

Interactive comment on “Direct N₂O₅ reactivity measurements at a polluted coastal site” by T. P. Riedel et al.

Anonymous Referee #3

Received and published: 30 January 2012

This is an interesting short observational paper describing N₂O₅ reactivity in a polluted coastal area. The observations show a large range in the value of the heterogeneous uptake coefficient for N₂O₅ (γ) onto the ambient submicron aerosol particles, stressing the importance of better understanding the dependence of γ on composition and atmospheric conditions. The observations back up the laboratory-observed "nitrate effect", which is a poisoning of the surface reactivity when large amounts of nitrate are present in the particles. At first thought, the concept that a coastal study would prove the nitrate effect exists in field data is surprising because one would have thought that chloride in the particles would provide a rapid sink for the hydrated intermediate. Thus, the finding that neglect of the chloride assists in bringing parameterizations for γ closer to the observations is surprising. However, it may be a reasonable explanation that the aerosol particles are not internally mixed

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and that the chloride is not in the proper sized particles to cause the full effect predicted by the parameterization. The authors then go on to discuss that the observed γ is still smaller than expected and speculate upon the possible role of organic matter in poisoning the surface. One should note that both of these effects (turning off the nitryl chloride channel and organic surface poisoning) lower γ . Thus, if one was to indicate that the organic effect were larger, one could possibly still allow the nitryl chloride channel to be active. Therefore, the question of the chloride effect and organic effects is not really disentangled by this analysis. As the authors indicate, further study is clearly indicated to resolve these important issues. In any case, the direct observation of the nitrate effect in field data is novel and an important finding.

Minor typographic problems:

p31913 Line 24: Typo on Finlayson-Pitts et al. Also p31915 Line 14

p31914 line 7: This equation assumes no diffusion to particle limitation, and thus is appropriate for submicron aerosol. This might be mentioned as a part of one of these sentences.

p31918 line 21: Missing period before "Neglecting..."

Interactive comment on Atmos. Chem. Phys. Discuss., 11, 31911, 2011.