

1        *Supplement of* **Quantifying black carbon light absorption**  
2        **enhancement by a novel statistical approach**

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21  
22 This SI contains five tables and nineteen figures.

23

## 24 **Uncertainty of $E_{abs}$ estimation**

25 The uncertainty of  $E_{abs}$  estimation depends on uncertainty propagation from MAE uncertainty,  
26 which can be calculated from (Harris, 2010):

$$27 \quad MAE_{Unc} = MAE \times \sqrt{\left(\frac{\sigma_{abs,Unc}}{\sigma_{abs}}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{EC_{Unc}}{EC}\right)^2} \quad S1$$

$$28 \quad E_{abs,Unc} = E_{abs} \times \sqrt{\left(\frac{MAE_{Unc}}{MAE}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{MAE_{p,Unc}}{MAE_p}\right)^2} \quad S2$$

29

## 30 **Descriptions of customized programs used in this study for data analysis and** 31 **visualization**

32 Several computer programs were developed to meet specific research purpose in this study. All  
33 the programs are based on Igor Pro (www.wavemetrics.com) that provides a friendly GUI. Brief  
34 descriptions are given below.

35

### 36 **MRS program (Igor Pro based)**

37 The program (Figure S15) is written in Igor Pro (WaveMetrics, Inc. Lake Oswego, OR, USA)  
38 to feasible MRS calculation via a user-friendly GUI. The MRS application is not limited in  
39 SOC estimation, but can also be extended to other applications (e.g.  $E_{abs}$  estimation) as long as  
40 a reliable tracer is available.

41 MRS calculation can be done by different temporal cycles (batch calculation): by year, by  
42 year&season, by season, by year&month, by month, by year&month&hour. Data filter is also  
43 available to calculate MRS on a specific subset of data.

44 The program is available from <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.

45

### 46 **Mie program and source code written in Igor Pro**

47 A computer program (Figure S16) written in Igor Pro (WaveMetrics, Inc. Lake Oswego, OR,  
48 USA) for Mie scattering calculation. Both BHMIE and BHCOAT (coated particles)  
49 algorithms(Bohren and Huffman, 1983) are included. The program is also capable of batch  
50 calculation for both algorithms. Available from <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.

51

## 52 **Aethalometer data processing program (Igor Pro based)**

53 This handy tool (Figure S17) can perform different corrections (e.g. Weingartner, Virkkula) on  
54 Aethalometer data. Raw Aethalometer data suffers from several artifacts including filter matrix  
55 effect (multiple scattering), loading effect (shadowing) and scattering effect. Careful  
56 corrections are needed for reporting light absorption coefficient from attenuation measurement.  
57 This Igor based program can directly import Aethalometer raw data and perform corrections  
58 (algorithm can be selected by user). Results can be exported to .csv files. Extra information  
59 including statistics of sensor voltage from each channel, sampling flow rate, etc are plotted for  
60 a quick QA/QC check. Available from <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.

61

## 62 **Histbox program (Igor Pro based)**

63 A handy tool (Figure S18) to generate histogram and box plots with many powerful features.  
64 Data can be sorted by different time scale and batch plotting is available. Available from  
65 <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.

66

## 67 **Scatter plot program**

68 Scatter plot (Figure S19) is a handy tool to maximize the efficiency of data visualization in  
69 atmospheric science. The program includes Deming, WODR and York algorithm for linear  
70 regression, which consider uncertainties in both X and Y, that is more realistic for atmospheric  
71 applications. It is Igor based, and packed with lots of useful features for data analysis and graph  
72 plotting, including batch plotting, data masking via GUI, color coding in Z axis, data filtering  
73 and grouping. Available from <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.

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Table S1. Comparison of Mass absorption efficiency (MAE) at various locations. For literature MAE values at different wavelengths rather than 550nm, an estimated MAE<sub>550</sub> is given in the brackets following equations given by Moosmuller et al. (2011) assuming AAE of 1.

Location	Type	Sampling Duration	Inlet	$\lambda$ (nm)	$\sigma_{\text{abs}}$ Instrument	EC determination protocol	$\sigma_{\text{abs}} \pm 1 \text{ S.D.}$ (Mm <sup>-1</sup> )	EC mass ( $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ )	estimated MAE <sub>p</sub> <sup>*</sup> (m <sup>2</sup> g <sup>-1</sup> )	observed MAE (m <sup>2</sup> g <sup>-1</sup> )		Reference
										arithmetic mean $\pm 1 \text{ S.D.}$	Gaussian fit	
Guangzhou, China	Suburban	2012.2-2013.1	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	550	AE	NIOSH_TOT	42.20±29.41	2.63±2.27	13*	19.02±6.60	16.16	This study
Shenzhen, China	Urban	2011.8-9	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	532	PAS	LII	25.4±19.0	4.0±3.1	/	6.5±0.5[6.29±0.48]	/	(Lan et al., 2013)
Xi'an, China	Urban	2012.12-2013.1	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	870	PAS	LII	/	8.8±7.3	7.17[11.34]	/	7.62[12.05]	(Wang et al., 2014)
Xi'an, China	Urban	2013.2	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	532	PAS	LII	/	/	/	14.6±5.6	12.7	(Wang et al., 2017)
Guangzhou, China	Urban	2004.10	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	532	PAS	NIOSH_TOT	91±60	7.1	7.7[7.44]	/	/	(Andreae et al., 2008)
Fresno, USA	Urban	2005.8-9	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	532	PAS	IMPROVE_A_TOR	5.06	1.01	/	6.1±2.5[5.9±2.42]	/	(Chow et al., 2009)
						NIOSH_TOT	/	0.58	/	9.3±2.4[8.99±2.32]	/	
T1, Mexico city, Mexico	Suburban	2006.3	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	870	PAS	NIOSH_TOT	/	/	/	9.2~9.7***[14.55~15.34]	/	(Doran et al., 2007)
Pasadena, USA	Urban	2010.5-6	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	532	AM	NIOSH_TOT	3.8±3.4	0.6~0.7	5.7[5.51]	/	/	(Thompson et al., 2012)
Toronto, Canada	Urban	2006.12-2007.1	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	760	PAS	NIOSH_TOT	/	/	6.9~9.1** [9.53~12.57]	9.3~9.9[12.85~13.68]	/	(Knox et al., 2009)
Toronto, Canada	Suburban						3~6	0.10~0.14	/	30~43[42.6~61.06]	/	
Windsor, Canada	Urban	2007.8	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	781	PAS	LII	4.4±2.9	0.27±0.23	/	16±1[22.72±1.42]	/	(Chan et al., 2011)
Ottawa, Canada	Urban						26±17	1.7±0.9	/	15±3[21.3±4.26]	/	
Beijing, China	Rural	2005.3	/	550	AE	NIOSH_TOT	/	/	9.5	11.3	/	(Yang et al., 2009)
Montseny, Spin (Mediterranean)	Rural	2009.11-2010.10	PM <sub>10</sub>	637	MAAP	NIOSH_TOT	2.8±2.2	/	10.4[12.04]	/	/	(Pandolfi et al., 2011)
Jungfraujoeh, Switzerland (high alpine)	Rural	2007.2-3	/	637	MAAP	LII	/	/	/	10.2±3.2[11.81±3.71]	/	(Liu et al., 2010)
Lin'an, China	Rural	1999.11	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	550	PSAP	NIOSH_TOT	23±14	3.4±1.7	/	8.6±7.0	/	(Xu et al., 2002)
Jeju Island, Korea	Coastal Rural, (East China Sea)	2001.4	PM <sub>10</sub>	550	PSAP	NIOSH_TOT	/	/	/	12.6±2.6	/	(Chuang et al., 2003)
Maldives	Oceanic rural	1999.2-3	PM <sub>3</sub>	550	PSAP	EGA	62±34	2.5±1.4	6.6	8.1	/	(Mayol-Bracero et al., 2002)

\*Determined by Minimum R Squared method; \*\* Median values;

AE:Aethalometer ; PAS photo acoustic spectrometer; MAAP: Multi Angle Absorption Photometer; PSAP: particle soot absorption photometer; AM: albedo meter; LII: Laser induced incandescence

Table S2. Statistics of monthly MAE<sub>550nm</sub>

Month	95th	75th	50th	25th	5th	Mean	Max	Min	S.D.	N
Feb-2012	31.29	22.04	18.12	15.74	13.90	19.72	47.73	8.50	5.78	533
Mar-2012	28.33	19.80	17.48	15.92	13.77	18.78	45.56	10.98	4.92	663
Apr-2012	33.06	22.66	18.24	16.11	13.85	20.21	48.29	6.01	6.23	595
May-2012	33.74	23.35	19.61	17.17	14.73	21.22	48.40	6.33	5.99	533
Jun-2012	39.73	27.17	21.76	18.72	15.04	23.70	49.07	5.62	7.37	333
Jul-2012	35.96	24.62	19.12	15.64	12.71	21.14	49.63	9.23	7.65	609
Aug-2012	42.94	27.99	22.01	16.24	12.55	23.50	49.95	9.75	8.98	556
Sep-2012	33.15	21.11	17.61	15.25	12.99	19.31	49.54	10.39	6.18	684
Oct-2012	20.72	15.84	13.95	12.60	11.18	14.70	34.09	7.34	3.21	715
Nov-2012	28.64	18.67	15.53	13.72	11.95	17.18	48.41	8.34	5.58	506
Dec-2012	29.92	19.32	15.74	13.67	11.78	17.39	48.73	9.33	5.86	591
Jan-2013	21.60	16.24	14.48	13.03	11.79	15.33	48.48	7.16	3.97	709

Table S3. Statistics of monthly AAE<sub>470-660</sub>

Month	95th	75th	50th	25th	5th	Mean	Max	Min	S.D.	N
Feb-2012	1.41	1.25	1.17	1.09	0.94	1.17	1.70	0.78	0.14	533
Mar-2012	1.31	1.17	1.08	1.00	0.92	1.09	1.45	0.68	0.12	663
Apr-2012	1.16	1.07	1.01	0.95	0.83	1.00	1.35	0.56	0.10	587
May-2012	1.11	1.03	0.99	0.93	0.85	0.98	1.21	0.50	0.09	530
Jun-2012	1.17	1.09	1.03	0.97	0.88	1.02	1.29	0.39	0.10	333
Jul-2012	1.19	1.09	1.03	0.97	0.84	1.03	1.38	0.47	0.11	604
Aug-2012	1.16	1.08	1.03	0.97	0.88	1.02	1.30	0.64	0.08	556
Sep-2012	1.21	1.11	1.04	0.98	0.90	1.05	1.37	0.68	0.10	684
Oct-2012	1.25	1.15	1.07	1.01	0.93	1.08	1.36	0.84	0.10	715
Nov-2012	1.22	1.14	1.09	1.03	0.97	1.09	1.45	0.88	0.08	506
Dec-2012	1.31	1.21	1.15	1.09	0.99	1.15	1.41	0.92	0.09	591
Jan-2013	1.36	1.25	1.17	1.11	1.00	1.18	1.63	0.90	0.11	709

Table S4. Statistics of monthly SSA

Month	95th	75th	50th	25th	5th	Mean	Max	Min	S.D.	N
Feb-2012	0.91	0.89	0.87	0.84	0.79	0.86	0.94	0.65	0.04	530
Mar-2012	0.91	0.89	0.86	0.83	0.77	0.85	0.95	0.42	0.05	660
Apr-2012	0.92	0.89	0.86	0.83	0.76	0.85	0.94	0.45	0.06	552
May-2012	0.92	0.90	0.87	0.83	0.74	0.85	0.94	0.45	0.06	532
Jun-2012	0.92	0.89	0.86	0.81	0.74	0.85	0.95	0.64	0.06	328
Jul-2012	0.91	0.87	0.83	0.79	0.71	0.83	0.95	0.57	0.06	602
Aug-2012	0.94	0.92	0.89	0.85	0.79	0.88	0.96	0.67	0.05	547
Sep-2012	0.94	0.91	0.88	0.84	0.75	0.87	0.96	0.55	0.06	682
Oct-2012	0.94	0.93	0.91	0.89	0.84	0.90	0.96	0.66	0.03	715
Nov-2012	0.91	0.89	0.87	0.83	0.75	0.85	0.94	0.18	0.06	506
Dec-2012	0.91	0.89	0.86	0.82	0.74	0.85	0.94	0.66	0.05	591
Jan-2013	0.91	0.89	0.87	0.85	0.79	0.86	0.93	0.64	0.04	709

Table S5. Statistics of monthly  $E_{\text{abs550}}$

Month	95th	75th	50th	25th	5th	Mean	Max	Min	S.D.	N
Feb-2012	2.24	1.57	1.29	1.12	0.99	1.41	3.41	0.61	0.41	533
Mar-2012	1.76	1.23	1.09	0.99	0.86	1.17	2.83	0.68	0.31	663
Apr-2012	2.45	1.68	1.35	1.19	1.03	1.50	3.58	0.44	0.46	595
May-2012	2.50	1.73	1.45	1.27	1.09	1.57	3.58	0.47	0.44	533
Jun-2012	2.74	1.87	1.50	1.29	1.04	1.63	3.38	0.39	0.51	333
Jul-2012	2.95	2.02	1.57	1.28	1.04	1.73	4.07	0.76	0.63	609
Aug-2012	3.61	2.35	1.85	1.36	1.05	1.97	4.20	0.82	0.75	556
Sep-2012	2.53	1.61	1.34	1.16	0.99	1.47	3.78	0.79	0.47	684
Oct-2012	1.87	1.43	1.26	1.14	1.01	1.32	3.07	0.66	0.29	715
Nov-2012	2.31	1.51	1.25	1.11	0.96	1.39	3.90	0.67	0.45	506
Dec-2012	2.54	1.64	1.33	1.16	1.00	1.47	4.13	0.79	0.50	591
Jan-2013	1.83	1.38	1.23	1.10	1.00	1.30	4.11	0.61	0.34	709



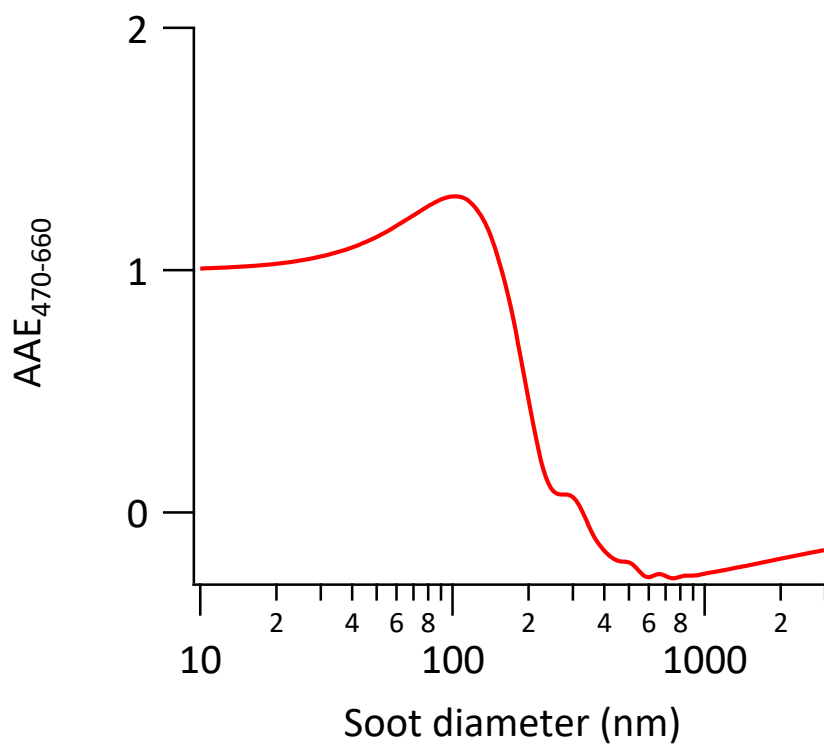


Figure S1. Mie simulated  $AAE_{470-660}$  of a bare soot particle as a function of diameter with a Refractive index of  $1.85 - 0.71i$ .

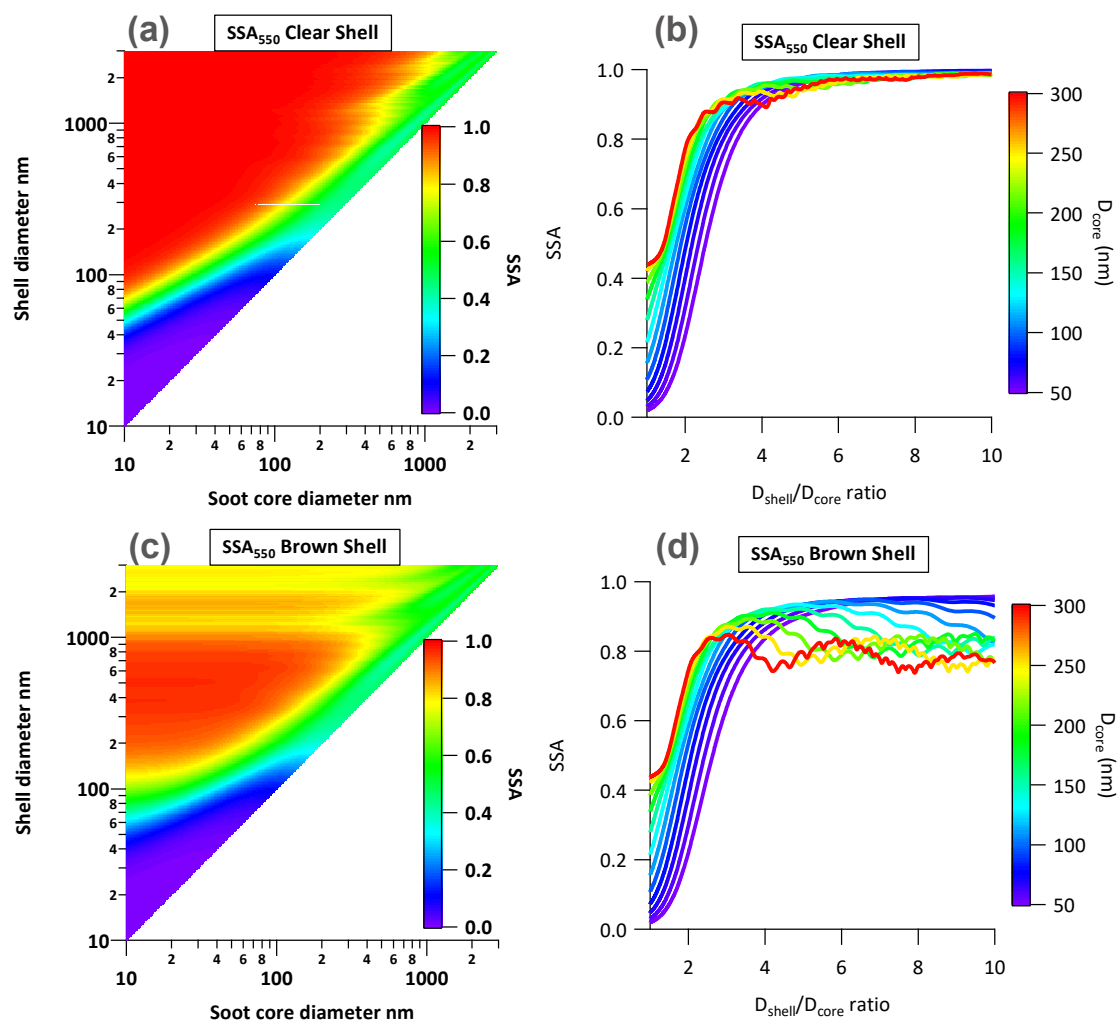


Figure S2. Mie simulated size dependency of soot particles SSA at wavelength 550 nm. (a) Combination of different shell (y axis) and core diameters (x axis). The color coding represents the SSA of a particle with specific core and shell size; (b) Cross-sections views of (a). The color coding represents different  $D_{core}$  in the range of 50 – 300 nm. (c) Combination of different shell (y axis) and core diameters (x axis). The color coding represents the  $E_{abs}$  of a particle with specific core and shell size; (d) Cross-sections views of (c). The color coding represents different diameters of soot core in the range of 50 – 300 nm.

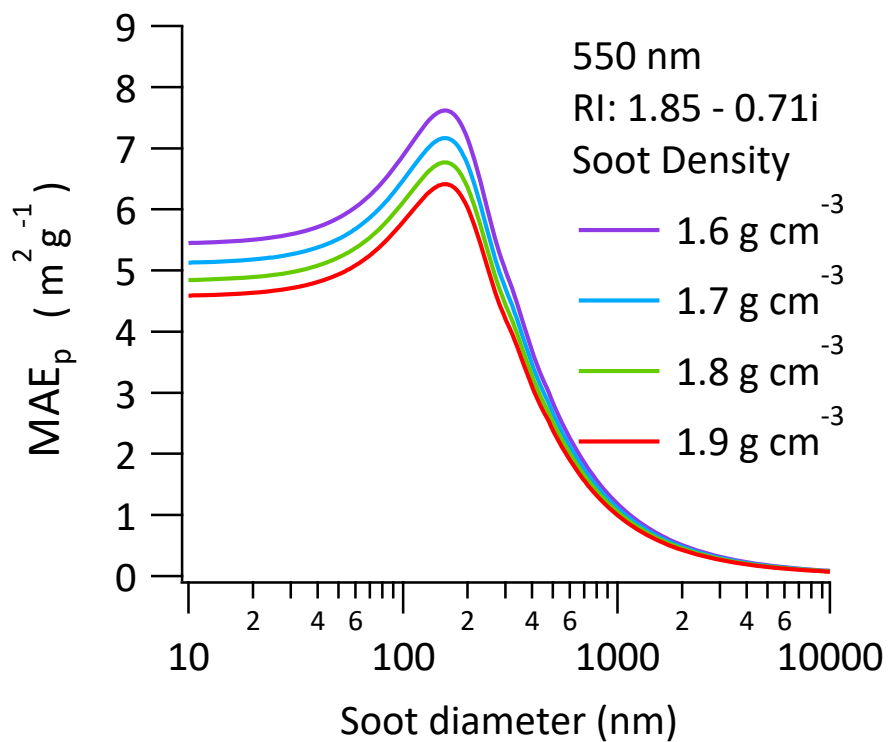


Figure S3. Mie simulated mass absorption efficiency (MAE<sub>p</sub>) of a bare soot particle as a function of diameter at a wavelength of 550nm. Refractive index is 1.85 – 0.71i and density varied from 1.6 to 1.9 g cm<sup>-3</sup>.

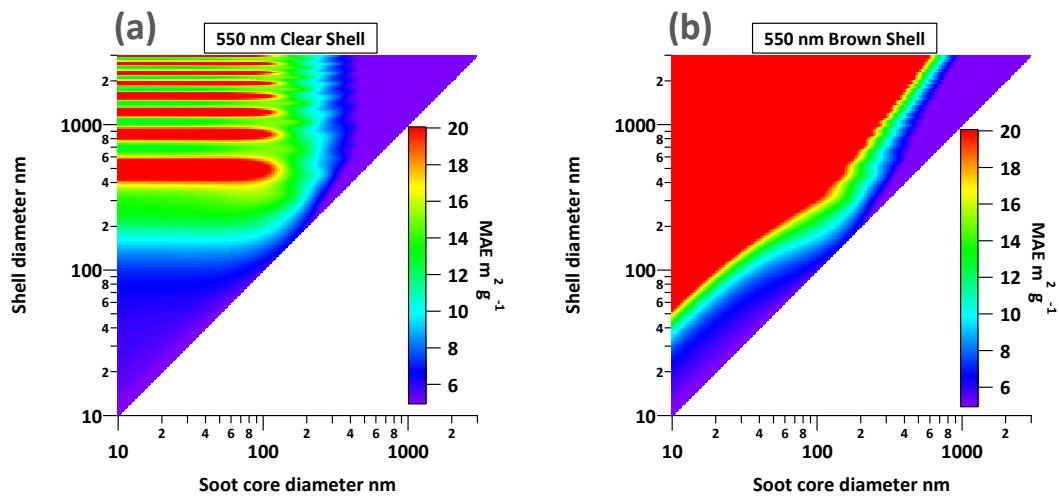


Figure S4 Mie simulated mass absorption efficiency (MAE) of a bare soot particle as a function of diameter at a wavelength of 550nm. Refractive index is  $1.85 - 0.71i$  and density is  $1.9 \text{ g cm}^{-3}$  for soot core. Refractive index for clear coating is 1.55. Refractive index for brown coating is wavelength dependent adopted from Lack and Cappa (Lack and Cappa, 2010).

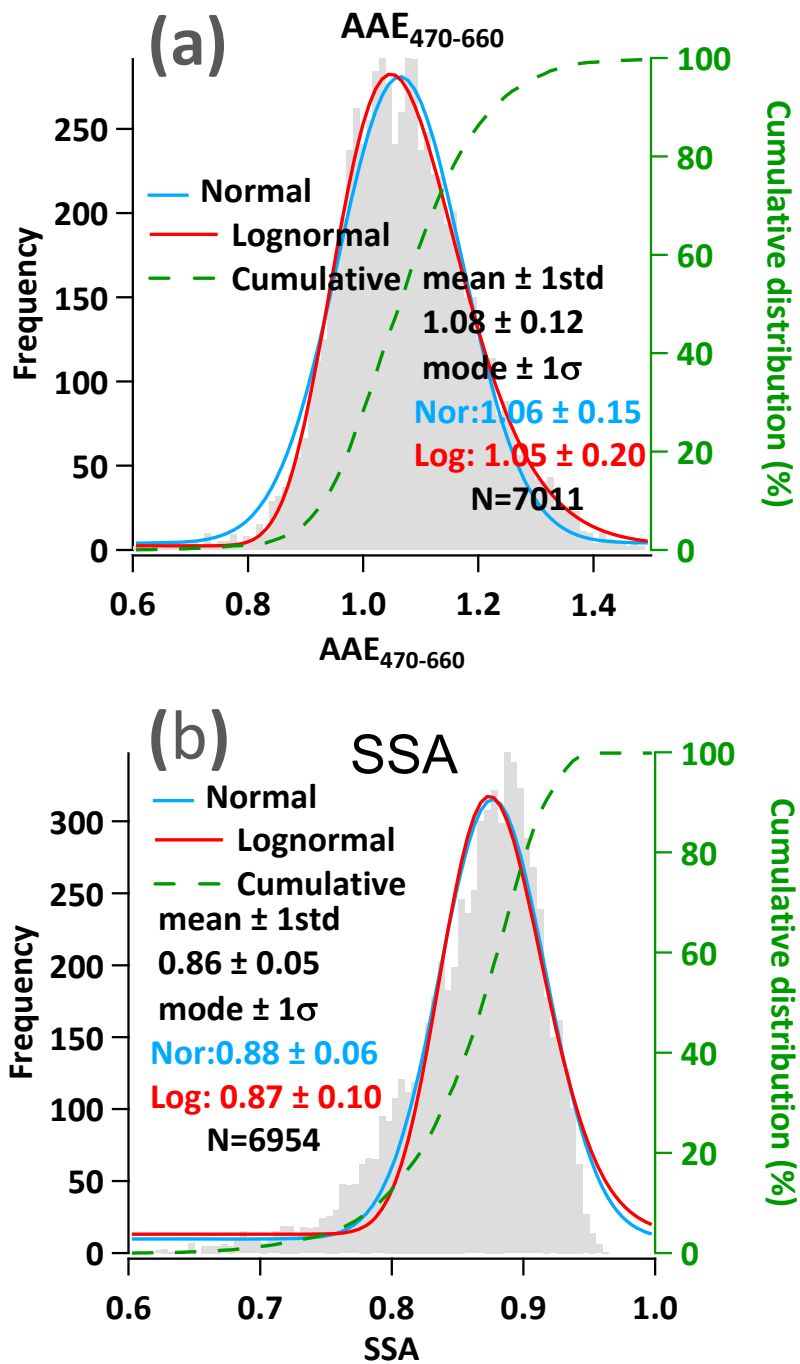
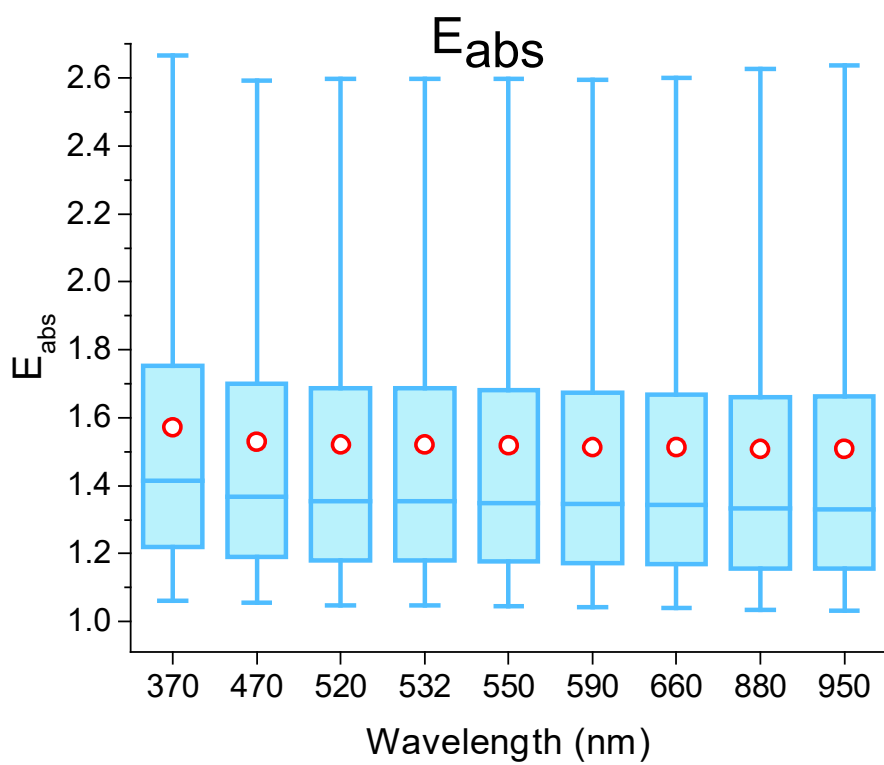


Figure S5. Measured annual statistics of AAE<sub>470-660</sub>, and SSA. (a) Annual frequency distribution of AAE at 550 nm. (b) Annual frequency distribution of SSA. The blue and red line represent normal and lognormal fitting curve respectively.



Wavelength (nm)	370	470	520	532	550	590	660	880	950
$E_{abs}$ mean	1.57	1.53	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.51	1.51	1.51	1.51
$E_{abs}$ S.D.	0.52	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.52	0.53	0.53

Figure S6. Spectrum annual average  $E_{abs}$  from 370 to 950 nm.

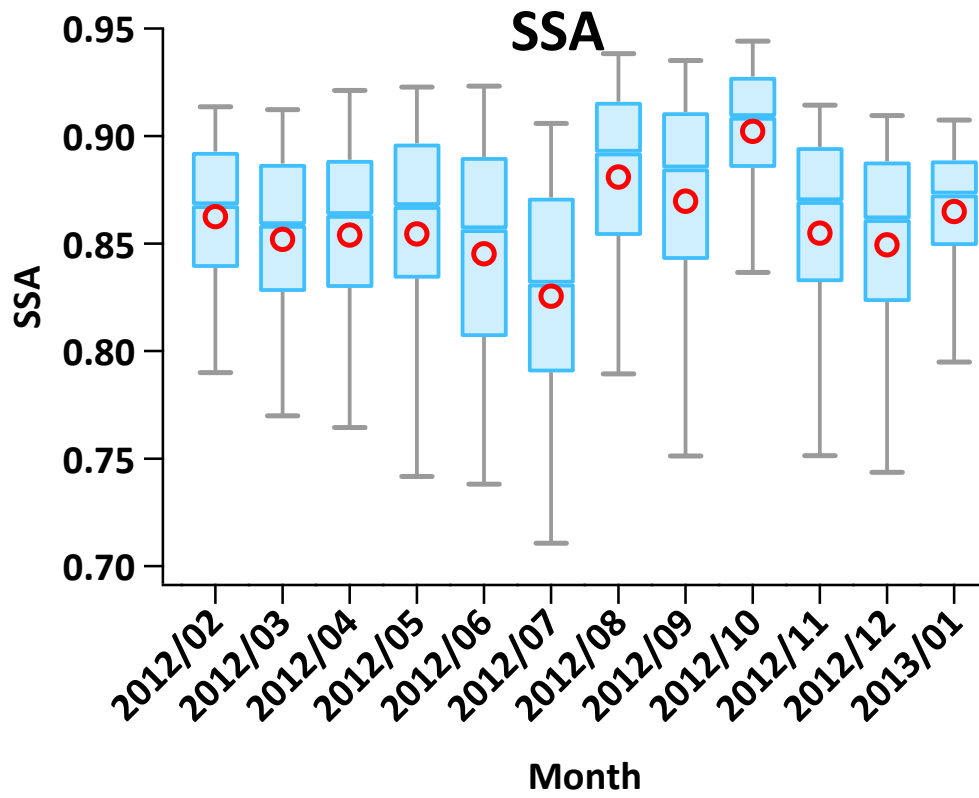


Figure S7. Measured monthly variations of SSA.

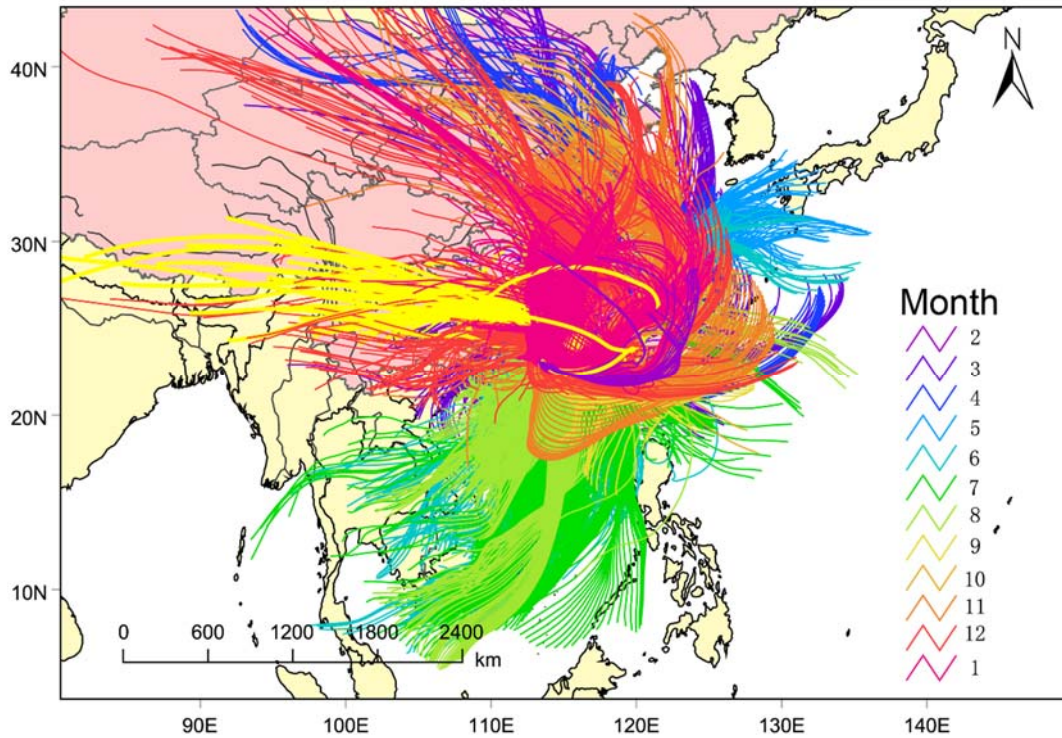


Figure S8. Hourly back trajectories for the past 72 hours calculated using NOAA's HYSPLIT model from Feb 2012 to Jan 2013. The color coding represents different months.

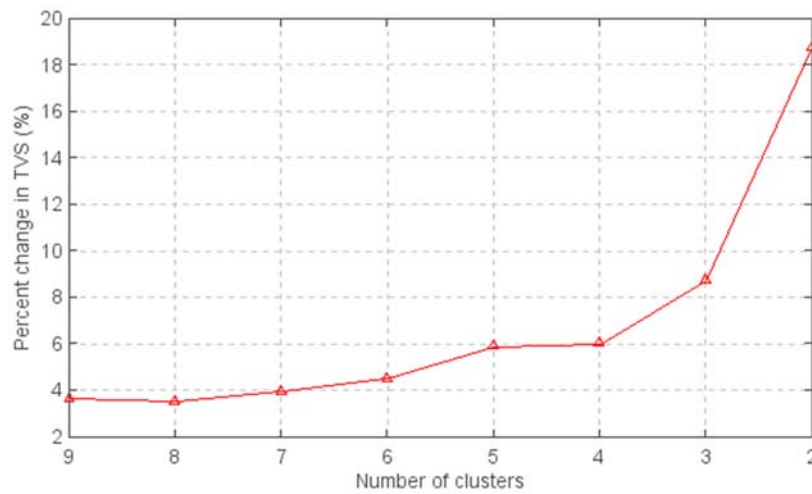


Figure S9. Total spatial variance (TSV) as a function of number of clusters in back trajectories clustering analysis.



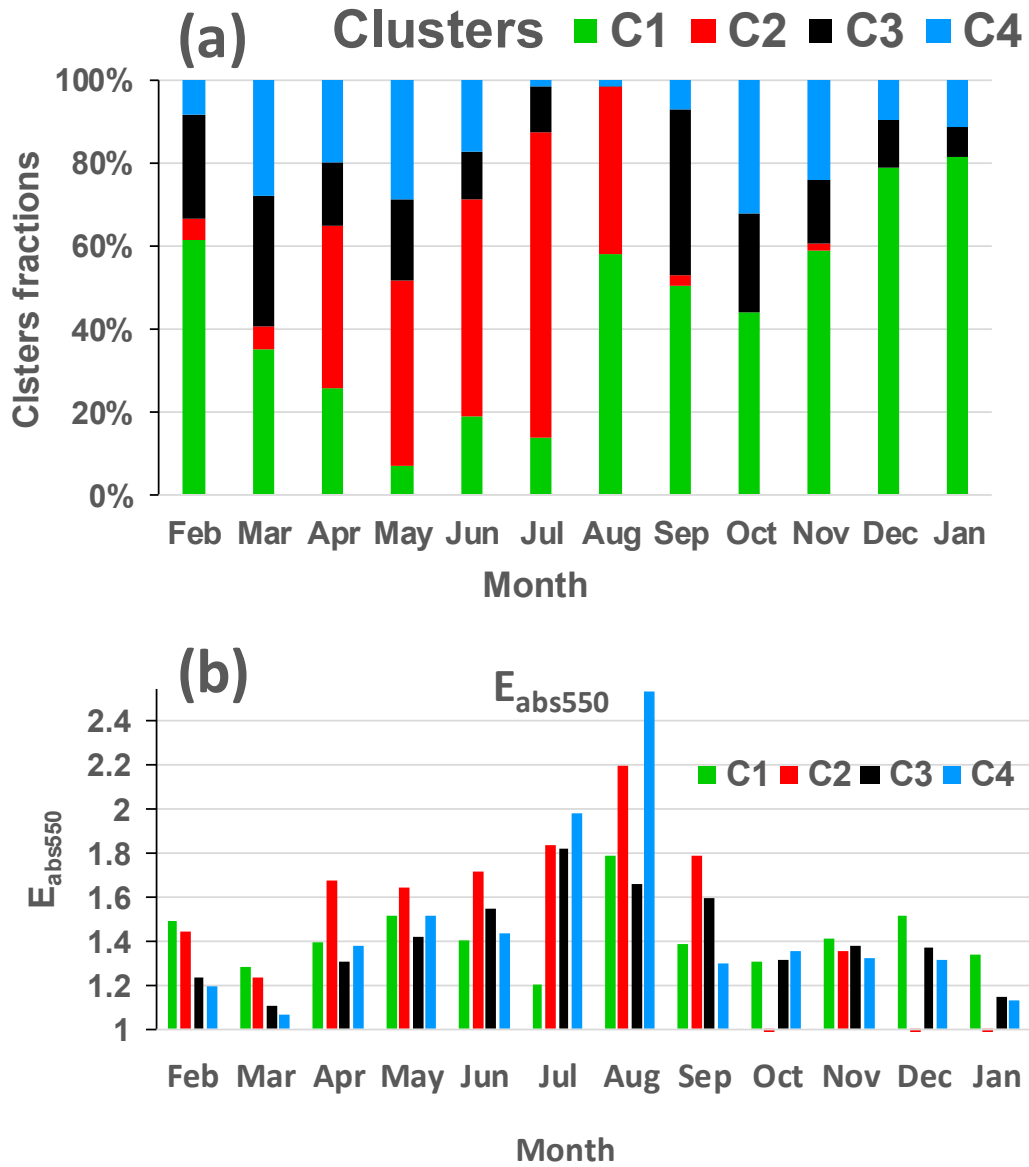


Figure S10. (a) Monthly contribution of each cluster. (b) Monthly  $E_{\text{abs550}}$  of each cluster.

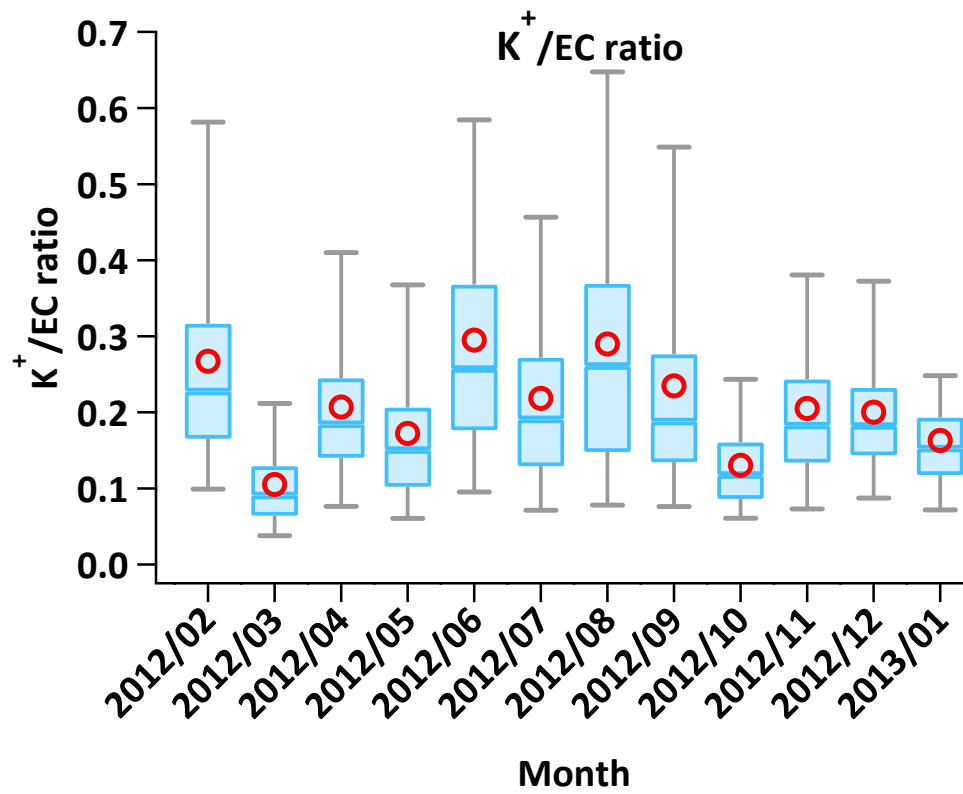


Figure S11. Monthly variations of K<sup>+</sup>/EC ratio from 2012 Feb to 2013 Jan at NC site.

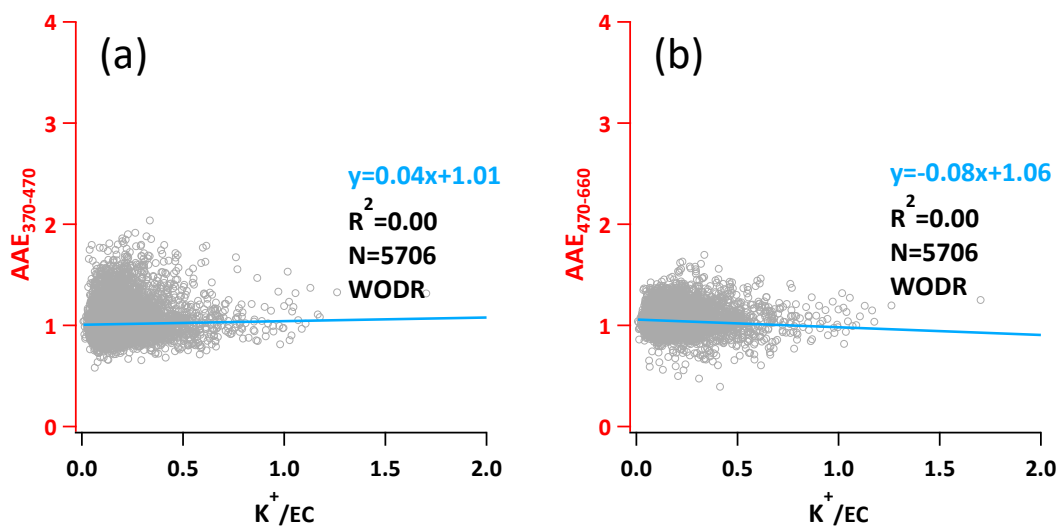


Figure S12. Correlations of AAE with  $K^+ / EC$  ratio (biomass burning indicator). (a) AAE from 370 – 470 nm. (b) AAE from 470 – 660 nm.

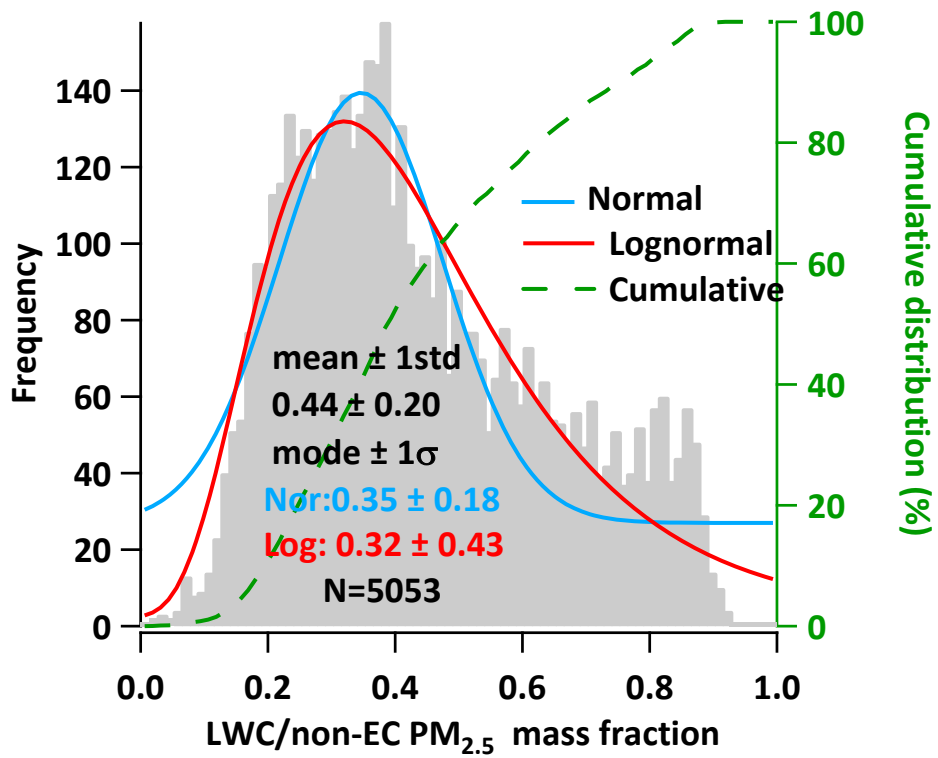


Figure S13. Annual frequency distribution of LWC/non-EC PM<sub>2.5</sub> mass fraction.

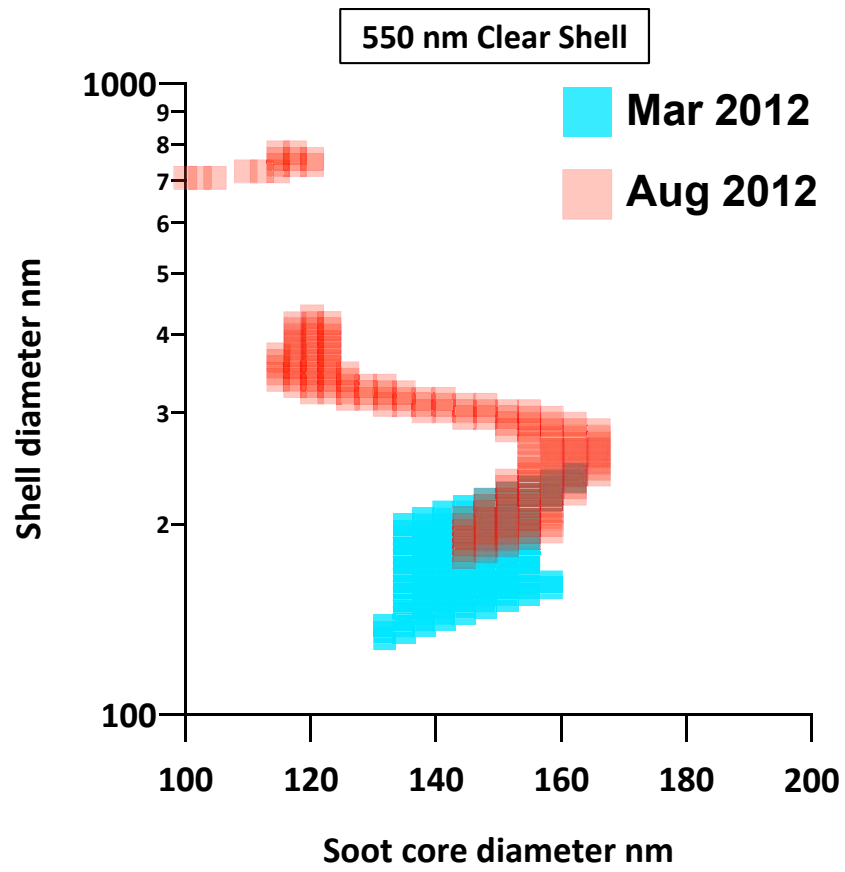


Figure S14. Size range of soot particles constrained by  $E_{\text{abs}}$  and  $AAE_{470-660}$  from measurements.

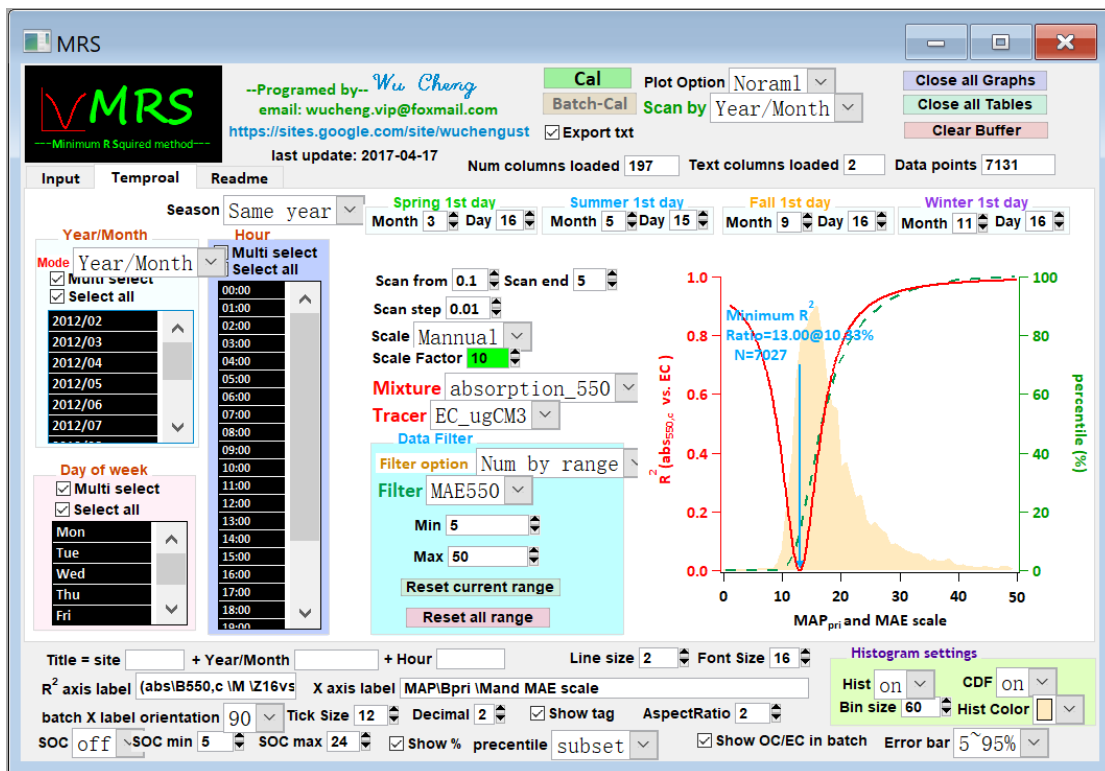
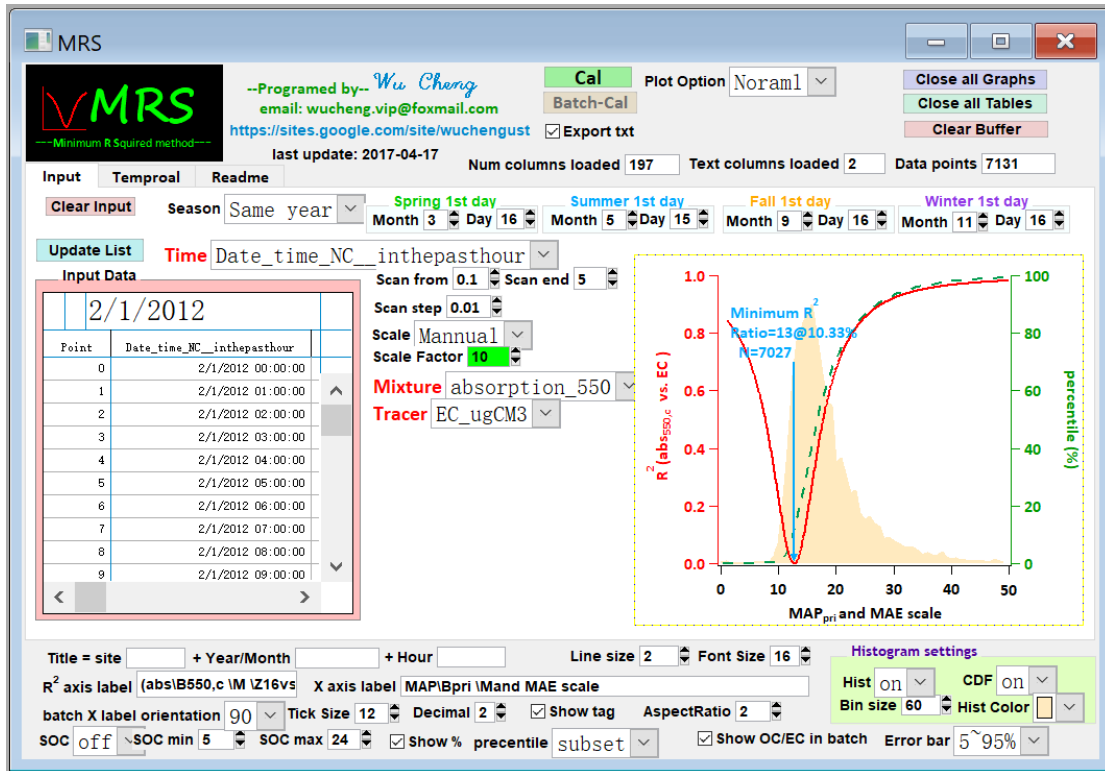


Figure S15. MRS program written in Igro Pro (WaveMetrics, Inc. Lake Oswego, OR, USA). Available from <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.

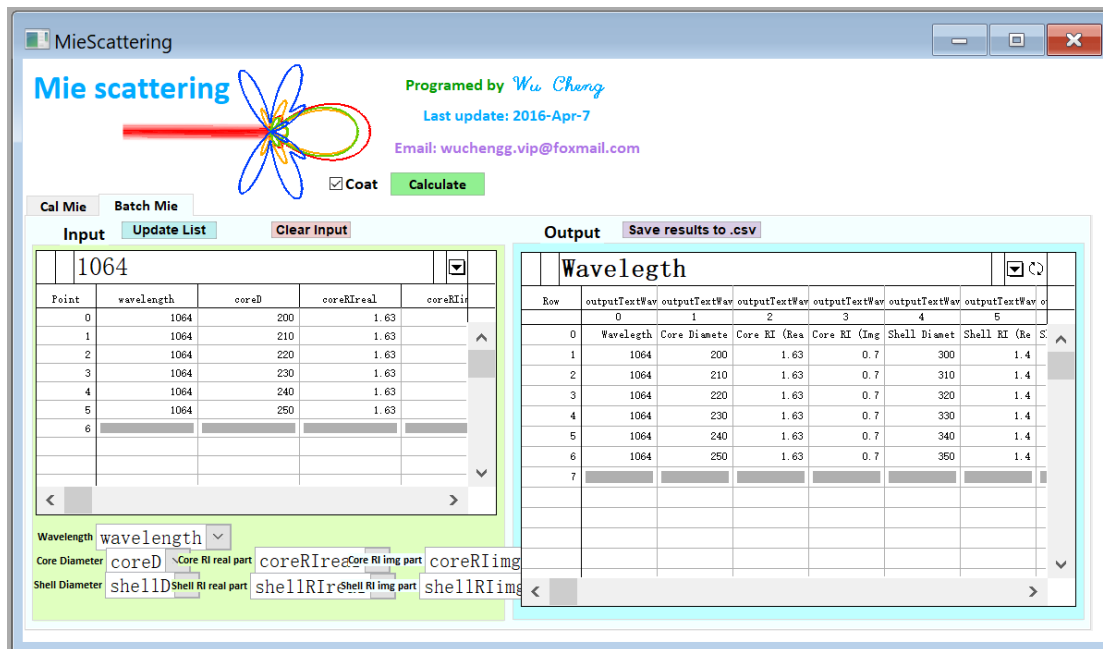
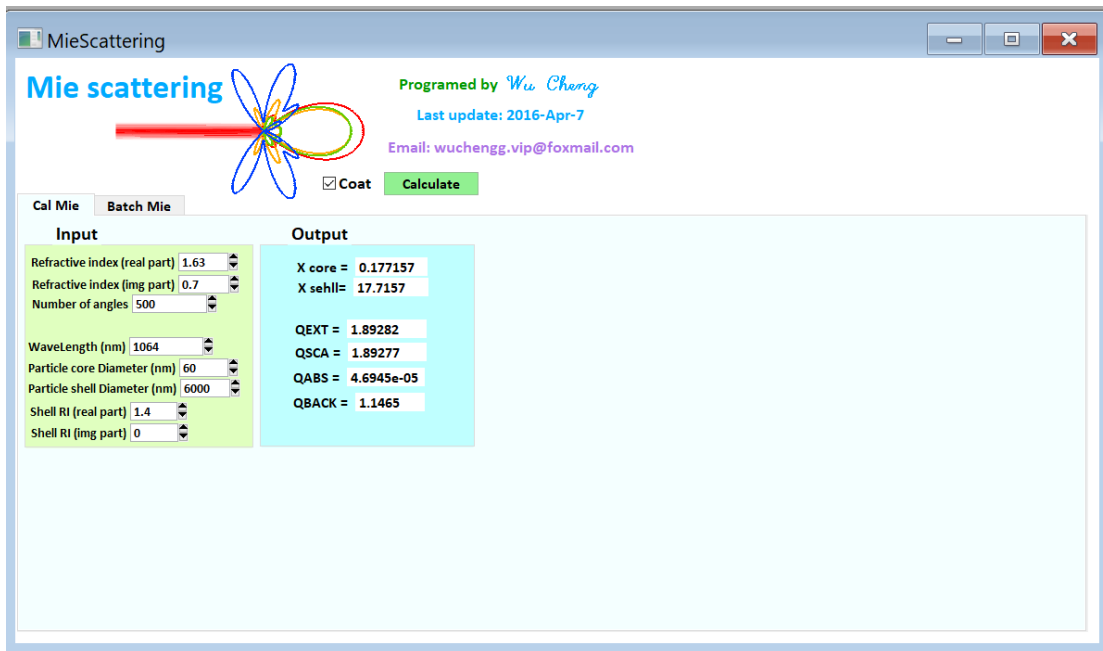


Figure S16. Mie program written in Igro Pro (WaveMetrics, Inc. Lake Oswego, OR, USA). Available from <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.

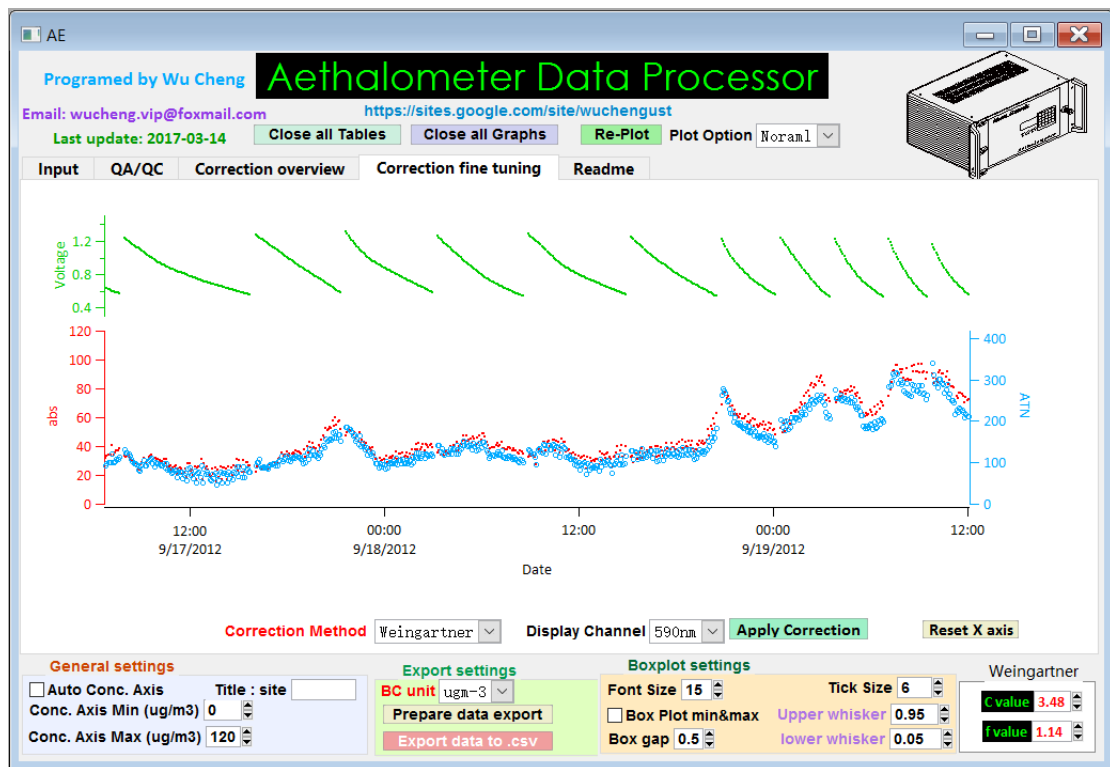
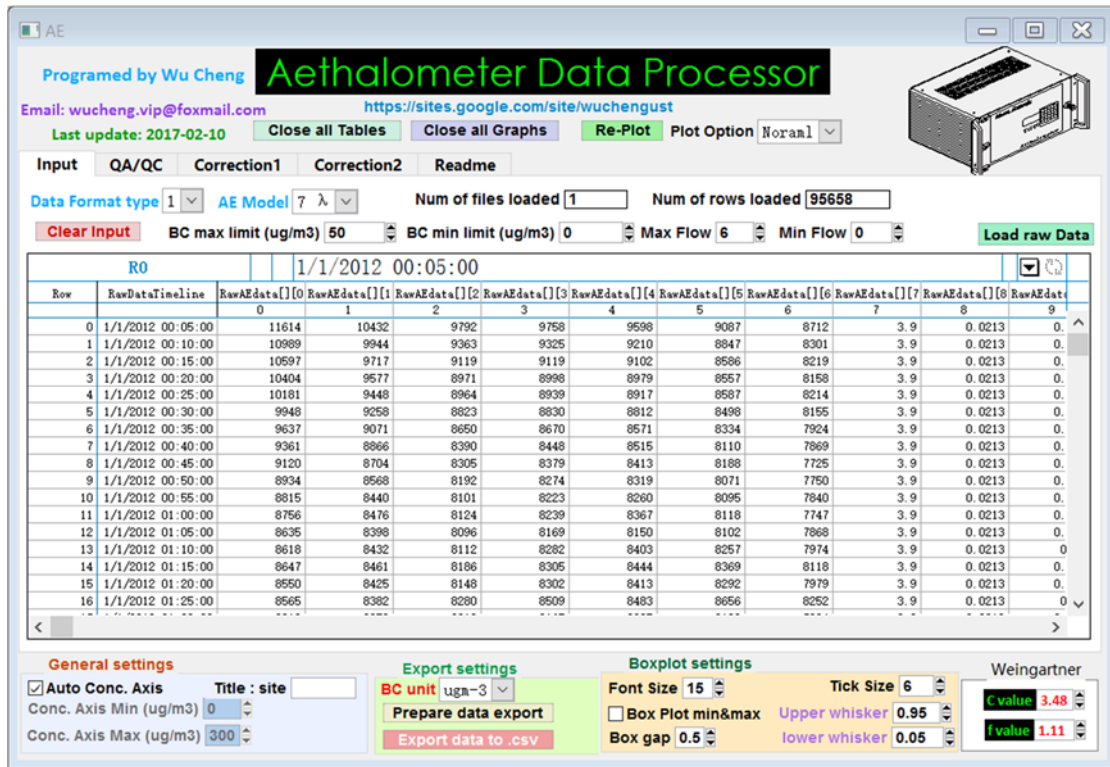


Figure S17. Aethalometer data processing program written in Igro Pro (WaveMetrics, Inc. Lake Oswego, OR, USA). Available from <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.



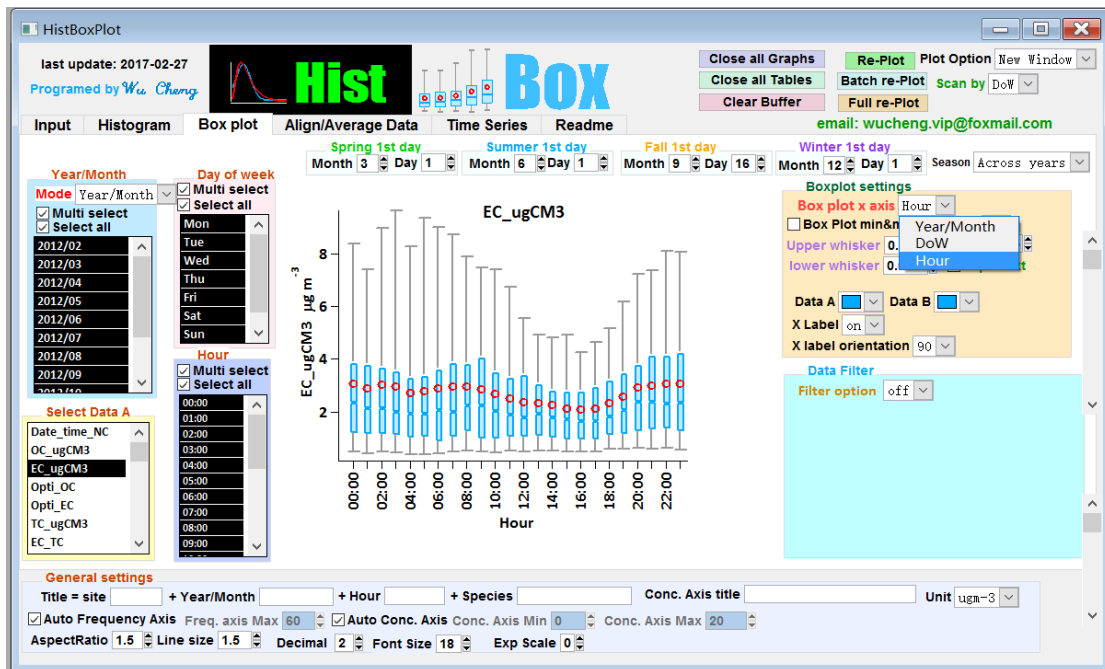
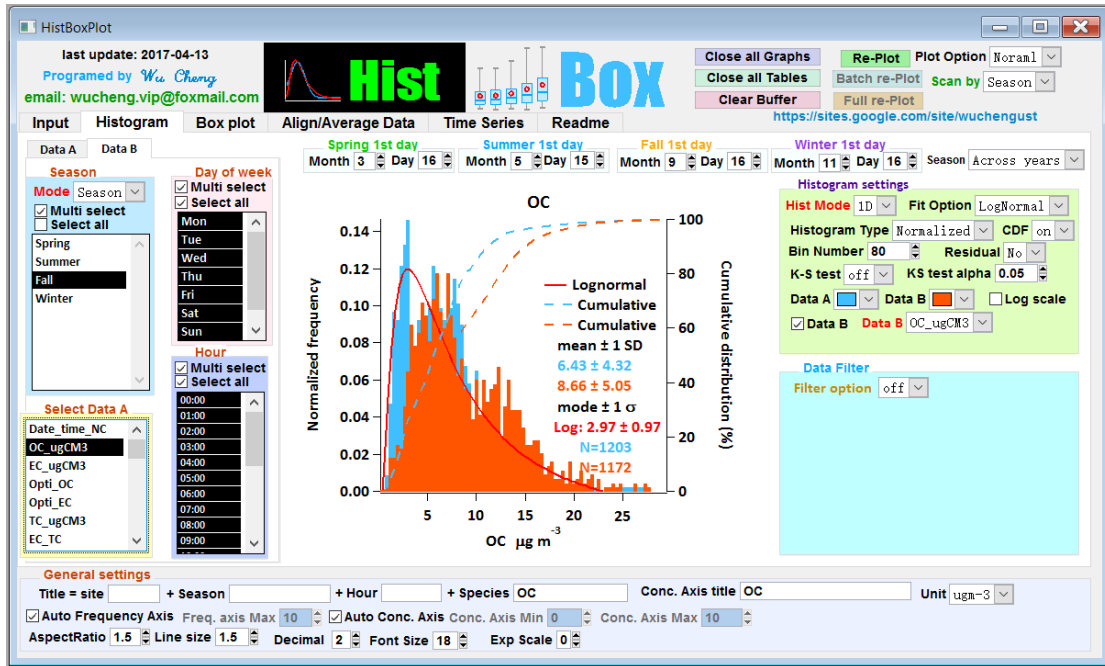


Figure S18. Histbox program written in Igró Pro (WaveMetrics, Inc. Lake Oswego, OR, USA). Available from <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.

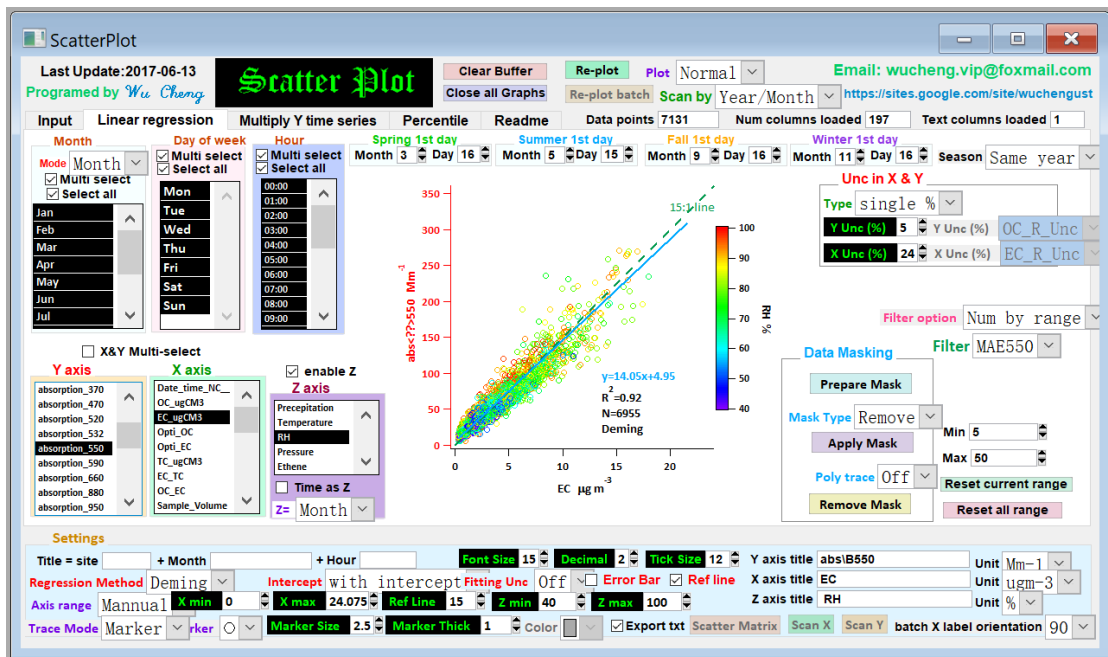
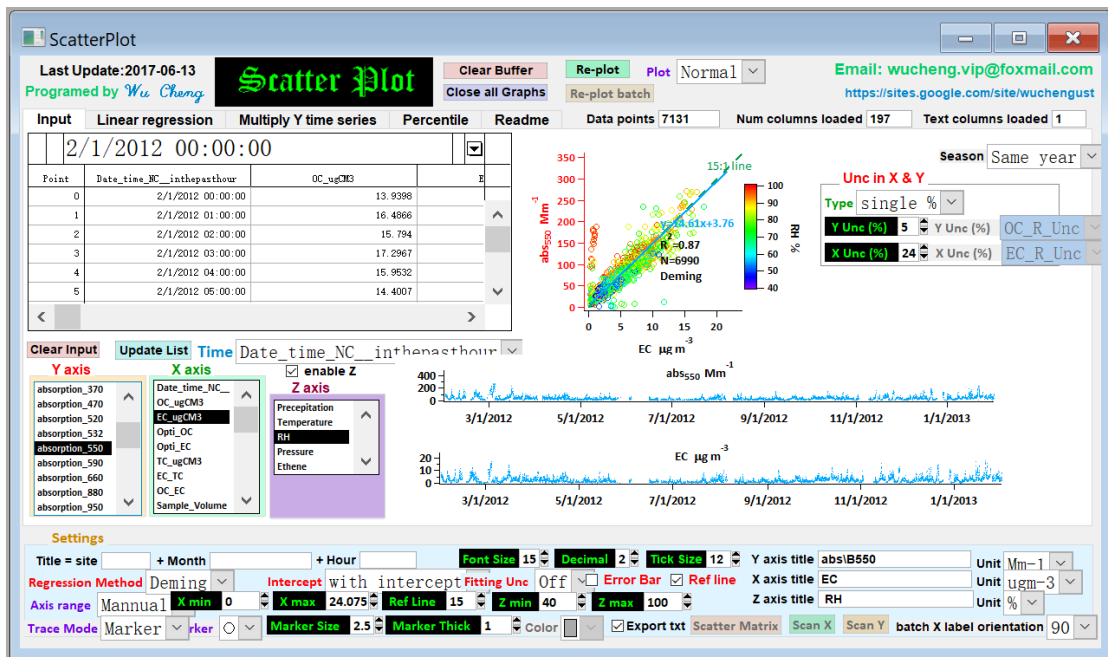


Figure S19. Scatter plot program written in Igro Pro (WaveMetrics, Inc. Lake Oswego, OR, USA). Available from <https://sites.google.com/site/wuchengust>.