration
- 3.5% Sand



21

21



## Variable Density Bed Sorting Model



1. Mass Exchange Rates  $\Delta M_{bk} = f_M \Delta t (D_{ik} - E_{ik} + S_{bk})$

2. Bed Change  $\Delta z_{bk} = \frac{\Delta M_{bk}}{(1 - \phi_b) \rho_{sk}}$   $\Delta z_b = \sum_k \Delta z_{bk}$   $\Delta z_{bk}^D = -\frac{f_M \Delta t E_{ik}^{SS}}{(1 - \phi_b) \rho_{sk}}$   $\Delta z_{bk}^W = \Delta z_{bk} - \Delta z_{bk}^D$

3. Grain Mass Concentrations  $m_{1k}^{n+1} = \frac{\Delta M_{bk} + m_{1k}^n \delta_1^n - m_{*k}^n \Delta \delta_2}{\delta_1^{n+1}}$   $m_{2k}^{n+1} = \frac{m_{2k}^n \delta_2^n + m_{*ki}^n \Delta \delta_2}{\delta_2^{n+1}}$

4. Bulk Densities  $\rho_{dj}^{n+1} = \sum_k m_{jk}^{n+1}$  for  $j = 1, 2$   $m_{*k} = \begin{cases} m_{1k} & \text{for } \Delta \delta_2 \geq 0 \\ m_{2k} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$

5. Grain Mass Fractions  $f_{jk}^{n+1} = \frac{m_{jk}^{n+1}}{\rho_{dj}^{n+1}}$   $\phi_b = \begin{cases} \phi_0 & \text{for } \Delta z_b > 0 \\ \phi_1 & \text{for } \Delta z_b \leq 0 \end{cases}$

22

22



## Computation Procedure

1. Solver Transport Equations
2. Compute Bed Change and Mass Exchange

$$\Delta M_{bk} = f_M \Delta t (D_{tk} - E_{tk} + S_{bk}) \quad \Delta z_b = \frac{1}{1 - \phi_b} \sum_k \frac{\Delta M_{bk}}{\rho_{sk}}$$

3. Fractions and Dry Density

$$m_{1k}^{n+1} = \frac{\Delta M_{bk} + m_{1k}^n \delta_1^n - m_{*k}^n \Delta \delta_2}{\delta_1^{n+1}} \quad \rho_{d1} = \sum_k m_{1k} \quad f_{1k} = \frac{m_{1k}}{\rho_{d1}}$$

4. Check convergence and repeat
5. Compute second layer

$$m_{2k}^{n+1} = \frac{m_{2k}^n \delta_2^n + m_{*k}^n \Delta \delta_2}{\delta_2^{n+1}} \quad \rho_{d2} = \sum_k m_{2k}$$

23

23



## Implicit Weighting Factor

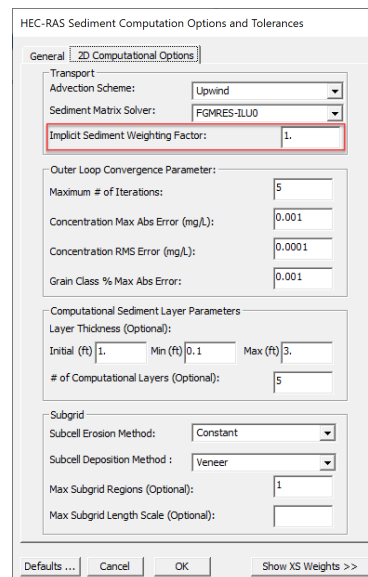
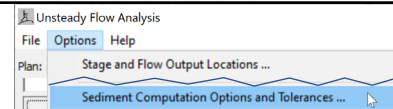
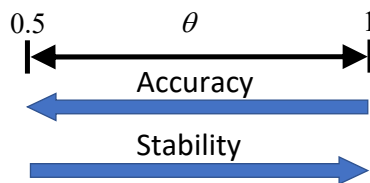
- Temporal Weighting  $C_{ik}^{n+\theta} = (1 - \theta)C_{ik}^n + \theta C_{ik}^{n+1}$

$\theta$ : Implicit weighting factor  $0.5 \leq \theta \leq 1$

$\theta = 1$ : Fully implicit

$\theta = 0.5$ : Fully implicit

- Advection-Diffusion Terms Only
- Erosion and Deposition Fully Implicit



24

24



## Convergence Parameters

- Maximum number of iterations

$$m: \text{Iteration number} \quad m \leq M_{\max} = [0, 20]$$

- Concentration Max Abs Error

$$E_{MAE}^C = \max |C_{tk,i}^{m+1} - C_{tk,i}^m| < T_{MAE}^C = [0.0001, 0.01] \text{ mg/L}$$

- Concentration Root Mean Squared Error

$$E_{RMSE}^C = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (C_{tk,i}^{m+1} - C_{tk,i}^m)^2} < T_{RMSE}^C = [0.00001, 0.001] \text{ mg/L}$$

- Grain Class % Max Absolute Error

$$E_{MAE}^D = \max |f_{lk,i}^{m+1} - f_{lk,i}^m| < T_{MAE}^D = [0.001, 0.01] \%$$



25

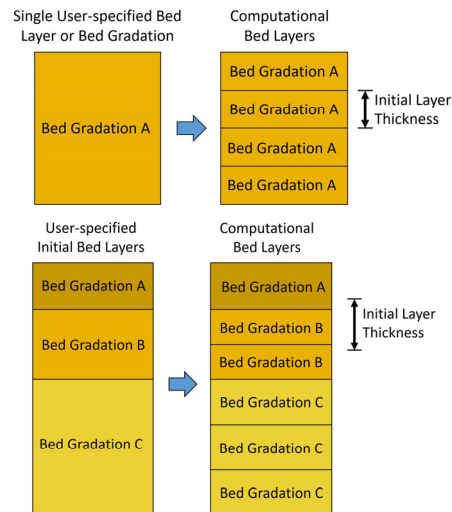
25



## Computational Sediment Bed Layers




### Initial Bed Layer Thickness




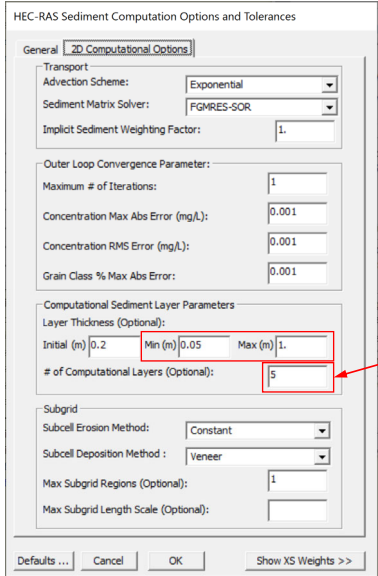
26

26

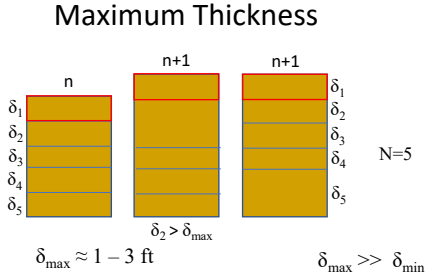


## Computational Sediment Bed Layers

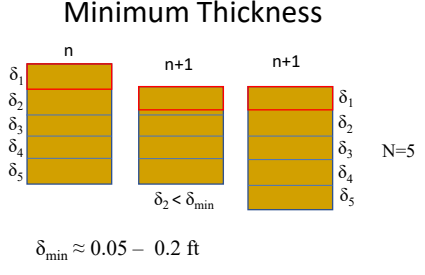




### Maximum Thickness




### Minimum Thickness




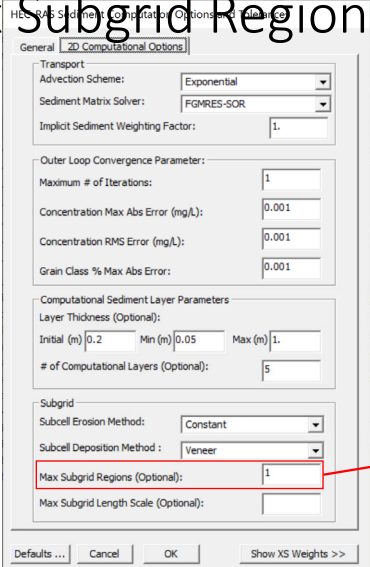
27

27



## Max Subgrid Regions





Hydrodynamic property tables can have a lot of sub regions per cell (e.g. 30)

Way more than you need for sediment

N=1 → standard 2D model (no subgrid) – but still sub-grid hydrodynamics, and still tracks partially wet and dry (e.g. sheet and splash erosion on dry hydraulic on wet)

Subdivides larger cells more

28

28



## Non-Newtonian Modeling



- Complexity ↓
- Goal: Provide users with different modelling approaches with different levels of complexity
  - 1. Constant user-specified total-load concentration
  - 2. Total-load concentration time-series (spatially constant) (Not implemented yet)
  - 3. Representative grain class, spatially variable concentration, and fixed bed
  - 4. Representative grain class, spatially variable concentration, and movable bed
  - 5. Multiple grain classes, spatially variable concentration, and movable bed

29

29



## Non-Newtonian Flow Equation



### Continuity Equation

$$\frac{\partial h}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (h\mathbf{U}) = q - \frac{\partial z_b}{\partial t}$$

### Momentum Equation:

$$\underbrace{\frac{\partial \mathbf{U}}{\partial t}}_{\text{Temporal}} + \underbrace{(\mathbf{U} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{U}}_{\text{Advection}} + \underbrace{f_c \mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{U}}_{\text{Coriolis}} = -g \cos^2 \varphi \left( \underbrace{\nabla z_s}_{\text{Pressure gradient}} + \underbrace{\frac{h}{2\rho} \nabla \rho}_{\text{Density gradient}} \right) + \underbrace{\frac{1}{h} \nabla \cdot (\mathbf{v}_i h \nabla \mathbf{U})}_{\text{Diffusion}} - \underbrace{\frac{\tau_b \cos \psi}{\rho R \cos \varphi}}_{\text{Bottom Stress}} + \underbrace{\frac{\tau_s}{\rho h}}_{\text{Wind Stress}} + \underbrace{\frac{\rho_0 - \rho}{\rho h} \frac{\partial z_b}{\partial t}}_{\text{Bed change}}$$

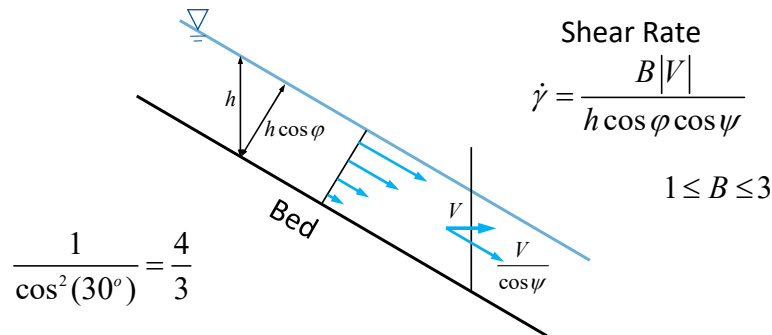
$$\tan \varphi = |\nabla z_s| \quad \tan \psi = \frac{\mathbf{V} \cdot \nabla z_s}{|\mathbf{V}|}$$

30

30



## Slope Corrections



Model limitation:

- Hydraulic property tables computed with flat water surface

31

31



## Slope Corrections



- Flow direction not always follows water surface slope
- Hegarten and Robl (2015) propose using surface or bed slope
- A more robust method is implemented with a slope limiter:

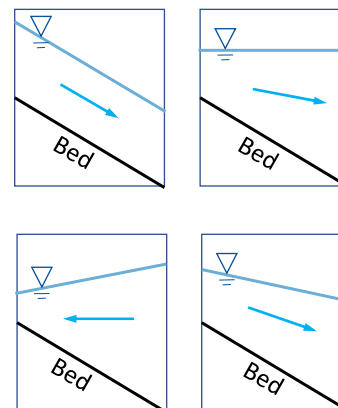
$$\tan \varphi = |\phi(\nabla z_b, \nabla \eta)|$$

$$\tan \psi = \frac{V \cdot \phi(\nabla z_b, \nabla \eta)}{|V|}$$

$$\phi(a, b) = \text{slope limiter}$$

Tests show that the Minmod Slope Limiter works well

### Possible Conditions



32

32





## Formulations



- Mixture density  $\rho = C_{tV} (\bar{\rho}_s - \rho_w) + \rho_w$
- Volume concentrations  $C_{tkV} \rho_{sk} = C_{tk} \quad C_{tV} \bar{\rho}_s = C_t$
- Volume fractions  $\hat{f}_{0k} = C_{tkV} / C_{tV}$
- Volume-average grain density  $\bar{\rho}_s = \sum_k \hat{f}_{0k} \rho_{sk}$
- Volume-average grain diameter  $\bar{d} = \sum_k \hat{f}_{0k} d_k$

33

33



## Transport Limiters



- Total-load

$$\hat{q}_{tk}^* = q_{tk}^* \min\left(\frac{C_{t,\max}}{C_{t^*}}, 1\right)$$

$$C_{t^*} = \frac{1}{Uh} \sum_k f_{1k} q_{tk}^*$$

$$q_{tk^*} = Uh C_{t^*}$$

- Suspended-load

$$\hat{q}_{sk}^* = q_{sk}^* \min\left(\frac{C_{s,\max}}{C_{s^*}}, 1\right)$$

$$C_{s^*} = \frac{1}{Uh} \sum_k f_{1k} q_{sk}^*$$

$$q_{sk^*} = Uh C_{s^*}$$

- Bed-load

$$\hat{q}_{bk}^* = q_{bk}^* \min\left(\frac{c_{b,\max}}{c_{b^*}}, 1\right)$$

$$c_{bk^*} = \frac{q_{bk^*}}{u_{bk} \delta_{bk}} \quad c_{b^*} = \sum_k c_{bk^*}$$

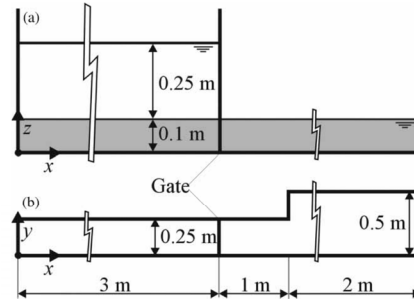
34

34



## Validation

- Lab dam break experiment at Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL)
- Gate opening:  $< 0.1$  s
- Median diameter: 1.72 mm
- Bed layer thickness: 10 cm
- Froude number:  $< 3.8$



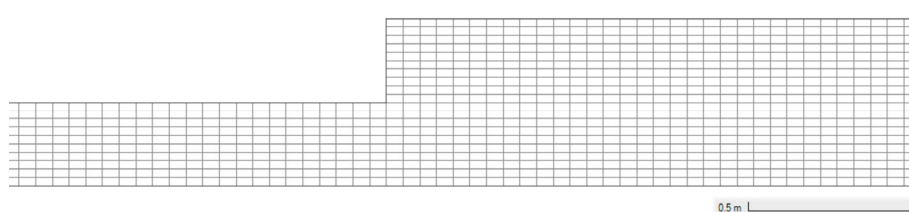
35

35



## Model Setup

- Resolution: 5 x 2.5 cm
- Manning's n:  $0.02 \text{ s/m}^{1/3}$
- Single grain class
- Diameter: 1.72 mm
- Transport potential: Wu et al.
- Fall velocity: Soulsby
- Hindered settling: Richardson and Zaki

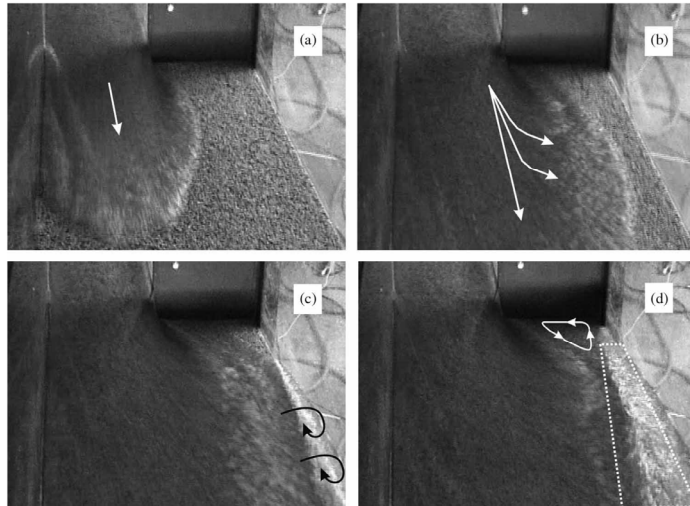


36

36



# Results

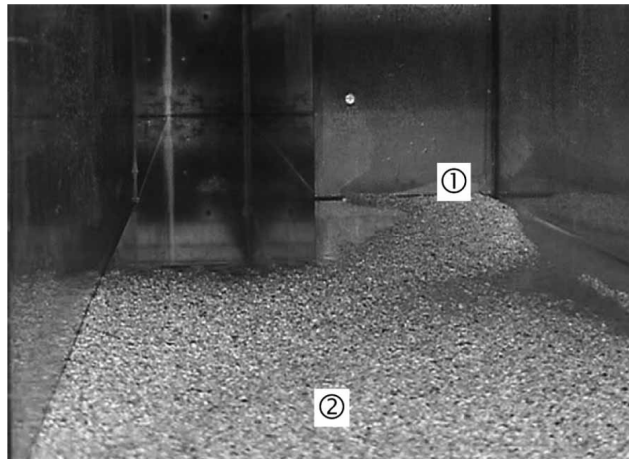


37

37

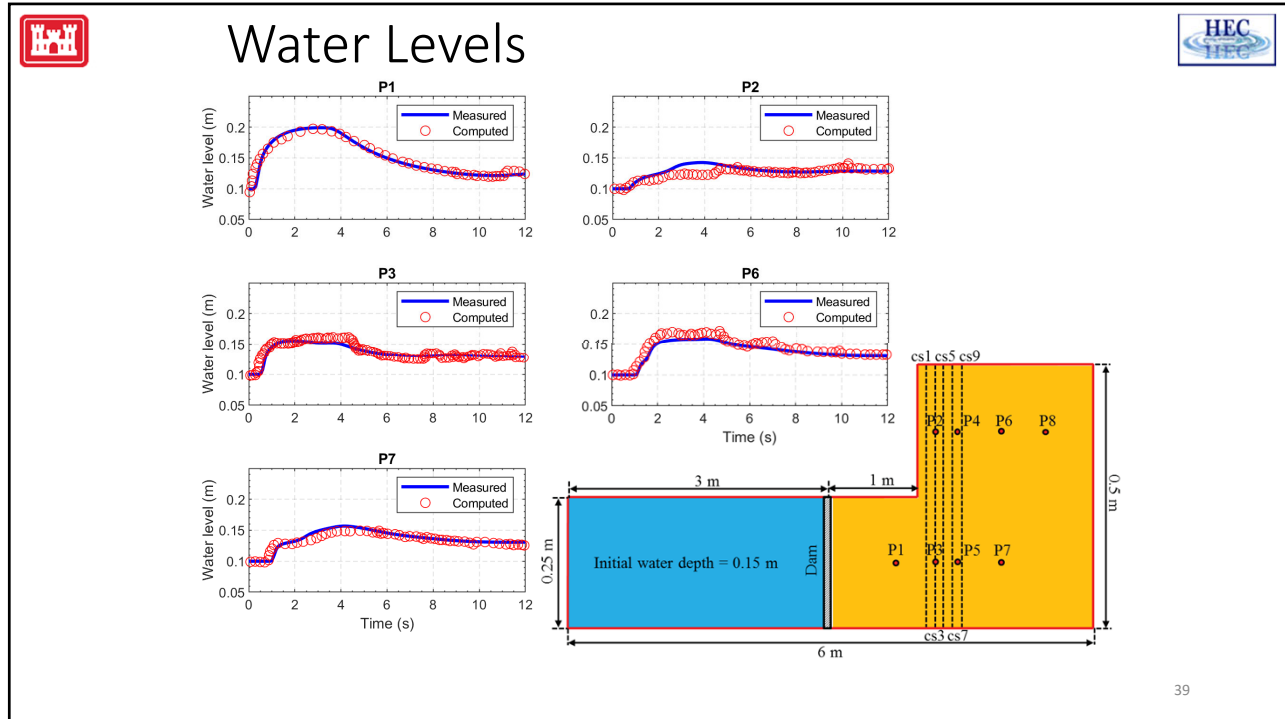


# Lab Result

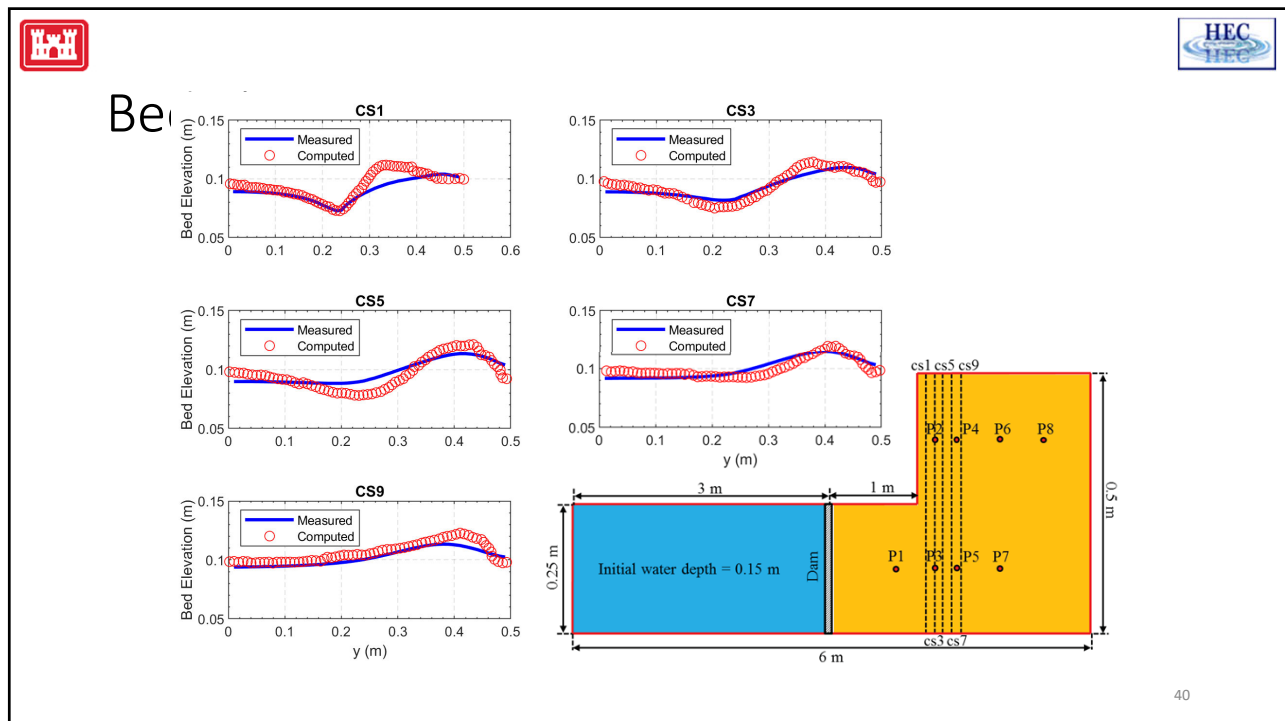


38

38



39



40

# Thank You!

HEC-RAS Website:

<https://www.hec.usace.army.mil/software/hecras/>

Online Documentation:

<https://www.hec.usace.army.mil/confluence/rasdocs>



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®



41