

Dear author,

I consider your manuscript should be published if you include the revisions I mention here below (that are based on the two referee reports).

Major comments:

- A section “Conclusion” summarizing the main points of the paper is missing; I recommend to keep only the discussions in section 5 (that should be renamed “5 Discussions”) and add a new section “7 Conclusions” at the end of the manuscript
- The fact that the manuscript is not meant to be an end-to-end (E2E) paper but a presentation of the Fortran recoding of Ecopath with Ecosim (EwE-F) should be stated more clearly in the introduction and in the conclusion.
- The sentences “The availability of numerous ready-to-use HTL models built with EwE in various aquatic ecosystems makes it a strong candidate as the HTL model in coupling schemes. In situations where an EwE model is available, the development of a integrated approach would only require minimal work concerning the HTL model and remove the burden from starting from scratch.” does not sound right to me. Something like “Numerous ready-to-use HTL models built with EwE for various aquatic ecosystems are available; the development of coupled integrated applications based on these HTL models would only require minimal modifications in these models and remove the burden from starting from scratch.” sounds better to me.
- I think that a summary of your response to referee #1 comment (9) should be added in 5.2
- I think that a summary of your response to referee #1 comment (10) should be added in 5.2
- Given the referee #2 comment (F) and your response, I think a reference to the EwE-F manual could be added in the text.
- Referee #2 comment (G), second issue: I do not understand your response. I think the referee writes that the Northern Adriatic model offers an opportunity to compare an *uncoupled EwE* study to an *uncoupled EwE-F* study. In your reply, you mention that this comparison is included in Fig. 6. But then in the text you write “*uncoupled EwE* and *coupled EwE-F* model results (Figure 6)” and in Figure 6 legend, you write “*coupled* (black lines) model versus simulations of *uncoupled EwE*”, which reads like “*coupled EwE ... versus ... uncoupled EwE*” to me. Please make the text, the legend and your reply to referee #2 consistent.
- Your paragraph 5.1.3 seems to imply that spatial simulation capabilities are included in EwE-F, and this is not the case. I propose to rewrite the paragraph as follows: “Given the current experience with biogeochemical models coupled with hydrodynamic models e.g. Lazzari et al., 2012), explicit accounting for spatial variability is important for any assessment of marine ecosystem dynamics. Future efforts are required to add spatial simulation capabilities to EwE-F, either by implementing Ecospace in Fortran or by direct integration of Ecosim-F in a spatially explicit coupled hydrodynamic -biogeochemical model. This planned future work could lead EwE-F to play a substantial role in spatial simulations.

Minor comments:

- P.2, l. 27, please find another word than “published” in “400 scientific *publications* utilising EwE as a modelling tool have been *published*”
- P.8, l. 20: please change “Figs. Figure 2 and Figure 3” for “Figure 2 and Figure 3”
- P.10, l.28-30: I think the sentences “However, for our specific application, we decided to keep these values identical to the standalone biogeochemical model as it produced similar seasonal cycles observed in the standalone biogeochemical model except the missing second cycle in mesozooplankton (Figure 6). Considering that our research was not an idealised case study, our aim was to have plankton dynamics qualitatively comparable to the biogeochemical model, therefore, further fine-tuning was avoided.”

could be simplified in

“However, for our specific application, we decided to keep these values identical to the standalone biogeochemical model as it produced similar seasonal cycles observed in the standalone biogeochemical model except the missing second cycle in mesozooplankton (Figure 6) and as our aim was indeed to have plankton dynamics qualitatively comparable to the biogeochemical model.”

With best regards